

27 – Shavuot 2023 – Outline

About “Holi-days”

- English word “holiday” from “holy” and “day”
- biblical holidays certainly ARE holy days, set apart by God for special purposes, including special offerings to Him
 - these are not optional for Believers; it is not an option to take what is holy and treat it as common – an affront to God
 - holiness is a one-way street – what is holy cannot later become common
 - we simply must do everything we possibly can in our current situations (when the culture does not yet honor these days) to guard and protect and honor these days

The Basics of Shavuot

- “shavuot” = “weeks/oaths”
- not minor – one of the big three pilgrimage festivals
- 2nd of the two firstfruits observances that bookend the Omer
 - the first is what we call “Firstfruits” (barley, done by priests in Passover season, first day of the Omer)
 - the second is Shavuot, the 50th day after the “Sabbath” of Passover (understood to be the first day of Unleavened Bread)(2 loaves of leavened wheat bread offered by priests on the altar)
- a rest day
- all in one’s household are to travel to Jerusalem and offer voluntary offerings there (Deu 16)
- Shavuot is one of the main points in the year to bring personal firstfruits offerings; it begins a window in the year for bringing firstfruits, which extends to Sukkot
- tradition connects the Omer and Shavuot to a harvest from the nations
 - Psalm 67 read during the Omer is all about this harvest from the nations
 - the book of Ruth is read at Shavuot and is about a Moabite woman who is grafted into Israel
- one tradition has come to dominate the day in our times: that the Torah began to be given at Mt. Sinai on Shavuot; this is the main connection Jews make today to Shavuot, the day of the giving of the Torah

Shavuot’s Place in the Salvation Pattern

- a goal here: get a sense for how all of God’s details work together to tell one story – salvation, always
 - ALL DETAILS from the respective salvation progressions (the mo’edim, Israel’s history, the agricultural calendar, human development, etc.) work together to tell this one story, each progression illuminating the others
- going back to the beginning and moving forward to Shavuot
 - Rosh Chodesh Nissan – Tabernacle set up, God comes, bringing a new light

- by this new light, we see we are still enslaved, darkness remains, and we cry out to God
- Passover – God’s response to our cry, rebirth
 - we have little to do with it
 - it is a birthing process, birthing to a higher level
 - God also places the seed of salvation for the year in us, salvation in the spirit, soul, and body, corresponding to Pesach, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits
 - Yeshua’s blood purchases our renewal, but it’s not just a one-time renewal – He purchases CONTINUAL RENEWAL
 - God’s work is very high at Passover (transferring from kingdom of darkness to kingdom of light) while man’s reflected work is very low (leave Egypt, locational, not touching the soul yet)
 - this is a pattern that continues through the year, God’s foundational work reflected by man’s work in response; God’s work starts high and descends, while man’s work starts low and ascends (man being an infant at first and only capable of a low work at first)

God’s Foundational Repairs and Man’s Reflected Responses		
Season	God’s Realm of Foundation Work (high to low)	Man’s Realm of Response (low to high)
Passover	spiritual kingdom	environment/body
Omer	will, faith	nephesh
Shavuot	intellect	ruach
Fall	heart/gut	neshamah
Winter	body/environment	community/kingdom

- Omer – infancy and childhood
 - the parent’s work in the child is very high in the child’s psyche, conforming the child’s will to obeying authority and instilling faith in the child
 - the Sages say that the Omer is a period for us to work on our nephesh, the lowest part of the soul, the instincts and drives
- Shavuot—adolescence
 - God empowers the mind by giving the Torah, the textbook
 - man’s area of response is the ruach, the seat of the emotions

