

## Shavuot: What are we REALLY Celebrating – Worksheet

### Section I: The Agricultural Aspect of Shavuot (Shavuot in the Torah)

#### A. Complete the chart

Source	What Shavuot is Called	What we DO	What Shavuot is About
<a href="#"><u>Shemot 23:14-19</u></a>			
<a href="#"><u>Shemot 34:18-26</u></a>			
<a href="#"><u>Vayikra 23:15-21</u></a>			
<a href="#"><u>Bemidbar 28:26-30</u></a>			
<a href="#"><u>Devarim 16:9-12</u></a>			

## B. Questions

1. What are 3 things that you NOTICE after filling out this chart?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are 2 things you WONDER about after completing this chart?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the names that the Torah gives to the *chag* that we call “Shavuot?”

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4. What reason, if any, is given by the Torah for celebrating this *chag*?

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5. What date, if any, is given for Shavuot?

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6. If there is no date given, how do we know when Shavuot is celebrated?

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## C. Thought Questions

7. Why do you think that the agrarian/agricultural aspect of our holidays is so “front and center” in the Torah?

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8. How does living an agrarian life lend itself to GREATER awareness of and reliance on God?

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9. Is it easy or challenging for you to relate to the realities of agrarian/agricultural life? Why is that?

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## **Section II: The *Matan Torah* Timeline (or Lack Thereof)**

### **A. Determine the Date**

What was the date of *Matan Torah*? Before reading the text below, keep in mind the following information (determined by *Chazal* and referenced in Rashi).

1. The events of *Shemot* 19:1 occurred on *Rosh Chodesh Sivan*.
2. Every time Moshe “went up” to *Har Sinai*, it was a new day.

Read the text ([Shemot 19:1-16](#)) carefully and (try to) figure out on what date the Torah was given on *Har Sinai*, and then answer the questions below.

1. What date did you come up with?

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2. What is your text proof for your answer?

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3. Is the actual date provided?

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4. WHY do you think that is?

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5. Is Shavuot mentioned anywhere here?

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6. WHY do you think that is?

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7. How is this ambiguity connected to the fact that we call Shavuot “*zman Matan Torateinu*” and NOT “*Chag Matan Torateinu*”?

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## B. Thought Questions

8. How do you think that Shavuot came to be connected with *Matan Torah*?

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9. Why do you think that Shavuot came to be known as and CELEBRATED as “*Zman Matan Torateinu*”?

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## Section III: How Has Shavuot Evolved Over Time?

### A. Introduction

The Torah does not connect Shavuot directly to *Matan Torah*. Furthermore, one of the names of Shavuot – *Atzeret* – is actually used in the Torah for the last day of Pesach and for Shemini Atzeret, the *chag* at the end of Sukkot. It is only in the time of the second *Beit HaMikdash* and the Mishnah (and beyond) that *Atzeret* was used exclusively to refer to Shavuot.

Nevertheless, the Torah text from *Shemot* 19 puts *Matan Torah* at *around* the time of Shavuot. The explicitly stated connection of Shavuot with *Matan Torah* is first found in Talmud *Megillah* (31a) and *Seder Olam Rabbah*; both are Rabbinic texts. Referring to Shavuot as “*zman Matan Torateinu*” in *tefillot* is first found around the 9th century CE (although it may have been recited earlier than that). The Rambam and other early Rishonim take it as fact that Shavuot is *zman Matan Torateinu*.

The various customs around Shavuot, such as learning Torah all night long (*tikkun leil Shavuot*), eating dairy, decorating the house and shul with flowers, and the general focus on accepting the Torah, evolved throughout the last 1000 years or so.

## B. Thought Questions

1. Why do you think that Shavuot’s identity as “*zman Matan Torateinu*” grew steadily the longer we were in *galut*? Why did that aspect become more and more important and central?
2. Why do you think that Shavuot is referred to specifically as “*zman Matan Torateinu*” in our Yom Tov *tefillot*, rather than any other name?
3. How do the agrarian foundations of Shavuot add to and deepen our understanding and appreciation of the relationship between nature and reliance on God?
4. How does understanding the agrarian cycle help us deepen our understanding of Judaism?
5. Why is gratitude so important and a foundation to our belief system?
6. What Shavuot practices speak to you?
7. What kind of practice could you devise that would integrate both the “Harvest Festival” element and the “*Matan Torah*” element of Shavuot?