

Laws & Customs: Sivan and Shavuot

The Jewish
Weekly

For the year 5786

According to Shulchan Aruch Harav, Mishna Berurah and Nittel Gavriel

All times listed are for Jerusalem only as per www.myzmanim.com

Based on Rabbi Shmuel Lesches's Halachah Sheets

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SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

Unlike usual, Av Harachamim is recited on Shabbat Mevarchim Sivan, in memory of the tragedies that occurred during this month.

It is customary for the Gabbaim to arrange a Kiddush with the purpose of increasing resolutions in learning Torah, keeping Mitzvot B'hidur, and rejoicing in the completion of the Torah.

According to the Shla"h Hakadosh, Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan is an auspicious time to pray for children and he made a special prayer for this.

SIVAN

Tachnun is not recited from Rosh Chodesh Sivan until after Shavuot, some however hold not to say Tachanun until the twelfth day of Sivan.

One generally should not undertake a fast on these days, even for a Yahrzeit. However, for a Taanit Chalom (a fast for a bad dream) as well as a Chattan and Kallah fast on their wedding day.

Some have the custom that an Avel (within 12 months of a parent's passing or within 30 days of a spouse, child or sibling's passing) should not serve as the Chazzan in Shul during these days. This does not apply to one who has a Yahrzeit. Others, (including Chabad) have the custom that he should serve as the Chazzan, except of course, on Shabbat and Chag.

During these days, we do not eulogize over someone who has died.

Some hold that one can take a haircut from Rosh Chodesh Sivan, some hold from the first morning of the Shloshet Y'mei Hagbalah (i.e. Tuesday). According to some, a Bar Mitzvah boy who is having his Bar Mitzvah after Rosh Chodesh Sivan may have a haircut in honor of his Bar Mitzvah beforehand. Nevertheless, according to the Chabad custom, one shouldn't take a haircut until Erev Chag.

SHLOSHET Y'MEI HAGBALAH

From the 3rd of Sivan (Tuesday May 19th) starts the Shloshet Y'mei Hagbalah.

Many customs associated with mourning during Sefirat Haomer no longer apply from Tuesday morning. Music, dancing and haircuts, are permissible.

From Rosh Chodesh Sivan some hold that one can have a wedding, but most hold only from the beginning of the Shloshet Y'mei Hagbalah. And some hold that due to Rosh Chodesh being on Sunday, one may get married on Friday.

PREPARATIONS FOR CHAG

The Mitzvah of V'Samachta B'Chagecha on Chag entails eating meat, wine and delicacies; providing new clothing or jewelry for one's wife according to his means; and giving candies to children. These should be arranged in advance.

Prior to every Chag, we also need to remember that the Chag requirements of the needy be met. Chag is also an especially appropriate time to host guests.

One should make spiritual preparations for Shavuot as well. These include learning Torah – especially the laws of Shavuot, Matan Torah, as well as increasing in Ahavat Yisrael.

The Chabad custom is that during the period before Chag, one should reach out and do all within his or her power to ensure that all Jews – men, women, children and even small babies – should attend the Aseret Hadibrot on the day of Shavuot.

EREV CHAG (5TH SIVAN)

In honor of Shavuot, if one has not done so yet, one should take a haircut on Erev Chag.

On Erev Shavuot, one should not donate blood, take a blood test, or undergo any procedures involving blood loss. [Of course, this prohibition does not apply in a case of Pikuach Nefesh.]

For those who regularly shave or trim, it is a Mitzvah to do so on Erev Chag and there are some who are particular not to shave after Chatzot (12:35pm).

Some have the custom to immerse in a Mikvah after midday, to prepare for Chag.

It is a Mitzvah to cut one's finger nails on Erev Chag, and for some who are particular, not to cut them after Chatzot (12:35pm).

Just like on Erev Shabbat, it is preferable to refrain from eating a proper meal once the tenth Halachic hour of the day begins (4:05pm), in order to properly enjoy the Seudat Chag at night. However, one may snack in small quantities.

As Chag goes straight into Shabbat, the head of the household performs an Eruv Tavshilin (for more information regarding Eruv Tavshilin, please see the Halachot in [Blue](#) after this section).

One should arrange a pre-existing flame from which to light the Shabbat candles on Chag as Shabbat starts directly after Chag.

Shavuot is an opportune time to enhance one's Torah learning and make positive resolutions; to spread Torah to others; to enhance one's adherence to daily study; and to accept upon oneself the Ol Shel Torah (yoke of Torah).