- God gives a special dispensation of a second gift of empowerment at this time, the Holy Spirit
 - Acts 2: The disciples were gathered together at Shavuot and received the RUACH HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit
- Shavuot and Adolescence
 - when are we most influenced by our emotions, doing the most work to reign in our passions and embarrassments and sadnesses and fears? – Adolescence
 - teens can be absolutely driven by emotions and crippled by them
 - middle school counselor friend: “All teens are depressed.” – it comes with the territory
 - R’Aaron Raskin: the Zohar compares receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai to a bar or bat mitzvah, 12 for a girl, 13 for a boy
 - (https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1768505/jewish/Marrying-G-d.htm 6:20m)
 - when we become personally responsible to the Torah
 - most teens are not in open rebellion; this is not a given for this age
 - teens are largely being motivated by fear and duty rather than love
 - hard to do good work consistently when you are simply obeying from duty – not a strong motivator, but it is a phase of development
 - what comes next in the calendar is a fall, the 3 Weeks (includes Tisha B’Av)
 - in a sense, teens are set up to fall
 - why would God do this?
 - R’Raskin brings from R’Schneerson: God puts man in a situation that he should fall because every descent is for a greater ascent
 - (https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/2196024/jewish/Loving-Your-Fellow-as-Yourself.htm 16:20m)
 - what follows the 3 Weeks is repentance, the repentance of Elul and the Days of Awe – this is getting us to the goal of this half of the cycle; falling enables us to see what’s going on inside, leading to repentance
 - adolescence is a meeting point, where childhood and adulthood meet
 - Shavuot has this “meeting point” character, though it is only the beginning of reunification; the real peace comes later
 - Shavuot aligns with step 2 in the ancient Jewish marriage, erusin/kidushin
 - engagement; promises are made, but then the two go their separate ways to prepare – not the fullness yet of cohabitation and real intimacy, but the foundation of it
 - Shavuot as the “meeting” of right and left, heaven and earth, spiritual and physical:
 - 2 loaves offered on the altar, right and left

- 2 tablets with the 10 commandments
- “cloven” flames of Acts 2
- mazal of the 3rd month, Sivan: Gemini, the twins
- “chush” of Sivan: walking (right and left)
- tribe of Sivan: Zebulun (always paired with Issachar)
- Ruth: Orpah goes left, Ruth goes right
- Shavuot is a time for examining our connections and seeing how we can strengthen them; make promises (even if just to yourself)
 - husbands and wives, parents and children, each person with God, within ourselves
 - “Shavuot” literally means “Promises;” we come now to a holiday called “Promises”

The Role of the Spirit

- the web of connections for Shavuot helps us to understand a facet of the role of the Spirit: the Spirit has a BRIDGE ROLE
 - we tend to think of the Spirit as being the most elevated of the faces of God in Scripture, but the most elevated is the Father; the Spirit has a bridging role
 - “ruach” means “wind” – both tangible and invisible, between the realms
 - John the Baptist is associated with the Spirit
 - he prepares the way for the coming Messiah
 - his message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
 - the Spirit is described as a Tutor, leading us into all truth
 - the Spirit brings conviction for sin, righteousness, and a coming judgment
 - the point of being led to truth and being convicted is to lead us to repentance; repentance is the goal for the Spirit’s bridging work
 - repentance prepares us for receiving the Messiah
 - repentance is the focus of 40 days – Elul and 10 Days of Awe; these 10 Days of Awe are associated with judgment, “judgment to come”
 - what follows is Sukkot, Yeshua tabernacling among us; the work of the Spirit leading to repentance leads to the embracing of the Messiah; in the calendar, this is Sukkot, the beginning of deep intimacy

Practical Suggestions

- Open yourself up to a new work, the beginning of a new revelation of Torah
 - trust that He is doing this now
 - R’ Alon Anava brings from the Arizal that the night of Shavuot determines one’s connection to the Torah for an entire year
 - (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ps3_cwHUGhg 39m)

- whether true or not, we are positioning ourselves now in relation to the Torah, an attitude of submission toward God through submission to His Torah
 - reach for it with eagerness
 - tradition: stay up all night studying Torah, if possible
 - puts us in an attitude of HUMILITY- “I want this; I need this, even if I have to be uncomfortable.”
- R’Anava: We should focus on love for others at this time, which is the heart of the Torah
 - R’Anava: love is expressed through giving; work on giving at this time. Where you expect to receive, turn that around to become an opportunity to give. Take as little as you can from this world.
- A Warning
 - adolescence is a time for authorities to start handing some authority over to us; be careful. God may remove a filter that He has previously given by His grace.
 - We are agreeing to take on the Torah once again, and the Torah is love, and that will be tested. Expect it.

Yeshua

- Yeshua is the Word, the Torah, which God speaks forth to create everything, including us
 - 1 Corinthians 8: We are made FOR the Father, and we are made THROUGH Yeshua.
- God first gives the Spirit to Yeshua, Who distributes it to us
 - Acts 2:32-33 - “This Yeshua God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and **having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this** that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”
 - everything from the Father comes through the Son to us, including the Spirit
 - our ultimate example of how we are to be a pipe, not a bucket (as Grant would say); we are to be a channel for God’s Spirit and blessing in this world, like Yeshua, not a bucket that holds the blessing inside

Shavuot and Grant and BT

- Grant’s last Shabbat leading BT was within a couple days of Shavuot
- the task God gave Grant was leading a group of people out of a narrow place and back to the Torah; this is the role Moses occupies, a prophetic role, closely connected to Shavuot
- BT is now in a period of development that follows, a period that is marked by a deeper intimacy

27 – Shavuot – Transcript (not exact)

Welcome, everyone, to Beth Tikkun and this series called Spiritual Seasons. This week, the progression through the Torah pauses for the very special mo'ed of Shavuot. So we will discuss Shavuot today.

