

# **MIKVAH: An Introduction**

## **A WALK OF PURITY**

It is not the intention of the writer to criticize Christendom for the lack of understanding that abounds about immersion, or add to the controversy, or think that by this humble book there will be a great change across the world, that would be very much akin to trying to empty the Atlantic ocean with a tea cup. But for the few hungry souls that cry for understanding I pray that this will be a help. Understanding the Hebrew rites and rituals is a long journey for us that were not exposed to the teaching at an early age, and I dare say that not all that have had the privilege of experiencing them for most or all of their life, see the significance of their teaching as related to *Yeshua/Jesus*. I shall endeavor to help in a small way to expand on the understanding.

One of the most misunderstood teachings in the Bible is immersion. The Bible has much to say about immersion/or the doctrine of washing/baptisms. The first century believers understood the teachings of the different immersions and their purpose. In this brief writing it will be impossible to explore all the different immersions, but I would like to discuss briefly some of them, and in the process bring a glimmer of light to this most misunderstood teaching in scripture. In Hebrew 6:1 it is written: *"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Messiah/Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,"* (2) *"Of the doctrine of baptism(s), and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."*

*Rav Sha'ul/Paul* in the above referenced verses states that the elementary teachings of Messiah are as follows;

1. Foundation of repentance from dead works
2. Faith toward G-d
3. Of the instructions/doctrine of immersions/baptism(s)... please note plural
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal judgement

Understanding of these six principals was considered by *Sha'ul/Paul*, to be elementary teachings of Messiah. If we fully understand the above six teachings then, and only then are we qualified to move on to the MEAT of the word leaving the milk.

Ephesians 4:5 states that "One L-rd, one faith, one immersion". To the casual student this might seem to be a contradiction in scripture, but we know that the *Ruach haKodesh/Holy Spirit* inspired all scripture so *Rav Sha'ul/Paul* is referring to one of the many immersions, and in particular to the immersion into Messiah.

I was confused by what seemed to me to be a new doctrine when *Yochanan haMatvil/John the Baptist* arrived on the banks of the Jordan river preaching and immersing. *Yochanan haMatvil/John the Baptist* was not suspect, by the people, as to where he received the doctrine nor the validity of the teaching questioned. Never did anyone ask him why was he immersing. They all seemed to accept the teaching, even in light of Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32 and Revelations 22:19 stating that the Word could not be added to or taken away from. In Deuteronomy 4:2 it is written: *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."*

In Deuteronomy 12:32 it is written: *"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."*

In Revelation 22:19 it is written: *"And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."*

The severest punishment is the penalty for such an act. It seems today that little thought is given to the fact that G-d said not to add to or take away from the form of worship that he gave to Adam in the Garden, had Moses write down on the mountain of Sinai and again gave to King David before the temple was built by his son Solomon. This form of worship/teaching, as prescribed by G-d, seems to have fallen by the way side in this present day of many doctrinal differences. I hear many times "we must have UNITY of the Faith" but the people that preach this the strongest, are the very ones that say the only way to have unity is for you to come and join us because we have the true revelation of the word, and you are lacking in your understanding. I dare say that UNITY will not be realized to any great measure until Messiah has returned and set up His Kingdom on earth. Then, and only then, will UNITY be enjoyed by all believers. Maintenance of this unity will require Messiah to rule with a rod of iron. In Revelation 19:15 it is written: *"And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron"... Rev 19:15 NAS*

The Jews were chosen by G-d to show all the world the ways of the L-rd. To teach the world about Messiah, our relationship to Him, to each other, and end time events. All things must be centered on Messiah. In Romans 3:1-2 it is written: *"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? (2), Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God (or words of G-d)."*

All the festivals, customs, foods, sacrificial system, laws of ritual purity including immersion were given to the Jewish people as teaching tools for us to learn more about Messiah. We must always keep Messiah in the forefront of our studies and realize that all things are to give us a better understanding of what Messiah has done

for us, and what is in store for us. If we want rest, peace and contentment in our lives we must know of Him. In Matthew 11:29 it is written: *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*

The entire Bible is written about Messiah. In Psalm 40:7 it tell us this. *"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me"*

To follow the instructions of our L-rd and learn of Him, we must learn about the festivals, customs, foods, sacrificial system and laws of ritual purity. We must not only know about them as we are commanded, but put into practice the things that we can do. Some of the commandments require that the Holy Temple be standing in Jerusalem. The other commandments that do not require the standing of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, we must make a part of our life to please our L-rd. The commandments in Torah fall into three major categories

