

Welcoming the Ruach HaKodesh into Jewish Space

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The title of this panel has been announced as “Experiencing the *Ruach HaKodesh* in Jewish Space.” Actually, what I was asked to speak about was “Welcoming the *Ruach HaKodesh* into Jewish Space.” “Experiencing” and “welcoming” are a little different but not that much different, so I think what I will say to you today will be appropriate. Now in fitting together what you hear from us three panelists, you should know that none of us knows the views of the others and what the others will say, so there is a possibility that we will not agree.

There are indications that Messianic Judaism has developed a new consciousness and desire for the *Ruach HaKodesh*. In fact, the UMJC’s decision to have this seminar is one of those indications, and another is that it has come close on the heels of Tikkun’s recent conference in Pennsylvania, where the *Ruach HaKodesh* fell in power among many of us – especially among our youth. A coincidence? I don’t think so.

Tikkun thinks of its space as “Jewish,” not very different from UMJC “Jewish Space,” but when the *Ruach* fell at the Tikkun conference, the behavior of many who were gathered looked more Pentecostal than Jewish. People were falling, laying face-down on the floor, speaking in tongues for the first time, and like that. It certainly did not look like Jewish Space to me but, then again, how would I know since there is no counterpart to this experience within modern Judaism? I say “modern” Judaism because the *Ruach HaKodesh* was prophesied to, and first given to Jews on *Shavuot* about two thousand years ago, and there was plenty about it that didn’t look Jewish even then. Historically, majority Judaism did not acknowledge the New Covenant that brought universal access to the *Ruach*, and eventually Christianity picked it up, put their own cultural spin on it, and claimed it as their own. But Holy Spirit ministry should always have been considered Jewish because the Christians got it from us.

Anyway, let me share some impressions I had when the *Ruach Hakodesh* visited the Tikkun conference. As I looked over the hundreds of worshipers, I noted three kinds of behaviors. There were those who were in prayer and quiet meditative worship; that looked Jewish. There were others who were exhibiting emotion and excitement; that didn’t look very Jewish. Then there was a third group of persons who were looking around trying to figure out what to make of it all.

Years ago, I was among those who were easily distracted by exhibitions of animated emotion during Holy Spirit ministry. I suspected it as being mostly of the flesh, and it sure didn’t look Jewish. I was right about some of it being of the flesh because occasionally, people admitted to me that some of their behaviors were “put on” as a result of pressures they felt to conform to community expectations. However, over time, I observed another thing, and that was that some of those whom I saw acting strangely, seemed to accelerate in their spiritual development soon after the ministry events. Some received spiritual gifts they did not previously have, and some matured in Galatians 5 fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” The last of the fruit listed is self-control and, I am

telling you, that these spiritual advances happened immediately after ministry events that appeared to lack self-control.

Nevertheless, I could not deny the good fruit that seemed to come from those Holy Spirit ministries and, although I didn't understand them and was still uncomfortable with them as being both emotional and non-Jewish, I had to admit that God was using them for good. I eventually developed a theory of why Holy Spirit ministry and emotions so often seemed to go together, and for better or worse, I'll tell you what that theory is:

First, the God who created the entire world and maintains it, is so powerful that we humans cannot even stand up in the shadow of His presence. Although we ought not to intentionally lose control of ourselves, it is easy to do when we are in the presence of such power. That accounts for part of the emotion. The other part is that many of us are normally so self-controlled in our way of being and in our daily walk, that without meaning to, we refuse to release control to God even when we are in his awesome presence. This may have Jewish implications, because we Jews are taught from before Bar Mitzvah age how to *davven*, but we generally not taught that it is okay to feel excited in the presence of God. Anyway, in order to break through, God meets us with power during times of ministry when we are willing, "ever so slightly," to open ourselves to Him by letting go of some of our conventional and cultural inhibitions. When we do that, God gets inside us without forcing Himself on us and, the combination of God's power and our openness to Him produces a great emotional release that often surprises even us.

Now there is an important caveat to this that I would be remiss if I did not mention:

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE DO NOT JUDGE GOD'S PRESENCE OR THE FRUIT OF HIS MINISTRY BY THE FEELINGS OR EMOTIONS WE OBSERVE OR EXPERIENCE.

There are manifestations of the flesh that can mimic manifestations caused by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, so after what has seemed to be a powerful move of the *Ruach* upon us, we should ask ourselves probing questions such as:

1. In the process or afterwards, have we repented of any life-dominating sins to which we were previously in bondage?
2. Have we let go of some of our flesh, put off our old man and put on the new man of the *Ruach*?
3. Have we received *Ruach HaKodesh* gifts that we did not previously have? Discerning of Spirits? Healing? Prophecy?
4. Have we acquired more of the "Fruit of the *Ruach*?"