About “Holi-days”

As we get started, I want to make a point about the idea of “holidays.” In English, we get the word “holiday” from the two words “holy” and “day.” Now, when we’re talking about biblical holidays in particular, these TRULY ARE HOLY DAYS. If God chooses something and sets it apart for special purpose, it is holy. If God sets apart certain days in the calendar for special attention and devotion to Him, for bringing special offerings to Him, then He has made these days holy. They are set aside for Him and for His special purposes. And if we are Believers and followers of God, if He is our King, then these are not optional days to do with as we please. God has claimed these days. Who are we to take what is holy and treat it as common? It’s an affront to God.

We’ve been focusing on this idea of holiness in recent weeks because recent Torah portions have mentioned this word “holy” so much. And one of the commandments we learned establishes that when something becomes holy, it can’t go back to being common. If someone sets aside an animal for God, it becomes holy, and it can’t be taken back. If you decide you want to substitute a different animal, both become holy. Becoming holy is a one-way street. And the idea of holiness is very, very important to God, our King and Creator. How could we now take these days lightly? Praise the Lord for lifting the veil on the Gentiles as He is now around the world. But once we see better what He has called holy, there’s no looking away. Once we know, it is offensive to Him when we trample on His holy days. I understand that we live in a world that largely does not yet align with God’s calendar. Right now, we simply must do everything we possibly can to guard and protect these days.

The Basics of Shavuot

Let’s turn now to Shavuot specifically. We’ll start with the basics of commandments and a couple of traditions. Shavuot means “weeks.” We sometimes call it the “Feast of Weeks.” It is not a minor mo’ed but one of the “big three,” one of the three pilgrimage festivals. As we reckon it today, Shavuot is the 50th day after the special Sabbath rest day that begins Unleavened Bread, the first day of Unleavened Bread. Shavuot is the second of the two firstfruits mo’edim that bookend the Omer. The first day of the Omer is the firstfruits of the barley harvest offered by the priests at the Temple on behalf of the nation. Shavuot, too, is described in the Torah as a firstfruits celebration, an offering from the wheat crop. This means the whole 49-day Omer period begins and ends with two days set aside for offering firstfruits to God. Unlike the raw barley flour at the beginning, though, this second firstfruits offering at Shavuot is to be made of two LOAVES OF LEAVENED BREAD made from wheat. It is a rest day. In Deuteronomy 16, Moses describes how the Israelites are to gather up everyone in the household and take them to Jerusalem for Shavuot, including servants, Levites staying in one’s home, sojourners, orphans, and widows. Once there, all are to bring voluntary offerings and

rejoice before the Lord. The ceremonies for traveling together as a village and for being welcomed as a village into Jerusalem at Shavuot are really extraordinarily colorful and fascinating. Shavuot is one of the main points in the year for the people, themselves, to bring firstfruits offerings to the Temple, as opposed to the priests bringing a firstfruit offering on their behalf, like at Passover. At Shavuot, the priests are still bringing an offering of bread on behalf of the people, but the people, themselves, are also now stepping up to offer their own firstfruits to God. In fact, Shavuot begins a whole portion of the year in which the people can come to Jerusalem with their firstfruit offerings especially of the seven species of the Land, though anything could be brought and given to God. This window for bringing firstfruits stretches from Shavuot to Sukkot, though I believe I've read that some said the window was open until Hanukkah.

Speaking of firstfruits, let me mention here that tradition clearly associates particularly the Shavuot firstfruits with a reaping from the nations. All during the counting of the Omer, we are traditionally reading Psalm 67, which is focused squarely on the harvest from the nations. The book of Ruth, too, which is traditionally read on Shavuot, has a Gentile focus in that Ruth is a woman from Moab who is grafted into Israel, becoming part of the line of King David and, thus, an ancestor of the Messiah.