1. *Mishpatim* - Literally translated Judgements these are ethical / moral laws
2. *Edos* - literally translated witnesses
3. *Chukim* - literally translated Decrees

Some of the commandments that the L-rd requires of us are hard to understand. We can understand, do not kill or steal, as in "*mishpatim*/ethical" laws. We can understand the "*Edos*/witness" commandments. These are the rituals and festivals which teach us of important religious truths or commemorate key events. The third group of commandments "*Chukim*/decrees" does not seem to have a logical reason as to why we must obey them. The "*chukim*/decrees" are commandments which we must obey whether or not we understand their reason. In Exodus 24:7 it is written: *"All that G-d says, we will do and we will hear"*.

This indicates that when Torah was given, we were ready to keep the commandments and "*do*" them before we "*heard*" reason or logic. When we keep commandments that have no apparent reason, we demonstrate our faith and inner security as followers of Messiah. Even though we may not be able to justify these commandments to the world, we feel secure to continue observing them. If a person is unsure of himself, or wavering in his faith the laws that are not understood are the first to be abandon. We understand what the Torah means when it says in Deuteronomy 4:6 as it is written: *"Observe and keep [commandments], for this is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations"*

Messiah, Himself said in John 14:15 as it is written: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"*.

We do not observe the commandments because logic demands it, but simply because they were given by G-d. This shows a "heart attitude" set to please G-d.. One of the most important of these commandments is immersion in a *mikvah*, the ritual bath for the purpose of bringing about ritual purity, and that is the one that we are going to discuss.

The Greek word for baptism is *baptizo* meaning to immerse or dip cloth into a vat of dye. The word is derived from an industry of dying cloth in Lebanon. The vats used to hold the different colors of dye, and the process of placing the cloth into the vats was called *baptizo*. As time passed the ritual purity process of immersion began to be known as baptism. The Hebrew word for immersion is *tevilah* and means literally immersing in a ritual bath known as a *mikvah*. Immersion is the act of washing performed to correct a condition of ritual impurity and restore the impure to a state of ritual purity. It is never for the purpose of cleaning or bathing the body.

The *mikvah*/ritual bath was of great importance to the first century Jew. It was understood that if a community or village had only enough money for a synagogue or a *mikvah*, the *mikvah* would be built first. The Torah speaks of numerous things that make a person *Tomeh*/ritually unclean, and a number of processes of purification. **The one act required in all purification processes was immersion in the *mikvah*.**

Life for the average Jew, in the average village, depended on access to the *mikvah*. A man from the tribe of Levi, a son of Aaron could not assume his office as priest until he had gone through a *mikvah*. Before a person could be *tahor*/ritually clean to enter the grounds of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, he must be immersed in the *mikvah*. The severest punishment was imposed on a person for entering the Temple area in the state of *tomeh*/ritual impurity. A woman in her monthly cycle was required to wear special clothing so all would know that she was in a state of *niddah* (ritually unclean due to monthly cycle). She would not be *tahor*/ritually clean until after entering the *mikvah*. Immersion in a *mikvah* is an integral part of conversion to Judaism. Without immersion conversion is not valid. There are many more times an immersion in a *mikvah* is customary, we will endeavor to explore as many as space permits.

There are two basic parts of Torah, one is the written Torah consisting of the first five books of the Bible, with which we are all familiar. The second part of Torah is just as important but not as well known. It is what we call the Oral Torah or unwritten law. This was handed down orally from generation to generation for about 1,500 years. About the third century C.E. Oral Torah was put into writing by Rabbi Yehudah the Prince and is the foundation of Mishnah. The Talmud was formed after discussion and commentary was added. All Jewish law is derived from this Oral Torah. We might call it the "how to" book. Detail instructions on how to carry out all worship, the festivals, sacrifices, commandments, including ritual purification and preparing the *mikvah* are in Oral Torah.

The Mikvah is a ritual bath, the Hebrew word *mikvah* means a "pool" or "Gathering" of water. Two direct references in the Bible to Mikvah are in the Bible. In Leviticus 11:36 it is written: *"Only a spring and a pit, a gathering (Mikvah) of water, shall be clean..."*

The second is Jeremiah 17:12-13 as it is written: "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. {13} O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters".

