

PENTECOST AS FESTIVAL OF THE GIVING OF THE LAW

by MOSHE WEINFELD

It is still a prevalent view that Pentecost as a festival commemorating the revelation at Sinai and giving of the law (זמן מתן תורתנו)¹ cannot be earlier than the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Thus for example, E. Lohse in his article Πεντηκοστή² states that 'only in the Christian period do we find evidence that later Judaism linked this feast too with the events of the age of Moses, and particularly remembered the giving of the law at Sinai on this day. The immediate occasion for thus changing the meaning of Pentecost was the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. which meant that the ancient pilgrimage could no longer be held nor the first fruits and sacrifices offered in the temple' (Engl. Transl. p. 48).³ It is true, that in the last decade this view has been challenged especially by French scholars. Thus J. Potin in his *La Fête Juive de la Pentecôte* (*Lectio Divina* 65, I-II, 1971)⁴ argues that Pentecost as 'Festival of the Covenant' goes back to the second or even the third century B.C.E. and in this he was actually anticipated by other French scho-

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1. Cf. Amidah liturgy of *Shavuot*. See J. Elbogen, *Der Jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*³, 1931, p. 138.

2. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum NT*, Band VI, 1959, s.v. (English translation in *Theological Dict. of NT*, vol. VI, 1968).

3. Compare also 'Shavuot,' *Encyc. Judaica*, vol. 14, col. 1320: 'In rabbinic times a remarkable transformation took place . . . the festival became the anniversary of the giving of the Torah.' Cf. also J. Howard Marshall, 'The Significance of Pentecost,' *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 30 (1977), p. 349.

4. I am grateful to Prof. R.J. Tournay O.P. for drawing my attention to this study.

lars.⁵ In general however, scholars still cling to the conventional view, i.e. that Pentecost as the festival of the giving of the law is late. It is admitted that some Jewish sects associated Pentecost with the Covenant but officially—so it is argued—the festival of the giving of the law was not celebrated before the second century C.E. Thus, for example, J. Kremer in his recent monograph *Pfingstbericht und Pfingstgeschehen* (Stuttgarter Bibel Studien 63/64, 1973) states:

die Erinnerung an die Gesetzgebung am Sinai, die im Rabbinischen Schriften mit Pfingsten verbunden wird, wurde allerdings erst nach der Zeit der Zerstörung des Tempels allgemein damit in Verbindung gebracht (p. 29).

and this in spite of the fact that he himself associates the Pentecost story in Acts 2:1-13 with the Sinai tradition.

This sceptic attitude towards Pentecost as festival of the giving of the law has penetrated Jewish scholarship too, cf. e.g., G. Alon, *מחקרים בתולדות ישראל*, pp. 111, n. 91 and S. Safrai, *העליה לרגל בימי בית שני*, 1965 p. 189 and n. 143, although some leading Jewish scholars in the past argued for the antiquity of the festival.⁶

In this study we try to clarify the covenantal nature of the Pentecost by tracing its origins to the Old Testament literature (Psalms and Chronicles) and by showing its continuation in the Second Temple period.

COVENANTAL FESTIVAL

a) According to Ex. 19 the revelation at Sinai took place in the third month (Siwwan), the month in which Pentecost is due according to the Pharisaic as well as to the Essene and Qumran calendar. Though there is no evidence in the law that the Sinai theophany was commemorated as was Exodus, (cf. Ex. 12) indications of such commemoration may be found in the Psalmic literature. Psalm 50 opens with a theophany which is similar to that of Sinai; (compare especially *ה' מסיני בא... הופיע מהר פארן* (v. 2) with Deut. 33:2 *מציון... אלהים הופיע*) However there the scene takes place in Zion and not in Sinai.

5. Compare also R. Le Déaut, 'Pentécôte et tradition juive,' *Assemblées du Seigneur* 51 (1963), pp. 22-38; M. Delcor, 'Pentécôte' in *Diction. de la Bible, Suppl.* VII 1966, 858-879, idem, *Rev. Bibl.* 79 (1972), pp. 610-614.

