

בשורה *Besorah!*

*Not By Might, Nor By Power...**

As we know, the Feast of Shavuot is 50 days (Gk. 'Pentecost') after Passover. Fifty, in Scripture, represents fullness and Shavuot is a harvest festival. During His last Passover supper (John 13 – 19), Jesus told His disciples that the Comforter would come after His departure (John 15:26 and 16:7). The Holy Spirit was indeed poured out 50 days later, in fulfilment of the Feast and prophecy (Acts 2:1-11, Joel 2:28).

In John 15 and 16, Jesus refers to the Comforter as 'The Spirit of **Truth**'. John also wrote, 'and it is **the Spirit that beareth witness**, because the Spirit is **truth**' (1 Jn 5:6).

Speaking again of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, 'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall **BE** witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Jesus was clearly setting forth the provision of **power needed in order to become messengers**, to the end that, starting with Jerusalem, the Gospel would go out to the whole world.

James wrote, 'of His own will begat He us with the **word of truth**, that we should **BE** a kind of **firstfruits** of his creatures' (Ja 1:18). As discussed in previous issues of BESORAH, the Hebrew word for 'firstfruits' in Lev 23:10, referring to the wave sheaf (ראשית – 'beginning' or 'chief' – i.e. Jesus) is different from the Hebrew word for 'firstfruits' referring to the Two Wave Loaves (בכורים v:17 – 'firstborn' or 'progeny' – i.e. Believers).

Perhaps the most curious and distinctive aspect of observing Shavuot is the presentation of the two

leavened Wave Loaves. This is the only Feast which actually *prescribes* leaven! What a paradox!

So, let us look more closely at the main components of this Feast: Most scholars understand the two leavened loaves to represent the Body of Messiah, made up of Jew and Gentile, and that they still sin. However, **with the bread** were offered 'seven lambs without blemish, one young bullock and two rams, for a burnt offering' and 'a kid of the goats for a sin offering' (Lev 23:18,19). In other words, the sinful condition of the loaves is **answered** by the complete provision of the finished work of Yeshua! The loaves were 'waved' (תנופה) before the Lord. This action involves shaking in all directions of the compass, such as one might do with a sieve. It symbolises complete submission to God's scrutiny and **truth**.

1 John 1:8-10, written to believers, reads, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and **the truth is not in us**. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and **his word is not in us**'.

Let's keep in mind that while the symbolism of Shavuot conveys being reconciled to God, this reconciliation is *unto* something: the spreading of the Gospel. It points to harvest! The passage in Lev. 23 which instructs the observance of Shavuot follows with: '**when ye reap the harvest...**' (v.22).

I have deep grief over recent revelations, in the Jewish media, regarding a rash of Gentile Christians who have masqueraded as Orthodox Jews – and



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even as rabbis - supposedly in an attempt to 'witness' to Jewish people. Sadly, this has had the opposite effect by greatly increasing suspicion among Jewish people globally and hardening them against the true Gospel.



What does this alarming activity actually reveal about the church? Deut 32:9 reads, 'For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.' Here, Jacob (i.e., unbelieving Israel) is literally described as 'the measuring line', or, 'plumbline' ('lot' = המל). This implies that the Jewish people are actually a 'yardstick', by which the Lord measures people. (Verse 10 refers to Jacob as 'the apple of [God's] eye', so we also see how delicate and precious the Jewish people are to God and the lens by which He views the world.)

Paul's letter to the Romans quotes the prophecy in Deut 32:21 (Rom. 10:19), which speaks of God using Gentile believers ('those that are not a people') to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy. He refers to this a *further two times* (Rom 11:11 & 14) in order to emphasise the significance of this great mystery: that Gentiles can be saved and become a people capable of being perfected, 'unto a perfect man, unto the **measure** of the stature of the fullness of Messiah' (Eph 4:13) and so make the Jewish people **jealous unto salvation**! In Romans 11, Paul shows that there is a goal for the Church that extends **beyond its own fullness**, i.e., reaching Jewish people with the Gospel. Here, it is clear that Jewish mission is not a fringe activity or sideline of the Church, just for 'geeks' and 'oddballs'!

Jewish mission is a 'barometer' of the Church's true spiritual condition. Paul writes, 'for if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy' and, '**I would not have you ignorant of this mystery**' (Rom 11:16, 25. *N.B. - This is the only time in Scripture that Paul exhorts the Church against ignorance regarding a*

mystery!). 'Jacob' is God's measuring line and the vehicle by which the Lord will test the church and, if it is obedient, bring it to maturity and save Jewish people.

However, our message must first be truth IN us. Only this – not any level of fraud - will result in making Jewish people jealous unto salvation.

In a small book called, '*Spiritual Reality or Obsession?*' Watchman Nee wrote:

'One thing which God's people should take note of is that every spiritual matter has its reality before God. Although spiritual reality is often expressed in words, those words, however many, are not the reality. Although spiritual reality must be manifested in conduct, human-manufactured pretension is not reality.

'Once anything is outside the Holy Spirit, it turns into letters and forms which are dead. Whatever may be entered into without the guidance of the Holy Spirit is definitely not spiritual reality. All which one can obtain merely by listening or thinking or being emotionally involved is not spiritually real.'

When faced with the dead son of the widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:17-24), Elijah stretched himself (lit. 'measured himself') upon the lad's body *3 times*, as he cried out to the Lord to revive him. What a test of Elijah's spirituality!! When the son was brought back to life, 'the woman said to Elijah, 'Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the **word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth**' (v. 24).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to give us the power we need to BE witnesses. As concerning the Gospel, the Jewish people are enemies for our sakes (Rom 1:28): Jewish mission is the Church's spiritual litmus test! When 'waved', will we be found to be up to the task, or wanting? These days, knowledge is increasing and people are running after it; but to what end? Facts, head-knowledge and apologetics about Israel and Jewish things are not enough. God didn't send His Spirit to give us 'truths', but to make us true! Jesus instructed his disciples to tarry until they received power from on high. Who will heed the call?

Chag Shavuot Sameach, Chrissy Rodgers

*All emphases in this article are mine.