



THE EXECUTIVE FELLOWSHIP

M² The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education

EIGHTEEN AMAZING WAYS TO CELEBRATE SHAVUOT

*This resource was created as part of the 18x18 fellowship



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CONNECT TO THE CHAIN OF JEWISH TRADITION

One-Off Program

The opening Mishna in Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Fathers) describes the transmission of the Torah, beginning with Moses and passing through elders, prophets and more. What if learners were asked to work with this Mishna as a template and add their lineage, history and traditions to chain of transmission?

Larger-Scale Initiative

Design an oral history project that could include interviews with elders, leaders and influencers in the community to better understand their motivations, convictions and contributions to Jewish life. What did they take from the past and what were they determined to leave for the future?



ENGAGE WITH JEWISH ROLE MODELS

One-Off Program

Tradition states that the People of Israel washed their garments in anticipation of receiving the Torah. Dress in your finest white attire at your very own “Diner en Blanc” for a festive Shavuot dinner. The theme of the event: Jewish Role Models. As part of the program, invite attendees to speak about all the Jewish icons they wish would be there.

Larger-Scale Initiative

As a Bnei-Mitzva project, design a 10-month journey for teens to identify, interview and internalize lessons from living Jewish role models. In advance of Shavuot, teens should prepare a gallery in a local synagogue, JCC or other communal space which puts their experience on display. As a collective ceremony, all Bnei Mitzva from the community gather on Shavuot night to accept and listen (Na’ase V’Nishma) to the wisdom they have garnered.



PRACTICE TIKKUN OLAM AND GEMILUT HASADIM

One-Off Program

A cornerstone of Megillat Ruth are the agricultural mitzvot of gathering food for the needy. In one example, whatever produce falls from its source – even if perfectly intact – must be kept for those in need. How cool would it be to adopt that approach regarding materials that are found in our house? What if our community created a drive to collect unused items that are of value and high quality for those in need, and then distributed by a local organization?

Larger-Scale Initiative

Over 50 years later we're still talking about Woodstock, and it's been more than 30 years since Live Aid. The Jewish community has put on large-scale festivals like the recent "Great Big Jewish Food Fest." Now is our chance to put on a music festival benefit concert to support initiatives that are repairing the world.



RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WRESTLING WITH GOD

One-Off Program

The imagery of Mount Sinai is central to Shavuot, and it is also customary to stay up all night. What if there were a program where participants were invited to stand before an audience – on a podium that resembles a makeshift mountain, and in a “MOTH-style” event – share their story, struggle and insights about wrestling with God.

Larger-Scale Initiative

It's no surprise that teens spend significant time exploring questions related to identity and faith. Empower your teens to create a documentary which explores faith, commitment, doubt and devotion. On Shavuot, screen the film or host a panel with all who were involved, and bring these explorations to the forefront of your community.



RESPOND TO ISSUES FACING AMERICAN JEWRY

One-Off Program

Given that Shavuot is a holiday centered on the text of the Torah, draw attention to other forms of text; namely news headlines which are full of significant issues that face American Jewry. In this Zine-making workshop, piece together the most important issues that you are facing this year as an American Jew, and spark a discussion on how Judaism and Torah can help respond to them.

Larger-Scale Initiative

Were we all at Sinai? Were some of us there? What happens to those who want to join our community today? How do we welcome people into the covenant? What responsibilities and rights go with it? Make a video that is centered on the topic of covenant, inspired by the story of Ruth which captures the journeys of people who successfully and unsuccessfully joined the Jewish covenant, as this is a burning issue facing American Jewry. Screen the video on or around Shavuot.



ACCESS HEBREW AND JEWISH TERMINOLOGY

One-Off Program

Counting in Hebrew is a core skill that is key to being able to navigate the Hebrew language. Given the centrality of counting in the seven weeks leading up to shavuot (the period called the “Omer”), this is an opportunity to create a board game about how the numbers are formed and how to say them.

Larger-Scale Initiative

We may have all said “Na’ase V’Nishma” (we will accept and listen) at Sinai – but were we all speaking the same language? The evolution of “Jewish language” is a fascinating topic. How did a dying language come back to life? Are you on team Yiddish or Hebrew? What role did Greek and Aramaic play in Jewish communities many centuries ago? What can we learn from various dialects of Hebrew? Invite members of your community to a series on the origins, adaptations and developments of the “Jewish language”.