The answers to these questions will tell the story of whether what we experienced was the Spirit or the flesh.

So let's return to the subject of this seminar, which is "Welcoming or Experiencing the *Ruach HaKodesh* in Jewish Space." Stop and think about it for a minute; isn't that a strange title? It infers that the *Ruach HaKodesh* is not already in Jewish Space – that's why we have to invite Him in. The fact is, the *Ruach HaKodesh* has been in Jewish Space for as long as there have been Jews. He was active among the Israelites during the time of Moses and before, and His coming to dwell in all who would receive Him was prophesied to the Houses of Israel and Judah as part of the New Covenant that God made with the Jewish people. Then, centuries later, Jeremiah's prophecy came to pass when the *Ruach HaKodesh* fell upon Jews who were gathered in Jerusalem during *Shavuot*. So biblically and historically, the *Ruach HaKodesh* has a large role in defining Jewish Space, in that whatever space He occupies together with Jews HAS TO BE Jewish Space, and if we have a concept of Jewish Space that does not include the *Ruach* in a major way, there is a serious problem in our understanding. For that reason, perhaps this seminar should have been called: "Is Our Jewish Space the same as God's Jewish Space?"

I do not mean to infer that Jewish culture is unimportant or that we have no part in defining what Jewish Space is for our communities. What I am saying is that any attempt at creating Jewish Space that does not make place for the *Ruach HaKodesh* is incomplete in its foundation. It is also not God's will that we take it upon ourselves to establish Jewish Space without the Holy Spirit's participation. It would be like a committee of us writing building a Tabernacle that we call Jewish Space, and then asking the *Shechina* to dwell there. It's backwards thinking. If we want the *Ruach HaKodesh* to dwell among us, He has to tell us what Jewish Space is.

It should be obvious that if we want the *Ruach's* presence, our Jewish Space cannot be a copy of the wider Jewish Community that does yet possess New Covenant understanding. I am not suggesting that we not try to build a Jewish Space that we are used to and are comfortable in, but I am suggesting that we have to be open to change our understanding of Jewish Space once we know what the *Ruach* wants. I think some of us believe that Messianic Jewish Space should be the same as in the wider Jewish community. It is the Jewish Space of our youth – the space that gives us warm fuzzies and a sense of belonging. The problem is that it is also the Jewish Space that long ago ejected the *Ruach HaKodesh* by denying Yeshua and the New Covenant. Despite that, some of us have resisted establishing our Jewish Space in a way that would better accommodate New Covenant realities, because we have not wanted to be seen as inauthentic by the wider Jewish community. We have sometimes defended this as necessary for Jewish outreach, and there is some truth to it. But I also think that some of our motives have included fear of being rejected by the Jewish community, and pursuing comfort for ourselves through what we find familiar and pleasing. Nevertheless, if we are serious about inviting the *Ruach HaKodesh* into our Jewish Space, we are going to have to be willing to change some things about our Jewish Space, and this very likely means bearing some criticism of our Jewish authenticity.

I don't exactly know what *Ruach*-friendly Jewish Space should look like, and I am guessing that none of you do either, because God has not yet revealed it to us. But I am sure of some things about it, so allow me to share what I do know.

First, *Ruach*-friendly Jewish Space must accommodate our understanding of *Torah* and its application in the New Covenant age as being through the *Ruach HaKodesh*. We accept every word of the *Torah* as true, but without the *Ruach*, we cannot know how to apply most of it, and

that is the case for both Jews and non-Jews alike. So we have to change our emphasis from being “Messiah and *Torah*-centered” to being “Messiah, *Torah*, and *Ruach*-centered.”

Second, we should recognize that much of our Jewish Space is already *Ruach*-friendly. Bible learning, connecting to our Jewish people and to Israel – these are all *Ruach*-friendly. What is not *Ruach*-friendly is any inflexibility on our part that dissuades us from consulting the *Ruach*, or being submissive to Him if He wants to change our direction, albeit in the midst of a service or at other times.

Now a word about Jewish prayer: Jewish prayer is largely liturgical, and the nature of liturgy is that it is structured and ordered. Jewish liturgy is, for the most-part beautiful, biblical, and completely consistent with New Covenant realities, but we must also realize that it is devoid of overt New Covenant content because it was developed over time by a Judaism that did not believe in Yeshua. That does not make Jewish liturgy bad, but it makes it incomplete, so we must be willing to change it where needed, and also add New Covenant content – a lot of it. Scott does this with excellence, and I believe that any Messianic Jewish congregation that does not do it, cannot expect the *Ruach* to be powerfully present in its services. Can the *Ruach* crash through and be there of His own accord? Of course. But that is different from inviting Him.

