

TALMIDEI YESHUA MESSIANIC MINISTRY OF NEW ZEALAND

BELIEVER'S IMMERSION (MIKVEH)

All Scriptural references in this handout are from the Complete Jewish Bible by David H Stern

Shalom

We hope this handout will provide insight into the history of sprinklings, washings and immersions in the Torah and the Brit Hadashah. It covers the key understandings with scriptural references, which need to be read and understood before a person enters into immersion as a new believer in Yeshua. This handout is a guide, but not a substitute for a person's own research into and study of this very important life changing event.

Background

One of the great instances of the use of water to spiritually and physically cleanse the earth was the flood of Noah. B'reshet (Genesis) 7:17. We read in 1 Kefa (Peter) 3: 20-21, that the water of the flood of Noah prefigured the water of immersion as it says; ... *'in which a few people – to be specific, eight – were delivered by means of water. This also prefigures what delivers us now, the water of immersion, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but one's pledge to keep a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah....'*

After the flood, the next time washing is mentioned, is just before the giving of the Torah on Mt Horev, when the people of Israel had to wash their clothing to separate themselves for YHVH before He came down on the mountain: Sh'mot (Exodus) 19:10; *'so YHVH said to Moshe, "Go to the people; today and tomorrow separate them for me by having them wash their clothing;.."'*

Ritual washing was part of the Torah obedient life of Israel, related especially to ritual purification. In Sh'mot (Exodus) 30: 17-21, Moshe was commanded to make a basin of bronze for washing which was to be placed between the tent of meeting and the altar. The seriousness of Aharon and his son's washing of their hands and feet before approaching the altar to minister by burning an offering for YHVH, was confirmed by YHVH's statement, "so that they won't die."

Various other washings were required by the Torah of Moshe as found in Vayikra (Leviticus). It is clear that water is regarded in the Torah as a means of cleansing from defilement, separation and the renewal of life. The primary significance is not for physical cleansing, although physical cleansing is part of washing with water, but the main reason is so that the person coming before YHVH becomes ritually clean (tahor).

Immersion in the Brit Hadashah (New Covenant - writings)

By the time Yeshua came, immersion in a pool of flowing water was a common way of being cleansed and healed as shown by the paralysed man waiting to be put into a pool for healing. Yochanan 5: 2-4; *"In Yerushalayim, by the Sheep Gate, is a pool called in Aramaic, Beit-Zata, surrounded by five porches, in which lay a crowd of invalids – blind lame and crippled."* David Stern notes that in some manuscripts it says (in 3b-4), *'waiting for the water to move;'* for at certain times an angel of YHVH went down into the pool and disturbed the water, and whoever stepped into the water first after it was disturbed was healed of what ever disease he had." In the context of this man and this pool, Yeshua demonstrates his healing power and the man is set free with the now famous words from Yeshua, *"Do you want to be healed?"* and after the man has described trying to get into the pool while it was disturbed and always having someone

else get in first, Yeshua's next famous statement to him was, *"Get up, pick up your mat and walk."* This time immersion in water was not necessary for the healing was directly from Yeshua.

Yochanan, Yeshua's cousin, was known as Yochanan the Immerser and his role was to immerse those who came to him in the Yarden River, for the forgiveness of sins. Mattityahu (Matthew) 3: 1-2 *"It was during those days that Yochanan the Immerser arrived in the desert of Y'hudah and began proclaiming the message, turn from your sins to Elohim, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!"* 3:6 *"Confessing their sins, they were immersed by him in the Yarden river."* Confessing of sins includes tshuvah or repentance. True repentance means turning 180 degrees away from sin, as it is only by completely turning our back on sin, that we can have a clear conscience. The action of immersion ratifies the individual's confession and repentance.

