

# Immersion in the Ruach HaKodesh

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We don't often talk about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Messianic Jewish circles. First of all, it is a supernatural phenomenon, and Jews are generally more apt to believe that supernatural occurrences happened in Moses' time than to believe that such things happen today. Second, the term "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" is so *goyish*-sounding, that we are often reticent to portray it as a Jewish phenomenon that ought to be promoted in our congregations. That is no doubt the reason that, in his Complete Jewish Bible, Dr. Stern chooses to use the expression "immersed in the *Ruach HaKodesh*," rather than "baptised;" "immersed" sounds better to Jewish ears. So, in Acts 1, Stern's translation begins:

*"Dear Theophilos: In the first book, I wrote about everything Yeshua set out to do and teach, until the day when, after giving instructions through the Ruach HaKodesh to the emissaries whom he had chosen, he was taken up into heaven. After his death he showed himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. During a period of forty days they saw him, and he spoke with them about the Kingdom of God. At one of these gatherings, he instructed them not to leave Yerushalayim but to wait for "what the Father promised, which you heard about from me. For Yochanan used to immerse people in water; but in a few days, you will be immersed in the Ruach HaKodesh!" (Acts 1:1-5).*

But what does Yeshua mean by "you will be immersed in the *Ruach HaKodesh*," and what is its value? We read a little further and we find out, as Yeshua explains:

*"But you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh comes upon you; you will be my witnesses both in Yerushalayim and in all Y'hudah and Shomron, indeed to the ends of the earth!" (Acts 1:8).*

So apparently, when the disciples are immersed in the Holy Spirit they will receive power that they did not previously have, and that will enable them to be Yeshua's witnesses both in the Holy Land (i.e. to their fellow Jews), and "to the ends of the earth," meaning to the Gentile nations. I imagine that the disciples understood Yeshua's words, but did not fully appreciate that they did not already have the power of which Yeshua was speaking. After all, they knew Yeshua personally. They had lived with Him and were taught by Him both before and after His crucifixion and resurrection. How more empowered could they be?

Anyway, as Scripture continues, Yeshua is taken up to heaven before the disciples' very eyes, after which "they returned the Shabbat-walk distance from the Mount of Olives to Yerushalayim." (Act 1:12). But why were the disciples hanging out in Jerusalem in the first place? The average answer you will hear is "because Jesus told them to," but that is not the reason. The reason is that *Shavu'ot*, the Feast of Weeks (that Christians call Pentecost), was ten days away, and the disciples needed to be in Jerusalem to perform their firstfruits sacrifice in obedience to Leviticus 23:15-16.

You notice that Yeshua did not tell the disciples to go to Jerusalem – he told them to stay there, and stay there they did. Then ..

*The festival of Shavu'ot arrived, and the believers all gathered together in one place. Suddenly there came a sound from the sky like the roar of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on each one of them. They were all filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and began to talk in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. Now there were staying in Yerushalayim religious Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered; they were confused, because each one heard the believers speaking in his own language. Totally amazed, they asked, "How is this possible? Aren't all these people who are speaking from the Galil? How is it that we hear them speaking in our native languages?" (Acts 2:1-8)*

These diverse languages are what some translations call "tongues," and the powerful happening that occurred was what Yeshua promised: "you will be immersed in the Ruach HaKodesh," that is, "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (NKJ) (Acts 1:5), and ".. you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh comes upon you;" (Acts 1:8a).

This immersion in the Holy Spirit that was accompanied by power and tongues was not just a one-time thing, for we read in Acts 10:45-46 how it happened again in Peter's ministry later on:

*"All the believers from the Circumcision faction who had accompanied Kefa were amazed that the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh was also being poured out on the Goyim, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God."*

And also in Acts 19:1-6, we read:

*"While Apollos was in Corinth, Sha'ul completed his travels through the inland country and arrived at Ephesus, where he found a few talmidim. He asked them, "Did you receive the Ruach HaKodesh when you came to trust?" "No," they said to him, "we have never even heard that there is such a thing as the Ruach HaKodesh." "In that case," he said, "into what were you immersed?" "The immersion of Yochanan," they answered. Sha'ul said, "Yochanan practiced an immersion in connection with turning from sin to God; but he told the people to put their trust in the one who would come after him, that is, in Yeshua." On hearing this, they were immersed into the name of the Lord Yeshua; and when Sha'ul placed his hands on them, the Ruach HaKodesh came upon them; so that they began speaking in tongues and prophesying."*

Even before the Holy Spirit fell on *Shavu'ot*, and while Yeshua was in his resurrected human form, He directed His disciples prophetically:

*"As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation. Whoever trusts and is immersed will be saved; whoever does not trust will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who do trust: in my name they will drive out demons, speak with new*

*tongues, not be injured if they handle snakes or drink poison, and heal the sick by laying hands on them."*

(Mark 16:15-18)

There are believers both within Messianic Judaism and Christianity who do not believe that what happened at *Shavu'ot* in the First Century can happen today. Although I can show you from Scripture that it can, my time in giving this message is limited, and I want to make the point through my own testimony.