The word translated *hope* in verse 13 is *Mikvah* thus giving us the understanding that Messiah is the cleansing fountain/*Mikvah* or hope of Israel.

While Messiah still hung, on the cross a Roman "soldier pierced His side, immediately there came out blood and water"; John 19:34 NAS the opening of the cleansing fountain or *Mikvah* for Israel. In Zechariah 13:1 it is written: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."

### **MIKVAH SPECIFICATIONS**

The *mikvah* must meet six special requirements as described in Oral Torah.

1. No other liquid but water may be used in the Mikvah, no coloring or chemicals, etc.
2. The Mikvah must be built into the ground, or be a part of a building attached to the ground. It cannot consist of any vessel that can be disconnected and carried away, such as a tub, vat, or barrel.
3. The water of a Mikvah cannot be running or flowing. The only exception to this rule is a natural spring, or a river whose water is derived mainly from springs.
4. The water of the Mikvah be brought together by natural means not drawn.
5. The water cannot be channeled to the Mikvah through anything that can become *tomeh*/unclean, such as pipes or channels made of metal, clay, or wood.
6. The Mikvah must contain no less than 40 *Sa'ah* of water, that is approximately 150 to 200 gallons.

As you can see the modern baptisteries, in the local church, do not fit the criteria of a clean ritual bath. Many houses in Israel have been excavated and found to have as many as nine *Mikvot* in them. The Holy Temple area had many *Mikvot*, a worshipper could not enter the area without going thru the *Mikvah*. In Masada, the fortress built by Herod the Great, *Mikvot* were found.

Today in the modern "church" there is controversy as to what part immersion plays in our life, and also how is a "Biblical" immersion performed. The three main divisions of this controversy are for the most part as follows;

- a) Is immersion necessary for salvation...is salvation a two-part process
- b) Which is Biblically correct, immersion or sprinkling;
- c) In what name is a person immersed or sprinkled, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit or Jesus only?

Ritual purification or immersion is a Hebrew ritual, commanded by G-d and must be viewed in that perspective. Certain guidelines were commanded by G-d to be strictly followed by the person entering the Mikvah.

The method of immersion as practiced by all the Old Testament people and including *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist was very different from what we do today. The person was to already have taken a bath, washed his hair, pared his fingernails and make sure that he was very clean. The Mikvah was not for the purpose of taking a bath. The person being immersed went into the water by himself, stretching out his arms, flexing his fingers, fluttering his eyelids he squats down into the water until he is completely covered by water. Flexing the fingers and toes, fluttering the eyelids was to insure that the water touched every part of the body. Normally a person would do this three times. The witness was the person that stood out of the water to make sure that the immersing person was completely covered by the water.

### **There are three types of immersion:**

1. Immersion of the whole body in water
2. Washing of the hands
3. Washing of the hands and feet

Immersion of the whole body will be the first of the three types we will discuss beginning in Part I of this teaching.

## **PART I**

### **Immersion For Ritual Purity**

Immersion of the whole body is the act of washing performed to correct a condition of ritual impurity and restore the impure to a state of ritual purity. The ritually impure person is prohibited from performing certain functions and participating in certain rites. Immersion, following a withdrawal period and, in some cases, other special rituals, renders him again *tahor*/ritually clean and able to participate in worship.

The state of *tumah*/ritual impurity is considered detestable to G-d, A person must take care in order not to find himself in such a state and thus be cut off from the divine presence of G-d. There are three main causes of *tumah*/ritual impurity; leprosy, coming into contact with dead bodies of certain animals, and particularly human corpses, and an issue from human sexual organs.

### **LEPROSY**

Three types of Leprosy is distinguishable: of man, of clothes and of buildings. Leprosy of human beings is further subdivided: one type is immediately declared as unclean, another as clean (including a case where the symptoms appear over the whole body), while a third type requires isolation for one to two weeks and if there is not any deterioration the bearer is considered clean. Leprosy of clothes and buildings always requires them to be isolated for one to two weeks and only following this period is it decided whether they are clean or not.

Leprosy as translated in the Bible has grouped all skin imperfections into one category and labeled it leprosy. Rest assure that Torah is not talking about just leprosy, some of the more acceptable renderings are tumors, scabs, bright spots or cuticle. The general term which many translate as leprosy, is really just some kind of undefined human skin disease.