Yeshua was himself immersed by Yochanan, even though he was sinless. He said to Yochanan, *"...Let it be this way now, because we should do everything righteousness requires."* Mattityahu 3:15. Righteousness was related to Torah commands. This example by our Master Yeshua, shows us that, if we are to be his disciples, water immersion for the forgiveness of sins is mandatory. In fact immersion is connected with salvation as we read in Mark 16:16 *"Whoever trusts and is immersed will be saved;..."* Here the main point is trust which is then followed by obedience. The true meaning of the word Trust in Hebrew, Emunah contains the understanding of being loyal. Shaul, as he recovered his sight after being blinded by Yeshua, was healed by Hananyah the Torah observant Jew who said to him: ... *"So now, what are you waiting for? Get up, immerse yourself and have your sins washed away as you call on his (Yeshua's) name."*

Once Yeshua came out of the water, the Spirit of Elohim came down upon him and his obedience was noted by his Father, as it says in Mattityahu 3:16-17: *'As soon as Yeshua had been immersed, he came up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, he saw the Spirit of God coming down upon him like a dove, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; I am well pleased with him."*

Immersion for believers in Yeshua also represents death and resurrection as stated by Shaul (Paul) in Romans 6:3-4: *"Don't you know that those of us who have been immersed into the Messiah Yeshua have been immersed into his death? Through immersion into his death we were buried with him; so that just as, through the glory of the Father, the Messiah was raised from the dead, likewise we too might live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will be united with him in a resurrection like his."* The context of this passage is about not letting sin reign any more in our mortal bodies, as we have been cleared from sin through the water of immersion for forgiveness of sin. A person under the water is descending as if into the grave. When he emerges out of the water, it is like he comes back to life anew. Shaul understood this death and life imagery. As we read before in 1 Kefa 4:21, our immersion is our pledge to keep a good conscience through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah. We also have the promise of a resurrection like Yeshua's as it says in Romans 6:5: *"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will also be united with him in a resurrection like his."*

Yeshua also talked about another immersion, that of immersion by the Ruach Ha Kodesh (Holy i.e. set apart) Spirit of Elohim. Yeshua was conceived by the Ruach Ha Kodesh and was not separated from the Father by sin as we are and did not need to practice tshuvah. However, the Ruach still came upon him as verification of his obedience and loyalty, after his water immersion.

At this point Yeshua had not yet ratified the New Covenant in his blood, but from then on he was first tested by the Adversary and after forty days and nights and began proclaiming *"Turn from your sins to God,*

for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!" Mattityahu 4: 1-17. The fullness of his ministry began after his water immersion, just as happens for all his disciples, including adversarial testing.

Nakdimon (Nicodemus)

An interesting narrative in the Brit Hadashah is the one about Nakdimon. Nicodemus is a Greek name that was Hebraized to Nakdimon.¹

In Yochanan 3: 1-13, we read of the dialogue between Nakdimon and Yeshua. It is interesting that Nakdimon is said to be among the P'rushim and a ruler of the Judeans. David Stern has correctly distinguished between the Jews and the Judeans in the Complete Jewish Bible. The fact that the Judeans were actually Edomites and not Jews, is often overlooked in other translations, but it is very important in this narrative. Most Jews would have understood what Yeshua was saying about being born again, as the concept was not new to them. The term "born again", is a Jewish term and in Jewish life there were many re- births, such as going through the mikveh, getting married, entering a Yeshiva, in fact any major life change was seen as being born again. It seems strange that Nakdimon did not relate to Yeshua's words and Yeshua said as much when he answered him and said; *"You hold the office of teacher in Isra'el, and you don't know this?"* If Nakdimon was an Edomite, he might not have known about being born again in the Jewish context.

Immersion into Yeshua death as our death and rebirth

Yeshua's death and resurrection fulfilled the first part of the edict made by YHVH to the serpent in B'resheet (Genesis) 3:15; *"I will put animosity between you and the woman, and between your descendant and her descendant; he will bruise your head and you will bruise his heel."* The bruising of Yeshua's heel as the seed of the 'woman', Isra'el, happened on the stake, and the final bruising of the Adversary's head in annihilation will be done by God, after Yeshua's Millennial reign. Adamic death has now lost its sting in for those in Yeshua as he became the first fruits of those who have died. As shown in Torah, if there are first fruits there is always a harvest to follow. This is explained in 1 Corinthians 14:20; *'But the fact is that the Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a man (Adam), also resurrection of the dead has come through a man (Yeshua). For just as in connection with Adam all die, so in connection with the Messiah all will be made alive. But each in his own order...'* also in 1 Corinthians 15: 45-46:.. *'Adam the first man became a living human being; B'resheet (Genesis) 2:7, but the last Adam (Yeshua) has become a life giving Spirit.'* Being born again is a promise in this age for us with the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh being the guarantee, but the resurrection of those who belong to the Messiah, at the time of his coming, completes this. 1 Corinthians 15:23. *Italics in brackets – the writers.*