CONNECT WITH JEWS AROUND THE WORLD

One-Off Program

While the Torah is a central text that connects Jews around the world, different communities have their own tradition of how they read it. In this Zoom workshop, “fly in” cantors and torah-readers from 5 ethnic groups and hear how they read the ten commandments in their tune. Try saying the words as they say it, pick up a thing or two about how they chant the verses, and commit to sharing a lesson learned with someone this holiday.

Larger-Scale Initiative

There are a number of global initiatives that attempt to unite Jews within their local communities and as part of the broader community by celebrating Shabbat. Imagine “Shavuot across the World: A Virtual International Assembly” which highlights practices, traditions and perspectives related to being part of the Jewish community. Walk away inspired by and more connected to Jews around the world.



PARTICIPATE IN THE KEHILLA

One-Off Program

Ruth is one of the most widely known converts from within the Jewish canon. Welcome to Conversion Conversations, a series of Ted-Talk style presentations that feature personal stories of conversion from members of our Kehilla which must be heard. By making space, listening and cultivating empathy, we'll lay the groundwork for a more understanding and supportive Kehilla.

Larger-Scale Initiative

Several of the ten commandments create a blueprint for cultivating a strong and healthy society – not stealing, coveting, committing adultery, murdering and lying are foundational norms for a healthy society. But many of our societies could use repair in these areas or others. Identify the real issues that are plaguing your community and come up with a task force to address them. What is your communal vision for the coming year, and what is your call to action for people to participate in your Kehilla?



CARE ABOUT ISRAEL AND HER PEOPLE

One-Off Program

Shavuot is the season of the wheat harvest in Israel. Connect with the Land of Israel by learning the agricultural cycle and how that correlates with holidays in the Jewish calendar. Then, create a seven-species scavenger hunt featuring wheat. To really get into the topic of wheat, end with a sourdough-starter workshop for your learners.

Larger-Scale Initiative

Megillat Ruth – a central text of Shavuot – is a call to care for those who are marginalized within our society, including orphans and widows. In the months leading up to Shavuot, learn about social issues that are prominent in Israel, as well as organizations that are working towards social reform. On Shavuot, facilitate a giving circle to support those initiatives.



EXPLORE SANCTITY, SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

One-Off Program

The wee hours of the morning have a pristine aura to them. With dew on the ground and the light of a crescent moon, there is a short period where one can feel alone, as if the world was only created for them. Design a “Hitbodedut” practice to take place in the middle of the night on Shavuot and guide participants through a personal and spiritual opportunity for prayer.

Larger-Scale Initiative

In the seven week period after Passover and culminating with Shavuot, also known as the period of the “Omer”, it is customary to explore Jewish mysticism through the lens of the “sephirot”. This is a great opportunity to develop a portal of spiritual practices including yoga, journaling, prayer, meditation, and art, all of which could be centered around the sephirot and counting.



UNDERSTAND THE WHY AND HOW OF JEWISH MITZVOT

One-Off Program

Everyone has questions regarding the why and how of Jewish mitzvot, to some degree or another. And more often than not, we turn to rabbis and experts for direction. In this roundtable conversation, participants would be invited to ask their most burning questions regarding the meaning of mitzvot to each other to hear diverse and relatable perspectives.

Larger-Scale Initiative

“Ask the Rabbi” is a typical forum for people to inquire about questions related to Judaism. What if a virtual portal was launched in your community where members could ask questions related to the why and how of Jewish mitzvot. While they would be addressed on an individual basis during the year, as part of the Shavuot celebration, the community could come together and discuss the top 5 questions that surfaced that year.



PARTAKE IN JEWISH CULINARY TRADITIONS

One-Off Program

Welcome to the “Branch Beyond Cheesecake Shavuot Extravaganza”, where home-cook-families from your community are invited to bring their best dairy game forward. One caveat: No cheesecake allowed! What creative culinary innovations will they come up with? Pair families together for a Shavuot meal. Be sure to design children’s placemats that include questions and activities for the meal.

Larger-Scale Initiative

It is customary to eat dairy on Shavuot, that’s why cheese and cheesecake have become staples on this holiday. While we can all enjoy a delectable slice, it’s a great opportunity to investigate the dairy industry. What are the innovations, abuses, and advancements that dairy farmers and cheesemakers are dealing with? Through a multi-day symposium, including site visits, tastings and panels, draw up a manifesto for your family about your relationship to dairy food.



CULTIVATE JEWISH FRIENDSHIPS

One-Off Program

Who loves the prospect of staying up all night more than children? This Shavuot, host a sleepover pajama party and invite young families to do art, share stories, have snacks and learn songs that are all connected to the holiday. And create social opportunities for the parents to mingle so they'll connect with each other down the line.

