

Shavuot (Pentecost) Part I

Written by Victoria Radin

"Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the L-rd. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves....of fine flour....baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the L-rd. And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you...It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations." (Leviticus 23:16, 17, 21)

Shavuot is called Hag Matan Torah, Festival of Giving the Torah. It is taught that on this day, G-d met with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai and gave them His Law, the Torah. G-d commanded the Israelites to celebrate this festival forever because it foreshadowed the day that G-d wrote His Law on their *hearts* when He baptized them with the Holy Spirit and fire (Acts 1:5 compare Matt. 3:11) in Jerusalem in the upper room.

Spiritually, Shavuot points to a future time when G-d will pour out His Spirit on all flesh as prophesied by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28). It is then that the *One New Man* (Ephesians 2:14-22) will be fully realized—when both believing Jew and Gentile will be in one accord. They will be greatly empowered to bring in the final harvest of souls before the L-rd's return. The number three is significant in the traditions of this Festival: triangular pancakes stuffed with cheese are eaten because the Tanakh (Bible) has three parts: the Pentateuch (Torah), the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (writings). The Torah was given to a three-part people: priests, Levites, and Israelites in the third month (Sivan) through Moses who was the third child of Jochabed who hid him for three months.

Dairy foods are eaten because the Torah is likened to milk (Songs 4:11). Milk, being a complete food, is the only thing a baby needs to grow up healthy. They were also about to enter the Promised Land "flowing with milk and honey" (Psalm 119:103)

. Shavuot is often called the Festival of Roses. The home and synagogue are decorated with greenery, flowers (especially roses), spices, and myrtle to simulate the greenery of Mt. Sinai. Incense is also burned to create a beautiful fragrance. The aromatic flowers and the burning of incense are a reminder that the Torah creates a beautiful fragrance in one's life. Each commandment from G-d filled the world with a pleasant aroma.

All of the commands and traditions of Shavuot point to the many biblical prophecies of the L-rd's first appearance *and* His return. The following traditions are significant:

Shavuot (Pentecost) Part I

Written by Victoria Radin

1. It Is The Early Harvest Festival
2. It Is The Day Of Giving The Torah
3. The Israelites Experienced The Manifestation Of G-d In Visible Form
4. The Trumpet Call Of G-d Was Heard
5. Tikkun Leil Shavuot Is Observed
6. It Is the Wedding of G-d to Israel.
7. It Is The Day Of The Judgment Of The Fruit Trees

This article will deal only with Shavuot's significance as the early harvest festival. Shavuot Part II, Part III, and Part IV show more significant features of the Festival.

Central to the theme of Shavuot, the Book of Ruth is read in the synagogue. The story takes place at the beginning of harvest-time. Jews see Ruth, a Gentile, as having embraced the heart of Judaism, which is hesed (loving-kindness).

Hesed is the core of Biblical faith. Ruth was brought from famine (a Gentile without the Torah) to feast (Boaz-a type of G-d Himself) by her mother-in-law Naomi (a type of the nation of Israel). Ruth is known as a woman of valor for her voluntary acceptance of Judaism. All three major characters of the book are distinguished by their acts of loving-kindness.

Shavuot (Pentecost) Part I

Written by Victoria Radin

Once Ruth decided to convert to Judaism, the Scriptures ranked her equally with Naomi. Boaz, in recognizing his responsibility as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, not only helped Ruth, but Naomi as well (i.e. both Jew and Gentile). Just as the Israelites at Mt. Sinai said, "Whatever G-d speaks, we will do", Ruth told Boaz, "All that you say to me I will do." She left everything to G-d's beneficence. The story of Ruth can be seen as an allegory, Ruth being the Church and Naomi being Israel. Ruth represents the Gentiles who will identify closely with the Jewish people.

Symbolically, the first Shavuot celebrated the *first* harvest of souls that were reconciled to G-d [i.e. the Israelites]—reconciled through the Old Covenant Law [laws written on tablets of stone]. It pointed to a greater harvest [Acts 1:1-4 and 41-43] of souls that were reconciled to G-d through the New Covenant of the Holy Spirit, [the 'law' written on the hearts of men—2 Cor. 3:3]. Moreover, Shavuot points to a future time when G-d will pour out His Spirit on all flesh for the greatest harvest that mankind has ever experienced just before the return of the L-rd:

"O children of Zion, be glad, rejoice in the L-rd your G-d. For He has given you the early rain in kindness [righteousness], now He makes the rain fall as formerly—the early rain and the late. And threshing floors shall be piled with grain, and vats shall overflow with new wine and oil" (Joel 2:23, 24 - the Tanakh)

Barukh HaShem (Blessed is the Name of the L-rd)