

Shavuot Prayers, 1450

Framing This Unit

This unit introduces a historical resource which suggests how Shavuot was celebrated in the oldest Jewish community known in Europe: the Roman Jewish community in the fifteenth century. We will step back in time to the distant past and consider the effect that illustrations can have on the prayer experience. At the end of the unit, we will use art to express our thoughts about a classical Jewish text that resonates with us.

Group Activity

Work in pairs to analyze the historical resource from the medieval Roman mahzor using [the worksheet](#).

Discussion

- Do you think every person in the community had an illustrated mahzor like this one?
- What can be learned about the Jewish community of Rome from this historical source?
- Imagine how Jews in the Roman community felt when they prayed using this mahzor. How do you think the illustrations affected their feelings about the prayers?

Creative Activity

- If you were illustrating a mahzor for Shavuot, what aspects of the festival would you choose to illustrate?
- Choose a text read on Shavuot or a text that describes an aspect or custom related to this festival. Consider its message and the feelings that you would like the person reading it to experience. Draw an illustration to accompany the text.

Primary Sources in This Lesson



Shavuot Prayers, Rome Machzor, 1450