Regarding traditions related to Shavuot beyond this connection to a much greater human harvest, the primary tradition that has come to dominate Shavuot is the idea that the Torah began to be given on Shavuot, the 6th day of the 3rd month, God's speaking forth of the 10 commandments. The text states that Israel arrived at the foot of Mt. Sinai on the first of the third month. So, Israel would have had a few days to set up camp and rest before being told to prepare for meeting God in another three days. If you ask an observant Jewish child what Shavuot is about, they will probably not say it's a harvest festival. They will say it's a celebration of the giving of the Torah.

Shavuot's Place in the Salvation Pattern

After these base level details about Shavuot, let's turn now to going a little deeper. Like every Torah portion and like all the other annual mo'edim, Shavuot doesn't exist in a vacuum. It exists in a progression of salvation, what I sometimes call God's yearly curriculum. How does Shavuot fit? What I'd like you to get from this discussion is a sense of how all of God's details work together to tell one story—salvation, always. We have various commandments and stories in the Word connected to Shavuot, both in the Tanakh and in the Brit Chadashah, and those commandments and stories are filled with details. None of those details are random. They all fit into a larger story, a larger progression, and that progression is called "salvation."

In order to see how Shavuot fits, we need to go back to the beginning. At Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the cycle begins again at a higher level. The first of Nissan is most famous for the day the Tabernacle was first set up, and we witness the God of the Universe coming to dwell with His specially chosen people in a holy home. God coming to be with His people is the coming of light, a new light. And by that light, we suddenly look around us and say, "Why am I feeling so closed in, so trapped by the flesh? I'm a slave." It's not that we've gone backwards; it's that the

new light helps us to see the darkness remains within us that we couldn't see before, and God is going to help us take another step higher. And so we cry out and say, "Lord, help me! I give you everything, once again. Set me free."

In the middle of the first month, we come to Passover, which is God's response to our cry for freedom. He does a very powerful work at that time for us, a work that we have very little to do with. And one of the things that happens at that time is that He gives us a seed of salvation for the year, a seed that contains within it new life for the spirit, soul, and body, which we connected to Pesach, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. As the barley harvest is beginning in the fields in Israel, God is placing within us the precious gift of a new year's salvation. This is accomplished by the blood of the Lamb. When Yeshua went to the cross for us one Passover two millennia ago, He purchased for us not just one isolated salvation, but what He purchased was continual renewal, year by year, month by month, week by week, day by day. His blood paid for cycles of renewal.

In the Passover teaching, we pointed out that at Passover God is doing a very, very high work, far above us. What is this high work? It's the work of transferring us further from one spiritual kingdom to another, out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. And we said that, a bit ironically, we experience this very high work down here as a very low reflection, a very physically-grounded reflection. For Israel, God's high work of transferring from one kingdom to another is reflected down below as Israel leaving Egypt. It's a change of location. In other words, as God does an act of empowerment in a very high place, what He enables us to do is make an adjustment in a very low place. In the case of Israel, changing their physical location does not yet touch their soul deeply, though a move like that does require a good deal of faith as they step out onto that dry, dusty road and start to walk with God. In a way, though, God had shown Himself so strongly, devastating Egypt so utterly and causing Egypt to fear Israel so greatly, that God had pushed them out. They actually didn't have a lot of choice at the time. And so we also see that freewill starts at a low point and increases as we mature.

What we will see as the year progresses is that God provides an empowerment in a certain area, and we are enabled to respond below. But God's empowerment starts high and works low, and our reflection starts low and works high. God starts high above us and descends to an empowerment in the mind, then the heart, and even lower. Our reflection starts below us, then enters the lowest part of the soul, then keeps going upward. This is how reflection works. God doesn't ask a newborn to do work that only an adult can do. When we are young and He is doing a very high work of empowerment, He only asks us to start at a very low place with our part to play in our salvation journey.

Truly, God's incredible design for salvation is a wonder to behold as we begin to dig into some of its secrets, as God lifts a veil in these end times to permit us to see even a few of the inner workings of salvation. Even just in getting a small glimpse of the wheels within wheels that He has created down here, we just have to stand back and say, "What a wonder You have wrought!" This particular idea of how God's area of empowerment descends from high to low as our own area of work ascends from low to high while we travel round the wheel of the year

has come more sharply into view for me as I have prepared this teaching, and it's really a powerful help for understanding Shavuot, in particular. So we'll keep going with this idea for a bit now. This really needs a visual aid, but you'll have to make due with an outline right now. There's a link to an outline below the video.