The Lubavitcher Rebbe's customary Shavuot greeting: "Kabbalat Hatorah B'Simcha ub'Pnimiyut" is loosely translated as: "May you receive the Torah joyfully and internally".

ERUV TAVSHILIN

The head of the household performs Eruv Tavshilin. Those residing with him are automatically included in his Eruv Tavshilin. Married children and guests – who are both eating and sleeping over – are also included in the Eruv Tavshilin.

If necessary, one may appoint a Shliach to set aside (the head of the household's) food and perform an Eruv with it. The Shliach performs the Eruv with a Brachah.

If the head of the household is not home for Chag, one of the other family members should do Eruv Tavshilin instead. [The head of the household may not rely on this Eruv Tavshilin, being that he is not spending Chag at home.]

If one will be eating all of his Shabbat meals elsewhere, but will be sleeping in his own dwelling, he will need to light his own Shabbat candles. To this end, he should perform Eruv Tavshilin without a Brachah. However, it is preferable to plan on preparing even a minor food item on Friday for Shabbat, such as adding water to the hot-water urn, in order that the Eruv Tavshilin be made with a Brachah.

One should set himself a reminder to perform Eruv Tavshilin, as well as remind others to do so.

Eruv Tavshilin should be performed on Erev Chag and not before. [If the Eruv was performed prior to Erev Chag and is still extant, one should redo the Eruv on Erev Chag, but without a Brachah.]

Eruv Tavshilin may be performed any time until sunset. If one forgot, Eruv Tavshilin

may still be performed until the emergence of three stars, provided that both the majority of the community, as well as the individual making the Eruv, did not yet begin davening Maariv or accept Chag.

If one is running late, and making an Eruv Tavshilin will prevent him from davening Mincha until it is too late, Mincha takes precedence.

If one forgot Eruv Tavshilin until after the emergence of three stars, he should consult with a Rav.

The Eruv Tavshilin consists of a baked item and a cooked item. [After the fact, a cooked item alone is deemed sufficient, but a baked item alone is not.]

The baked item should ideally be a complete Challah, so that it may be used for Lechem Mishna on Shabbat.

The baked item must equal a K'beitzah or more.

The cooked item should be a respectable food (e.g. fish, a hard boiled egg or meat). It may either be fully cooked, roasted, smoked or stewed. It may also be a non-cooked item that was pickled for at least 24 hours.

The cooked item must equal a Kezayit or more, excluding the bones or other inedible parts.

If one uses a hard-boiled egg, it should not be peeled until it is ready to be eaten on Shabbat. [If one peeled it on Chag, he may still rely on it for Eruv Tavshilin.]

One may freeze the Eruv Tavshilin at any time, as it is still inherently edible.

The first step of Eruv Tavshilin is to give the item to someone else, so that he can be Zoche (acquire) it on behalf of anyone outside of the household who may need to participate. One should not use the services of his wife or children for this task, unless there is no other alternative.

The one making the Eruv Tavshilin hands the food over to the Zoche and says:

אני מזכה לכל מי שרוצה לזכות ולסמוך על ערוב זה:

If he doesn't understand the Hebrew, he should say it in English. [I hereby grant a share in this eruv to anyone who wishes to participate in it and to depend on it.]

At this point, the Zoche takes complete hold of the food and raises it one Tefach (8 cm), and then returns it to the one making the Eruv Tavshilin.

The one making the Eruv Tavshilin holds the baked and cooked food items in his right hand, and recites the Brachah and associated declaration:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו על מצות ערוב: בדיו ויהי שרא לנא לאסווי ולבשולי ולאטמוני ולאדלוקי שרגא ולתקנא ולמעבד כל-צרכנא

מיומא טבא לשבתא לנא ולכל-ישראל הדרים בעיר הזאת:

One must understand the text of Eruv Tavshilin declaration. If he doesn't understand the Hebrew and Aramaic, he should say it in English. [Through this (eruv) it shall be permissible for us to bake, cook, put away a dish (to preserve its heat), kindle a light, prepare, and do on the holiday all that is necessary for Shabbat – for us and for all the Israelites who dwell in this city.]

Care should be taken to say the recitation as stated, as certain changes invalidate it.

Afterwards, the Eruv Tavshilin is put in a place where it will be safe until Shabbat.

One may prepare for Shabbat on Friday as long as at least a Kezayit of the **cooked** Eruv Tavshilin item remains edible and accessible. If this is not the case, then one should discuss his options with a Rav (even if the **baked** item remains). In any case, one may complete all the stages of preparation for food that one already began preparing whilst the Eruv Tavshilin was present.

