

In traditional Judaism, today is the second day of Shavuot (Pentecost). In the Bible, this second of the three pilgrimage festivals, occurs only on the 6th of the month of Sivan. However, I want to use today's service to talk about the significance of Shavuot, not only as a pilgrimage festival where the people brought in their second harvest tithes, but also the time when both the Ten Commandments were given and also when the Spirit first fell on the early disciples. There are five issues I want to deal with you on this morning.

On Shavuot, it is traditional to read the Book of Ruth, because she and her mother-in-law came back to Bethlehem during the wheat harvest, which was also a second Barley harvest. The Book of Judges is not strictly chronological and the last two stories in the book and the events of the Book of Ruth happened with events that are recorded at the beginning of the Book of Judges, shortly after the House of Israel entered the Promised Land.

The Book of Ruth mentions Ruth's conversion to Judaism, though she is still called the Moabite woman. Her declaration that she will dwell wherever her mother-in-law goes to live and that her mother-in-law's G-d shall be her G-d, is often recited out of context at weddings. She and her mother-in-law came back very poor and Ruth was sent to glean behind the harvesters, so that she and her mother-in-law would have enough food to eat until the next harvest.

This was a provision in Israel to prevent poor people and strangers from starving and Ruth ended up in the fields of one of her husband's kinsmen, Boaz. He has heard how well Ruth has been caring for her mother-in-law and invites her to remain with his harvesters and even sit and eat with them. When she returns home, her mother-in-law realizes that there might be a way for them to escape out of poverty by a special privilege called a levirate marriage.

Ruth is instructed to mark where Boaz is going to lie down and sleep in order to protect the harvested grain which has not yet been placed in protected granaries inside the walls of Bethlehem. The Bible uses a euphemism which can be easily misunderstood. She was told to uncover his feet and lie down. This is not a reference to any other part of his body and is certainly not some kind of sexual reference. The action would be understood by Boaz as a request for him to activate the levirate marriage option, which he proceeds to do.

In a levirate marriage, a close relative would marry the childless widow of a deceased relative, in order to provide an heir, who would inherit all the rights and privileged of the deceased person. This was also so that the deceased person's name would not disappear in Israel. Boaz makes sure that a closer relative is not interested in activating a levirate marriage with Ruth and then he marries her.

The levirate marriage would only last until an heir was produced and even though the new husband would continue to provide for the mother and her new baby, they would not continue to engage in further sexual relations. Ruth's problems were solved and the child she bore was an ancestor of both David and of our Messiah.

The second issue relates to the giving of the Ten Commandments, which were given twice, once at the mountain and again on the plains of Moab. They are the same commandments in both cases, given once to the children of the Exodus and again to the children of the wilderness. The only difference in the wording concerns the reason for observing the Sabbath. The children of the Exodus are to remember the Sabbath because of creation, while the children of the

wilderness are to remember the Sabbath because of their liberation from Egypt. It is understood that the giving of the ten commandments to the children of the Exodus occurred on the Feast of Shavuot, not long after our people set up camp around the Holy Mountain.

All subsequent commandments and statutes are based on these primary commandments which are also called the Ten Holy words. They are the rock bottom basic principles by which believers are to live and it is traditional to recite them at Shavuot. Here we go:

1. You shall have no other gods before (or after) YHVH. Our faith in YHVH is exclusive and not a buffet because He alone is worthy of our entire, exclusive religious devotion.
2. You shall not make graven images to worship. The cherubim on the ark were not graven images because they were not worshiped. You are never to worship the works of your hands.
3. You shall not swear falsely by YHVH's name. G-d is not a weapon you can point at your enemies and oaths were only to be made to Him and not as a means to strengthen any promises you might wish to make. You cannot speak in the name of the L-rd without His prior permission and then you had better keep your word. Profanity is bad, but that is not what this commandment is speaking about.
4. The Sabbath is our temporal tithe to G-d because we were set free from slavery so we could become slaves of our Creator. It is a holy, work free day. The seven festivals of the L-rd are special annual sabbaths attached to the harvest cycle so that our lives will always revolve around the L-rd and around His provision. Are you paying your temporal tithe?
5. We have to honor our parents because they are our blood connection to Adam and Eve. They gave us physical life and we should be grateful to them for that.
6. You shall not commit murder. War is not murder. To end someone's life prematurely has to be a carefully examined community decision.
7. You shall not commit sexual immorality of any kind. Sexuality should only be practiced within the bonds of marriage.
8. You shall not steal. Possessions can be exchanged but must never be taken by force or by deceit.
9. You shall not bear false witness. Lying and gossip are strictly forbidden. We are called to be truth speakers. Character assassination is sin.
10. We shall not covet. We are not to desire to own what does not belong to us so that we become dissatisfied with what is ours. Greed is forbidden. We are not to engage in pre-theft or pre-violence behaviors.

