

It's a new Hebrew month!

סִיּוֹן
Sivan ★

A month of
revelation and
covenant

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About Sívan

Sívan is the third month from Nísan, the ninth from Tíshreí. The Omer ends here, with Shavuot. The 49 days of counting that began during Pesach land on the sixth of Sívan, at the foot of Har Sínaí (Mt. Sínaí).

The month opens with arrival. On 1 Sívan the Israelites reach the wilderness of Sínaí (Ex. 19:1). They've been walking for weeks. They make camp, and they wait.

Shavuot is the only major biblical holiday with no fixed narrative attached to it in the Torah.

The Sínaí revelation is in Exodus – but the Torah never says Shavuot commemorates it. That connection is rabbinic, worked out by counting backward from Pesach.

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Sivan Holidays: Counting the Omer

The commandment is in Leviticus: count 49 days from the day after Pesach, then bring the first wheat of the season on the fiftieth day – Shavuot (Lev. 23:15-16). It's an agricultural calendar. Pesach falls at the barley harvest; by Shavuot, the wheat is ready. The counting moves with the crops.

The rabbis layered something else onto it. A plague, they said, killed 24,000 of Rabbi Akiva's students during these weeks – because they didn't treat each other with respect. The mourning practices that developed around this: no haircuts, no weddings, no live music. The period ends at Lag BaOmer, the 33rd day, when the plague stopped.

The kabbalists reinvented it again. Rabbi Isaac Luria – the Arizal, 16th century Safed – mapped the 49 days onto the seven lower sefirot: Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malkhut. Each week governed by one, each day within the week combining two. Day one is Chesed of Chesed. Day two is Gevurah of Chesed. By the end you've moved through every combination. The counting becomes a curriculum – 49 days from liberation to Sinai.

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Sivan Holidays: Shavuot

Shavuot begins on 6 Sivan, and is celebrated for one day in Israel and two in the diaspora. In the Torah, it's Chag HaBikkurim, the Festival of First Fruits: the wheat harvest is in, and you bring the first of it to the Temple, closing the agricultural arc that Pesach opened.

The rabbis attached Sinai to it. The tradition of tikkun leil Shavuot — staying up all night to learn — developed in the 16th century among the kabbalists of Safed/Tz'vat, the same circle as Rabbi Isaac Luria. There is also a tradition of eating dairy on Shavuot, although there isn't full agreement on why.

We read the book of Ruth on Shavuot. Ruth was a Moabite woman, sometimes considered the first Jewish convert, who chose to join the Jewish people after her husband died — “your people shall be my people, your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). The tradition also holds that King David was born and died on Shavuot. Ruth is his great-grandmother.

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Torah portions that typically fall in Sivan

The readings of Sivan move out of Leviticus and into Numbers – the newly organized community, counted and arranged, preparing to move.

Bamidbar (Num. 1:1–4:20) – The census. Every tribe counted, every family named. A people taking stock of itself before leaving Sinai.

Naso (Num. 4:21–7:89) – The longest single parsha in the Torah. Levite assignments, the priestly blessing, twelve tribal leaders bringing identical offerings on twelve consecutive days, each recorded as if it were the first.

Beha'alotcha (Num. 8:1–12:16) – The cloud and fire leading the camp. The Israelites demand meat. Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses.

Shelach (Num. 13:1–15:41) – Twelve spies into Canaan. Ten come back with a discouraging report. Forty years in the wilderness follows.

Note: Which parshiyot land in Sivan varies by year.