On Friday, preparing for Shabbat is only allowed if there is still enough time for guests to theoretically arrive and partake of what was prepared before Shabbat.

The Eruv Tavshilin is effective only for preparations involving food and food utensils, or other meal-related matters such as lighting candles.

One may theoretically eat the Eruv Tavshilin once the Shabbat preparations are complete. However, it is preferable not to eat it until the last meal of Shabbat.

It is customary to use the baked item of the Eruv Tavshilin as part of the Lechem Mishnah of both the night and day meals.

🕯️ FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE

Shulchan Aruch mentions the custom of decorating the Shul with trees (since Shavuot is the day of judgement for fruits), and flowers (to commemorate the foliage that appeared on barren Har Sinai). For various reasons, it is not the Chabad custom to decorate the Shul with trees and flowers, but this may be done at home.

Flowers and decorative leaves or branches which were cut and arranged prior to Shavuot are regarded as a decoration and are not Muktzah. Therefore, when necessary, they may be moved on Shavuot and Shabbat. However, if some of the flowers are not yet in full bloom and exposure to additional moisture will induce them to blossom further, the vase must be moved very gently so that the water level remains constant.

When all flowers are already in full bloom and exposure to additional moisture will not induce them to blossom further, the following further leniencies apply:

- On Shabbat and Shavuot, one may take flowers out of the vase of water. One may also return the flowers to the same vase, as long as the original water was not changed.
- On Shabbat and Shavuot, one may place the flowers in a new vase that was prepared and filled with water before Chag. One may also add flowers to a vase which already has flowers from before Chag.
- On Shavuot (but not on Shabbat), one may top up the water in the vase if necessary, but the ratio of the new water must be less than half of the total. One may certainly not replace the existing water.

A potted plant should not be moved due to two concerns – Muktzah and aiding plant growth. [In principle, these issues are subject to differing Halachic opinions and other variables.] If the potted plant accidentally overturns, or some soil spills out, it should be left alone. [If doing so will create a hindrance or inconvenience, a Rav should be consulted.]

For practical purposes, a potted plant should generally be treated as attached to the ground. Therefore, one may not water it at all or detach any of its leaves or branches. One may not lean on a potted tree or shrub, move it with his hands even ever so slightly, place anything in its branches, or remove anything caught in its branches.

Flowers, branches or leaves that were detached (regardless of the cause) on Shabbat or Shavuot are Muktzah. The same is true even if there is just a doubt whether it became detached on Shabbat or Shavuot. It goes without saying that they are Muktzah when still attached to the ground.

One may smell flowers and plants on Shabbat or Shavuot – even if still attached to the ground (and hence Muktzah). One should remember to make the appropriate Brachah. However, one may not smell attached fruits.

🕯️ CANDLE-LIGHTING

Prior to candle-lighting, one should give Tzedakah on Erev Chag for the following two days; Chag and Shabbat.

Candle-lighting is at 6:57pm. The Brachot are Shel Yom Tov and Shehecheyanu. [If eating out, one should ensure that some practical benefit is derived from the candles after Chag begins.]

Since it is Chag, if one neglected to light at the proper time, one may – and should – light candles on Chag itself, from a pre-existing flame.

When a man is required to light candles, he does not recite Shehecheyanu, as he will be

doing so in Kiddush. [Therefore, it is best that he lights candles right before Kiddush, so that his Shehecheyanu is linked to both.] Similarly, if a woman needs to recite her own Kiddush, she does not recite Shehecheyanu, as she already did so at candle-lighting.

NIGHT OF SHAVUOT

Maariv (and Kiddush) should preferably not begin before Tzeit Hakochovim (8:13pm) so that one can complete the full Sefirat Haomer cycle.

If someone davened Maariv before this time he should read Kriat Shema for Maariv before the Seudah.

After Maariv one should hasten to go start his Seudat Chag as the day is short with plenty to do (to be busy in learning Torah all night).

It is good and correct not to overeat or drink as overeating or drinking will make one tired.

One must drink a cup of wine on the day of Chag, even by those who did not make their own Kiddush.

One should speed up their meal in order for them to go and learn.

According to the Ari Z"l, one should refrain from marital relations, unless it is the night of Mikvah.

YA'ALEH VEYAVO IN BENTCHING

If one forgets to recite Ya'aleh Veyavo in Birchat Hamazon, but remembers before Hashem's name at Bonei Yerushalayim, he goes back. If one realized after that, but before starting the next Brachah, he recites the extra Brachah as printed in some Birkonim. If one already began even the first word of the next Brachah, one must begin Birchat Hamazon again.

