

Pentecost
A Feast, Rich in Meaning
By Fr. Dominic Borg, OCD

The history of the feast of Pentecost is old and meaningful, both in Judaism and also in Christianity. The different names by which this Feast is referred to in the Bible and in the Talmud, are by themselves a clear indication of the powerful messages that this Feast projects in front of us.

In Judaism Pentecost is the Feast of the Weeks: ***Hag HaShavuot***. The Jewish people were told to count seven weeks from the Day that they were liberated from Egypt, and on the 50th day they were given the true source of their freedom: The Ten Words (Ten Commandments). Another name for Pentecost is: ***Yom Ha Bikurim*** (Day of the First Fruits); it is the day when the Jews offer the first fruits of their harvest to God who gave them the Land and their freedom. This aspect of Pentecost is also made manifest with another name for Pentecost: ***Hag Ha Katsir*** (Feast of The Harvest), a feast that takes place between the months of May and June. Noteworthy is the fact that on this Feast the Jewish people read from the Book of Ruth, a book which manifest God's Kindness, and the expression of gratitude on man's part.

In the Talmud, Pentecost is also referred to by the word: ***Atseret*** (Stop) . It brings to an end the season of the Passover and as such their true Freedom! Lastly the Feast of Pentecost, especially during the intertestamental period, was called by the beautiful title: ***Zman Matan Torataynu*** (The time of the giving of Our Torah). The setting in the Acts of the Apostles was exactly the commemoration of this occasion; because Pentecost together with the other two Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles

(Booths) , were called the Hag, the Pilgrimage. Jews living within certain area around Jerusalem were obliged to go to Jerusalem to express their gratitude for the Gift of the TORAH, the Source of their FREEDOM. This scene is described clearly in Acts 2.1-11.

For the Christian Church Pentecost is known as ***The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the First Apostles*** (The First Church), also as ***The Fulfillment of the Promise*** made by Jesus to his disciples, and as ***The Birth Day of the Church***. It is a feast which was very well known in the New Testament times :Acts 20.16; 1 Cor 16.8. The gift of the Spirit brings with it what today's first and second readings speak about, and also the guarantee of the guidance of the Spirit about which John's Gospel speaks so clearly.

May we learn to be flexible to the Direction of the Holy Spirit in our daily life. It is this Spirit which will guide us into the TRUTH which will make us FREE, free to serve our God and our neighbour!

~~~

***Shavout***

by Sara Esther Crispe

Have you ever wondered why the very first of the Ten Commandments isn't really a commandment at all? "I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt." Okay. True. But what exactly is the commandment?

And yet, that first commandment says everything, encompasses everything, and is our foundation. Firstly, G-d is clearly reminding us who is Boss. And just in case we weren't sure, it was He who redeemed us from slavery. We did not leave Egypt, we were taken out.

But He is telling us something much greater. Our Creator is telling us that in our lives, each and every one of us may experience states of Egypt, times of darkness and limitation. We may feel trapped and rejected, and possibly abandoned. But we are never alone. He is letting us know from the get-go that when the going gets tough - and it may - He will be there for us. And He will take us out. For He is the L-rd our G-d, the One who took and will take us out of our Egypt. He is our Father and will always be there for us.

Let's be open to receive the Torah again this  
Shavuot  
and internalize its lessons for life!

~~~