
YESHUA AND THE MIKVEH

THE TEXT

Mark 1:9-11. And it came to pass in those days, Yeshuah came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was immersed by Yochanan the Immerser at the Yarden (Jordan river); ¹⁰. And immediately coming up from the water, he saw the heavens dividing, and the Spirit as a dove coming down upon him; ¹¹. and a Bat Qol (daughter of a voice) came out of the heavens [saying] (Psalm 2:7 & Isaiah 42:1), “You are My son, My elect in whom My soul delights.”

DISCERNING THE MEANING

This problem has bothered me for the longest time. Only recently have I concluded its meaning and purpose. Before we can fully understand the meaning of this event we need a bit of background information.

FIRST QUESTION: WHAT IS A MIKVEH?

To understand the [Mikveh](#)¹ in depth would take a great deal of time to explain. I will Endeavour to minimize this information for the sake of time and space. I would like to include a simple prayer that is recited when we wash our hands. Hand washing occurs at various times such as before eating ritual foods .i.e. bread and upon exiting the bathroom. Likewise, we wash our hands upon rising from sleep, which is a picture of death. The Cohanim² washed their hands each morning before entering service at the Beit Mikdash.³ Was this handwashing done because their hands were dirty? Do we wash our hands each morning because they are dirty? Why wash the hands?

The Blessing:

Transliteration: *Baruch A-toh A-do-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-olom A-sheer Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-tov Vi-tzi-va-nu Al Ne-Ti-Lat Ya-Dayim.*

Translation: Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands (lifting of the hands).

Many translation of this blessing render the final words as “washing of the hands.” However, we have translated the passage according to the true intent of the prayers meaning.

1 Timothy 2:8 ⁸ ¶ Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

¹See the article concerning Baptism and the Mikveh at the Jewish Encyclopedia.com

² Priests

³ The Temple

What is Rav Shaul⁴ speaking of in this passage? Is he wanting men to lift their hands in some sort of praise or prayer?

Actually, Rav Shaul is telling men that when they have washed their hands that they are to be lifted. This is because the lifting of hands (after washing) was a very old custom by the time Rav Shaul wrote about it. Rav Shaul maintains the true context of washing hands. Once the hands are washed (immersed) they are raised. There is a literal practice of raising the hands once they are washed and then reciting the blessing mentioned above. However, we have a question that we are trying to answer. Likewise, we are trying to make a point with regards to Yeshua's immersion.

Why are the hands elevated upon completion of immersion?

This illustration serves to teach us about all mikvot, ritual immersions.

RITUAL

Many people are afraid of ritual practices such as the hand washing mentioned above. However, Christianity is permeated with ritual. Why? Ritual is the physical enactment of a spiritual truth. In other words every ritual is the realization of some spiritual truth or point. Why do we go through the "ritual" of Marriage, baptism, and funerals? Each of these rituals tells us some spiritual truth. So, what truth are we to learn from hand washing and the mikveh?

WATER

One other point before I begin to sum all of these points up. Why do we immerse in water? (specifically "living water") Water has a peculiar ability. That ability is the dissolution of form. When we put sugar in water, it dissolves and loses its original form. The spiritual truth behind this point is that when a person enters the water of a mikveh some sort of change is affected. The purpose of the Mikveh will tell us what kind of change occurred.

ELEVATION

Every mikveh accomplishes some sort of elevation. This is why hands are lifted in the above-mentioned blessing. Likewise, this is why I have used this particular illustration to answer this question.

When the woman emerges from the monthly mikveh, she has been elevated to a new status. In some respects, she has been "cut off" from her family and the community. She cannot touch or interact with other people in the state of her impurity. It should be further noted that she did NOT sin and is not in any way guilty of some sort of sin. Upon rising from the mikveh, the woman is elevated to the status of now being able to interact with the community and her family. (This actually needs much more clarification)

Ritual immersion is not about dirt. We do not go to the mikveh because we need a bath. The mikveh is, as mentioned, an enactment of a spiritual truth. Therefore, the mikveh is about elevation not bathing.

⁴ Paul

Again, EVERY mikveh or immersion is an elevation of status. When the Cohanim begin their service to HaShem they wash their hands and feet as a symbol of their elevation to Holy service. Therefore, every time we wash our hands we are saying that we are dedicating ourselves to Holy activities and service. We have in some way been involved in some mundane activity. Upon washing our hands, we are committing to a higher plane of G-dly service. When we wash our hands after exiting the bathroom, we have devolved (in a manner of speaking) from Holy service. We have been involved in mundane (earthly) matters. Once the hands are elevated, we have recommitted to Holy service. Each mikveh moves the individual from one stage to a higher plane of worship, service and status.