The Harachamon for Chag is recited.

TIKUN LEIL SHAVUOT

The custom is to stay awake the entire night of Shavuot, Saying Tikun or learning Torah.

Needless to say, the night of Shavuot is not the appropriate time for lectures or forums about social, economic, political and communal issues. Although important, they cannot really be regarded as a form of Torah study – unless the focus is to learn the Torah's perspective.

The recitation of Tikun Leil Shavuot should be prioritized over all other forms of learning and Shiurim.

According to some, the Tefillot and Yehi Ratzons that appear in some editions of Tikun Leil Shavuot are omitted, and Kaddish is not recited.

If, for whatever reason, one did not complete the entire Tikun Leil Shavuot on the night of Shavuot, he should do so at the earliest opportunity during the day.

Shortly before dawn (4:14am), those who have the custom should immerse in the Mikvah.

At dawn, one washes Netilat Yadaim and recites Brachot.

One should not begin learning Torah after dawn until he concludes Brachot.

The Brachah of Tzitzit is not recited at this time as it is still too early.

After staying awake the entire night, some have the custom to daven at Sunrise (5:36am), and others hold to sleep for several hours and daven at the usual time, in order to allow one to focus on his davening at his usual pace.

Since B'dieved one fulfils his obligation when reciting the daytime Shema immediately after dawn, it is worthwhile to recite it with the intention that he thereby fulfils his obligation only if he neglects to do so at the ideal time.

One does not recite Kriat Shema She'al Hamittah when going to sleep after dawn.

If one chooses to daven before going to sleep, he should ensure that he recites the Brachah of Tzitzit and Shema after the earliest time (4:41am), and the Amidah after sunrise (5:38am).

The Brachah of Tzitzit is not recited on a Tallit Katan worn overnight. One who does not wear a Tallit Gadol should change his Tallit Katan before reciting the Brachah.

SHACHARIT & HALLEL

Care must be taken to recite Kriat Shema during the proper time (between 4:41 - 8:25am (Magen Avraham) or 4:41 – 9:07am (Gra & Baal HaTanya). One who goes to sleep prior to davening should ensure that he awakens in time to recite Shema.

Full Hallel is recited on Shavuot. When reciting Hallel, one may not interrupt it – other than for those things that one may respond to during the Brachot of Kriat Shema. [I.e. If the Chazzan recites Kedushah, one responds Kadosh, Baruch and Yimloch. When the Chazzan says Ha'E-l Hakadosh, one answers Amen. When the Chazzan says Modim, one answers the three words Modim Anachnu Lach. When the Chazzan recites Kaddish, one answers Amen Yehei Shmei etc, and Amen to d'amiran b'alma. One also answers Barchu and Amen when the Brachot are recited before and after an Aliyah or Haftorah.]

Hallel is recited standing (unless one is feeble or infirm).

It is preferable to recite Hallel with the Minyan. If one is not up to the Minyan, this creates a dilemma; on the one hand it is appropriate to recite Hallel with the congregation (if he hasn't yet begun Baruch She'amar), and on the other hand, it is appropriate that one davens in the correct order. For this reason, the Chabad Rabbeim were punctilious about being up to Hallel when the Minyan recited it on Chag.

If one forgot to recite Hallel, he should recite it with a Brachah as soon as he remembers, as long as it is not yet sunset 7:38pm (or without a Brachah until Tzeit – 8:14pm).

If one mistakenly recited half-Hallel, he must repeat the entire Hallel (without a Brachah).

KRIAT HATORAH

Akdamut is said by most, however, It is not the Chabad custom to recite it. (the Lubavitcher Rebbe would say it quietly.)

The Aliyah containing the Aseret Hadibrot is given to a prominent person.

The Chabad custom is that all men, women, children, and even babies and newborns (health permitting), should attend Shul to hear the Aseret Hadibrot. The congregation stands during the reading of the Aseret Hadibrot, facing the Sefer Torah.

Maftir is usually given to a learned and prominent person, due to the special significance of the Haftorah. The congregants read along in an undertone, and some have the custom to stand up while reading it.

Some have the custom of reading Rut in Shul on Chag. Although it is not the Chabad custom because the link between Rut and Shavuot is observed by the fact that one reads the entire Sefer as part of Tikun Leil Shavuot.

Yizkor is recited before Musaf. Those who leave the Shul for Yizkor may recite "Av Harachamim" after Yizkor.

