

CANDLE LIGHTING 8:25 PM Thursday • Erev Shavuos	CANDLE LIGHTING 8:26 PM Friday • from a pre-existing flame	YOM TOV ENDS 9:37 PM Motzaei Shabbos • Sat night	PIRKEI AVOS Ch. 1 The Chain of Tradition
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SHAVUOS • THE GIVING OF THE TORAH

Sacred Geometry.

This spring, the Ten Commandments went up on classroom walls across Texas. A state law, upheld by a federal appeals court in April,¹ now requires a framed copy in every public school classroom, at least sixteen inches by twenty. Louisiana and Alabama have versions of their own. Whatever one makes of the law, the posters now exist by the hundreds of thousands, and nearly all of them show the same picture: two tablets, side by side, rounded at the top like a pair of windows.

That rounded shape is one of the most recognizable images in the world. It is also, the Talmud tells us, wrong.

The Written Torah speaks at length about the Luchos: that they were stone, that there were two, that they were inscribed by the finger of God on both their sides. What it does not give is their measure. The dimensions of the tablets come to us from the Oral Torah. Bava Basra² teaches that each one measured six tefachim long, six wide, and three thick, a rectangular block, square at top and bottom, with no curve anywhere on it.

The Talmud adds that the two tablets together filled the length of the Aron exactly: twelve tefachim of stone in twelve tefachim of space, with nothing left over. A rounded top would have left a gap, a crescent of empty air above each tablet, unused and unaccounted for. The Aron existed for one purpose, to hold the Luchos, and nothing in it was wasted. The stone reached every corner — as the Rebbe taught that the Torah itself must reach every *pina nidachas*, every distant corner.

A rounded tablet is not a Jewish image. It is a borrowed one, and Sinai is the place we stop borrowing.

So where does the curve come from? The Lubavitcher Rebbe traced it plainly.³ For centuries the printers who produced Jewish books were not Jewish, and every book passed through a non-Jewish censor. They decorated the title pages with the tablets as they pictured them: rounded, the way the surrounding culture drew them.

Jews opened the books and let the picture stand. Habit hardened into custom. Generations later the borrowed shape had become the assumed one: printed on Chumashim, stitched onto the curtain of the Aron, chosen as the logo of Jewish schools. A non-Jewish drawing, mistaken for a Jewish fact and artifact.

A Torah received at Sinai has exact dimensions. It is not a mood, not a general uplift, not a shape we adjust to match the world around us. It is six by six by three: specific, measured, defined, and entirely itself. And the dimensions are not arbitrary. The Chassidic masters note that six is the gematria of the letter vav, and vav, in Hebrew, is the connective letter, the small word that joins one thing to the next. Each tablet is built on the letter of connection itself. Two tablets together span twelve: the twelve tribes, all present in one Aron with nothing left over, as the tribes declared at Yaakov's bedside: *there is only One in our hearts*.⁴ The picture matters because the picture is a claim: *this is what the Luchos looked like*. When we draw it the way the world draws it, we have quietly let the world tell us what our own inheritance looks like.

On Shavuos we stand at the mountain again and receive the tablets anew. Not the inaccurate, familiar, rounded version the centuries handed us. The real ones, with their corners intact.

¹ Texas SB 10; U.S. Court of Appeals, 5th Cir., April 21, 2026. ² Bava Basra 14a; cf. Yerushalmi, Shekalim 6:1. ³ *Sichos in English*, vol. 11; cf. *Sha'arei Halachah U'Minhag*, Orach Chaim vol. 1. ⁴ *Likutei Moharan* 1:5; *Likutei Halachot*, Choshen Mishpat, Metzranut 3:14; cf. *Pesachim* 56a.

PIRKEI AVOS • CHAPTER ONE

These Too Were Said at Sinai.

"Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and handed it on to Yehoshua." — Avos 1:1

With the festival, the summer cycle of Pirkei Avos begins again at Chapter One, and its opening words could not be better timed. The sages of the nations also wrote books of ethics, drawn from their own reasoning. Avos opens with *Moshe received the Torah from Sinai* to tell us that the refinements taught in this tractate, a tractate of pure ethics, no laws, only character and conduct, were not composed by the Sages from their own minds. *Af eilu ne'emru miSinai*: these too were said at Sinai. Even the parts of Torah that read like human wisdom were given at the mountain.