6. Cf. H. Albeck, *Das Buch der Jubiläen und die Halacha*, pp. 15-16, J. Heinemann, *Philons Griechische und Jüdische Bildung*, p. 128.

God, the Lord . . . spoke and summoned the world from east to west. From Zion, perfect in beauty God appeared – let our God come and not keep silence. Devouring fire runs before him, and rages around him fiercely. He summoned the heavens above, and the earth to the judgement of his people. Bring in my devotees who made a covenant with me over sacrifice . . . The heavens proclaimed his righteousness . . .

It seems that this passage reflects a dramatization of the Sinai theophany in Jerusalem. As at the covenant of Sinai so here God reveals himself in storm and fire, he calls from heaven to his people and asks to gather the ones who made a covenant with him over sacrifice (cf. Ex. 24:5). At last he proclaims:

Listen my people and I will speak	שמעה עמי ואדברה
O, Israel I will instruct you	ישראל אעידה בך
I am God, your God.	אלהים אלהיך אנכי

The last sentence is none other than a chiasmic quotation of אלהיך ה' אלוהיך of the decalogue, but because of its Elohist setting (being embedded in the group of Elohist psalms) the tetragrammaton was transformed into Elohim. In the continuation of the psalm we find admonition against stealing, adultery and false witness (v. 18-19), crimes enumerated in the decalogue.

Another psalm in which the first two commandments of the decalogue are quoted is Ps. 81. Here a festival is explicitly mentioned:

Blow the horn of the New Moon
 On the full moon for our feast day (ליום חגגנו)
 For it is a law for Israel
 A ruling of the God of Jacob.
 He imposed it as a decree upon Joseph
 When he went forth from the land of Egypt
 I heard a language that I know not.
 I relieved his shoulder of the burden
 His hands were freed from the basket . . .
 I answered you from the secret place of thunder
 I tested you at the waters of Meribah.
 Hear my people and I will instruct you (ואעידה בך)
 You shall have no foreign god
 You shall not bow to an alien god
 I the Lord am your God
 Who brought you out of the land of Egypt . . .
 (translation according to *Psalms*, JPS, 1972)

Here we find a festival involved in a theophany which occurs after the Exodus and is associated with the decalogue. The first two commandments are quoted chiastically **ה' אלהיך לא יהיה בך אל זר ולא תשתחוה לאל נכר אנכי ה' אלהיך**. Before the citation of the commandments the trial at the waters of Meribah is mentioned (v. 8) which reflects the sequence of the events as told in the Book of Exodus: waters of Meribah (Chap. 17) and then the story of revelation (chap. 19-20).

In this revelation God is depicted as answering from the secret place of thunder **רעם** **אענך** **בסתר** which undoubtedly points to the Sinai tradition where God answered Moses in thunder (liter. voice and see below) from the cloud (ex. 19:19, comp. Ps. 99:7 **בעמוד ענן ידבר אליהם**) while the horn was blowing. Similarly we read in Deut. 5:19 that God spoke to the congregation out of fire and cloud with a mighty 'voice', compare v. 20: 'You heard the voice out of the darkness.' The appearance of God in secret (**סתר**) out of the darkness while giving his voice (= thunder) is also mentioned in Ps. 18: 'He made darkness around him his secret place . . . the Lord thundered from heaven. The Most High gave forth his voice (**וירעם בשמים ה' ועליון יתן קולו**) (vv. 12-14). It is clear that here 'thunder' equals 'voice' as we find elsewhere in the Bible and in the ancient Near East.⁷ As in Ps. 50 where the verb **העיד** is used in connection with the commandments: **שמעה עמי ואדברה ישראל ואעידה בך** so in Ps. 81 the verb **העיד** precedes the quotation from the decalogue: **שמע עמי ואעידה בך**. The verse **עדות ביהוסף שמו** which occurs there likewise refers to these commandments. In fact **העיד** paired with **עדרת** is found in II Kings 17:15 and Neh. 9:34 and as Veijola has shown⁸ it means 'to impose covenantal laws.' On the other hand **העיד** has the connotation of 'instruct' as pointed out by Couroyer.⁹ It is interesting to note that in the Jewish Pentecost service a so called liturgy of **אזהרות** (linked to the decalogue) was recited (J. Elbogen, *Gottesdienst*, p. 217) which seems to have very ancient roots. Indeed **הזהרה** like **העיד** means 'to warn'¹⁰ as well as 'to instruct' and it is possible that the liturgical tradition of **אזהרות** is traced back to liturgical situations like those reflected in Pss. 50 and 81. It is then plausible to assume that Pentecost stands at the background of Pss. 50 and 81. It is true that the festival implied here could also be the New Year as Mowinckel suggested¹¹ and as was interpreted by the Rabbis¹² however this still remains a conjecture, whereas the sequence of events as depicted in Ps. 81 seem to point towards Pentecost and not the New Year. The blowing of the horn in Ps. 81 belongs to the ceremony of covenant renewal as may be learned from the Asa episode in II Chr. 15:10 f., quoted below, where blowing the horn accompanies the covenantal oath. It is likely that just as the Jubilee which follows seven yearly weeks (שבע שבתות שנים) was inaugurated by

