

Ha'Chazarah - החזרה



Rosh Chodesh Sivan

May it be Your will, O LORD, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, that You inaugurate this month of *Sivan* upon us for goodness and for blessing.

Abba, Father, may You give us long life,
a life of peace – *Shalom*
a life of goodness – *Tovah*
a life of blessing – *Bracha*
a life of sustenance - *Parnassa*
a life of physical health – *Hilutz Atzamot*
a life in which there is a fear of heaven and fear of sin - *Yirat Shamayim ve' Yirat Chet*
a life in which there is no humiliation – *Ein Busha u'Chlimah*
a life of wealth and honor – *Osher ve'Kavod*
a life in which we will have love of Torah and awe and reverence of G-d
- *Ahavat Torah ve'Yirat HaShem*
a life walked more fully for Your glory in *Adoneinu Yeshua*, our Messiah and Lord.
Amen. *Selah*.

¹ Baruch Nachshon

Revelation And Romance

For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the G-d of all the earth.²

You have loved us with great Love, LORD our G-d, and with surpassing compassion have You had compassion on us ... be gracious also to us and teach us. Our Father, compassionate Father ... Instill in our hearts the desire to understand and discern, to listen, learn, and teach, to observe, perform, and fulfill all the teachings of Your Torah in love.³

Sivan comes on with the last blush of spring and the first kiss of summer. With its profusion of blooming flowers and warm scented air Sivan is traditionally a wedding month. Within Sivan we celebrate the marriage between Heaven and Earth, between G-d and Israel.

This cosmic marriage is remembered on Sivan 6 - Shavuot (also known as *Z'man Mattan Torateinu*, the giving - revelation - of the Torah) with G-d as the *chatan* (the bridegroom), Israel as the beloved *kallah* (bride), Mount Sinai⁴ as the *chuppah* (wedding canopy) and the Torah as the *ketubah* (marriage contract). There at the foot of Mount Sinai, G-d pledged His love for Israel and Israel their love for G-d.

“I will write it upon their hearts.”⁵ Moses wrote the words of the covenant upon “tablets of stone” (Exodus 34:1); now G-d will write the covenant upon the hearts. The heart is the person. ...To the biblical mind nothing in the world was as holy

² Isaiah 54:5

³ A small portion of the second blessing - *Ahavah Rabbah* - recited before the Shema.

⁴ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet G-d, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (*b'tachtit hahar*) Exodus 19:17

The phrase *b'tachtit hahar* is generally translated as “at the foot of the mountain.” However, the Sages understood this phrase to literally mean “underneath the mountain.” There is a beautiful midrash that comes from this understanding. The midrash brings to mind a picture: G-d holding the mountain over the peoples' heads as a magnificent *chuppah* (wedding canopy) for the wedding ceremony between Himself and His people.

⁵ Jeremiah 31:31-33

as the Tablets; they were placed in the Ark. Days are coming when man will become Tablets...⁶

Sivan is a month of intimacy, union, and relationship, and we read in the Brit Chadashah⁷ of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) being poured into the hearts of Yeshua's disciples on Mount Zion on Shavuot. The Torah once written by the finger of G-d on tablets of stone is now written on tablets of the heart by the Spirit of G-d.⁸

And this Torah is an instrument of Divine love - an instrument that we continue to hear today. We are told that the voice of G-d heard at Sinai was *kol gadol velo yasaf*, "a great voice that never ceased."⁹

Isaiah describes G-d's voice still speaking to us today:

Your ears will hear (*shema*) a word (*davar*) behind (*ahar*) you,
"This is the way, walk in it..."¹⁰

Ahar (behind you, in the background) is the Hebrew word Isaiah used. Combined with *shema* (hear / listen / obey) and *davar* (a word) this phrase is telling.

Divrei Torah - the words of Torah. Torah means teachings or instruction. We may consider the whole of the Word - the *Tanakh* and *Brit Chadashah* - as G-d's words; and when you hear them, study them, understand them, obey them He is speaking to you.

Ezekiel and John both spoke of a "voice" behind you - that voice in the background:

Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind (*ahar*) me a voice of a great rushing,
[saying], Blessed [be] the glory of the LORD from his place.¹¹

⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Insecurity of Freedom*, pg. 174

⁷ New Testament

⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:3

⁹ Deuteronomy 5:19

¹⁰ Isaiah 30:21a

¹¹ Ezekiel 3:12

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind (*ahar*) me a great voice, as of a trumpet...”¹²

Pause and Reflect 1

Beloved are the people Israel for it was made known to them that they were given a precious instrument (*kli*), as it is said: ‘For I have given you a good teaching; do not forsake My Torah.’¹³

How is the Torah an instrument of G-d's love?



