

SIVAN, the third Hebrew month of the biblical calendar - that began in Nissan, or *Aviv* as it is referred to in the Torah, which was instituted by God to mark the Exodus from Egypt of His people and their redemption from slavery to freedom - from their enforced slavery to Pharaoh to their opportunity to receive God's love and to serve and worship Him. The transition of the seven weeks (called the Omer) from the Exodus, through the second month of Iyyar, culminates on the 6th Sivan with the festival of Shavuot, or Pentecost.

Every month of the Hebrew calendar is vital and important and has so much to teach us, but, there is something very beautiful and meaningful in Sivan. It's a month of revelation of who God is and a celebration of the gift of His Word - the teachings of His Torah. It's a time we can gratefully commit ourselves afresh to the ongoing process of learning more of God and of studying and questioning and applying His Word in our lives.

When we consider that Yeshua, as *Mashiach ben Yosef*, Messiah son of Joseph, lay down his life as the Passover Lamb and was raised by God from the grave - brought from death to new life - at the same time as the Exodus in the first month, Nissan, how can we apply what he was doing with the time we are at now? Today?

Today - Sunday, 21st May, is the 25th of Iyyar and the 40th day of counting the Omer, which is the day he ascended into Heaven! Yeshua had spent the first 40 days of the Omer meeting with and teaching his disciples more about the Kingdom of God and of his Messianic identity as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Before his ascension to the Father, he told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father to pour out His empowering Spirit of Holiness upon them.

On the 50th day, in 10 days' time, on the Festival of Shavuot, the promise was fulfilled and the Almighty God met with his people again. A "mighty rushing wind" with the sound of a shofar blast filled His House and tongues of fire came to rest on the disciples, just as they had at Sinai, and "they were all filled with the Spirit of Holiness" (Acts 2:4). Messiah had come, the Holy Spirit was poured out into prepared hearts, and the good news of the Kingdom of God was about to spread to all corners of the earth. It was indeed a new and joyous day!

WOMAN: RUTH

The book, or scroll, read at Shavuot is that of Ruth. This classic love story reminds us that Sivan also is a month of relationships - of friendship and romance. At Sinai, God wasn't revealing Himself primarily as a stern judge or lawgiver, but was demonstrating the power of His love. It was a marriage ceremony! God was the ardent Bridegroom and Israel was His beloved, chosen bride. His clouds of glory were the *chuppah*, marriage canopy, and the Torah, His Word, was the *ketubah*, the marriage document. He was proclaiming His eternal love to His people in a covenant that could not be broken.

In the book of Ruth, we see the strength and beauty of loyal relationship first in the bond of friendship between Ruth and Naomi. As a Moabite princess, Ruth was a foreigner, a stranger, when she returned with Naomi to Bethlehem in Judea. Ruth's faithful care and kindness toward Naomi earned her the respect of Boaz, the family's kinsman who would become their redeemer. Ruth had chosen to join herself to the people and the God of Israel. She had redirected her life onto the same path that would take the Covenant people to their God-appointed destination. The path that would make the way for all nations to be included in the family and Kingdom of God.

From the union of Boaz and Ruth, King David, their great grandson, is born in Bethlehem and, so too, "in the fullness of time" is Yeshua, the humble Messiah son of Joseph - *Mashiach ben Yosef*.

Before his ascension, Yeshua promised: "I will come for you. I go to prepare a place for you in my Father's house. I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14).

When he returns, in glory and in the full authority of the Father, it will be as the King of kings, Messiah son of David - *Mashiach ben David*. His throne will be set up in Jerusalem and he will establish the Kingdom of God and will reign over all the earth, which will again become as the Garden of the Lord!

We see this promise beautifully illustrated in the words of Isaiah, 61:10-11:

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to sprout up before all the nations."

TRIBE : ZEBULON - The Giver

Each Hebrew month is associated with one of the 12 tribes according to the order of their encampment and order of traveling through the wilderness. The tribe linked with Sivan is ZEBULON, who were known as generous givers.

The standard of the tribe was a merchant sailing ship. They were successful merchants who traveled far and wide to support not only themselves but also others, particularly their neighboring tribe of Issachar who were predominantly Torah scholars and teachers. This outstanding charity toward others earned Zebulun the honor and respect of many and also great favor in the eyes of God, who blessed them with success and wealth..

This warm, early summer month in Israel is traditionally a favorite wedding month and we find that the precious stone designated by God to represent the tribe on the High Priest's breastplate is the strongest and one of the most radiant gems of all - the *yahalom*, the diamond. The root of the Hebrew word for love - *ahavah* is *hav*, which means to give! God Himself is the greatest Giver - all we have we receive from His gracious outstretched hand. As the tribe noted for their generosity and giving, Zebulun indeed deserves the diamond as their stone - the gem traditionally given as the sign of love and the establishing of a covenant relationship!