7. Cf. my article in *Eretz Israel* vol. 14 (H.L. Ginsberg Festschrift), (forthcoming).

8. T. Veijola, *Ugarit Forschungen* 8 (1976), pp. 343 ff.

9. B. Couroyer, *Revue Biblique* 82 (1975), pp. 206 ff.

10. See J.L. Seeligmann, *Hebräische Wortforschung*, W. Baumgartner Festschrift (SVT 16), pp. 265 ff.

11. S. Mowinckel, *Le décalogue*, 1927, p. 129 f. Cf. also G. von Rad, *Gesam. Studien zum A.T.*, 1961, pp. 28 ff.

12. Cf. B. Rosh Hashanah 8a, b.

blowing the horn (Lev. 25:9) so also the Pentecost which comes after seven weeks (Lev. 23:15: שבע שבתות) was celebrated by blowing the horn.

b) A covenant ritual performed in the third month and most likely on *Shavuoth* is described in II Chr. 15:10 ff. Here we read that the people gathered in Jerusalem in the third month¹³ and after sacrificing, entered the covenant to seek the Lord 'with all their heart and soul' and bound themselves by oath to the Lord through acclamation and sounds of trumpets and horns. The oath here is a covenantal oath¹⁴ undoubtedly constituting a renewal of the first Sinaitic covenant ratified by a pledge accompanied by sacrifices (Exod. 24:3 ff.)¹⁵ The word שבועה which occurs three times in the passage points towards a connection with the name שבועות¹⁶ The double meaning of שבועות is explicitly referred to in the Book of Jubilees 6:21: 'this feast is two fold and of double nature.'¹⁷ The sounding of horns in the discussed passage finds its analogy in the sound of the horn at the revelation at Sinai in Exodus 19:16,19. As has been seen by Ehrlich, blowing the horn belongs to the oath ritual, a custom which persists in Judaism until this day.¹⁹

c) Pentecost as the covenantal festival par excellence is most clearly presented in the Book of Jubilees. The covenants with Noah and Abraham were established on the fifteenth of the third month, which is the date of the Pentecost, in accordance with the calendar of this book²⁰ as well as with the calendar of the Qumran sect.²¹

13. The Targum adds in v. 11 here בחגא דשבויעא see A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* IVa, p. 45.

14. For 'oath and covenant' as hendiadys cf. my article ברית in *Theol. Wörterbuch zum AT*, I, 1973.

15. II Chr. 15:15 recounts that the people 'rejoiced at the oath because they had bound themselves with all their heart and had sought him with all their will' (בכל רצונם). The 'joy' (שמחה) coupled with 'willingness' (רצון) found here, express the legal idea of free and uncoerced will of the one who takes upon himself the obligation. cf. V. Muffs, 'Joy and Love as metaphorical expressions of willingness and spontaneity in cuneiform, ancient Hebrew and related literatures,' *Morton Smith Festschrift*, vol. III, 1975, pp. 1 ff. Compare also the evening liturgy of the Shema Benediction: בשמחה רבה... ימלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם... 'they took upon themselves his kingdom, willingly... with great joy.' For רצון and שמחה and its legal connotation cf. the discussion of Muffs, op. cit., pp. 21 ff.