If we are to understand the significance of the *Mikvah* and its importance to the daily life of any Jewish person living during or before the first century, then we must look at the process by which a person became *tahor*/ritually clean. As an example we will examine the purification process of a leper. The purification of the leper was a lengthy process, here are the steps for purification as outlined in *Vayikra*/Leviticus 14:1-32.

In order to more fully understand the seriousness of being *tomeh*/ ritually unclean, and the process by which one becomes *tahor*/clean lets examine each of these steps. Please note the importance of immersion in this process of cleansing the leper, his house and his garments.

1. Repentance from sin, implied in the text
2. A visit to the *Kohen*/priest

*"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, {2} This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the Kohen/priest. (Leviticus 14:2)*
3. Examination by the *Kohen*/priest outside the camp
4. Supernatural cure by G-d

*And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper (Leviticus 14:3)*
5. Two sacrificial birds, cedarwood, crimson thread, and hyssop offered. (Leviticus 14:4-7)

*Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop (Leviticus 14:4)*

  - a) One bird is slaughtered in an earthenware vessel over spring water

*And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water (Leviticus 14:5)*
  - b) Live bird is dipped into the blood of slaughtered bird
  - c) Crimson thread and hyssop are also dipped along with the live bird.

*As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water (Leviticus 14:6)*
  - d) The offerer is sprinkled seven times with the blood
  - e) The live bird is set free in an open field.

*And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field (Leviticus 14:7)*
6. Sprinkled person must immerse all his clothing.
7. Sprinkled person must shave off all of his hair.
8. Sprinkled person must immerse his whole body.
9. Sprinkled person is permitted to enter the camp.
10. Sprinkled person must remain outside his tent for seven more days.

*And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days (Leviticus 14:8)*
11. After the seven days, the sprinkled person must again shave completely, immerse all his clothes, and himself.

*But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean (Leviticus 14:9)*
12. On the eighth day he must offer an *asham*/guilt offering, *hata'at*/sin offering, *olah*/burnt offering and a *minchah*/bread offering. The offerer must also bring some oil to the *Kohen*/priest.

*And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil (Leviticus 14:10)*
13. Before offering these sacrifices, the *Kohen*/priest must purify the place of offering.

*And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (Leviticus 14:11)*
14. The *Kohen*/priest takes blood from the *asham*/guilt offering and put some on the middle part of the right ear, the right thumb, and the big toe of the right foot of the offerer.

- And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot: {15} And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. (Leviticus 14:14-15)*
15. Some of the oil is sprinkled seven times before the L-rd, by the *Kohen*/priest.  
*And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD: {17} And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering. (Leviticus 14:16-17)*
16. The *Kohen*/priest then anoints the offerer on the same places as he did the blood.  
*And the remnant of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed: and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord. (Leviticus 14:18)*
17. The *hata'at*/sin offering, *olah*/burnt offering, and *minchah*/bread offerings are slaughtered; atonement is provided.  
*And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness; and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering. (Leviticus 14:19)*
18. The person is finally declared *tahor*/clean.  
*And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meat offering upon the altar: and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and he shall be clean. (Leviticus 14:20)*  
Variation is made on the specific content of the offerings depending on whether or not the offerer is poor. (Leviticus 14:21-32)

**Messiah always kept Torah. An example of this is recorded in Matthew 8:2-4:**

*"And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, L-rd, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. {3} And Yeshua/Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. {4} And Yeshua/Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the Kohen/priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. Again we see in Luke 17:12-14 "And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:" {13} "And they lifted up their voices, and said, Yeshua/Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." {14} "And when He saw them, He said unto them, 'Go show yourselves unto the Kohen/priests'. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."*

Even when Messiah had cleansed the lepers they were still required to fulfill the lengthy process and be declared *tahor*/clean by the *Kohen*/priest.

As you can see the process was very time consuming, expensive and embarrassing to the person. A great hardship was placed on all the family members, they all had to leave the house, move all their belongings outside the camp were there was not any safety. If the man was the one that had become *tomeh*/unclean he could not work, the source of income had been cut off. What a hard place to be.

The very sister of Moses, Miriam, was found to be *tomeh*/ritually unclean because of speaking against the marriage of Moses and the Cushite woman. For her act of criticizing Moses the L-rd struck her with leprosy. We need to think twice about speaking about those G-d has set in authority over us. Please note that Miriam was placed outside the camp for a period of seven days, she was not exempt just because she was Moses sister and that he prayed for her. All are accountable to the laws of ritual purity. This incident is recorded in Numbers 12:10-15.