Although we are using terms like inviting Him, the *Ruach HaKodesh* is not like any other invited guest who sits in a pew and follows along. On the contrary, when we invite Him, we invite Him to lead us; he becomes our Rabbi and *Gabai* rolled into one. When we discern His presence, we need to back off and listen. Does He want us to go this way or that way? Does He want to re-order our service or proceed as usual? And we ought to query ourselves: Will we refuse if He directs us to skip the *Amidah* for that day and, in its place, fall on our faces in pure solitary worship? Will we argue that “*Amidah*” means to stand? Will we *platz* if He directs someone to stand up and prophesy? Will we double-*platz* if the prophecy is in tongues and our *bubba* or *zede* are in the service? Welcoming the *Ruach* is more a matter of our hearts and attitudes toward His leadership than the kinds of services we have; they are what make the difference between whether He is pro forma invited, or begged to come.

I think I have been clear, but let me put it another way through a question. If the *Ruach HaKodesh* shows up, will we know what to do with Him? How to treat Him? I am reminded of the cup of Eliyahu on our *seder* tables and how we open the door, displaying our desire to receive Him because he signals Messiah’s return. But what if Eliyahu really shows up one *Pesach*? Do we just go on reading from the *Hagadah* as though he were not in our midst? Well, it is the same with the *Ruach HaKodesh*. We need to start each service by inviting Him, and expecting Him, and being ready to change everything at His direction.

Up to now, I have spoken about only one part of Jewish Space – our congregational services. Actually, there is a more foundational place where Jewish Space exists, and that is in our homes and, according to the *Sh’ma*, more broadly everywhere we happen to be as we walk by the way. It is unrealistic to think that we will experience the *Ruach HaKodesh* in congregational Jewish Space if we do not also experience Him in our private space, because He comes for us – not to experience a service. This means that each of us needs to be *Ruach*-thirsty, seeking to commune with Him continually.

I recall when I first encountered Genesis 5:24:

“And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

It impacted me between the eyes, and there and then I said to God and to myself: “That’s what I want my relationship with God to be.” And it has been, except for those times when sin on my part prevented it. And that brings me to something else I must say to you, and that is that personal holiness determines how close God will allow you to get to Him, and how close the *Ruach HaKodesh* will get to you. “And Enoch walked with God” is not a recreational statement; it is a statement of closeness between Enoch and God, and of Enoch’s relative holiness. Another way to say it is this: If you want to experience the *Ruach HaKodesh*, you don’t make an appointment with him between 2 and 3 in the afternoon. You seek to walk with Him as Enoch walked with God, living a repentant life, and always with your ears tuned to listen to His voice. Yeshua said this in Revelation 3:20:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

John heard that from Yeshua in heaven, so it is Yeshua’s invitation for the *Ruach HaKodesh* to come to us here on earth if He is asked. But the asking has to be God’s way – not ours, so the asking has to be accompanied by repentance, and a desire to walk in with God.

Back to the title of this panel: “Experiencing the *Ruach* in Jewish Space.” It had almost slipped by me, but we had better ask ourselves if we really want that. Have you heard the expression: “Beware or you may get what you wish for?” Perhaps you recall what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the *Ruach HaKodesh*? I am not suggesting that anyone plans to follow their example, but I am saying that the presence of the *Ruach HaKodesh* is serious business and nothing to trifle with. We ought not to think of Him as merely a comforter, although Scripture describes Him that way. Also, we ought not to think of Him as merely a provider of gifts, although Scripture describes Him that way also. What I am warning about is inviting Him into our space before we are sure that our hearts are right about Him and that we are ready to follow His directions. If we are not ready, it would be better for us to pray for mercy when He does make His appearance.

Let me conclude this way. We may not understand it, but we all sense the legitimacy of something we call Jewish Space, and we trying to determine how to invite the *Ruach HaKodesh* into it. The major points I want to leave you with are these: (1) If we want to experience the *Ruach HaKodesh* in Jewish Space, we need to first ask Him what He thinks Jewish Space is, and if we find it is not what we had in mind, we must nevertheless be prepared to say yea and amen to however He directs us; (2) As a corollary to point number (1), we must be prepared to bear any criticism of us that comes from the wider Jewish community that calls our resulting Jewish Space inauthentic; (3) we must turn our focus to holiness, obedience, and reliance on the *Ruach HaKodesh* to help us interpret Scripture, and show us its application in each of our lives; (4) We must repent of any inflexibility we may have in the ways we conduct our personal and congregational lives because when the Holy Spirit comes, He comes to take charge – not just to

visit; and (5) We must desire Him with all our heart and with a submissive heart, wanting to be like Enoch who walked with God.

I pray that God will bless this message and cause it to arrive at the ears of those who most need to hear it.