16. On the tendency for 'double meanings' in the Book of Chronicles, cf. Y. Zakowitch, שם כפל מרשי שם, MA thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 166 ff.

17. Cf. R.H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees*, 1902 ad loc. Charles comments: 'why this festival should be said to be 'of a double nature' I do not see.' (p. 53, n. 21). According to our view the double nature of the festival lies the double meaning of the root שבע, which underlies חג שבועות. It should be added however, that Pentecost in the Book of Jubilees is of a double nature: it is associated with the pledge of the Lord to the Patriarchs on the one hand and with the pledge of the Israelites to the Lord on the other.

18. Cf. A. Ehrlich, מקרא כפשוטו, ad loc.

19. For blowing the horn in the oath ritual cf. *Aruch Completum* s.v. הסת (p. 229) ותוקעין: בשופר עם האלה

20. See Charles, op. cit. p. 52 to vv. 17-18.

21. Cf. טלמון, מחקרים במגילות גנוזות, ספר זכרון לא.ל. סוקניק, תשי"ז, עמ. 77 ואילך.

We are told in the Book of Jubilees that Noah was the first one to celebrate the feast of weeks and therefore was commanded that the future generations 'should celebrate the feast of weeks in this month once a year, to renew the covenant every year' (6:17). A similar injunction is proclaimed right after the covenant with Abram:

On that day we made a covenant with Abram, according as we had covenanted with Noah in this month and Abram renewed the festival and ordinance for himself forever (14:20).

Both covenants followed the offering of sacrifices (6:3, 14:19) as was the case with the covenant at Sinai (Exod. 24:3 ff.) and the covenant of Asa mentioned above. The covenant with Abram, concerning circumcision, was also established in the middle of the third month, (15:1) and the revelation to Jacob also takes place in the middle of the third month after celebrating the harvest festival (44:4 ff.).

d) The people of Qumran used to renew the covenant annually (1 Q Serekh 1:16 ff.) and according to an unpublished text from Qumran cave 4 the annual covenant ceremony took place at Pentecost.²²

NAME OF THE FESTIVAL

The Hebrew and Aramaic names for Pentecost as reflected in the Mishnah (passim), the Targums²³ and Josephus are *עצרתא/עצרת* (*ἄσαρθά*, Ant. 3:252). *עצרת* means 'assembly' or 'solemn gathering' which indicates that Pentecost was especially noted for its solemn convocation. It commemorated – in our opinion – the covenant assembly at Sinai. As has been shown by D.Z. Hoffman the designation *עצרת* for the Pentecost is to be explained against the background of Biblical *יום הקהל* 'the day of assembly' which in Deuteronomy marks the day of revelation and giving of the law (9:10, 10:3, 18:16).²⁴ Indeed this is the only reasonable explanation for the name *עצרת* given to the Pentecost.

That Pentecost was notorious for its solemn massive gatherings may be learned from Josephus and the New Testament. Josephus tells us twice about big gatherings in Jerusalem on Pentecost. One is at the time of the Parthian invasion in 40 B.C.E.:

when the feast called Pentecost came round the whole neighborhood of the temple and the entire city were crowded with country-folk (Bell. Jud. I, 253, comp. Antiq. XIV, 337).

22. Cf. J.T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea*, 1959, pp. 113 ff.; for additional possible evidence cf. M. Delcor, 'Pentecôte', *Dict. Bibl. Suppl.* 870–871.