YESHUA AND YOCHANAN

Yochanan's mikveh was about the kingdom and repentance. Did Yeshua need to repent? A sinless person does not need to repent for himself or his sins. However, the Yom Kippur service as we know it from antiquity has a very interesting part to it called the Viduy (confession). The Viduy is very detailed. When the Viduy (which can also be found in the daily prayers) is said by EVERYONE in the congregation. We might ask ourselves why? One reason why we ALL cite the viduy is so that those who have sinned or committed some offense against G-d can confess without being singled out as being a sinner.

Yeshua would have participated in the Viduy in order to help others elevate themselves to a higher place of worship and communion with G-d. However, Yeshua was not confession because he had committed some sort of offense against G-d.

REASON #1

However, the real key to the immersion lies behind a genuine understanding of the Kingdom.

Mark 1:14-15. Now after Yochanan was arrested and put in prison, Yeshuah came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news (the Masorot – the Traditions) of the kingdom (governance) of G-d [through the Hakhamim and Bate Din as opposed to human kings], ¹⁵. And saying, The [appointed period of] time is fulfilled (completed), and the kingdom (governance) of God [through Hakhamim and Bate Din] is at hand; repent (have a change of mind and return to Torah wisdom) and faithfully obey the Masorah (Traditions/Oral Law).

Keeping in mind that immersion is an elevation to a higher purpose or office we can see that Yochanan was calling for a change status. Yochanan was not calling for repentance simply because people had sinned. Yochanan was calling for a “turning towards”⁵ a new system that was dawning and about on Yisrael. That system was the governance of G-d through the haHkamim. (The Sages). Therefore, one reason Yeshua submits to Yochanan's immersion is that he is now devoting himself strictly to this purpose and cause.

The opening pericope of Mark should be translated as follows.

Mark 1:1-3. ¶ The beginning {The choicest or chief part} of the Masorah (Tradition/Oral Law) is Yeshuah the Messiah, the Son of G-d (i.e. Ben Elohim = the Judge); ² As it is written in the prophets,

⁵ The Hebrew word for repentance is “teshuvah.” This word is based on the idea of turning. Teshuvah can mean return to G-d because one has fallen into sin. However, it's simple meaning is to turn towards...

Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which will prepare your way (Hebrew: Derekh/Halakha) before you (Exodus 23:30;& Malachi 3:1).⁶ (As translated by His Eminence Rabbi Dr, Yoseph ben Haggai)

Here my point is that the governance of G-d will be by the Mesorah (Oral Tradition) as taught and decided upon by the Bate Din's that would have to take authority in Diaspora.

REASON #2

The core of every mikveh is some sort of elevation as we have mentioned. We must ask ourselves what other elevation Yeshua might have experienced at his Mikveh? We must confess that Yeshua was born to the mission and occupation of Messiah. However, he did not always occupy this mission in the same capacity. In the final years of his life, we see his commitment to that mission on a level that was not before demonstrated. Therefore, we must surmise that this mikveh was an elevation to strict occupation of the Messianic mission.

CONCLUSION

A CARPENTER OR MESSIAH

We are told that Yoseph (Yeshua's Father) was a carpenter. I have discussed and argued this occupation with others suggesting that he was not a carpenter. My thesis was based upon the idea that both Yeshua and his brother Yaakov (James) were both haHkamim. (Men of extreme wisdom). Yoseph himself must have been a hakham. However, it is not a problem that Yoseph was some sort of stonemason or carpenter. Nevertheless, it is not plausible for Yeshua to remain a stonemason and Messiah at the same time. Therefore, I believe that the mikveh marks a transition between the mundane and the Holy (set apart to G-d's service) in Yeshua's life. At this point Yeshua is a fully ordained Rabbi. At this point, He is fully and exclusively committed to G-d's service as Messiah. This mikveh marks the elevation from carpenter to Messiah. This marks a new status in his life and ministry.

Yeshua did not go through Yochanan's immersion because he needed to repent. He went through the Mikveh as a symbol to demonstrate that from this point forward he was solely committed to his life's calling and mission. He was elevated from the status of a mundane carpenter to that of G-d's anointed.

⁶ <http://www.betemunah.org/sederim/heshvan369.html>