Avos 1:1 • Bartenura, *ad loc.* • Maharal, *Derech Chaim*, *ad loc.*

HALACHIC TIMES • VAUGHAN

Zmanim.

	THU • 5	FRI • 6	SHAB • 7
Sunrise	5:46 AM	5:46 AM	5:45 AM
Latest Shema	9:28 AM	9:27 AM	9:27 AM
Chatzos	1:14 PM	1:14 PM	1:15 PM
Candle Lighting	8:25 PM	8:26 PM ♦	—
Sunset	8:43 PM	8:44 PM	8:45 PM
Nightfall	9:18 PM	9:19 PM	—
Yom Tov Ends	—	—	9:37 PM

♦ Friday: light from a pre-existing flame **before** sunset. A 48-hour candle lit on Thursday ensures a flame is available.

FOR THE FESTIVAL

Two Days of Yom Tov.

- ♦ **Thursday night** — Tikkun Leil Shavuos: many remain awake the whole night in learning.
- ♦ **Thursday candles** — light at the regular time; say *Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov* and *Shehechyanu*.
- ♦ **The first day** — the Aseres HaDibros are read; the congregation stands. The custom of a dairy meal before the Yom Tov seudah. One waits an hour after dairy before eating meat (Zohar; Y.D. 89). Best to use soft cheeses; after hard, aged cheese the full six-hour wait applies (Rama).

The Maharal adds a second note. Moshe *received*, but he *handed on* — two different verbs. What is received, the Maharal explains, is taken in by each generation only as far as its capacity allows; the receiving is measured by the vessel. Yet what is handed on is the whole of it, undiminished: an unbroken transmission, *ish mipi ish*, person from person, every link reaching back to the mountain.

That is the chain Shavuos sits at the top of. We are not spectators at Sinai. We are the next link, holding what was handed to us and asked to hand it on.

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THE CYCLE OF CHAPTERS

FRI • 6 SIVAN

THREE CHAPTERS

Hilchos Nedarim, ch. 1–3

ONE CHAPTER

Hilchos Shabbos, ch. 1

SHABBOS • 7 SIVAN

THREE CHAPTERS

Hilchos Nedarim, ch. 4–6

ONE CHAPTER

Hilchos Shabbos, ch. 2

SEFER HAMITZVOS • BOTH DAYS

Positive Commandment 94

The command to fulfill whatever a person places upon himself by speech — a vow, oath, or pledge: "*What leaves your lips, you shall keep and do.*" A fitting study for the festival of the spoken word: the Torah given at Sinai has its measure, and so does a Jew's own speech.

- ♦ **Friday candles** — light **before sunset** from a pre-existing flame. Say *Lehadlik Ner Shel Shabbos V'Shel Yom Tov* and *Shehechyanu*.
- ♦ **By day** — some have the custom to study the Book of Rus, which tells of a righteous convert who took the Torah upon herself and merited that King David descend from her.
- ♦ **Shabbos, second day** — Yizkor is recited.
- ♦ **Sun, May 24** — Isru Chag. **Shabbos, May 30** — Parshas Nasso resumes.

FOR THE FESTIVAL Eruv Tavshilin.

Hold a matzah and a cooked food in hand. Nusach: Siddur Tehillat HaShem.

1. THE BRACHA

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the mitzvah of Eruv.

2. THE DECLARATION

With this Eruv, it shall be permitted for us to bake, to cook, to insulate food, to kindle a flame, and to prepare all we need, from the festival day for the Shabbos.

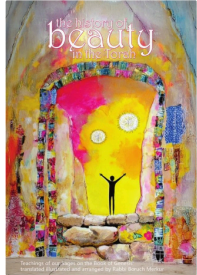
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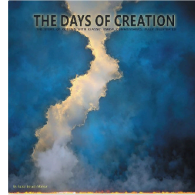
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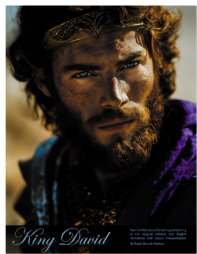


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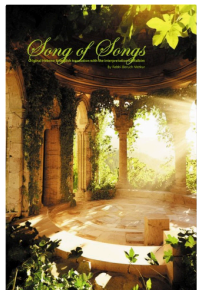


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