Megillat Ruth

I find it moving that the Bible dedicates a book to the story of David's great-grandmother Ruth, as if to say that her life was no less significant than his. She was a stranger, an outsider, someone with nothing but her own force of character, her refusal to walk away from another person's troubles. David was a military hero, a master politician, a king. There is a form of greatness, suggests the Bible, that has nothing to do with power, fame or renown. It exists in simple deeds of kindness [*hessed*] and friendship, generosity and grace. Rarely do they make the news. But they change lives, redeeming some of the pain of the human situation.¹⁴

¹² Revelation 1:10

¹³ *Pirket Avot* 3:18

¹⁴ Rabbi Sacks, *Lifting Others, We Ourselves Are Lifted*

In this month of revelation, romance, and the culmination of our redemption, we turn our focus to the book of Ruth.

Sivan as a month of harvest is singularly associated with the book of Ruth and sets the background for her story. The time is the ingathering of the wheat harvest, the setting is Bethlehem in Judea, and the events will culminate in a wedding and new life. Ruth had left her people and country of Moab both to support her mother-in-law Naomi and to cleave to her, and to her people, her land and her G-d - the G-d of Israel. Among the descendants of Ruth and Boaz would be born, in the little town of Bethlehem, the shepherd and future king of Israel, David, and the Messiah, Yeshua, who, in the fullness of time, will be crowned King of G-d's Kingdom in all the earth.

Pause and Reflect 2

This scroll [of Ruth] tells nothing either of cleanliness or of uncleanness, neither of prohibition or permission. For what purpose then was it written? To teach how great is the reward of those who do deeds of kindness (*hessed*).¹⁵

1. Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, all demonstrate *hessed*. How are their acts of *hessed* reminiscent of the patriarchs and matriarchs?

It [*hessed*] is usually translated as 'kindness' but it also means 'love' - not love as an emotion or passion, but love expressed as deed. Theologians define *hessed* as covenant love. ...In one of the loveliest lines in the prophetic literature G-d says to Israel through Jeremiah, 'I remember the kindness [*hessed*] of your youth, the love of your betrothal - how you were willing to follow Me through the desert in an unsown land' (Jer. 2:2). *Hessed* is the love that is loyalty, and the loyalty that is love. It is born in the generosity of faithfulness, the love that means

¹⁵ *Midrash Ruth Rabbah* 2:13

being ever-represent for the other... Those who know it experience the world differently from those who do not... *Hessed* is the gift of love that begets love.¹⁶

2.. How do we learn *hessed* from the acts of G-d himself?

Almost every verse in the book of Ruth begins with the Hebrew letter *vav*... When that letter is placed at the beginning of a verse or word it carries the meaning of the word "AND." [In Hebrew] it is called *Vav Hachibur* or the connecting *Vav*.¹⁷

The word *vav* means 'hook' and we read in the book of Exodus that in the Tabernacle golden *vavim* (hooks) joined all the curtains together. Similar to the book of Ruth, many verses in the Hebrew Scriptures begin with *vav* and the text of the scroll is set up in such a way that the writing on every page begins with a *vav* - the connecting letter - so the *vavim* join the whole Torah together to become one.

The letter "*vav*" connects words, verses and messages. The letter *Vav* gives the flow of thoughts, a history and continuity. When we relearn context and connect all the events and visions that seem so randomly placed before us we begin again to find direction and purpose. Only then do we find truth and that is why the letter *vav* is called the letter of truth.¹⁸

3. What lesson, concerning the book of Ruth, can be gleaned from this?



¹⁶ Rabbi Sacks, *To Heal A Fractured World: The Ethics Of Responsibility*, pgs. 45-46

¹⁷ Moshe Kempinski, *Understanding Vav in the Book of Ruth*

¹⁸ *ibid*

Zebulun – the Giver

You will find in the order of the tribes according to their encampments, Yehudah, Yissachar, and Zebulun correspond to Nissan, Iyar and Sivan.¹⁹

The people of Zebulun were successful merchants who travelled widely to provide support not only for themselves but also for others, particularly their neighboring tribe of Issachar who were Torah scholars and teachers. This outstanding charity to others earned Zebulun the honor and respect of others and also great favor in G-d's eyes.

The precious stone designated by G-d to represent Zebulun on the breastplate of the High Priest is the strongest and most radiant gem of all – the *yahalom*, the diamond. Also, Zebulun's portion of the land of Israel along the North-East seacoast contained the only source of something very meaningful and valuable to all Israel – the *chilazon*, a small snail from which the blue dye called *techeilet* is extracted.

The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the people of Israel, and bid them to make tassels (*tzitziyot*) on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put upon the tassel (*tzitzit*) of each corner a cord of blue (*ptil techeilet*); and it shall be to you a tassel to look upon and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to go after wantonly.²⁰

The tassel on each corner has three white strands and one strand of blue. They are threaded through a hole in the corner and knotted, which results in a tassel of eight strands. Four sets of eight make a total of 32, the number that spells the Hebrew word *lev* (heart). This is a significant pointer that part of the purpose for *tzitzit* is a reminder to love and serve the Lord with all one's heart. To the Orthodox Jew, and others who wear them, *tzitzit* can be compared to "heartstrings" that represent both a constant longing for the Presence of G-d and the means of drawing closer to Him – the 'thread' that connects heaven and earth.