I remember the time shortly after I committed myself to Yeshua and was, as the Scriptures say, "*Born Again!*" My entire life had changed from the way it was, and I was on fire for the Lord. I eagerly devoured the Scriptures and even gave up practicing law for a time, because I perceived that my practice did not measure up to what the Bible taught. I was also studying in a doctoral psychology program, and I gave that up too for the same reason. I wanted to learn, and I couldn't contain my enthusiasm about my new-found Truth. What more could there be? Well, there was more that I was not able to conceive of until I, like the disciples, was immersed in the Holy Spirit.

In reflection, I was energized by the enthusiasm of my discoveries that God was real and that Yeshua was the Messiah but, although I was not aware of it, the way I approached my life in Yeshua was driven more by my intellect than by spiritual empowerment. I studied a lot, and learned a lot, thought that I knew a lot, and was quick to offer what I knew to others. So far as I was concerned, I had it all.

But one day, I was invited to a meeting of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. I didn't want to go but I did and, after the speaker concluded his message, he called for those who wanted to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to come up and be prayed-for. I didn't go up because I figured I didn't need that kind of hocus pocus, but as I was walking across the room toward the exit, one of the Fellowship members whom I did not know and who did not know me, called to me: "Sir," he said, "Would you like to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Come up and let us pray for you."

Well, I was embarrassed to say that I did not want something that was supposedly of God, so I allowed him and another man to lay their hands on my head and pray. And they prayed, and they pushed on my head. And they prayed, and they pushed on my head some more. I had previously seen people fall to the floor when people prayed for them, and I didn't like it at all. Apparently, these two guys who were pushing on my head wanted me to fall down like the others had done, and I wasn't about to falsify my witness by complying. But they were persistent, and eventually I decided that the only way I was going to get out of their clutches was to make them happy by falling down, and so I did. And the ruse worked, because as soon as I let myself fall, they stopped pushing and praying, and walked away leaving me on the floor feeling foolish.

But then something strange happened. As I was lying on the floor, my jaw began to move spasmodically as though on a rubber band. Wow, that's weird, I thought. "What in the world is this?" I wasn't saying anything, but my mouth was moving by itself. I had heard of the gift of

tongues that was associated with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; could this be it? But I wasn't making a sound, so I decided to try and vocalize a sound through my moving mouth to see what would happen. When I did, my mouth began emitting sounds that seemed to be words, but words that I could not understand. Far out! (That's an expression we used in those days). I let it happen for a while, and then thought: "I wonder if I can stop it?" So, I tried to stop my mouth from moving and found that I could. It was under my control but, when I relaxed, the movement of my mouth resumed. When I had had enough, I got up, found Marie, and went home. Marie had been in another part of the large crowded room and had not seen any of this, for which I was grateful.

I assumed that I had spoken in what the Christians said were tongues but, in the days that followed, the automatic tongues I had experienced did not resume. Day after day I hid away and tried to mouth sounds, but they were unnaturally forced, and seemed to just be gibberish. I shared my consternation with a friend who had heard that trying to sing in tongues sometimes brought them out. I tried it, and it worked; apparently, I was inhibiting the flow of the tongues because I had gotten emotionally worked up over trying and failing, and the singing relaxed me; at least that is what I suppose was the reason. Eventually, my tongues became fluent without my having to sing and, ever since, I have been able to pray easily with words that I do not understand. As for the automatically uttered tongues that I first experienced, they never returned, and I never heard of anyone else who had experienced them the way I had.

The tongues was interesting, but it is not what was most significant. What was significant is that, from the day I first spoke in tongues, my spiritual emphasis shifted from the cerebral to the supernatural, and it dramatically deepened the way I related to God and understood the Bible.

Now let's go back to the Scriptures and try to understand why immersion in the Holy Spirit was so important for the disciples, and why it is equally important for us today. Yeshua's disciples were promised power that would be brought upon them by the Holy Spirit – such power as to enable them to become witnesses to Yeshua the world over. We at Ohev Yisrael need that power also, to have the boldness, the wisdom, and the effectiveness to lead those to whom we witness to a saving knowledge of Yeshua, and to oppose the evil one who would keep us from doing it. We need that power to be able to rid ourselves and others of unclean spirits that the enemy sends to oppose us, and we need it to heal and to ward off afflictions that he would bring upon us to keep us from succeeding.