Metaphorical Immersions

Mark 10:38 - Yeshua, when speaking to the sons of Zavdai when they asked to sit on his right and left when he was in his glory, said, " You don't know what you are asking! Can you drink the cup that I am drinking? Or be immersed with the immersion that I must undergo?" Also in Luke 12:50, Yeshua again mentioned this immersion. *"...I have an immersion to undergo – how pressured I feel till it's over!..."* This immersion had to do with his intense suffering, death and burial. It was the suffering servant's death immersion by which he took on the sin of mankind in our place and atoned for us. As talmidim of Yeshua we also have an immersion into suffering in this world as the world hates us in the same way as it hated Yeshua. Some are called to suffer death for the good news of the Kingdom and these gain the ultimate prize in the Kingdom.

¹ CJB Glossary page 1584

To sit at the right and left hand of Yeshua in his glory requires an immersion into suffering as he warned the sons of Zavdai.

Ephesians 5:25-27 - Speaking of the love husbands should show their wives, Sha'ul said, *"As for husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community, indeed gave himself up on it's behalf, in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the mikveh, so to speak, in order to present the Messianic Community to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without defect."* This immersion is to do with sacrificial love which cleanses by it's very action. Yeshua gave himself up for the Messianic Community and husbands are asked to match that sacrifice spiritually for their wives. In this way the heads of the families match the head of the Messianic Community, Yeshua himself.

Immersion in the Ruach HaKodesh

Mark 1:8 - Mark was quoting Yochanan the Immerser who said about Yeshua, *"After me is coming someone who is more powerful than I –I am not worthy even to bend down and untie his sandals. I have immersed you in water, but he will immerse you in the Ruach HaKodesh."*

At the end of Yeshua's forty days with his talmidim after his resurrection and ascension as first fruits from the dead, Yeshua said to them in Acts 1:5 *"wait for what the Father has 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!"* and again in Mark 1:8 Yeshua said, *.. "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!"* Straight after this Yeshua was taken in the cloud to heaven for the final time. This was a few days before Shavuot when the Ruach HaKodesh did descend upon the believers and they spoke as witnesses about the good news of Yeshua, in many languages to the Jews gathered from all over the diaspora. This was the immersion by the Ruach HaKodesh that Yeshua was speaking about which was also the fulfilment of the Prophet Yo'el 3:1-5 (2:28-32).

Acts 8:14 - From that time onwards, the immersion in water was accompanied by the immersion in the Ruach HaKodesh so that many signs and miracles accompanied the believers as they witnessed about Yeshua. However there appear to be some who had only received the immersion of Yochanan and when the emissaries in Yerushalayim heard that those in Shomron had received the Word of God they felt it necessary to send Kefa and Yochanan to lay hands on them in order to receive the Ruach HaKodesh. This may have been because there was a man called Shim'on in the city of Shomron who had been practising magic of whom every one was amazed. Having the true emissaries there was perhaps to make sure that no counterfeit could undo the work already started there by Yochanan the Immerser, who had immersed them into the name of Yeshua but they had not received the Ruach HaKodesh.