Yizkor may be recited at home without a Sefer Torah.

SHAVUOT DAY

The Mitzvah of V'Samachta B'Chagecha requires one to celebrate Chag with his family. As such, one should not overly prolong the time he spends at any communal Kiddush.

It is customary to eat dairy on Shavuot day. By the same token, Chag must be celebrated with meat.

One of the reasons for eating dairy on Shavuot, is that a two-loaf bread offering was brought in the Beit Hamikdash. To commemorate this, we eat two meals on Shavuot—first a dairy meal, and then, after

a short break, we eat the traditional meat meal for Chag.

There are many other reasons, but just to add another one here, is to emphasize that Jews – unlike the angels who visited Avraham Avinu – are careful to separate between milk and meat. As such, special care must be taken to adhere to all the Halachot of Kashrut. These include:

- Some hold to wait an hour and some a half hour, or six hours after eating cheeses cured for more than six months. [It may not be practical to consume aged cheeses on Shavuot, as one must also eat meat.]
- One is supposed to wash their mouth out between milk and meat.
- Making a Brachah Acharonah between dairy and meat.
- Not using the same tablecloths and loaves for dairy and meat.
- Not eating dairy together with a Challah baked in a Basari oven or vice versa. [There is grounds to be lenient if the Challot weren't physically touching any part of the oven, and the oven was absolutely clean and devoid of steam whilst the Challot were baking.]
- Not baking a dairy or meat loaf of bread lest people mistakenly think it is Parve. If already baked, it may not be eaten. Exceptions: The loaf has a distinctive shape, or it is visibly and obviously noticeable as dairy or meat, or it is small enough to be consumed within one day.
- Using separate knives (or a Parve knife) to cut vegetables used with dairy and meat. This is especially true when cutting sharp vegetables, since they assume the status of the knife even if it was completely clean and recently unused.

Needless to say, some people are careful to eat only Chalav Yisrael. Accordingly, one should not eat even Parve or Chalav- Yisrael foods if they came into contact with non-Chalav-Yisrael utensils whilst hot.

Shavuot is the Yahrtzeit of the Baal Shem Tov, and is therefore an opportune time to mention a teaching and story of the Baal Shem Tov. Shavuot is also associated with Moshe Rabbeinu (who received the Torah) and David Hamelech (who compiled Tehillim). Therefore, Shavuot is an opportune time to enhance one's commitment to learning Torah and saying Tehillim.

There is an old Jerusalem custom to go visit the grave of David Hamelech on Har Tzion.

If Shavuot is on a bright day it is a good sign for the whole year.

PREPERATION FOR SHABBAT

Some have the custom to go to Mikvah on Chag for Shabbat and some are particular not to go on Chag but rather after the emergence of 3 stars and some just go on Erev Chag.

Regarding preparations on Friday for Shabbat, please see the Eruv Tavshilin section in [Blue](#).

As it is Erev Shabbat, in some communities, Pasach Eliyahu is recited before Mincha, but not Hodu.

According to Nussach Sefard and Nussach Ha'Ari (Chabad), Kabbalat Shabbat starts from Mizmor Ledavid including Lecha Dodi, Some do the first two and the last two stanzas and some (including Chabad), do the whole Lecha Dodi, however, Nussach Ashkenaz starts Kabbalat Shabbat from Mizmor Shir L'Yom HaShabbat.

Since it is Erev Shabbat, one should not eat after sunset – even if one washed beforehand. [One may bench after sunset and even after the emergence of three stars. Ya'aleh Veyavo is recited, but not Retzei.]

The candles should be kindled with a pre-existing flame at the usual forty minutes

before sunset (6:58pm), and certainly not after sunset (7:38pm). The Brachah of Shel Shabbat is recited.

Candles must not be waxed into place, nor may the wicks be twisted to facilitate their lighting. When necessary, one may remove the wax from the previous night with a knife. It is best that one removes it in a way that it falls directly into the garbage.

AFTER SHAVUOT

The day after *Chag* (according to Mishnah Chagigah) is known as "*Yom Tovo'ach*" as well as *Isru Chag*, and should be celebrated with additional food items.

The days after *Shavuot* until the twelfth of Sivan (inclusive) are known as "*Y'mei Tashlumin*", during which *Tachnun* is not recited. The *Baal Hatanya* once remarked that these are the days to "pack" all the treasures and revelations of *Shavuot*.

On *Shabbat the day after Shavuot* (7th Sivan), *Av Harachamim* and *Tzidkatcha* are not recited.