**May**

**The spirit that inspires:**

***Shavuot & Pentecost***

Shavuot celebrates the empowering spirit of Divine Revelation. Pentecost celebrates the spirit of God that inspires the weak and the meek. Orientation and inspiration: standing on a stable foundation. Forming and shaping, moving forward with courage!

**A Jewish voice**

**short version:**

Shavuot is observed exactly fifty days or seven weeks *(“shavuot”)* after Pesach and celebrates the revelation of the Torah at Sinai. Actually, every Torah reading is a reenactment of this event, but at the "Feast of the Gift of the Torah" it is even more special, because the Ten Commandments are recited. The Sinai moment is understood as a kind of marriage between God and Israel, and the Torah is the marriage contract that sets forth the mutual devotion and commitment of both lovers. An emblem of this fidelity is the biblical book of Ruth, which in many communities is assigned as a special reading for the Feast of Weeks.

Shavuot was one of the three pilgrimage festivals and, like the others, also has an agricultural dimension. It is sometimes called the "Feast of Firstfruits" because it marks the beginning of the wheat harvest and the ripening of summer crops in the field and garden. The special festival offering in Temple times included the offering of wheat loaves. Today, the festival is popular primarily because of the *Tikkun*, a night of study, during which people devote themselves to Torah study together until the wee hours of the morning. The people are kept awake by a variety of sweet and savory dishes made from milk and cheese, which give the festival its special flavor.