23. Onkelos and Targum Jonathan Num. 28:26, Neofiti I (facsimile, Jerusalem 1970) Deut. 16:10 חגה דשבוועיה היא עצרתה

24. D.Z. Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus*, 1905-1906, II, pp. 228f.

Mark that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti translate *ביום כנישת קהלא: יום הקהל* and in Deut. 18:16 *ביומא דאתכנשו שבטיא למקבלא אורייתא:*

The second time is after the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E.:

on the arrival of the Pentecost . . . it was not the customary ritual so much as indignation which drew the people in crowds to the capital. A countless multitude flocked in from Galilee, from Idumaea, from Jericho, and from Peraea beyond the Jordan, but it was the native population of Judaea itself which, both in numbers and ardour, was pre-eminent (Bell. Jud. II, 43, comp. Antiq. XVII, 254).²⁵

In both cases the gathering is particularly noted. It is true, the gatherings were exploited for military activities, but these could not be upheld were it not for the particular solemn occasion.

Similarly we read in the Acts of the Apostles, Chap. 2, that the crowd witnessing the miracles of the Pentecost included:

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, of Judaea and Cappadocia, of Pontus and Asia, of Phrygia and Pamphylia, of Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene; visitors from Rome both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs . . . (vv. 9 ff.).²⁶

That Pentecost was outstanding for its pilgrimage may be also learned from Acts 20:16 according to which Paul wanted at all costs to spend Pentecost in Jerusalem. Philo marks Pentecost as a festival greater than Passover (*ἑτέρας ἑορτῆς μείζονος*) (De Spec. Leg. II, 176). In another place (De Spec. Leg. I, 183) he calls Pentecost the most national celebration (*δημοσελεσάτη ἑορτή*) and when describing the celebration of the Pentecost by the Therapeutae he refers to the festival as *μεγίστη ἑορτή* 'the biggest holiday.'

PENTECOST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Most instructive for our purpose is the story about the founding of the Christian congregation on the day of Pentecost as told in the Acts of the Apostles:

When the day of the Pentecost arrived (reached its course) they were all together, when suddenly there came from the sky a noise like that of a strong wind which filled the whole house . . . and there appeared to them tongues divided like flames of fire and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues as the spirit caused them to utter . . . (2:1 ff.).

25. Translation according to Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library.

26. For a thorough analysis of this catalogue cf. J. Kremer, *Pfingstbericht* etc., pp. 145 ff.

The main components of this story may be found in the traditions of the law-giving at Sinai.

1) The heavenly noise and the fiery tongues have their roots in the description of the Sinai revelation as it was elaborated in the Midrashic literature of the Second Temple period. The aramaic Targums as well as Philo explain the *λόγοι* coming out of the mouth of the deity at Sinai as blazing flames becoming words or voices, a concept based apparently on Ex. 20:18: וכל העם ראים את הקלות ואת הלפידים liter.: 'all the people saw the voices and the flashes/torches.' Philo recounts that the flames (*φλόγες*) became articulate speech in the language (*διάλεκτος*) familiar to the audience (Decal. 46). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as well as Genizah Targum fragments and Neofiti similarly describe the word of God departing from his mouth as blazes and torches (Exod. 20:2)

דבירא... כד הוה נפיק מן פום קודשא יהי שמייה מברך הי כזיקין והי כברקין והי כשלהוביין/כלמפדין דינור, למפד מן ימינה ולמפד דאישא מן שמאליה, פרח וטייס באויר שייא וחזר ומתחמי על משירייתחון דישראל וחזר ומתחמי על משירייתחון דישראל וחזר ומתחקק על לוחי קיימא...²⁷

The word that went out from the mouth of the Holy one, may his Name be blessed, was like shooting stars and lightnings and like flames and torches of fire, a torch of fire to the right and a torch of flame to the left. It flew and winged swiftly in the air of the heavens and turned around and became visible in all the camps of Israel and by turning it became engraved on the two tablets of the covenant.