*And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. {11} And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. {12} Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. {13} And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. {14} And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. {15} And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.*

In these cases the person's house and possessions were to undergo a purification as well, described in *Vayikra*/Leviticus 14:32-57.

After reading the process by which one became *tahor*/clean we can more fully appreciate what all Yeshua our Messiah has done for us, taking in His own body all our sins and transgressions. Blessed be HaShem.

The steps of cleansing the leper's house are as follows:

1. Go to the *Kohen*/priest. (Leviticus 14:35)
2. The *Kohen*/priest will order the house be emptied of all possessions. (Leviticus 14:36)
3. The *Kohen*/priest will inspect the inside of the house. (Leviticus 14:36)

4. The house is quarantined by the *Kohen*/priest for seven days. (Leviticus 14:38)
5. On the seventh day the *Kohen*/priest will make an inspection to determine if the house is still unclean. If the *Kohen*/priest determines that the house is still unclean he will order that the area of the affliction be removed. Scraping the inside of the house and removing the stones and plaster to an unclean place outside the city. (Leviticus 14:39-41)
6. The stones and plaster shall be replaced. (Leviticus 14:42)
7. If the affliction/leprosy returned to the house after the stones and plaster have been replaced, the *Kohen*/priest will again inspect the house. If the *Kohen*/priest determines that the house is unclean the house is to be torn down, depositing all stones, plaster, timbers etc. outside the city in an unclean place. (Leviticus 14:43-45)
8. If the *Kohen*/priest determines upon inspection that the affliction/leprosy has not returned to the house, the following process is required to cleanse the house. (Leviticus 14:48-53)
  - a) Two sacrificial birds, cedar wood, crimson thread, and hyssop offered.
    - 1) One bird is slaughtered in an earthenware vessel over spring water
    - 2) Live bird is dipped into the blood of slaughtered bird
    - 3) Crimson thread and hyssop are also dipped along with the live bird
    - 4) The house is sprinkled seven time with the blood
    - 5) The live bird is set free in an open field.
9. He shall make atonement for the house and it shall be clean. (Leviticus 14:53)

A similar process was required for the leprous garment. (Leviticus 14:55)

A person suffering from leprosy could not eat the holy things. He must be immersed to rid himself of being *tomeh*/ritually unclean. (Leviticus 22:4-6) *"What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath a running issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. And whoso toucheth any thing that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goeth from him; {5} Or whosoever toucheth any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean, or a man of whom he may take uncleanness, whatsoever uncleanness he hath; {6} The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water"*.

#### **EXPOSURE TO A DEAD BODY**

Whoever came into contact with a dead body, or went inside a tomb/grave was unclean for seven days. The third and seventh days he was sprinkled with water in which ashes from the red heifer has been dissolved. The seventh day he immersed his whole body and washed his clothes and became clean. In Numbers 19:18-19 it is written: *"And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: {19} And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even"*.

#### **EXPOSURE TO A PERSON HAVING AN UNCLEAN ISSUE**

Any person that came into contact with the body of, or with an article of furniture used by a person having an unclean issue *zav*/(a man suffering from an unclean issue), or any article used by that person, must immerse both his body and his garment and was unclean for a whole day. In Leviticus 15:5-14 it is written: *And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {6} And he that sitteth on any thing whereon he sat that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {7} And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {8} And if he that hath the issue spit upon him that is clean; then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {9} And what saddle soever he rideth upon that hath the issue shall be unclean. {10} And whosoever toucheth any thing that was under him shall be unclean until the even: and he that beareth any of those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {11} And whomsoever he toucheth that hath the issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {12} And the vessel of earth, that he toucheth which hath the issue, shall be broken: and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water. {13} And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean. {14} And on the eighth day he shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and give them unto the priest.*

When the woman with an issue of blood (called a *zavah*), touched Messiah in the crowd, He immediately became *tomeh*/unclean and would have to immerse Himself, wash His garment and be *tomeh*/unclean for a whole day. This did not mean that He had sinned or was in a sinful state. The woman could have been punished severely for being out in public in a state of *tomeh*/ritually unclean. The virtue that went out of Messiah was His *tahor*/ritual purity with enough power to heal her. Yeshua's purity was enough to overcome all her ritual impurity. The woman would have to fulfill all the requirements to become *tahor*/clean also. In Matthew 9:20-22 it is written: *"And,*

*behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: {21} For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. {22} But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour."*

The garment that she wanted to touch was his *tallit*/prayer shawl. The *Tallit* has ceremonial fringes on four corners representing the 613 commandments. A rabbi would not go to prayer without having his head covered with his *tallit*. It is thought that when *Yeshua* spoke about going into your closet to pray, he was referring to the head being covered with the *tallit*. In Matthew 6:6 it is written: "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to the Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*".