¹⁹ Bnei Yissaschar, Maamarei Chodesh Tammuz – Av 1:3

²⁰ Numbers 15:37-39

The sages commented that the blue thread (*ptil techeilet*) "...resembles the sea, the sea resembles the heavens, and the heavens resemble the Throne of Glory".²¹ White is commonly associated with the purity and righteousness of G-d, and *techeilet*, blue, signifies His majesty and sovereignty over the earth, as well as His constant gracious Presence with us. Although, historically, the use of royal blue and purple dyes was restricted to nobility, G-d instructed that every Israelite was to include this one thread on each corner of their garment as a reminder that they are children of the Great King of the Universe and therefore are indeed royalty! Today *tzitzit* are worn on the *tallit* – prayer shawl – and, for every day use, on a light, cotton undergarment called a *tallit katan* (small tallit). When donning the prayer shawl a beautiful prayer is uttered:

How precious is your loving-kindness, O G-d! The sons of man take refuge in the shadow of your wings. May they be satisfied from the abundance of your house; and may You give them to drink from the stream of Your delights [the living water of Your Word]. For with You is the source of life; by Your light we see light. Extend Your loving-kindness to those who know You, and Your righteousness to the upright of heart."²²

The Arab conquest of Israel circa 638 CE/AD, is believed to have brought an end to the dyeing industry and the *chilazon* disappeared from the shores. The loss of the blue thread for *tzitzit* was widely lamented by the Jewish people. It was only after the modern restoration of the people of Israel to their Land that, through archaeological investigation, the locations of the dyeing industry with remains of massive mounds of *chilazon* shells were discovered. Through the twentieth century, extensive searches and tests established that the snails had now returned and the method for creating the authentic *techeilet* dye was discovered. The latter was achieved by Prof. Otto Elsner of Shenkar College of Fibers in Israel, together with Ehud Spanier of Haifa University – located in the ancient portion of Zebulon!²³

Just as this small living creature, the *chilazon*, gives of itself, indeed its very life, to provide G-d's people the means of obeying a command of G-d, so did Zebulon

²¹ Dr. J.H.Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, The Soncino Press, 634.

²² Siddur, *Jewish Daily Prayer Book*

²³ More interesting information on *techeilet*, also transliterated *tekhelet*, can be found on the website www.tekhelet.com.

epitomize generosity in freely giving means to their brothers to enable them to pursue the study and teaching of G-d's Word. Every gift of oneself given for the benefit of another reflects the greatest "giving" when G-d gave of Himself through His Son, Yeshua, who died that all might live and come into knowledge of, and growing relationship with, the Father in Heaven. The essence of the month of Sivan and the joyful appointed time of Shavuot is the celebration of the foundational truth that, just as it is the Creator Himself who provides the snail that contains the means to fulfill one of His commandment, so is He the all-knowing Father who in great loving-kindness provides all our needs as His children.

Pause and Reflect 3

Here is how G-d revealed his love among us: G-d sent his only Son (Yeshua - the living Torah) into the world, so that through him we might have life.²⁴

In our western culture, love is thought of as an emotion, something we feel toward another. But in Hebraic understanding love has a much deeper meaning. One Hebrew word for love is *ahava*, with its parent root *hav*, which means to give / to provide. The concept of giving provides a much fuller meaning to the word *ahava*.

The Hebrew word for father is *av* - א aleph / ב bet. In the ancient Hebrew pictograph the symbolic meaning of א aleph is leader or strength. The meaning of ב bet is family or house. So the pictograph for father (*av*) tells us that a father is the leader or strength of the family. *Ahav* (love)²⁵ is composed of א aleph / ה hey / ב bet. By placing a hey (symbolic meaning 'to reveal') in the middle of father we see that love is the father's heart revealed.

How does this Hebraic understanding of love affect your understanding of G-d's commands of loving G-d, loving each other, loving neighbors, and loving your enemies?

²⁴ 1 John 4:9

²⁵ *Ahav* is the first occurrence of the word love in the Torah - Genesis 22:2 the Akedah.



26

George MacDonald tells a story of a woman who had experienced a great tragedy in her life. “The heartache was so crushing and her sorrow so bitter that the one in distress exclaimed, 'I wish I'd never been made.' With spiritual discernment, her friend answered, 'My dear, you are not fully made yet; you're only being made, and this is the Maker's process!'”

Though *Naomi* (pleasant) said, “Call me *Mara* (bitter)...” the Scriptures, inspired by the Spirit of G-d, continued to call her Naomi, “So *Naomi* (not *Mara*) returned.”

For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for well-being and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.²⁷

²⁶ Sandy Freckleton Gagan, *Whither Thou Goest*

²⁷ Jeremiah 29:11