These stipulations built a fence around the people to keep out all forms of paganism. We are to gather together unto the L-rd and let our lives revolve around His Word. What does your life and devotion revolve around? Does His Word have you completely surrounded?

Our people celebrated their first memorial Passover at the mountain and on the twentieth day of the second month (Iyar), of the second year, they moved camp for the first time. At their first camp away from the mountain, they would have celebrated their first memorial Shavuot. I need to make a small correction about what I have taught about the mixed multitude. They traveled with the tribes they joined, but at this time their status as a mixed multitude was still intact and while they did not try to take over the camp this time, they led the people in complaining about the lack of meat.

They even complained about the manna which they received every morning, but instead of asking for meat, they just complained about the lack of it and some of the people joined in with

them. Even after all that the L-rd has done for them, right at the beginning of their journey to Canaan, they start to complain. Not a good beginning.

In response to the people complaining after all they have seen, Moses is troubled. They had just completed their first journey from the mountain. Faced with this ingratitude, Moses has a bit of a melt down. He can no longer retreat up the mountain and his tent is no longer outside of the camp and he is so overwhelmed that he actually asks the L-rd to kill him to put him out of his misery. Instead, the L-rd has him assemble the 70 elders and he performs a mini Pentecost by taking the of the Spirit which was on Moses and placing on the seventy elders.

When the Spirit lands on them, they prophesy, even the ones who did not come when they were called. When Joshua objects to the late comers being empowered by the Spirit, Moses makes a prophecy by saying that he wished all of the people were composed of prophets and that he wished the L-rd put His Spirit on everybody. This all happened on or around the feast of Shavuot at their first camp away from the mountain. It was fulfilled centuries later, on the Day of Pentecost (Shavuot), in the year when our Messiah ascended into Heaven

The L-rd then deals with those who coveted meat. He causes quail to come and these birds cover the ground two meters deep, for one day's march on either side of the camp. Those who gathered the least, picked up about three cubit yards of quail or nearly 1,000 birds each. The L-rd said because their complaints rose up into the L-rd's ears, they would have a month full of meat. He also said that the people would eat meat until it came out of their nostrils.

While those who led in the complaining were stuffing their faces, they were struck with a plague and died. It would have struck down both the ring leaders from the mixed multitude and also the ring leaders among the people. Their burial place was called the grave of coveting. Those greedy people were literally drowning in meat and even though the ring leaders perished, I am not sure the people learned their lesson yet. Even in our day, some people still love to complain and do not show appropriate gratitude to the L-rd for all that He does for them.

We go now to the festival of Shavuot shortly after the ascension of our Messiah. While our Messiah walked among us, He could only be in one place at a time. He seemed to appear and disappear at will and it is likely it took Him a full 40 days to appear personally to all five hundred of His followers. A more efficient solution had to be found as more and more people came to faith. He needed to find a way to indwell all believers so He would not have to run from place to place. He also needed to be able to hear the prayers of all believers and intercede for us before the Father.

You see, in John's Gospel, Yeshua made a double promise. He said that very soon the Comforter would come and speak to them about things which are to come (John 16:13). He also said that in a little while they would see Him no more and yet in a little while they would see Him because He is going to His Father (John 16:17). This is not a contradiction, it speaks to Him ascending to the Father and then returning to indwell our hearts.