Ordinary cohabitation renders both the man and the woman impure until the evening, they were required a total immersion to be clean. In Leviticus 15:16-18 it is written: "*And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even. {17} And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the seed of copulation, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the even. {18} The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even*".

## **LAWS OF SEPARATION TO G-D**

### **NIDDAH**

*Niddah* is a ritually unclean woman due to her monthly cycle. In the days of the first century and before a woman that was *niddah* was required to wear special clothing that would let all know that she was in the state of *niddah*. Today this would seem humiliating to us but to them it was a perfectly natural way to let all know that they were in a state of *niddah*. A *niddah* was set apart for seven days, they are called seven red days. After the seven red days she must count seven more days, they are called white days. We see this recorded in Leviticus 15:19: "*And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. (20) And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. {21} And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {22} And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {23} And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even. {24} And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean. {25} And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean. {26} Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation. {27} And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. {28} But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. (29) And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. {30} And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the LORD for the issue of her uncleanness. {31} Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them.*

Please note the purification process for the *niddah* is complete after immersion in the *Mikvah*. According to the Torah's definition, the words "set apart" is the word *niddah*. As you can see this would change family life dramatically. A special community would have to be set up just for the *niddah* if this was strictly adhered to. The *niddah* is set apart to G-d just as the person that takes a Nazarite vow, (Numbers 6) or a person that is on a fast. During the time of *niddah* she sets herself apart from her husband but she is specifically suppose to set herself apart to G-d.

A woman has the status of *niddah* from the time that she has her period until she immerse in a *Mikvah*. Today the most general use of the *Mikvah*, in Jewish circles, is for the *niddah*. The Jewish women that participate in this practice say that they would not give it up. It seems that the husband-wife bond is stabilized by this time of separation, infidelity is virtually unknown, and the divorce rate is significantly below the normal level. The practice of *Niddah* does not require the Holy Temple be standing so this law is in effect today but a special garment is not required. It is considered by the Rabbis that without the Holy Temple all of us are *tomeh*/unclean. The immersion for the *niddah* and the woman after childbirth should take place after dark, all other immersions should be during the day.

We can see an example of a lady coming out of her *niddah* in 2 Samuel 11:2-4: "*And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman immersing/washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. {3} And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?*

*{4} And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her niddah tomeh/uncleanness: and she returned unto her house".*

On this particular passage I have heard any number of explanations as to why Bathsheba was washing, how simple it is to explain when we know the laws of *niddah*. Please note that she was immersing after dark as was prescribed for the *niddah*.

The Torah forbids any sexual contact between a man and a woman who has the status of *niddah*. We thus find the commandment in Leviticus 18:19 as it is written: *"Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness/niddah."*

Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman with the status of *niddah* is considered a most serious sin, very much like entering the Holy Temple in an unclean state. In Leviticus 20:18 it is written: *"And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness (niddah), and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people"*.

The punishment of being *korais*/cut off is prescribed as a general punishment for sexual perversion. *Koret*/cut off is the same punishment for incest, and adultery. *Korais*/cut off is generally thought of as being "cut off" from ones spiritual source by being put outside the camp. We might think that G-d is a little strict on this one, but truly..."For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8).

