All you need to know about Shabuot in one word

Most Jewish communities observe five minhagim (traditions) on Shabu'ot. To remember these customs, we use the Hebrew word □□□□□ A / CHA / R / I / T, which is the acrostic of these five traditions.

A: **Azharot or Aqdamot.** During Shabu'ot, we read the beautiful poems (piyutim) composed by the Geonim and Rishonim, which poetically describe the 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions of the Tora. In these poems, we review all the commandments that were entrusted to us. The word AZHAROT means warnings or commands about the rules and precepts of the Tora. The numerical value of the word □□□□□ is 613 = 365 + 248.

CHA: **Chalab** (milk), as in any other Yom Tob, during Shabuot, we should eat meat and drink wine to fulfill the Mitsva of *Simcha*, celebrating and enjoying the day of Yom Tob. Still, the custom is that some meals are made with dairy products. Several explanations (Sefer haToda'a mentions 10!) explain why we have dairy meals for Shabu'ot. One such explanation is that the Hebrew word CHALAB □□□ sums "40", which reminds us of the days that Moses stayed on Mount Sinai to receive the Tora.

R: **Ruth**. During Shabu'ot, we study Megillat Ruth. One reason we read Ruth's story during Shabuot is that when Ruth converted to Judaism, she accepted the entire Tora. In the same way, in Shabu'ot, we celebrate our "conversion" to Judaism by receiving the Tora. Another reason is that after the acceptance of the conversion of Ruth, from whom King David descends, we learn the complete dependence of the written Tora on the oral Tora since, according to the literal text of the Tora, the conversion of Ruth might not have been accepted. The legality of the conversion of a Moabite woman, however, is learned solely from oral tradition (Tora Shebe'al pe).

I: **Yereq** (green plants). Many communities have the custom of decorating the synagogue with plants and flowers to remember Har Sinai. We cherish in our collective memory that when we received the Tora, it was spring, and Mount Sinai was filled with plants and flowers. In the tradition of the Jews of Iran, this custom is so essential that Shabu'ot is known as mo'ed ghol (the festival of flowers).

T: **Tiqun** (Reparation). One of the best-known customs of Shabu'ot is to stay awake all night (from midnight until dawn) studying Tora to "repair" what our forefathers did. What happened? On the night of 6 Sivan, HaShem gave the people of Israel the Ten Commandments. Later that same night, HaShem revealed all the commandments in Parasha Mishpatim to Moses. The next day, God would present the covenant to the people of Israel, and they would formally accept all the commandments of the Tora. Instead of waiting awake and enthusiastically for this great event, our ancestors fell asleep. This custom was established initially by Rabbi Shelomo Halevi Alqabets (1500-1580) –a colleague of Rabbi Yosef Caro, the author of Shulhan Arukh– who established the tradition of staying up all night studying Tora to repair what our ancestors did and show our love, devotion, and enthusiasm to receive the Tora.

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