He is not talking about His Return, which is still in the future. He is talking about His return to dwell in our hearts, which can only happen when He goes to the Father.

He is going to return by the Spirit and at the same time, the Spirit is going to be poured out on the disciples. After His ascension, 120 followers gathered in the Upper Room which they had probably rented again for the festival of Shavuot. They were told to wait for the Spirit to descend

and they spent this waiting time in prayer. Waiting in prayer is the best use of our time because G-d is always faithful.

So two separate, distinct events occurred simultaneously, but they should not be considered a single happening. As the Spirit was being poured out, the Messiah hitched a ride and entered the hearts of the believers at the same time as the Spirit was being poured out onto them. It is likely that He also entered the hearts of all the other scattered believers who were not present in the Upper Room.

His mother Mary was also among the 120 and I know what He said as He entered her heart: "Hi, mom". Now there are many different opinions about the outpouring and infilling of the Holy Spirit. Among the Jesus only groups you are 1/3 saved when you accept the L-rd, 2/3's saved when you speak in tongues and 3/3's saved when you are water baptized in Jesus' name only. This can be quite confusing, so I want to spend the rest of our time sorting out this confusion. Receiving the Messiah and being filled with the Spirit are two separate functions.

Let me begin by saying that both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit are still available for all believers and just like there is no real competition between the Spirit and the Torah, there is also none between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. However, being filled with the Spirit and exercising the gifts of the Spirit is no guarantee that a believer will also grow in the fruit of the Spirit.

The Corinthian church was operating in the gifts of the Spirit, but they were also very carnal and deficient in the fruit of the Spirit. More about this later.

Let me say first that the moment you accept the L-rd into your heart, you are fully saved and entirely heaven bound. You need to grow in faith and obedience as your new man progressively takes over your whole life and fills it with all the treasures of His Word and His Spirit. Being born again is not the same as growing in the grace and knowledge of our Messiah, it is just the beginning of the process of a lifelong walk with our Saviour.

On the day of Pentecost (Shavuot) 120 disciples were filled with the Spirit as tongues of fire fell on all of them and they began to speak of the wonders of G-d in any number of contemporary languages. Before this happened, there was a mighty rushing wind which not only shook the room they were in, but likely other houses in the immediate neighborhood, so the people feared an earthquake and poured out onto the streets. Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism who had come to Jerusalem for Shavuot, heard the specialized praise in languages they could understand and wondered what it meant.

The disciples were not given the ability to speak or understand the languages which the Spirit gave them utterance to speak of the wonderful marvels of G-d. They did not know what they were saying, but the people who heard them, did when the disciples were speaking in a language they understood. As the people gathered, Peter explained that what was happening to them was a fulfillment of prophecy because the last days began when our Messiah rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. We have been living in them for over 2,000 years.

Many of those who heard Peter speak and who heard the disciples giving multilingual praises to G-d, came to faith and two things would have happened to them. The Messiah would have entered into their hearts and they would have had the Spirit poured out on them. Both promises were given to all who became believers from that time forward until the return of the Messiah.

The gifts of the Spirit did not cease at some point in the early centuries of the early church.

The passage in I Corinthians 13 which says that when that which is perfect shall come, that which is partial shall disappear, is talking about the return of the Messiah. We shall not speak in tongues in Heaven because we will all speak one new heavenly language, just like the one people spoke before the scattering at the tower of Babel. In a way, the gift of tongues is a foretaste of this heavenly reality. People from around the globe form one redeemed people of G-d and together they speak in many tongues. They are being gathered and not scattered and in fact all the nations and peoples are being called back into the new redeemed nation

At Babel one people were scattered among many languages. At Pentecost, people spoke many tongues and were united into the one new man, Jew and Gentile. Paul did a lot of teaching about the operation of the gifts of the Spirit while he was correcting some of the abuses practiced by the Corinthian congregation. Instead of taking turns and letting the messages given in tongues be interpreted, they just bellowed loudly and at great length.