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Sívan History

Jewish history in Sívan includes:

- c. 1456 BCE – 1 Sívan: The Israelites arrive at the wilderness of Sinai (Ex. 19:1).
- c. 1456 BCE – 6 Sívan: The revelation at Sinai. The Ten Commandments. The whole people at the foot of the mountain.
- c. 1040 BCE – 4 Sívan: Birth of King David.
- c. 940 BCE – 6 Sívan: Death of King David. The same date as the revelation.
- 474 BCE – 23 Sívan: Mordecai and Esther send letters throughout the empire allowing the Jews to defend themselves.
- 1096 – 1 Sívan: Jews in Worms massacred during morning prayers after taking refuge in a castle. Part of the Rhineland massacres of the First Crusade.
- 1171 – 20 Sívan: Jews of Blois, France burned alive on a blood libel accusation. Rabbenu Tam declares the day a fast. It remains a fast day in some communities.
- 1648 – 13 Sívan: The Khmelnytsky massacres begin devastating Ukrainian and Polish Jewish communities. Among the deadliest events in Jewish history before the twentieth century.
- 1760 – 6 Sívan: Death of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism. He died on Shavuot.
- 1967 – The Six-Day War ends on 10 June / 2 Sívan. Israel holds the Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan.

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Sivan Zodiac



The sign for Sivan is Gemini – תאומים (Te'omim), the twins.

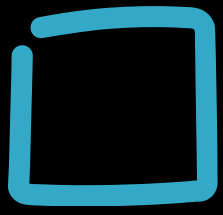
The obvious reading: Torah was given in two forms. Written and oral – the text and the interpretation that travels alongside it, inseparable. You can't have one without the other. Gemini is the month the split happened, if you want to call it a split.

But the twins in Jewish tradition carry something harder. Jacob and Esau are twins. So are Peretz and Zerach, the sons of Tamar – one thrusts out a hand, a thread is tied around it, then he withdraws and his brother is born first. The thread stays on the wrong wrist. Twins in the Torah are almost never simple. There's always a struggle over which one is really which.

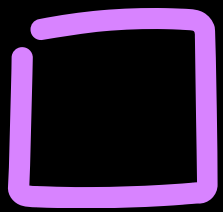
The covenant at Sinai is bilateral – God and Israel, each bound to the other. Two parties, one agreement, the whole relationship depending on both holding it. Te'omim.

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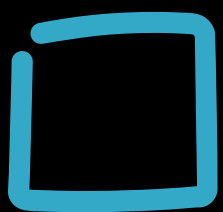
To Do in Sivan:



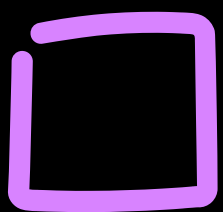
Stay up and learn something. Doesn't have to be all night.



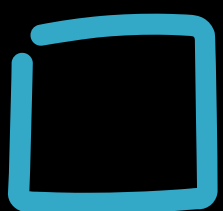
Read Ruth, or at least the first chapter.



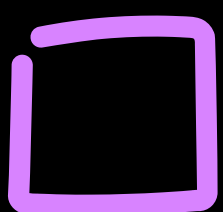
Eat something dairy and don't worry too much about why.



Ask what it would mean to choose this — not inherit it, choose it.