### **CHILD BIRTH**

A woman is unclean for a period of seven days after giving birth to a male child. In Leviticus 12:2 it is written:

*Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.*

*{3} And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.*

In Luke 2:21 of the Jewish New Testament we see that *Yosef*/Joseph and *Miryam*/Mary are in the Temple as prescribed by the above referenced verses to have *Yeshua*/Jesus's *b'rit-milah* /ritual circumcision, and be given His name. "On the eighth day, when it was time for His *brit-milah*/circumcision He was given the name *Yeshua*/Jesus." In Luke 2:21 of the King James version it reads as follows: *"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS."*

In Matthew 2:21 it states it this way: *"And he (Yosef/Joseph) arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel."*

Thirty-three days later we again see *Yosef*/Joseph and *Miryam*/Mary in the Holy Temple at *Yerushalayim*/Jerusalem for *Miryam*/Mary's purification with the appropriate sacrifices. In Luke 2:22 in the Jewish New Testament it is written: *"When the time came for their purification according to the Torah of Moshe, they took him up to Yerushalayim/Jerusalem to present Him to Adonai/The L-rd (Verse 23) As it is written in the Torah of Adonai "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to Adonai (Verse 23) and also to offer a sacrifice of a pair of doves or two young pigeons as required by Torah of Adonai"*.

An immersion would also be part of the requirement. In Leviticus 12:4 it is written: *"And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled"*.

In Luke 1:59 in the Jewish New Testament we see another example *Z'kharyah*/Zechariah and *Elisheva*/Elizabeth presenting *Yochanan*/John for his *b'rit-milah* /ritual circumcision and to be given his name. There are different requirements for the birth of a girl. The woman is unclean for fourteen days with an additional sixty-six days. In Leviticus 2:25 it is written: *"But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days."*

The last type of immersion to do with separation are the cooking vessels to be used for the preparation and consumption of food that are not made of metal or glass (differing opinions on china and porcelain). If these vessels are purchased from a non-Jew they must be immersed in a *mikvah* before use. and the following blessing is said: *"Blessed are You O L-rd, our G-d, King of the universe, Who made us holy with His commandments and commanded that we immerse a utensil(s)."*

This immersion is to remove the "impurity of the Gentiles". There is a different process of immersion by which vessels are ritually cleansed to remove non-kosher food which might have penetrated there walls.

The men of war who had gone into battle were required to pass everything that could stand fire through the fire, and all else must be purified with an immersion for impurity. This included all weapons, spoils and cooking utensils. This is found in Numbers 31:21-24 as it is written: *"And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses; {22} Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, {23} Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water. {24} And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp."*

### **Worship in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem**

What was the purpose of the *Mishkan*/Tabernacle and the form of worship prescribed? The *Mishkan*/Tabernacle was seen by the people as containing the very throne of God. The earth had become consumed with evil after Adam

had sinned and was removed from the Garden of Eden. There was not an area on earth that the Lord could walk and talk with man as he had done in the Garden of Eden. The tabernacle was established, by a commandment from God, to provide a dwelling place for God here on earth and for man to commune with and worship him in a pure environment. In Exodus 25:8 it is written: *"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them"*.

This *Beit HaMikdash*/Sanctuary was to take the place of the pleasant walks and talks that God had with man in the Garden of Eden. The *Beit HaMikdash*/Sanctuary was to be devoted completely to the communication with and the worship of God, where everything pertaining to the impurity of sin would be excluded. The great Kingdom age when Messiah will rule and reign here on earth, from Jerusalem, for a thousand year span is seen in Jewish Eschatology as a repeat of the Garden of Eden.

Thus the rules regarding ritual impurity are understood. The main rules regarding ritual impurity are pertaining to the *Mishkan*/Tabernacle or later the *Beit HaMikdash*/Sanctuary or Holy Temple in Jerusalem. If a person should enter the Temple *Beit HaMikdash*/Sanctuary in a state of ritual impurity the severest penalties were imposed. In Numbers 19:20 it is written: *"But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean"*.

#### **Ritual uncleanness is often thought of as sin.**

Everything given by God in both the Tabernacle and the Temple was given to us as an example for us to learn something about Messiah. We might ask, "what was the purpose of all the sacrifices"? We know that *Yeshua*/Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that takes away all the sins of the world ... the sins are varied and so must the sacrifices be varied. For one sacrifice to meet each of the requirements of each sin that is committed is impossible for the human mind to comprehend as a whole.

The Lord in His infinite understanding of our mind, devised a way that would illustrate and teach the concept to unregenerate man. That teaching, with visual aids, is depicted by the animal sacrificial system. I cannot imagine a more graphic way to illustrate the horror of sin and the price paid than to kill a gentle, sin free lamb, see its blood flow, its body go limp. Then, the impact that it would make upon my mind realizing that I am the cause of its death. Multiply that by trillions of sins that our Messiah bore in His own body.