Let's return now to the early part of the calendar. If we experience a rebirth at Passover, what is the period of the Counting of the Omer? What follows birth? Well, infancy and childhood follow birth. Every year we go through a time of infancy and childhood, first steps with God on a new journey, at a new level. And so God is very much relating to us as a parent with a child at the beginning of the year and through the Omer. God is strong and protective and also firm to discipline at this point, and we can see all of these parental qualities as He leads Israel in the wilderness from Egypt to Mt. Sinai.

The work that a parent does is still a very high work that mostly involves training the child's WILL and instilling FAITH, training the child to submit to authority and establishing faith in the child. These are such high areas within the psyche that they still haven't quite entered the intellect. And God can't really empower the intellect yet because a child is not yet capable of deep intellectual thought yet. On the other hand, the work WE are given to do, our part in salvation here, moves from an external physical change to work on our NEPHESH during this time. Recall that the Sages have said that the Omer period begun by the harvest of barley is when we are being empowered to work on the animal soul, the nephesh, the lowest part of our soul, which we can think of as our instincts and animal drives. Barley is primarily animal fodder. So our reflected work is moving upward from a place of base physicality to the lowest part of the soul during the Omer, the nephesh.

We come now to Shavuot and the giving of the Torah. Finally now, God is saying, "Ok, you're ready now for Me to do a work of empowerment for the mind, the intellect. You are old enough now and mature enough for that." And so He says, "Here's the Torah. Here's the textbook for life. Study this. Memorize this. And do what you can now to conform your life to this."

And so on the one hand we do a work of receiving the Torah with the mind at this time, and this is a foundational intellectual work. But we are not yet mature enough for a deep understanding in the Torah. The reflected work that we are being especially empowered to do, the area that we will find we can make real progress in during the summer is one step above the nephesh. What is that area? Grant has often taught us about the nephesh and neshamah as the two sides of the human soul, the spiritual side and the physical side. But there is a third that the Sages include that is between these two. They call it the Ruach. It is the seat of the EMOTIONS. The Ruach is described as moving back and forth between the neshamah and the nephesh, between the intellect and the instincts, between the head and the gut. So we enter now into a period wherein we are being empowered to work on the ruach, the seat of the emotions.

Now, let me add here that I have not heard a Jewish teaching linking Shavuot to the beginning of a season in which we are empowered to work on the emotions. That's me connecting some

dots as God leads. So, take this idea with a grain of salt. My understanding of the calendar continues to develop as I continue to walk this road with God. But you see, Believers in Yeshua have a few more dots to work with than those who have not yet come to accept Yeshua as the Messiah. And when I say that the area of the soul called the “ruach” is being opened for a deeper work at Shavuot, a Believer in Yeshua who has read the book of Acts immediately makes a connection – Acts 2, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. “Spirit” in Hebrew is “ruach,” and “Pentecost” is the Greek name for Shavuot. In other words, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is the same as the coming of the Ruach at Shavuot. It was exactly on the day of Shavuot that the Believers were gathered together in prayer and the Spirit came upon them like fire, cloven flames above their heads. As we are enabled to work on our emotions, we are given the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Ruach.

Pray in the season ahead, the long hot summer, “Lord, help me to work on my emotions.” Trust that He not only is going to honor that request, but also that He has built this energy for growth in this area at this time into the very fabric of the universe and every fiber of your being, every cell of your body made with the same pattern that we are seeing here in the year, every cell resonating with this pattern and with the seasons as we travel through them.

And so to summarize those overlapping progressions, God’s area of empowerment first involves kingdom, then the areas of will and faith, then the intellect. Our area of reflected work, on the other hand, first involves the purely physical, then the animal drives and instincts, then the emotions.

Speaking of the emotions, let’s turn back now to the progression of human development, which is one of our important keys for unlocking what’s happening in the calendar. In what stage of life are we most affected in a profound way by our emotions? In what stage of our lives are we particularly tasked with throwing reigns onto our passions and disappointments and sadnesses and fears? In what stage of life are we most apt to while away a whole day in the mindless joy of a spontaneous road trip or a game that has so enthralled us that we stay awake a whole night in a fight to the death with our friends? Shavuot is our entrance into ADOLESCENCE. Adolescence is when we can be absolutely driven by our emotions and crippled by our emotions. I have a friend who is a counselor for middle school students in public schools here in Ohio. And she says, “Every teen is depressed.” It simply comes with the territory.