Immersion by fire

Mattityahu 3:11 - Yochanan also mentions an immersion by fire which is likely to relate to the coming of the Ruach HaKodesh at Shavuot after Yeshua's death, resurrection and final ascension. This is also mentioned in Luke 3:16-17 and in connection with salt in Mark 9: 49. This immersion with fire appears to be a purging immersion as scripturally fire is connected with purging and the mention of salt shows that it is also covenantal. Salt in the Tanakh was connected with irrevocable covenant. The receiving of the Ruach Ha Kodesh is receiving the guarantee of our inheritance, holding us in a sense until the journey is completed, as stated in Ephesians 1:13; *'Furthermore, you who have heard the message of the truth, the Good News offering you deliverance and put your trust in the Messiah were sealed by him with the promised Ruach HaKodesh, who guarantees our inheritance until we come into possession of it..'*

Immersion in the Ruach HaKodesh before water immersion

In the Brit Hadashah, one instance of the Ruach HaKodesh being received before water immersion is in Acts 10:44, after Kefa had obeyed the voice which came to him and visited Cornelius a God Fearing Gentile. After addressing the friends and relatives whom Cornelius had gathered to hear him tell about Yeshua and just as he was still speaking the message about trust and forgiveness of sins, the Ruach fell on all who were hearing the message, *'Kefa was still saying these things when the Ruach HaKodesh fell on all who were hearing the message. 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.'* Kefa's response was, *"Is anyone prepared to prohibit these people from being immersed in water? After all, they have received the Ruach Ha Kodesh, just as we did."* And he ordered that they be immersed in the name of Yeshua the Messiah'

The three witnesses

1 Yochanan 5:5-8 – *'Who does overcome the world if not the person who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God? He is the one who came by means of water and blood. And the Spirit bears witness because the Spirit is the Truth. There are three witnesses – the Spirit, the water and the blood- and these three are in agreement.'*

The importance of the three witnesses cannot be understated. The water immersion is for cleansing and the request to God for a clean conscience. The blood of Yeshua is the sacrificial Pesach offering for sin, which atones for those who believe in Yeshua and His blood sacrifice ratifies the New Covenant as promised to Israel and Y'hudah in Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31: 30-34 which says: *"Here the days are coming. " says YHVH, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and the house of Y'hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers, on the day I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says YHVH. "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days,: says YHVH: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, 'Know YHVH'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more."* This promise extended to the gentiles like Cornelius who believed and became grafted in members of Israel through trust in Yeshua. The receiving of the Ruach Ha Kodesh is the seal of that New Covenant of the Torah on the heart.

IMMERSION AS PRACTISED IN TALMIDEI YESHUA KEHILOT

Immersion in Talmidei Yeshua Kehilot, is for adults including those of Bat/Bat Mitzvah age, who have shown maturity and understanding of what it means to become a Talmid/Talmidah of Yeshua.

Talmidei Yeshua Kehilot practice full body immersion in flowing water, in the presence of two or three witnesses.

As we have no mikveh in the Kehilah buildings, the person who is choosing to be immersed chooses the place, usually a stream or sea in summer and a pool with flowing water in winter.

There is no set outfit to wear, but modesty is important. If wearing a bathing suit, a long t-shirt is recommended over the top.

The Kehilah can be informed and a special prayer by the Nasi and also by the Kehilah can be said for the one(s) being immersed, at the Shabbat Service nearest to the immersion date.

The one(s) being immersed may like to give a short testimony at that time as to their faith, showing their understanding of who Yeshua is and the commandment of immersion.

At the time and place of immersion, the Nasi will say a prayer and the immersion in Talmidei Yeshua Kehilot, is in name of Yeshua as shown by Kefa in Acts 8:16 when it states, *'And he ordered that they be immersed in the name of Yeshua the Messiah.'*

In Mattityahu 28: 18 -20, Yeshua, after his resurrection, appeared to the eleven talmidim as follows: *'Yeshua came and talked with them. He said, " All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make people from all nations into Talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember! I will be with you always, yes even until the end of the age."*

This last statement is known as the Great Commission and all who are immersed in the name of Yeshua must understand that it is incumbent upon all of Yeshua's Talmidim to fulfil this commission according to the gifting's Yeshua gives as described in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. *'Now you together constitute the body of Messiah and individually you are parts of it. And God has placed in the Messianic Community first emissaries: second prophets; third teachers; then those who work miracles; then those with gifts of healing; those with the ability to help; those skilled in administration; and those who speak in various tongues.'*

As well as the roles given by the Ruach HaKodesh for the benefit of the Messianic Community (Kehilah), individual fruits or outcomes of having been immersed in the Ruach HaKodesh are noted in by Sha'ul in Galatians 5:22-23; *'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self control. Nothing in the Torah stands against such things'. The context of the passage contrasts with the old nature Galatians 5:19-21, and reminds us that those who belong to Yeshua, have put their old nature to death on the stake.* This relates to the Jewish/ scriptural understanding of re birth.

