

Top Ten Shavuot Programs

- OU Department of Synagogue Services

1. **Torah Marathon for Youth** (Boca Raton Synagogue - Boca Raton, FL)

Are you looking for a program that will bring both parent and children together for inspirational learning? Look no further. The Torah Marathon is your solution.

How does the program work?

Every child will have the opportunity to shine by giving a dvar Torah to their community. They give the dvar Torah in front of a panel of their rabbis and teachers, and then they choose a prize and receive a certificate. This is a wonderful program because the kids want to participate because all of their friends are and because of the prizes and certificates, and the parents come to hear their children. Additionally, this brings together the entire community because kids from other shuls will want to participate.

Room set-up

Use a room with sufficient place to fit all the children and their parents from your community. Place candy and snacks on the tables, and decorate the room. Set-up a table at the front of the room for the panel of rabbis/teachers who will listen to all of the divrei Torah. Have another table out with an assortment of prizes for each of the children. The first year that Boca Raton Synagogue ran this program, there was a young public school girl in 2nd grade who gave a beautiful dvar Torah. The principal of the day school was there. He was so moved that he spoke to her parents about enrolling her in a Jewish school, and she started attending the day school the following fall.

[Torah Marathon Flyer](#)

[Torah Marathon Certificate](#)

2. **Theme Your Shavuot** (The Jewish Center - New York, NY)

Every year, your shul has a Tikkun Leil Shavuot filled with non-stop shiurim. Adding a theme to your evening can take your Shavuot from good to great.

There are several benefits to using a theme:

Spread buzz: If you choose a creative theme, people will talk. For example, last year the Jewish Center's theme was The Jewish Center Goes Green. People were impressed by how many different topics all fell under this category. (Click here to view this year's theme.)

It's more memorable: People will remember creative themes that engage them on Shavuot night, and the next year they will look forward to your shul's Tikkun Leil Shavuot.

3. **Enhance a Traditional Siyum**

What better way to celebrate Matan Torah than a siyum? This shows your community that you are dedicated to learning all year round.

How can you ensure this succeeds in inspiring your congregation?

Identify a realistic goal based on the needs and size of your community: Examples include, Tanach, Nach, Mishnayot, etc. Alternatively, you can encourage all members of the congregation to learn the same sefer (such as Megillat Ruth or Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson a Day), ending on or before Shavuot.

Include all demographics: Include all the segments of your congregation in this initiative - from the kids to the seniors.

End the program with a bang: Make the siyum something people look forward to. Ideas include have it at a shul meal or bringing in an expert on the topics to speak (ie. If you make a siyum Tanach, bring in someone who is known to be an expert on a specific sefer of Tanach).

4. A Siyum with a Twist - All in a Day's Work

Do you like the idea of a siyum on Shavuot but don't think you can pull it off on short notice? Think again.

Here's how you pull off a siyum on a day's notice:

Choose something small and manageable. For example, since we read Megillat Ruth on Shavuot you can expand this to all of the megillot by having a different person from your shul learn each Perek. You can have all the learning take place on Shavuot night or over the course of the chag. Then, make a siyum at a shul meal or afternoon oneg.

5. Teach All of Torah at Once Sitting (Beth Jacob Congregation - Oakland, CA)

Imagine learning all of the parshiyot of the Torah at once.

Can this really be done?

Of course it can. Assign each parshat hashavua to a different person. Then, have each of them give a five minute dvar Torah on their parsha. This can be adapted in many ways. Other examples include giving each person a chapter in a sefer of the Tanach or each person a mishnah from Pirkei Avot.

Benefits:

You empower each person who gives a dvar Torah.

The people giving divrei Torah will need to learn the parsha/perek well enough to speak about it, which means that you are facilitating high-level learning.

People will stay engaged because they are interested in hearing their friends.

When there is only one speaker, there will inevitably be people whose learning styles differ from the way they are teaching, but with many teachers, everyone will find educators they can relate to.

6. Power Perek and Youth Bracha Bee (Riverdale Jewish Center - Bronx, NY)

Power Perek: Teens (but this can be done for adults as well) are invited to learn an entire perek of Talmud in one night with Rabbi Jonathan Rosenblatt.

Youth Bracha Bee: Host a bracha bee for your youth. Be sure to include lots of tasty snacks.

7. Teachers Bring Students (Young Israel Lawrence-Cedarhurst - Cedarhurst, NY)

Identify the top teachers from your day schools, and arrange for them to have learning for their classes at your shul.

Benefits:

Provides you with top quality teachers.

You know your youth will benefit because they know they enjoy learning with these teachers.

If you are in a community with multiple shuls, youth from other shuls will come to your shul because you have made your shul "the place to be."

8. Meat and Scholars (Beth Jacob Congregation - Beverly Hills, CA)

Meat: Have an all you can eat meat buffet for breakfast after the vatikin minyan. If this isn't incentive to stay up all night learning, what is?

Scholars: Bring in a dynamic duo - a couple where both the husband and wife can serve as Shavuot scholars-in-residence. Financially, this is less expensive than bringing in two couples where only one person from each couple gives shiurim, and the wife can give special shiurim to the women.

9. More Meat and Scholars (West Side Institutional Synagogue - New York, NY)

Meat: Midnight BBQ. (You can do this at 12:00am or in the middle of your night of learning to give people an energy boost. There's nothing quite like a 2:00am BBQ).

Scholars: Invite a Rosh Yeshiva or teacher to come with his shiur/class. This livens the learning, gives you people who can learn b'chavruta with your members and ensures the shul has a larger crowd for the vatikin minyan. (You can put cots in the shul all the students have a place to sleep without you having to find housing for tens of people.)

10. Snacks, Snacks and More Snacks

Let's face it; we know that the best way to keep people awake all night is with snacks and caffeine. Have a new snack each hour, and publicize this in advance. If your snacks are good enough, can help people stay up knowing their favorite snack is coming up.

Example:

11:30-12:00: assorted snacks to be out all night

12:00-1:00: hot chocolate

1:00-2:00: cheesecake

2:00-3:00: s'mores (graham crackers, marshmallows and chocolate)

3:00-4:00: watermelon

4:00 - davening: cereal and milk