

## Shavuot Customs in Words and Pictures

### Framing this unit

Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah, and many customs are associated with this festival, such as learning the Torah all night (*Tikkun Leil Shavuot*) eating dairy foods, decorating the synagogue with greenery, and reading the Book of Ruth.

In this unit, we will learn about these customs by studying traditional texts, analyzing primary sources from the National Library of Israel, and reading first-person accounts of [Shavuot celebrations in Europe that were recorded by Centropa](#).

### What do you Know About Shavuot?

The educator introduces the unit with a group discussion about the holiday of Shavuot.

- What does Shavuot celebrate?
- When is Shavuot this year?
- How does your family celebrate Shavuot?
- What Shavuot customs are you aware of?

### Group Activity

#### Analyzing Primary Sources

In pairs or small groups, the students do two activities:

#### 1. Analyzing Shavuot Resources

Students analyze [resources depicting Shavuot customs](#), using the online [source sheet](#) and answer the questions in their notebooks.

#### 2. Reading Memories of Shavuot Customs

Students read oral histories of Jews who lived in Europe in the twentieth century and recalled their family celebrations of Shavuot, using the online [source sheet](#) or the [printed version](#). For each interview, students highlight the relevant texts using the colors designating each different custom.

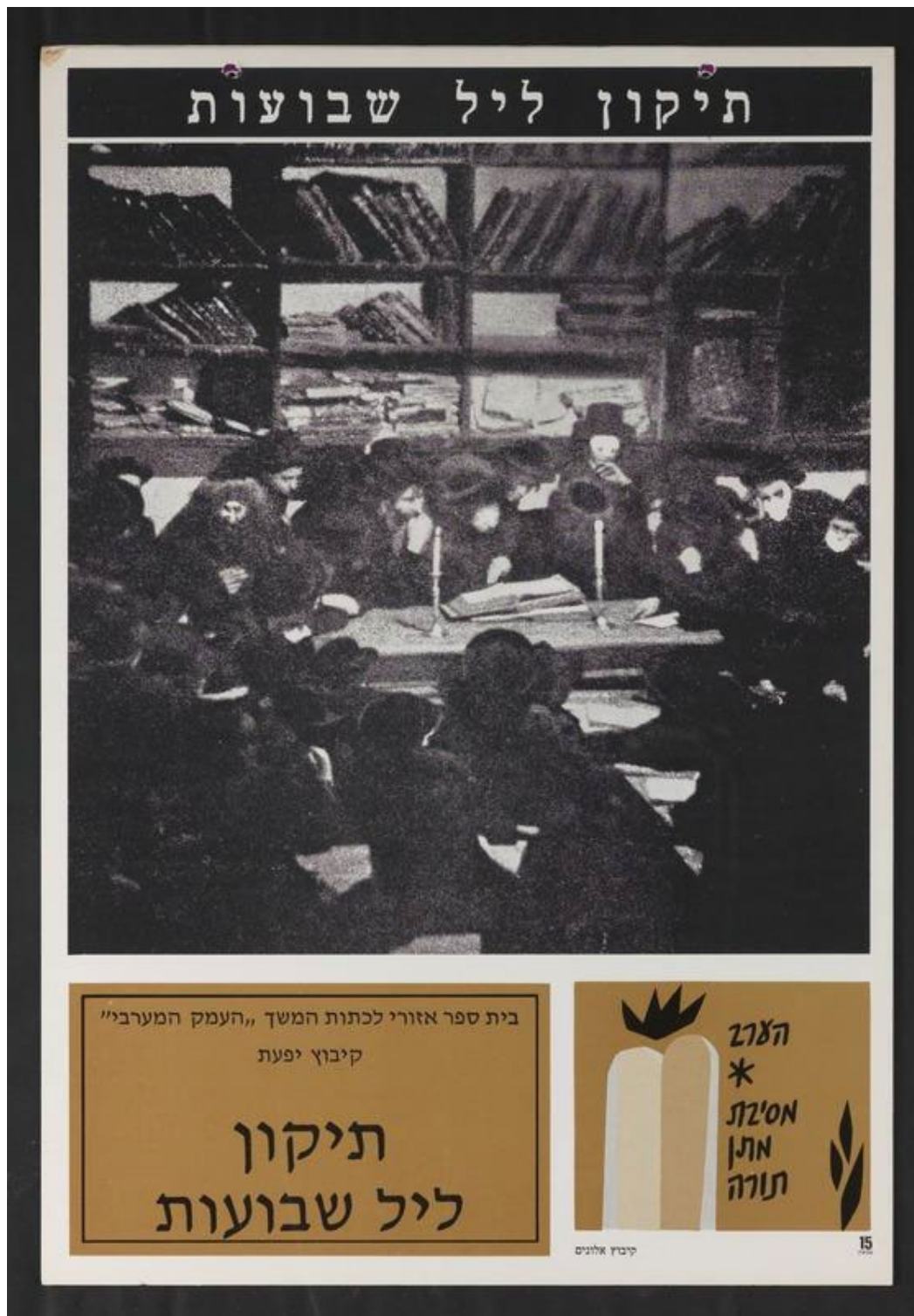
### Discussion

- What new customs did you learn about?
- Did you learn any new explanations for a custom?
- Many types of dairy foods were mentioned in the oral histories. Do you eat any of these foods on Shavuot? What does your family traditionally eat on Shavuot?

### Creative Activity

- Interview an older relative or friend to learn how Shavuot was celebrated when they were young. How is Shavuot celebrated in your community?
- Create an infographic or a poster explaining the customs.
- Write a journal entry about celebrating Shavuot. The entry can describe real or imagined Shavuot celebrations.

Primary sources in this lesson



Tikkun Leil Shavuot



Tnuva Cheeses





Shavuot, painting by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim



Naomi and Ruth Postcard, 1870