Pre requisites for believers immersion in Talmidei Yeshua Kehilot

1. Hearing, reading about and understanding the Good News about Yeshua in the Hebraic Scriptural context, and being able to describe this.
2. Trusting in this Good News about Yeshua, the Son of God and the Promised Messiah of Israel and being able to testify personally about your trust.
3. Call upon the Nasi of the Kehilah to share your desire and readiness to become immersed. With help from the Nasi, decide on a place for immersion and call for your witnesses - two or more usually including the Kehilah Nasi.

Action

4. Act upon your trust through immersion, after confession of sin and repentance²
5. Believe that you will receive the promised immersion in the Ruach HaKodesh, either directly from Yeshua or through the laying on of hands of the leadership and/or other believers in the Kehilah.
6. Begin living the sacrificial life of trusting faithfulness, continued repentance, and loyal service to the Master Yeshua as his talmid (male disciple) or talmidah (female disciple), as He gives the strength and gifting (s) in order to do so.
7. Continue living in community with the body of Messiah sharing the gifting (s) Yeshua gives through the Ruach HaKodesh, for life in the body of Messiah. Belong to and regularly attend your Messianic Kehilah, for the sake of the encouraging others in the body of Messiah and for your own encouragement and care as well.
8. Be prepared to share the Good News of the Messiah of Isra'el in the context of the promises to Israel and the world, with who ever may listen, in order that others who are being called, can also enter into the Priesthood of Yeshua and the one new humanity, in the body of Messiah as Talmidim of Yeshua.

Recommended Reading from the Complete Jewish Bible Introductory notes:

X1V. Tanakh Prophecies Fulfilled by Yeshua the Messiah

Graeme and Caroline Purdie – Talmidei Yeshua Messianic Ministry of New Zealand - June 2015

Notes:

The practice of Tevilah (full body immersion) for ritual cleansing and purification in a Mikveh or pool of water (mikvah means pool of running water) has been practised amongst Orthodox Jews, right up to the present times. Gentile converts to Orthodox Judaism have to be immersed, showing that they have been cleansed from their pagan ways and are beginning a new life i.e. are born again. They have changed from being tamay (ritually unclean) to tahor (ritually clean) i.e. from being unfit to being fit to be in the presence of Elohim.

Occasionally some ask the leaders of Talmidei Yeshua Messianic Ministry, if they should be re-immersed in Yeshua's name having been immersed in the name of Jesus or into a particular denomination. Some have been sprinkled as babies and been through a confirmation ceremony at a later stage. Our answer is that "it depends". Full immersion by an understanding adult after confessions of sin and repentance is what is required in the brit Hadashah. If a person has been sprinkled as a baby and then come to a deeper understanding and has confirmed their faith even in the name Jesus which is an English derivative of the Greek word for Yeshua, and has walked the walk of trusting faithfulness, believing in the blood atonement of Yeshua and has received the Ruach Ha Kodesh, then the requirement of the three witnesses, the water (albeit a sprinkling) the Spirit and the blood has been satisfied.

If the person still wants an immersion, not feeling complete in their walk, then after careful consideration by the Nasi, this can take place but never more than one more time or it makes a mockery of it.

² Adamic sin is the inherited state of separation from YHVH after his edict in B'resheet (Genesis) 3:16-24. This edict included separation from the Tree of Life and a death sentence. Yeshua's sacrifice atoned for that sin and reversed the curse of death for those who trust in Him and what he has done. For those of Jewish (Israelite) descent who have been brought up with the Torah which shows us what YHVH considers sin, their confession and repentance needs to be in light of the Torah of Moshe as well as the Torah of Yeshua. For those of the nations coming in, their confessions and repentance need to be in the light of their conscience, particularly in connection with blood, idolatry and sexual impurity. The gentile believer will learn the Torah of Moshe and the Torah of Yeshua each Shabbat in a Messianic Kehilah.