2) The idea of the division of flames into tongues is rooted in the Midrashic notion that each one of the Lord's words was divided into seventy tongues, that is, the languages of all the nations.²⁸ Thus we read in B. Sabbath 88b: Rabbi Yohanan said: 'The Lord gives a command, those who bring the news are a great host' (Ps. 68:12), every *dibbur* that came out from the Almighty was divided into seventy languages.²⁹ Another dictum by R. Yishmael: 'Behold my word is like fire—declares the Lord—and like a hammer that shatters rock' (Jer. 23:29). It was taught by Rabbi Yishmael: Just as the sledgehammer (when shattered by the harder rock) is divided into many slivers, so every word which was uttered by the Holy One was divided into seventy tongues.³⁰ Most significant is the overlap in phraseology between this tradition and the account in Acts: *the tongues of fire were divided*.

27. For the variants in the Targums see J. Potin, *La Fête Juive* etc. Tome II, pp. 37 ff.

28. Cf. the seventy nations in Gen. 10 and see my short commentary on Genesis, Masada, 1975, ad loc.

29. Cf. Midrash Tehilim (ed. Buber) 92:3

30. Amongst the various Rabbinic parallels which were adduced by Strack-Billerbeck to the episode in Acts 2, this dictum was also quoted but without noting its importance for understanding of the motif.

Rabbi Yishmael

דבור (כאש) נחלק לשבעים לשון
the word (like fire) was di-
vided into seventy tongues

Acts 2:3

καὶ ὠφθησαν αὐτοῖς
διαμεριζόμεναι γλώσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρός
there appeared to them
tongues divided like
flames of fire

Cf. also: 'R. Yosi bar Haninah says: As a man who strikes with a hammer on stone and the fire sparks sprinkle around . . . so the Holy discharged the *dibbur* from his mouth and it was divided into luminaries' (Midrash Tehilim to 92:3).

3) The fiery tongues which rested on each of them (Acts 2:3) remind us of the divine glory or the divine diadems³¹ which were put on the head of the Israelites when they proclaimed 'we will do and obey' (נעשה ונשמע) at Sinai (B. Sabbath 88a).³²

THE SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

Following the revelation to the Christian congregation – we are told by Luke – the members of the congregation started to talk in different languages. Scholars do not know how to explain 'the talking in tongues' here. In their opinion it means 'ecstatic babbling', and according to E. Meyer, it reminds us of the activities of the bands of the popular prophets in ancient Israel.³³ Though one cannot deny the central place of the *πνεῦμα* in this tradition (see below) there is no justification for understanding 'the speaking with foreign tongues' as ecstatic babbling. Luke in Acts 2 just wants to inform us that the revelation was destined not only for the Galileans who constituted the main bulk of the population present there (2:7) but for all the nations and 'tongues' of the world. Behind the story lies the Jewish tradition that the Torah was given in seventy languages, i.e. in the languages of all the nations in the world³⁴ and it is no mere coincidence that Rabbi Yishmael who expounded the verse about the fiery word of God dividing itself into seventy tongues, was also the author of the dictum that the Torah was written on the stones of Mount Ebal in seventy languages.³⁵

31. The divine glory *הדר/זיו/כבוד* constitutes the fiery halo which surrounds the head and thus forms a crown. For the nature of the *כבוד* and its Akkadian and Egyptian equivalent *me-lammu* and *nsrt*, cf. my forthcoming article in *Eretz Israel* vol. 13 (H.I. Ginsberg Festschrift).

32. According to the earlier tradition God himself tied the diadems upon their heads while the later tradition has it that the angels did it, see E.E. Urbach, *The Sages* I, pp. 148-149.

33. Cf. e.g. E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* III, 1923, pp. 142 f., 221 ff.

34. Cf. Tosefta Sotah 8:7

35. Cf. the Mechilta on Deut. discovered by Schechter, *J. Lewy Festschrift*, p. 189.

Another Midrash speaks about God revealing himself at Sinai in four tongues (*Sifrei* to Deut. 33:2):

When the Holy . . . revealed himself to give the Torah to Israel, he talked to them not in one language but in four:

- 1) 'God came from Sinai,' this is, in Hebrew.
- 2) 'He shone forth from Se'ir,' that is, in Roman.
- 3) 'He appeared from the Mount Paran,' that is, in Arabic.
- 4) 'And came (ואתה) from רבבות קדש that is, in Aramaic.³⁶