Paul said that he spoke in tongues more than any of them, but in a public service, when someone stood up to give a message in tongues, they needed to be interpreted if they were going to be of any use. The people could sing songs and hymns together, both in their own language and also in tongues, but when they were addressing the people, everything had to be done decently and in order.

I have been in some churches where people screamed and yelled like they were at a pep rally and they seemed to compete with each other to see who could screech the loudest. In Ancient Greece at the oracle of Delphi, the priestesses would inhale the volcanic gases that seeped from cracks in the earth. Then they would screech and go into convulsions, then one of the priests would interpret their so called message from the gods. The Corinthians were imitating this unruly pagan behavior and thought that their great volume added to the impact of their messages. It does not.

It is fine to express great happiness loudly and I have made some very impressive noise at pep rallies, but that is not how it is supposed to be when we gather for worship. There is also no indication that the 120 who spoke in tongues were screeching or even shouting. I enjoy spontaneous worship but it doesn't have to be loud and unruly.

Well, many feel that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of being filled with the Spirit and there is considerable scriptural evidence for this, but before we go on to discuss this assertion, I want to discuss a unique passage in the Book of Romans (8:26, 27). It says that we do not always know what to pray, but the Spirit helps us to utter what is needed and the one who hears what the Spirit is uttering through us, answers these special prayers. Even liberal commentators agree that this is referring to speaking, or praying in tongues. Once we run out of steam in prayer, the Spirit steps up and helps to pray over and above our own understanding in an unknown language which He gives us to speak.

The Book of Acts is really a history of the early Messianic Movement and the experience of being filled with the Spirit is mentioned at least five times and there always was some kind of vocal manifestation. Because the first time the Spirit was poured out was accompanied by tongues, it is entirely logical and biblical to say that tongues was the manifestation whenever the Spirit was poured out.

Well, what do people have to do to be filled with the Spirit. I have heard some evangelists teach people to say hallelujah very quickly and they will be led into speaking in tongues. This is simply not the case. I have even heard people say repetitive phrases like: shundala bundela and I wonder if they are actually talking in tongues or just repeating what they have heard other people say.

When I was filled with the Spirit, I got a phrase that sounded like it was Hindi. I was afraid to say it until I knew what it meant. I asked a missionary who had ministered in India and he said that I was saying: praise to the high G-d. I was greatly comforted.

Some people are afraid of tongues, and some people do not believe that tongues is a gift for our time, but when you examine the testimony of the Scriptures you get the right picture. The gift of tongues has been abused and some charismatic services are pretty unruly and even loony, but I will always accept the testimony of the Scriptures over the opinions of men.

Shavuot celebrates both the arrival of the Ten Commandments and of the Holy Spirit being poured out on the early believers. Throughout the last 2,000 years there have been outbreaks of tongues before the modern Pentecostal movement was even born. And it may surprise you to know that many of these outbreaks accompanied intense Bible Study where people wanted to return to a more New Testament faith.

The early church was not always faithful to the Scriptures and soon became clogged with all kinds of weird and wonderful traditions and superstitions. This is not what we are called to, as Messianic Jewish and Gentile believers in the Messiah from Nazareth. We are to gather together around His Word and His Spirit so that our lives can be purged of all paganism and all and any carnal baggage our lives may become clogged with.

The people were set free from Egypt and had to be purged from any carnal Egyptian ideas and habits they may have picked up. At Pentecost (Shavuot) our people were given a new spiritual charter in the Ten Words and in the applications which were made of them as they were applied to their then current situation. In our modern world we have also received the same spiritual charter and we have to do our best to also apply it into every situation of our lives.

At Pentecost (Shavuot) our people welcomed a Moabite convert who became the ancestor of both King David and our blessed Messiah. We are seeing a great in gathering of peoples as they respond to the Gospel around the world and more and more, this is starting to happen more frequently among our Jewish people.

Our people also received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, followed by signs and wonders. May we learn to let the L-rd equip us fully and thoroughly, both with His Word and with His Spirit as we wander through our darkening world and begin to see things line up for our Messiah's return. Chag Shavuot (have a happy and fruitful Shavuot (Pentecost)).