



SHAVUOT

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The renewal of Shavuot as the holiday of Bikkurim, the beautiful custom that began in the Land of Israel of bringing the first fruits of the Land of Israel to the Jewish National Fund, add grace to this holiday, which is one of the most lovely and endearing holidays of the Jewish festivals. These new customs rely on the values of an ancient tradition, renew the character of the holiday as the holiday of nature and grant it new meanings as the holiday of greenery and youth.

Yet the renewed value of the holiday of Shavuot will be positive and vital and will enrich the next generation's connection to tradition, the assets of spirit and soul for the Jewish people and the springs of creativity for national thought and national sentiment – but only if it provides an added value and does not detract from the old traditions, only if this holiday succeeds to impart, in its new content and form, a taste of an ancient legacy, the taste of a hundred generations in Israel.

Shavuot is not only and not primarily the Holiday of Bikkurim; it is first and foremost the holiday of the giving of our Torah. This marvelous and one-of-a-kind concept with which the Jewish people were blessed, the concept of Torah, is more than a religion, set of laws, mindset and source of knowledge alone, but includes an original and essential blend of worldviews, lifestyle, culture and treasures of national spirit and soul. The Torah is the supreme concept which reflects the national uniqueness of the Jewish people in the world and is connected in the nation's consciousness and sentiment to the holiday of Shavuot.

This supreme property of the nation, which is invaluable and equal to the rest of its assets and treasures ("The Study of Torah is Equal to Them (the Mitzvot) All"), and which coined its original, national, supreme character as Am Segula ("Be silent, Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God."), found its most concentrated expression in the holiday of Shavuot.

What generations of Jews invested from the treasures of their souls in this holiday, in its prayers, in the reading of the Torah and the Parasha of Ma'amad Har Sinai (The Revelation at Sinai), and even in the singing of liturgical poems and its festive melody, will not be converted or replaced by the frivolous custom of the offering of the new fruits of the valley or by the celebrations in Haifa. There is a point and value to the new frivolous custom, but only if it does not pretend to inherit the valuable and significant property of the generations: the time of the giving of our Torah.

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