

The festival of Shavuot (Sha-voo-oat), the Feast of Weeks, occurs 50 days from the journey of the Jewish people out of Egypt. Shavuot, a Sabbath, (no work), marks the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. The Voice (now audible) was heard by all; however, it was an invitation to each individual heart to come into covenant with The Holy One. (Exod. 19 – 20).

The night before Shavuot (tonight) is spent reading sacred text, praying, reading inspirational poems and beautiful prose, to lift one up to a higher consciousness in readiness for “hearing” the message of Shavuot at dawn. In Jerusalem, in the pre-dawn darkness, people from all over Jerusalem walk to Temple Mount to await the moment the first rays of dawn spread over the Temple site. It is a moment of awe, a moment to hear the still small Voice speak to your heart. The first words spoken are a blessing. (For Christians, this is the event of Pentecost as the Disciples were gathered all night to study and transcend to heightened spiritual states before going out into the streets to the Temple).

Today, Shavuot is also celebrated by eating dairy foods, filling the house with greenery and flowers, especially roses, as the oral traditions report that Mt. Sinai bloomed with roses as the Voice spoke. Dairy is eaten because it is a “nurturing food” as the “Torah (literally the ‘Lighter bearer’) is like Mother’s milk, nurturing us and enabling us to grow”. It is a wonderful day of cheese blintzes, dairy kugel (noodle pudding), sweet cakes, and in modern congregations, macaroni and cheese, ice cream, cheese cake, and every imaginable dairy item.

I hope this gives you something to talk about with your patients and their families. Maybe you can invite them to take quiet time to allow their heart to hear Divine words that nurture them, or share an inspiring poem or say a blessing to one another from the heart. Encourage them to eat a yummy dairy treat (even if it is only a milkshake – real or Boost) to celebrate.

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