



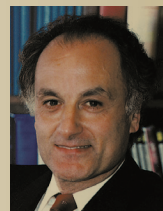
Shavuot and Shalom

Shavuot, perhaps more than any other Jewish festival, deserves the attention of *Shabbat Shalom* for it is the festival that celebrates the historical experience of “covenant.” This is the time when Israel received the Torah and responded to God’s call to receive it. This is also the festival that reminds that the infinite God has come down to relate with humankind, involving both Israel and the nations. On Shavuot, we celebrate not merely Israel’s response to God’s particular election but also the potential response of the nations:

Why was the Torah not given in the Land of Israel? In order that the nations of the world should not say: “Because it was given in Israel’s land, we do not accept it.” Lest one group say: “In my territory, the Torah was given”: therefore, the Torah was given in the desert, publicly, and openly in a place belonging to no one. To three things, the Torah was likened: to the desert, to fire, and to water. This is to tell you that just as those three things are free to all who come into the world, so also are the words of the Torah free to all who come into the world. (*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ismael* on Exodus 20:2).

Shavuot is the festival that then brings the Jew and the Gentile together to enjoy the Torah and fulfill God’s promise to redeem the world. For the Jews, Shavuot which means *weeks* reminds of the seven weeks that stretch from Passover to this feast and is also called the day of the first fruits which is a reminder of God’s blessing in the prospect of the promised land. For the Christians, Shavuot has become Pentecost, which is the translation of the Hebrew word *shavuot*, and means the first fulfillment of God’s promise as it happened in the book of Acts (chap. 2).

In this special issue devoted to Shavuot, the Jew and the Christian will be able to remember that Salvation is not their own work to boast about, but it is from above just as is the Torah, just as is the Messiah. May this Jewish-Christian reflection on Shavuot draw the Jew and the Christian, Ruth and Naomi, nearer in their common gratitude to the God who saved them and in their common hope for the promised land of peace and life.



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