SPEAKING TONGUES AS A SPIRITUAL GIFT

The 'fiery tongues' have their origin — as shown — in the Jewish Midrashic traditions about God's revealing the Torah in seventy languages. The 'speaking in tongues' by the members of the holy congregation³⁷ belongs however to another tradition and viz. the tradition about 'charismata' or the spiritual gifts bestowed upon the ones overtaken by the holy spirit (cf. I Cor. 12:10,28, Acts 10:44-45).³⁸ This tradition has its roots according to our view, in the story of Num. 11 about the spirit of God descending upon the seventy elders (v. 25) who were to adjudicate the tribes of Israel. As is well known this story served as the prototype for the seventy members of the Sanhedrin in the second temple period and regarding them we are told that they should know and speak³⁹ seventy languages (Tos.Sanh.8:1, Jerus. Shekalim 5:1,48d, B. Sanh. 17a, Menah. 65a). The people of the elected body of the nation upon whom the spirit of God rested were thus endowed with the gift of tongues and this is exactly what we find in the miracle story of the Pentecost.⁴⁰ If it is true — as some argue — that it is only the Apostles who received the spirit in the upper room, then the analogy with Num. 11 is even stronger. Like the elders and the Sanhedrin, the Apostles too were in charge of judging Israel (Mat. 19:28, Luke 22:29) and therefore were in need of the divine spirit.⁴¹ On the other hand it is possible that the whole community was considered as a council similar to that of the 'seventy' and therefore all its members received the holy spirit.

36. For other parallels cf. Potin, *La Fête Juive*, pp. 258 ff.

37. It is not clear altogether whether Acts 2:4 refers to the 120 men mentioned in 1:15 or to the 12 Apostles. At any rate the writer has in mind here the holy body constituting the fountain of the Christian community.

38. Cf. Beare, *JBL* 83 (1964), see also Martin *JBL* 63 (1944).

39. Every member must understand the languages and should be able to speak at least two of them. The ability to speak the languages does not mean controlling them perfectly, cf. S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, New York, 1942, pp. 15-16.

40. It seems to us that the story in the Letter of Aristeas about the seventy-two elders who translated the Torah through divine inspiration, belongs to the same category. For the story in the letter of Aristeas and its connection with the account of the revelation at Sinai, cf. most recently H.M. Orlinsky, *HUCA* 46 (1975), pp. 94 ff.

41. Cf. E. Stauffer, *ThLZ* 77 (1953), p. 202, who compares the 120 to the 120 members of the 'Knesset hagedolah.'

‘Speaking in tongues’ is a divine gift as is every propensity and talent but it is no more than a medium of communication. It was especially important for the Christian congregation which was comprised of people from different nations. ‘Speaking in tongues’ was needed not only for the translation of the message but also for understanding prayer, and this is what stands behind I Cor. 14. In this chapter we find the legitimation for praying in foreign languages.⁴² ‘Amen’ can only be said when the prayer is understood:

I will pray with my spirit but I will also pray with my understanding. I will sing⁴³ with my spirit but I will sing also with my understanding. If you utter your praises in the spirit how is the person in a layman’s position to say Amen to your prayer? For of course he does not know what you are saying (vv. 15 ff.).

‘Speaking in tongues’ is – as Beare summarized in his study – ‘one among many gifts, amid a great diversity and is less highly valued than the gift of prophecy or prayer and “praise with the mind”.’⁴⁴ It is a medium for disseminating the divine message and for understanding the prayer and is not an aim in itself.

