

From Rabbi Jordan Braunig  
Emory Jewish Chaplain  
2021

A few hours after Emory's commencement this Sunday, the holiday of Shavuot will begin. For many grads there will be meals and celebrations with family and roommates and friends. The joy of the day will inevitably become the joy of the night. Though the Talmud instructs us, *ein m'arvin simcha b'simcha*/don't mix one joy with another, after a year of living in a pandemic it feels like the more gladness and merriment, the better. So, how might you bring a little low-key Shavuot into your celebrations? Here are five suggestions.

1. **Share a Fundamental Piece of Learning-** The sages teach in Pirke Avot that every day a Divine voice goes out from Sinai. Revelation, it seems, is an ongoing process, not confined to a historical moment, but accessible to each of us. Sit around with a group of your close friends and ask each other, "what is something essential that you learned during your four years here?"
2. **Donate Some Dairy to a Free Fridge** - For many the celebration of Shavuot wouldn't be complete without lasagna, blintzes, cheesecake or other such dairy goodness. This year take advantage of the mutual aid refrigerators [around the city](#) and share the Shavuot bounty with those experiencing food insecurity. What better way is there to use up those boxes of mac and cheese before you move out.
3. **Spend an Hour in Nature** - The midrash teaches that Torah is given by means of the wilderness. Why? Because in order to receive wisdom it is sometimes necessary to experience the sense of being ownerless and without boundaries. Take a long quiet stroll through nature and see what wisdom seeps in.
4. **Honor a Teacher-** There is no way of celebrating the gift of Torah without honoring those who have instructed us. The Talmud says were it not for a single teacher, the entire Torah might have been forgotten. During a graduation meal, ask friends and family to share the name of a teacher who made a lasting impact on them and to explain why. In this way you will invite the professors, rabbis, preschool teachers, coaches, high school teachers to join you in the festive meal.
5. **Connect to Agricultural Systems-** The holiday of Shavuot has deep ties to the cycles of planting and harvest. The holiday is referred to both as *Chag HaKatzir*/The Festival of Harvest and *Yom HaBikkurim*/The Day of First Fruits. Judaism is an earth-based tradition and should encourage us to understand where our food comes from and how it is grown. One great way of celebrating Shavuot is to find a CSA (community supported agriculture) in the place where you live and to buy a share. This way you will honor the earth by eating radishes, peaches, cucumbers and squashes all when they are in season.