

## Once Upon a Time



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Avot

Why do we tell stories? The Torah is full of them - from the creation of the world, to the stories of the Israelites escaping slavery and reaching the Land of Israel. We also have *Midrashim*, a kind of 'behind-the-scenes' to the Torah, allowing us to learn lessons and gain insights into its 'characters', passed down all the way from Mount Sinai.

*What makes the story of the giving of the Torah different from all other stories?*

This story isn't meant to end. It is the story of our ancestors, told to their children down the chain. Until one day it reached us. As we

celebrate the festival of Shavuot - with the receiving of the Torah, flowers, abundance of cheesecake and family time - we also become aware of a sense of responsibility. The Torah is not merely about the past, but the present. It is not about others, it is *our* story.

On Pesach, which leads into Shavuot, we are told to conduct our seder *as if we were leaving Egypt* ourselves. We decorate our dining rooms, dress up, tell the story, sing songs, eat matzah and bitter maror. It is as if we are *reliving* the entire experience.

Yet when it comes to Shavuot, the *Midrash* tells us that we were present at Mount Sinai itself; **each one of our souls was there** and experienced the giving of the Torah.

This means that we do not have to imagine the experience on Shavuot.

We simply have to remember. And how do we do this? By decorating our shul with flowers, staying up all night learning, and eating milky foods (as the Jews did not yet know how to properly prepare the meat).

Surprisingly, for a festival on which *we received all of the laws of the Torah*, hardly any actual *laws* apply on Shavuot compared to other festivals! Maybe this is because Shavuot is about the stories we tell.

### **Ask yourself:**

- How does it change our perspective of the story to imagine ourselves at Mount Sinai?
- How can we recreate the story as an experience in our own lives, right now?
- And how can we continue to tell the story?

## Shavuot Scramble

Unscramble the classic Jewish foods. Are they parev, milky or meaty?

1. Cmrae cseehe eblag
2. Hhalalc
3. Cnhulet
4. Ceihckn upso
5. Touudgnh
6. Cehkeeeacs
7. Astl efeb
8. Hmeacsahenn
9. Gkleu
10. Shkakahsu