R’Aaron Raskin says that the Zohar compares receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai to a bar or bat mitzvah, twelve years old for a girl, thirteen for a boy. This is right on the cusp of adolescence. It is the age that a child enters a higher stage of life by becoming personally responsible – responsible to what, though? “Bar mitzvah” is “son of the commandment.” “Bat mitzvah” is “daughter of the commandment.” When a child is bar or bat mitzvahed, they take on personal responsibility for upholding the Torah. This is exactly what we remember at Shavuot, this moment when God reached out to Israel and said, “Do you want relationship with Me?” and the people said, “Yes, we do.” And He gave them the textbook, the Torah. And when is it that we become professionals at slinging around textbooks? It is when we are teenagers that we are heavily invested in textbooks.

Let's make a couple more points here about teenagers as we are beginning this phase called adolescence. First, let me say that I was pleasantly surprised by the teens I worked with while teaching at a Christian high school for five years, right up to Covid. My last quarter of teaching was done online because of Covid. But rewind five years before that last quarter, as I was preparing to teaching American students for the first time, I was nervous. I had recently returned from overseas. I had not trained to be a teacher. And as I thought back to my own experiences in public school growing up in Stow, I was remembering how hard we could be on teachers. And I thought I'd have a lot of trouble with the teens at Lake Center. But you know what? I didn't. They were a delight. Don't get me wrong, there were those days where I lost my cool and shocked everyone, myself included. But for the most part, I found the students to be well-behaved, generous, funny, and largely willing to do what they were being asked to do, as long as I had explained things clearly. Yes, being a teen is a painfully difficult time to go through for everyone. It's a time filled with awkward missteps. But it doesn't have to be a time marked by open rebellion. That's not a given.

Teens are in a difficult spot especially because they are being motivated largely by fear and duty rather than love; they're not old enough yet to be primarily motivated by love. I found the students I worked with to be respectful, but I didn't find them eager to work. As much as I grew to like them, I knew that most of them didn't want to do the learning I was trying to get them to do. I knew that few of them enjoyed learning to write a coherent essay. Learning to write is tough work. I can assure you that grading a half-hearted essay is harder than writing one. Many of my students simply dragged themselves to the computer to write, and the product lacked heart. When we perform from duty rather than the heart, it shows. Most of them lacked the life experience and depth of understanding and foresight to know that what I was teaching them would be profoundly useful in life, the ability to write well, the ability to organize and present your thoughts, the ability to generate thoughts in the first place.

This idea of an adolescent being primarily motivated by duty has a big role to play in what's coming next in the calendar, the stumbles and the separation of the Three Weeks, which come in the summer. The problem with obeying out of duty rather than love is that there is little power there to stick to it or do what you're doing well. As God opens us up to a deeper level of Torah observance at Shavuot, WE ARE BEING SET UP FOR A FALL.

Why does God do that? Why would God set us up to fall? R' Raskin brings from R'Schneerson that God puts man in a situation that he should fall because every descent is for a greater ascent. What follows the Three Weeks of mourning in the high summer? The month of Elul, the 6th month, is an entire month of repentance. Somewhere in this whole process of learning Torah and falling and rising again, we see ourselves better than we ever have before, and we put that before God and say, "I see it. I don't like it. I'm sorry for it. Have mercy on me." And He does, and in raising us up from that place, He lifts us to a higher place than where we were BEFORE we fell. So expect the falling that follows Shavuot, but just keep walking. In a sense, it's part of the plan designed to show us what's really going on inside.

The last point I want to make here connected to this word “adolescence” is the idea that adolescence is a meeting point, a coming together of childhood and adulthood. And Shavuot and the third month of Sivan which we have now entered are very much about this point of meeting. Now it’s a first point of meeting, a beginning of reunification. We’re not there yet fully. And isn’t it the case that a teenager is experiencing more of a BATTLE between two life phases than PEACE. It’s not a time for peace yet, but it’s a time for a bridging to happen. At Shavuot, the right and left are brought together; heaven and earth are brought together; male and female are brought together, but not yet with intimacy.

Remember that when we applied the three steps of the ancient Jewish marriage to the yearly pattern in the parsha Mishpatim teaching, we described the second step, which is what Shavuot is, as the point of engagement. Words are spoken that connect. Promises are given that connect. Promises are powerful connectors, but the fullness of physical intimacy is not for this moment. This second stage of marriage we’re talking about is called “erusin,” but it has a second name called “kidushin,” which implies a setting aside for special purpose. This second phase involves promises and the chuppah and a ketubah, all of which we see at Mt. Sinai. But after the young groom and bride agree to the marriage, the engaged couple part ways to prepare separately. The young man goes to build onto his family’s home, and the bride goes to focus on her personal preparations. So Shavuot is a point is a point of connection that looks ahead to a much deeper connection.

