



The Littlest Mountain

Based on an ancient story about the Ten Commandments.

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God needs to find a special place where he will tell all people the ten rules for peace. The mountains of the world compete for this great honor, bragging of their beauty and importance. Little Mt. Sinai knows it's not important enough to be God's special place. Could the littlest mountain be just what God is looking for?

EDUCATIONAL LESSON IDEAS

BY MICHELLE S. TOLUB, JEWISH EDUCATOR

You shall count for yourselves -- from the day after the Shabbat, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving -- seven Shabbats, they shall be complete. Until the day after the seventh sabbath you shall count, fifty days... You shall convoke on this very day -- there shall be a holy convocation for yourselves -- you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for your generations. -Leviticus 21:15-16, 21

The holiday of Shavuot has different names:

Z'man Matan Toratenu - the Time of the Giving of Our Torah (holiday celebrating our receiving the Torah from God)

Chag haBikkurim - Festival of the First Fruits (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates were brought to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem as a gesture of thanksgiving)

Chag haKatzir – Wheat Harvest Festival (The sample of the first crop of the wheat harvest was brought to the Temple, baked into two loaves of bread, and then waved before the altar as the concluding rite of the season.)

The holiday of Shavuot is the holiday that commemorates God giving the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people. It's a day that Jews are supposed to study Torah and the Ten Commandments all night long.

In Hebrew, the word Shavuot means "weeks." It takes place seven weeks after the second day of Passover. It always falls on the 6th day of the Hebrew month, Sivan. Besides giving the Torah to the Jewish people on this day, it was also a harvest holiday. This festival marked the harvest of the wheat crop, the last grain harvest of the season, and the beginning of the fruit harvest.

A major feature of the celebration was the ceremony of bringing the "first fruits", or *bikkurim*, of the harvest to the Temple as an offering of thanks. The *bikkurim* were carried in beautifully decorated baskets. Families would gather together to walk to Jerusalem and they would sing,

dance and have music playing whilst they walked. When they arrived at the Temple, they gave the bread and fruit to the priests who would bless them. Today synagogues are decorated with greenery and flowers at Shavuot.

The Ten Commandments

1. There is One God.
2. There will be no other gods before me.
3. Don't use God's name in a useless way.
4. Remember Shabbat.
5. Honor your parents.
6. Don't murder.
7. Be true to your spouse.
8. Don't steal.
9. Don't lie.
10. Don't want what other people have.

Moses was given the Ten Commandments from God. These ten rules are good rules to live by. Are you able to live by all of these rules? Why or why not?

These laws are laws that Jews are supposed to follow. However, are some of these laws just good ideas for everyone? Which laws might be the ones that all people should follow? Which ones should just Jews follow?

It's traditional to think that we, not just our ancestors, were given the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. How do you think you would have felt on that day?

About the Other Mountains

Although the other mountains were not chosen to have the Ten Commandments given from them, each mountain was important for another reason:

- Mt. Carmel – associated with Elijah (Near Haifa)
- Mt Hermon – Tallest mountain in Israel, (Golan Heights)
- Mt. Tabor – Deborah the Judge and Barak fought from this mountain against the Canaanite King, Jabin
- Mt. Moriah – The binding of Isaac might have happened here. Others say that Jacob had his dream about the ladder and wrestled with the Angel at the foot of the mountain.
- Mt. Ebal – Joshua died and wrote out the words of the laws here.
- Mt. Gilboa – King Saul & 3 sons died here against the Philistines
- Mt Erarat – Noah's Ark was stranded at the top of the mountain when the flood receded.

In Hebrew, the word mountain is *har*. Make a picture of a mountain using the letters of the word *har* (hay and resh).

Language Arts

- Laws are written so that people understand what is expected of them. God chose to give laws to the Jewish people. What are some laws that you could come up with for your family or community?
- Why was it so important to for God find a place to give the Ten Commandments from and why was it the humble mountain?
- Unfamiliar vocabulary: Boastful, vain, mightiest , peak, cliffs, squabbled, kind, generous, hateful, cruel, rocky, garden, streams, summits, mining, meadows, humble
- Identify which words in unfamiliar vocabulary are words about nature? About emotions? Write a sentence using one of the new words.

Geography/Social Studies

- Make a relief map of Israel using clay or play dough. Make sure to remember to place all the mountains mentioned in the book on the map. Also, indicate rivers, forests and deserts.
 - Play dough recipe
 - 1 c. water
 - 3 c. flour
 - 1 1/2 c. salt
 - 1/4 c. oil
 - Food coloring for different colors
- Locate Israel on a world map. What part of the world is it in?
- Locate the different mountains on a map (have a blank map PDF attachment?)