When we read the account in Acts of what happened at *Shavu'ot*, what initially jumps out at us is the phenomenon of speaking with foreign tongues – that is, languages that were not naturally known by the believers who were assembled. But what should impress us more is that the disciples of Yeshua who were immersed in the Holy Spirit were imbued with power just as Yeshua had promised. Consider, for example, the boldness of Peter after he received the Holy Spirit:

*Acts 2:14-21: "Then Kefa stood up with the Eleven and raised his voice to address them: "You Judeans, and all of you staying here in Yerushalayim! Let me tell you what this means! Listen carefully to me! These people aren't drunk, as you suppose- it's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken about through the prophet Yo'el: 'ADONAI says: "In*

*the Last Days, I will pour out from my Spirit upon everyone. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my slaves, both men and women, will I pour out from my Spirit in those days; and they will prophesy. I will perform miracles in the sky above and signs on the earth below- blood, fire and thick smoke. The sun will become dark and the moon blood before the great and fearful Day of ADONAI comes. And then, whoever calls on the name of ADONAI will be saved.*

Peter continued to speak boldly of Yeshua – how Yeshua had demonstrated that He was from God by performing "*powerful works, miracles, and signs*" in the presence of those assembled, and that they, nevertheless, sent Him to the Romans to be crucified. But as it was prophesied about the Messiah, death would not be able to keep its hold on Him; and Peter concluded by saying:

*God raised up this Yeshua! And we are all witnesses of it!" (Acts 2:32).*

That's it! That's what we want! That's what we need! We need God's Spirit poured out in this very room. We need God's Spirit poured out in our homes. We need to see those wonders in heaven and signs in the earth. We need assurance that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, any unbeliever who ventures through our doors will come under conviction to call on the Name of the Lord and be saved! Notice that when the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples, Peter stood up and spoke in boldness. Peter the fisherman. A moment earlier he didn't have such knowledge and such boldness. But after he was immersed in the Holy Spirit he became different. He went on to testify about Yeshua as we continue to read in verse 33:

*"Moreover, he has been exalted to the right hand of God; has received from the Father what he promised, namely, the Ruach HaKodesh; and has poured out this gift, which you are both seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into heaven. But he says, 'ADONAI said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Therefore, let the whole house of Isra'el know beyond doubt that God has made him both Lord and Messiah- this Yeshua, whom you executed on a stake!"*

*"On hearing this, they were stung in their hearts; and they said to Kefa and the other emissaries, "Brothers, what should we do?" Kefa answered them, "Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh! For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away- as many as ADONAI our God may call!" He pressed his case with many other arguments and kept pleading with them, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation!" So those who accepted what he said were immersed, and there were added to the group that day about three thousand people." (Acts 2:33-41)*

Now let us be clear. Being immersed in the Holy Spirit is distinct from being Born Again of the Spirit, and while "tongues" often accompanies the immersion, it does not always. We indeed need the Holy Spirit to be reborn, and that is a work of the Holy Spirit's power. But there is an extra measure of power that is given to us when we are immersed in the Holy Spirit, and this filling does not always occur when we first confess Yeshua.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, there are many

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<sup>1</sup> Some persons are Born Again and immersed in the Holy Spirit at the same time or in close succession.

of us who are Born Again (i.e. marked for eternal life) and yet have never experienced the fullness of the Spirit's power. In Acts 8:14-17, there is a biblical account of new believers in Yeshua who, even after being water-immersed in the Name of Yeshua, did not receive the Holy Spirit until hands were laid on them at a later time:

*"When the emissaries in Yerushalayim heard that Shomron had received the Word of God, they sent them Kefa and Yochanan, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Ruach HaKodesh. For until then he had not come upon any of them; they had only been immersed into the name of the Lord Yeshua. Then, as Kefa and Yochanan placed their hands on them, they received the Ruach HaKodesh."*

So, in conclusion: There is an immersion of the Holy Spirit (some call it a filling of the Spirit) that imbues us with greater power than most of us experienced when we first received Yeshua and became Born Again.<sup>2</sup> I have more to say about this and about praying and prophesying in tongues, but the time I am allotted for this message requires that I stop at this point. There are some in this room who need a filling of Holy Spirit but don't realize it. That is easy to understand because, for some of us (as it was for me), the experience of being Born Again resulted in such an extreme make-over that we cannot conceive of there being more. That was what I thought, but I was wrong. So, at the close of the service, I invite anyone who has not yet been immersed in the Holy Spirit and would like to be, to come forward for prayer.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*