And we see this idea of a coming together of right and left side-by-side but not yet fully connected in many ways. We see TWO leavened loaves specially offered by the priests on the altar at Shavuot. Leavened loaves are loaves that have been given time to rise, to expand, to reach a level of maturity like an adolescent. We also see this coming together of two sides in the two tablets with the 10 commandments, a right and a left. In the book of Acts, the tongues like fire that reveal the pouring out of the Holy Spirit are divided. The mazal of this third month, the month of Sivan, is teomim, the twins, Gemini. The “chush” of the month of Sivan, or the “bodily ability” associated with the month, is walking. How do we walk? We walk with the right foot and the left foot, right and left, right and left. The tribe of the month is Zebulun, who is paired with Issachar in Jewish history, twin tribes that supported each other. Issachar is the tribe of the second month and Zebulun the third. There is even a hint of this right and left in the story of Ruth, where two Jewish brothers marry Moabite women, one of which ends up turning to the left, the other to right.

We are being given the chance now to lay the foundation for a future connecting together of opposites. It’s a time to set ourselves in the way and make promises and ask God to fill us with the strength to be faithful to those promises. Remember that the word “shavuot” also means “promises” or “oaths.” We are literally at a holiday named “promises.” It is a time for each of us to reach up to connect to a God Who is coming down to the top of the mountain to meet us. It is a time for husbands to reach out to deepen their connection with their wives, for parents to do the same with children. It is a time for a kind of connecting together of our own beings internally, the spiritual and animal souls being connected together through the ruach.

This idea that Shavuot is a first stage of re-connection but not yet the fullness of it is reflected in the name “Shavuot.” “Shavuot” is rooted in the word for “seven.” The emphasis of the name is the number seven, and the letter of the month of Sivan is zayin, which is seven. And we have learned before that the number seven is the completion of the natural world. The natural world cycles in sevens. Eight, then, represents moving beyond the natural into the supernatural. Curiously, Shavuot happens on the 50th day, which is one beyond 49, which is 7X7. So the date looks to the eight and the supernatural time of echad when the right and the left truly unite in intimacy. But the word “Shavuot,” itself, is rooted in the number seven. We aren’t there yet at the eight. We need more time to develop. So there’s this mixture with Shavuot wherein the name speaks to the completion of the natural and the date speaks to the supernatural. I’ll add here, though, that the Greek word for Shavuot does not emphasize weeks or the number seven. The Greek word “pentecost” means “fiftieth.” And so here we have a hint of the deeper foundation of unity that comes with recognizing the Messiah and making Him Lord.

The Role of the Spirit

I want to circle back for a minute to the topic of the Spirit, because this whole web of connections for Shavuot we are arriving at via the salvation pattern helps us to understand a certain aspect of the role of the Spirit. The whole context here for the giving of the Spirit on Shavuot in Acts 2 is showing us that the Spirit has A BRIDGE ROLE. In some ways we know that, but it helps to see all these other pictures of this bridging phase that we can apply to the Spirit. We tend to think of the Holy Spirit as being maybe the highest and most spiritual of the faces of God we see in Scripture. But remember that this word “ruach” also means “wind.” What is wind? It certainly has a tangible element to it, a physical element. Wind can even lift up a house and move it or destroy it. But on its own without a tree to bend over or a flag to move, wind is invisible. It’s between the visible and invisible. It is God the Father Who is portrayed as highest above. The Spirit has a bridge role, and Yeshua, the Son, is the most tangible face of God.

The role of the Spirit, like John the Baptist, is to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. How does He do that? Well, He is described as a Tutor, for one. And when do we spend the most time in our lives with tutors and teachers? When we are teenagers. The Tutor helps us to understand the textbook, which is the Torah. The Holy Spirit Tutor leads us into all truth.

Being led into truth is one aspect of being prepared for the coming of the Messiah. But the point of this leading into truth is to bring us to repentance. It is humility and repentance that are the proper foundation for receiving the Messiah. John’s message and baptism were focused on repentance. John said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” The Holy Spirit is described as bringing CONVICTION, conviction for sin, and righteousness, and the judgment to come. Conviction leads to repentance. And in the calendar, what is the judgment to come? It is the judgment of the 10 Days of Awe, in the 7th month. After the Spirit leads us to repentance, followed by judgment, we are able to receive Yeshua at Sukkot, when He tabernacles among us. That’s the point where deep intimacy begins. That’s the point of the third stage of the marriage, which is where that deep intimacy and cohabitation begins.