Coming back to our main subject we may sum up in saying that the revelation as described in Acts 2 is patterned after the revelation at Sinai and the pouring of the spirit on the elders in the Sinai desert. Just as the revelation at Sinai occurred on the day of the Pentecost so the revelation to the first Christian community happened on this very day.⁴⁵ The date of the first revelation at Sinai, viz. the holiday of Pentecost served as a point of departure for other mystic experiences. Two episodes of later Jewish tradition are instructive in this respect. The first episode pertains to the story about the mystic experience of Joseph Caro (1488-1575). During the vigil of the Pentecost night (*Order of the Night of Shavuot*), a voice came out suddenly of the mouth of Caro. The people around him heard the voice, fell on their faces and everybody fainted.⁴⁶

The second episode relates to the proclamation of Shabbetai Zevi (1626-1676) as Messiah. During the vigil of the night of *Shavuot* the divine spirit rested upon Nathan

42. Cf. Mishnah Sotah 7:1.

43. ‘Sing’ here is associated with liturgy, compare 1QS X9: אֲזַמְרָה בְּדַעַת which comes before וְעַם מְרִצָּא עָרַב וּבֹקֵר אָמַר חֻקָּיו עִם מְבוֹא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה אֲבוֹאֵה בְּבֵרִית אֵל which points toward the recital of the Shema in the morning and evening, cf. M. Weinfeld, *Shnaton, An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, 1976, p. 77, n. 245, idem. *Tarbiz* 45 (1976), p. 20. Cf. also H. Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 1969, ad loc.

44. *JBL* 83 (1964), p. 246.

45. E. Haenchen (*The Acts of the Apostles, Commentary* 1971) who goes along with others in stating that evidence for the Jewish Pentecost tradition (associated with Sinai) has not been found earlier than the middle of the second century, nevertheless admits that Luke’s story is influenced by the story of Sinai and that the tongues of fire which had become tongues of speech at Sinai (relying solely on Philo) influenced the story of Acts 2 (p. 174).

46. Cf. R.J.Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, 1962, pp. 19-21.

of Gaza, and he fell into a trance and announced: 'Shabbetai Zevi is worthy to be King of Israel.'⁴⁷

It is also possible that Josephus' story in War VI, 299 f. belongs to the same category. We are told there that at Pentecost night before the war, the priests heard a noise and then a divine voice: 'We are departing hence.'⁴⁸

THE SINAITIC PROTOTYPE OF THE REVELATION TO JESUS

Just as the revelation to the first Christian community was patterned after the revelation to the Israelites at Sinai so the revelation to Jesus was patterned after the revelation to Moses. In the Sinai stories we are told that Moses ascended the Mount together with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Ex. 24:9) and after six days of waiting God called from the cloud (Ex. 24:16) and Moses entered the cloud. Following the contact of Moses with the Lord his face changed (Ex. 34:28 f.). Afterwards the tabernacle was built, when it was finished it was covered with a cloud (Ex. 40:34) out of which the Lord called unto Moses and commanded him (Lev. 1:1, cf. Deut. 31:14-15).

The story of the transfiguration has been similarly structured. Jesus ascended the Mount after six days (Mark 9:2, Mat. 17:1) together with his three followers: Peter, James and John. He was transfigured before them, following which booths were made for him and for Moses and Elijah who were with him there. After that a cloud overshadowed the booths and out of the cloud a voice was heard, proclaiming the election of Jesus.

The story of the transfiguration shows a perfect analogy with the stories about Moses at Sinai and there is no doubt therefore that the stories of the Gospels come to tell us that by ascending the Mount and speaking with Moses and Elijah Jesus became like them. As is well known, Moses and Elijah had revelations at Sinai and both of them together represent the supreme divine will as expressed in the Law and the Prophets, cf. Mal. 3:22-24, the concluding verses of the Torah and the Prophets.

It seems then that the revelation to Jesus as well as the revelation to the first Christian community were structured according to the Sinaitic narrative. The result achieved was that Jesus fulfills the role of Moses while the Christian congregation takes the place of the Israelite congregation at Sinai. The Jewish tradition about the Torah revealed by God through Moses from which Judaism drew its main inspiration was replaced in the Christian community by the revelation to Jesus on the Mount on the one hand and by the revelation to the first Christian community on Pentecost on the other.

47. Cf. G. Scholem, *Shabbatai Ševi*, Princeton, 1975, pp. 217 ff.

48. Cf. Tacitus, Hist. V, 13.