Larger-Scale Initiative

What better place to cultivate Jewish friendships than summer camp? As a kickoff to the summer season, invite young adults to an immersive Shavuot Retreat. You can expect to have music, mixers, and madness (and star-gazing). While it may only run for three jam-packed days, the friendships will surely last longer!



DISCOVER JUDAISM'S RELEVANCE TO LIFE'S QUESTIONS

One-Off Program

Shavuot celebrates the core text that offers us direction and guidance for our life. To demonstrate that it is a source of wisdom for life's questions, run a salon evening and introduce texts, prompts and resources that provide multiple answers to big questions. Prompt participants to reflect on the resources that were shared and help each other discover the answers together.

Larger-Scale Initiative

The ten commandments are foundational to Judaism. They can be interpreted and provide guidance to life's big issues, whether personal, communal or spiritual. Convene a diverse group of thinkers and spiritual leaders and ask them to reflect on contemporary dilemmas using the ten commandments as a guide. The result? A publication that can be available in synagogues around the world, and a digital version that solicits input from readers.



INTERPRET JEWISH TEXTS AND CORE NARRATIVES

One-Off Program

Take the 10 commandments and find the broadest form of Jewish texts that relate to them. Here's the caveat: They all need to be written in the 20th or 21st century and by Jews who are not Ashkenazi or American. And male voices should be a minority. Then, host a text-based Bet Midrash study session for your learners that amplifies voices which tend to be marginalized.

Larger-Scale Initiative

Broadway has been closed throughout the pandemic, but our desire for theater withstands. Invite your campers to learn, interpret and ultimately perform a theatrical presentations of receiving the Torah at Sinai. In the course of their preparations over several weeks, groups of campers will learn multiple interpretations of the story and make a narrative of their own. And we get to watch the performances.



APPRECIATE JEWISH CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCES

One-Off Program

We all know that one should not wear white after Labor Day. Fortunately, Shavuot is smack in the middle of the summer, so it's fashionable and acceptable to fulfill the custom of wearing white on the holiday. In this workshop, you'll learn about the influence that Eastern European Jewish immigrants had on fashion in the 50s and 60s in NYC.

Larger-Scale Initiative

Accepting the Torah was the act that defined the Jewish people as a nation. But we have always had a desire to live among other nations. Turn the local JCC into a physical embodiment of the interplay between Jewish culture and American culture, and reclaim the month of Sivan – when Shavuot takes place – as the month of Culture. Highlight examples where they've each influenced the other in the realms of food, entertainment, sports, ritual and holidays.



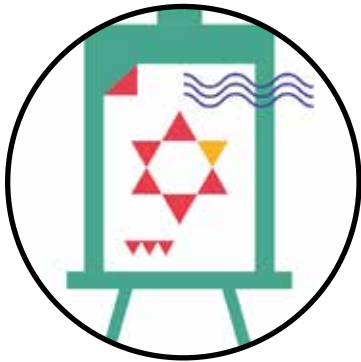
ENGAGE IN JEWISH RITUALS, HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS

One-Off Program

Tradition states that Mt. Sinai was full of flowers, which is why flowers have become central to Shavuot. In this flower festival, your community will be invited to create and decorate flower boxes in a woodshed, plant seeds, make flower wreath crowns, practice flower pressing, and more! Flowers will have a whole new meaning this Shavuot!

Larger-Scale Initiative

“Tikkun Leil Shavuot” has become a common Jewish ritual associated with the holiday. Host an all-night learn-a-thon. Be sure to create dynamic tracks that reflect the diverse interests of your community to keep them stimulated and engaged throughout the night. Make this an annual occurrence, so the “Tikkun” becomes a core ritual for how Shavuot is celebrated.



EXPERIENCE JEWISH ARTS AND CULTURE

One-Off Program

Hebrew calligraphy is one of the most discernible forms of Jewish art. In this online workshop, members of your organization's international community can log on and learn a thing or two about calligraphy. They'll be encouraged to create welcome signs, capturing the essence of hospitality and loving-kindness which are central to Megillat Ruth.

Larger-Scale Initiative

Right after Passover, release a call for proposals from photographers to capture Jewish expressions related to contemporary interpretations of "Accepting the Yoke of Torah", a phrase associated with Shavuot which captures the responsibilities, commitments, and potential burdens connected with faithful devotion. Create a gallery to feature the top ten photographers and spark a conversation about their work.



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develops and provides training and research to advance the field of experiential Jewish education and invest in the growth of its educators.

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