Practical Suggestions

As we finish up this deeper dive into Shavuot, let's focus on a few practical suggestions. Number 1: Open yourself up to a new work, the beginning of a new revelation of Torah. God gave humanity the Torah 3,400 years ago, but that's not enough. We have to receive it yearly and monthly and weekly and daily. And now is a very special time for that to happen in the year. Trust that He is doing this now. R' Alon Anava brings from the Arizal that the night of Shavuot determines one's connection to the Torah for an entire year. I don't know if that's true or not. But understand that we are positioning ourselves now in relation to the Torah, an attitude of submission toward God through submission to His Torah. Reach out for it with some eagerness. The suggestion from our Jewish brothers is that we stay up all night learning Torah, if we can, or stay up as long as we can. R' Anava explains that it's not just about learning Torah all night. It's about humbling ourselves before Him. We say to Him, "I want this. I'm willing to forgo my personal comfort for this because I want to be drawn closer to You through this Torah." In order to receive a filling, we must first empty ourselves. This is an attitude of humility.

Number 2, R' Anava says that we should focus on love for others at this time, which is the heart of the Torah and the summation of the Torah. And love is expressed through giving. Work on giving at this time. R' Anava says to pay attention to those places where you expect to receive, where you want to take, and turn it around so that you give.

Lastly here, a warning: adolescence is a time when the authorities over us are handing some authority over to us, giving us more control over our own lives to make our own decisions. It's easy to trip right after Shavuot. Again, the pattern is that there is a fall after Shavuot. You might find that God has removed some kind of filter for you that was only there by His grace up until now. Be on guard. We are stepping up to make a promise now to walk according to His Torah, which is love for Him and others. That's going to be tested. Expect it. And though it may be inevitable that we stumble, we still fight to stay upright as much as we can.

Yeshua

Let's turn now to a focus on Yeshua in this discussion. On the surface, Shavuot seems perhaps the least directly connected to Yeshua of all the annual mo'edim. Of course we know that Yeshua is the Word. Yeshua is the Torah that God speaks forth through which all of creation is made. 1 Corinthians chapter 8 tells us that we are made FOR the Father, and we are made THROUGH Yeshua. So Yeshua is very much the center of this mo'ed in the form of the Torah.

But I want to make a connection here to the discussion about the Spirit by drawing our attention to a verse from Acts 2, the chapter where we see the outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples at Shavuot. Acts 2:32-33 says, "This Yeshua God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." What I want to point out here is that the Spirit comes THROUGH Yeshua. God gives the Spirit to Yeshua, and Yeshua pours out the Spirit on us. God pours the Spirit through Yeshua to us. Listen again to the passage: "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having

received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”

Everything from the Father comes through the Son to us, including the Spirit. We exist through Him. God gives to us through Him and no other. And He is our ultimate example of how we are to be a pipe and not a bucket, as Grant would say. We are to be a conduit of the Spirit to this world, not a bucket that holds the Spirit and God’s blessing inside of us like a bucket.

Well, again, part of what I am aiming to do in all of these teachings is to show how every detail in the Word and in the world are all working together, planned, all telling one story, the story of salvation. When we glimpse this, we just stand in awe of our Creator. And these details also extend to every detail of our own lives. Speaking of Grant, it’s not a coincidental detail that Grant’s last Shabbat leading BT was within days of Shavuot. This is particularly appropriate because, as I see it, the task God gave Grant was leading a group of people out of a narrow place and back to the Torah. This is the role Moses occupies, a prophetic role that reaches out with a firm but loving hand to bring correction and clarity to God’s Word. It’s a role deeply connected to Shavuot. Once that phase was completed, Grant and Robin were free to step away. And we are now as a body of Beth Tikkun in the period of development that follows, a period that is marked by a deeper intimacy.

Well, that’s all for today. Thank you for listening. You can check out the outline linked below the video. May God make us a people who humbly receive the Word, knowing that in doing so, we are embracing Yeshua, and it is salvation for us. May we be a people with whom Yeshua can trust the precious gift of the Holy Spirit. May we be a people who live the Torah of love for God and our neighbors. And may we fully rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.