

# Torah and The Ruach

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Last week we heard the testimony of Rabbi Jason Sobel – how, when he encountered the power of the Holy Spirit, it changed his life and his ministry. I testified to you myself, previously, of my similar experience with the Spirit – how before the Holy Spirit came upon me, my belief, while strong, lacked a dimension of the supernatural and God’s power. I still have difficulty describing the difference because it was subtle at first. The most I can say for sure is that my relationship with God became more experiential and less theological – a return, in a way, to my first powerful encounter with God in 1976.

Jason and I have in common, that we both appreciate our need, as Jews, to live *Torah*-observant lives and to model it for others. Yet, when we received the Holy Spirit and incorporated the Spirit’s power, years after we first came to faith, it made a large difference in both our lives.

Although Jason and I had different initial encounters with the Spirit, our resulting experiences were not so different, yet the episodes that took us by surprise shouldn’t have surprised us, because the *Torah* is replete with references to the Holy Spirit. Here are some of them:

Genesis 1:1-3: *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”*

From this we see that God’s Spirit was involved in the creation of the world.

Exodus 31:1-5: *“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.”*

Here we see that God’s Spirit was needed for understanding, knowledge, workmanship and wisdom to create artifacts to be used in worshiping God. It is intriguing to think that, before Bezalel received the Holy Spirit, he may have been had the two largest thumbs in all of Israel.

Numbers 11:16-17: *“So the LORD said to Moses: “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.”*

Here we see another empowering by the Spirit – this time for wisdom to sit as judges in to be able to relieve Moses. Notice that this time God transferred some of the Spirit that was already

upon Moses and distributed it among the seventy elders. That is not the only time that God moved His Spirit from person to person but, for now, I want to just look at the *Torah*. Now here is expansion of the occurrence just mentioned; it is interesting because the Holy Spirit sought out two individuals who were supposed to be at the Tabernacle along with others to receive Him, but for some reason they did not go:

Numbers 11:25-30: *“Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!” “Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!” And Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.”*

This next occurrence of the Spirit falling upon a man is actually amusing because it caused an enemy of Israel to praise Israel against his will:

Numbers 24:2-5: *“And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him. Then he took up his oracle and said: “The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened, the utterance of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down, with eyes wide open: “How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!”*

I have heard it said that under the Mosaic Covenant the Holy Spirit came UPON certain people, but under the New Covenant He dwelt WITHIN people. Here is an example in the Torah that contradicts that, where God specifically informs Moses that Joshua has the Holy Spirit within him:

Numbers 27:18-19: *“And the LORD said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight.”*

But I think the most impressive statement about the Holy Spirit is found in Psalms shortly after David’s sin was exposed. In Psalm 51:11 David pleads with God:

*“Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.”*

You see here that David associates having the Holy Spirit with being in God’s presence, and that is really what I want to talk to you about today.

When we talk about living a Torah-observant Jewish life, we are talking about modern Jewish life – not First Century Jewish life. First Century Jewish life and Jewish life throughout the entire Mosaic Covenant period involved a full appreciation of the power of the Holy Spirit; it was a Jewish reality during the entire time that the Temple stood and the Levitical Priesthood served. That is why there are so many references to the Spirit in the *Tanakh*. However, something profound happened to Judaism after 70 AD. The Second Temple was destroyed, and Jewish focus on the presence of God and Holy Spirit Power went away with it. Judaism was thrown into a crisis, and influential rabbis of the time, in an attempt to save Judaism, led it into changing its assumptions regarding what Jews were required to do in order to please God. Whereas animal sacrifices in the Temple used to be the basis for atonement for sin, good works and keeping the commandments of Torah was now said to be an acceptable substitute and, although the Holy Spirit had already made Himself available on the *Shavuot* following Yeshua's death, the Spirit was not received by the majority of the Jews of the day, in the same way as Yeshua was not received. That is why the Judaism that resulted and that came down to us as Rabbinical Judaism related to God in ways that were mostly not experiential; in short, the Holy Spirit was not on the Jewish radar screen as having anything to do with contemporary Jewish life and practice.

Enter now modern Messianic Judaism – a Jewish rediscovery of Yeshua and the Holy Spirit. But our first encounter with these New Covenant realities was not through Jewish sources but rather through a Christianity that did not understand the Jewish calling to Torah – a Christianity that saw Torah law as in opposition to the grace and salvation of Yeshua, and also in opposition to what it termed “liberty” in the Holy Spirit. A Christianity that, over the millennia, did all it could to distance itself from Jewish practices of the Torah, even to the extent of ignoring the Bible's definition of the New Covenant which, according to Jeremiah 31, is that the Torah would be written on Jewish hearts and imbedded in Jewish minds.

Now we Jews had a part to play in this also. In response to Christianity's rejection and persecution of us, we dug in against anything we perceived to be Christian, including Yeshua and the Holy Spirit. So when God began removing the blindness from Jewish eyes to Yeshua and when, as a consequence, modern Jews in the twentieth century, myself included, discovered Yeshua, many of us thought that we had left Judaism to become Christians. When we realized that was not the case and became more settled in our Jewish identities, we did a 180 degree turn and tried to make ourselves look as Jewish as possible, modeling our practices after the synagogue that had no understanding of the Holy Spirit. We managed to fit Yeshua into our Jewish practices, but we either ignored the Holy Spirit, or incorporated Him in ways that were embarrassingly Christian.

Scripture teaches that there is a time for everything, and I think we are seeing that the time for reestablishing the Holy Spirit in *Torah* life and Jewish practice has come. I don't mean only at Ohev, but over all of Messianic Judaism. We witnessed this in Rabbi Sobel's teaching last week, in the outpouring of the Spirit at the Tikkun conference, in the UMJC's decision to conduct a seminar on “Welcoming the *Ruach HaKodesh* into Jewish Space,” and in some of the most unlikely Messianic Jews, known for their orthopraxy, turning their lives and ministries over to the Holy Spirit.

Lest we think that the center of this Holy Spirit movement is out there somewhere, I asked three of our own Jewish members to take 5 minutes apiece, and share something of their experiences related to *Torah* life and the Spirit.

Dawn Jones  
Matt Lazowski  
Doug Stearman

Thank you.

Friends, I hope you are convinced by what you have heard today and before today that we of Ohev, along with the rest of Messianic Judaism, are in the midst of the exciting realization that the Holy Spirit and *Torah* observant life go hand in hand. It is something to put at the top of all of our prayer lists.