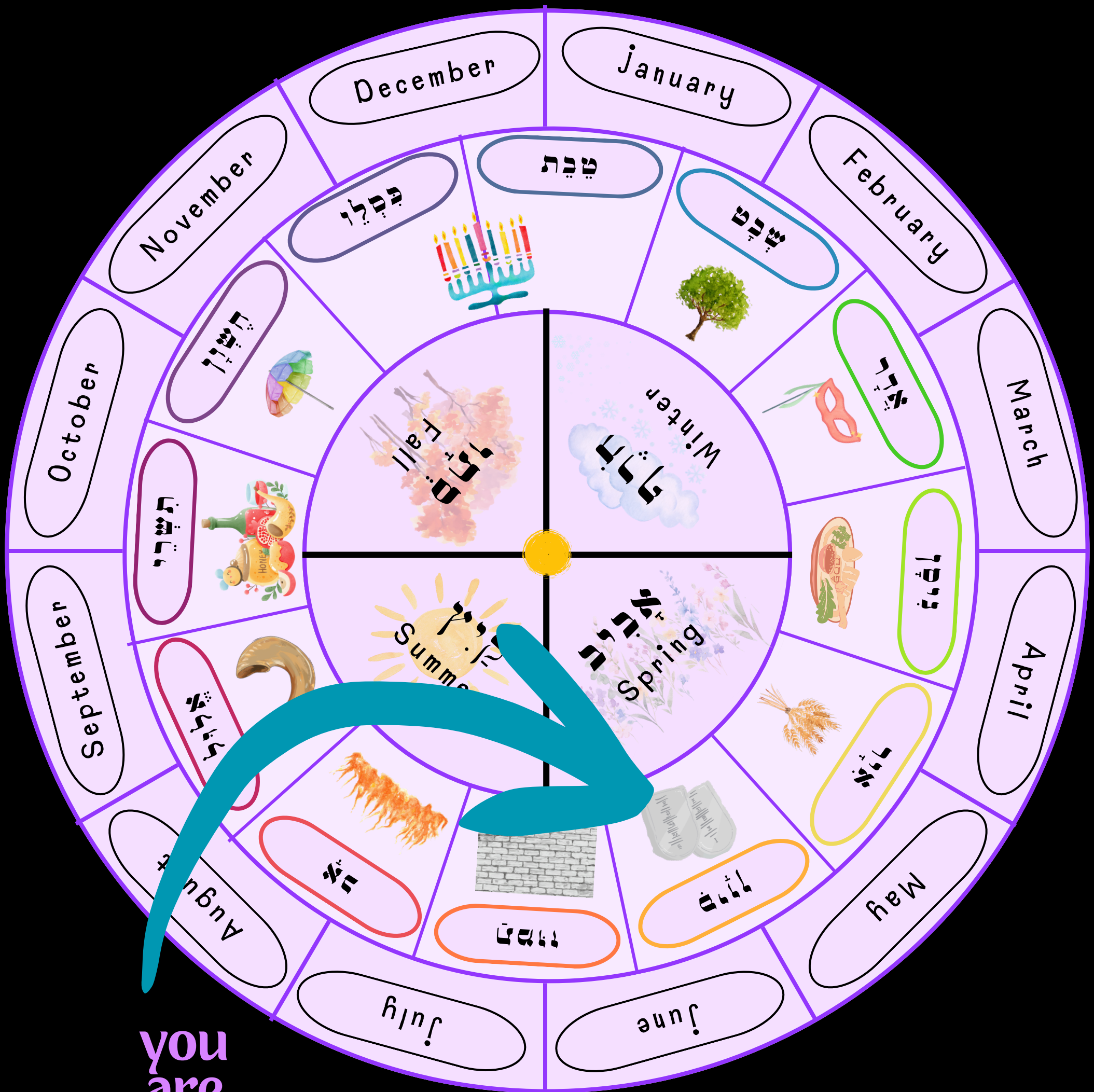


Bring the first fruits of whatever you've been growing since Pesach.



Stand at the foot of the mountain. Notice what you're carrying up with you. Take one step. Then another.

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you
are
here

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The Hebrew month of Iyar began this past Shabbat 🌱🐂

Iyar is the month you've never heard a sermon about. No dramatic crossing, no revelation, no single moment the whole story turns on. Just counting. Forty-nine days between liberation and Sinai, one day at a time.

The name is traditionally read as an acronym: Ani HaShem Rof'echa — I am your healer. That verse is spoken just after the sea closes, when the people are exhausted and newly free and have no idea what comes next. Healing starts there, not somewhere more convenient.

Iyar asks something quieter than Nisan: keep going. Count the day. Tend to what got damaged in the Narrow Place. Make room for a second chance — Pesach Sheni, the only holiday in the Torah that exists because people complained they'd missed out, is this month. You get another opportunity.

Some things to sit with this month:

🌱 What are you still carrying from Mitzrayim?

🐂 What would it mean to let the counting actually count for something?

🕯️ What needs tending — in your body, your relationships, your community — that you've been putting off since the crossing?