When *Yeshua* was sacrificed, He met the requirements of the *hata'at*/sin offering, *olah*/burnt offering, and *mincha*/bread offering, *sh'lamin*/peace offering and *asham*/guilt offering. How best to impact people than with the death of an animal. Each type of animal sacrifice is illustrating what Messiah had to do to meet the requirement to nullify that particular type of sin. The animal sacrifice system was not instituted to take away their sins. In Hebrew 10:4 it is written: *"It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"*.

Never was it the purpose of the sacrificial system to "save" anyone. Those before the death of Messiah were "saved" by faith just as we are today. We receive faith by believing God ... just as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. In Romans 4:3 it is written: *"Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"*.

God used everything as a visual aid to teach the people through out all ages about Messiah and His redemptive work. All the colors, furniture, vail, altar, ceremonies etc., were a visual aid in teaching us about Messiah and His redemptive work.

#### **INSTALLATION/CONSECRATION OF THE KOHANIM/PRIESTS**

Immersion as part of the installation/consecration ceremony of the *Kohanim*/priests was to attain a higher degree of holiness ... in essence to show a change of status. The immersion of the whole body was a necessary part of the installation/consecration ceremonies of the *Kohanim*/Priests. Worship in the Holy Temple would be impossible if the *Kohanim*/priest were *tomeh*/ritually impure. A vital part of the ceremonies of the installation/consecration of the *Kohanim*/priests was immersion not because they were ritually impure but to show elevation of status. There must be a change of status to assume the role of *Kohen*/priest, as described in the following scriptures. In Exodus 29:4 it is written: *"And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water"*.

In Leviticus 8:6 it is written: *"And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water"*.

In Exodus 40:12 it is written: *"And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water"*.

All *Kohanim*/priests were required to go through an immersion as part of the consecration/installation ceremony as we have previously seen in Exodus 29:4, before assuming the duties of the priesthood. A man had to be 30 years of age and a descendent from Aaron. We see that the priestly line of *Yeshua*/Jesus came from His mother who was related to *Elishava*/Elizabeth a descendent of Aaron (Luke 1:5). *Yeshua*/Jesus was not an exception, before entering into His ministry He had to be immersed, choosing His cousin *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist to be the witness. Not because *Yeshua*/Jesus was *tomeh*/ ritually unclean but because he was making a change of status to a higher degree of Holiness. It was customary also for anyone going on a fast to be immersed. In Mathew 4:1-2, it is written: *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. {2} And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.*

Many sermons have been preached on this one subject but the simple truth is *Yeshua*/Jesus had to carry out every requirement in Torah or He would not have been the perfect Passover lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

### **SEPARATION OF THE LEVITES TO THE SERVICE OF G-D**

The Levites were servants in the *Beit haMikdash*/Sanctuary or Temple. The ceremony that separated them unto the service of G-d and cleanse them from *tomeh*/ritually impurity consisted of an immersion according to Numbers 8:15 as it is written: *"And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering"*.

This applies to us as servants of the L-rd, we are set aside for the service to the L-rd and our body is a living sacrifice as recorded in the words of *Rav Shaul/Rabbi Paul* in Romans 12:1 as it is written: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"*.

### **YOM KIPPUR/THE DAY OF ATONEMENT CEREMONY**

The *Kohen haGadol*/The High Priest during the ceremony of *Yom Kippur*/Day of Atonement entered the *Kodesh haKodhashim*/Holy of Hollies two times, requiring an immersion and change of garments a total of five times in the Holy Place. The *Kohen haGadol*/High Priest was not ritually impure but there was a change of status each time he went before the L-rd. In Leviticus 16:24 it is written: *"And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people."*

Contrary to popular belief in Christian circles there was not a rope tied to his leg and there were not bells on the bottom of his garment. The *Kohen haGadol*/High Priest was trained extensively on what to do so that there would not be any mistakes. However, if there should be a mistake, another *Kohen*/priest would go in and finish the ceremony. This never happened.

The Azazel ceremony that took place on *Yom Kippur*/Day of Atonement consisted of two goats presented at the alter, lots being cast over them one was given to Adonai and the other was given to Azazel. The meaning of the word azazel is unknown but the Talmud thus denotes the mountain on which the scapegoat is sent. We call the one given to azazel the scapegoat. The goat given to Adonai was taken in and slaughtered on the alter. A scarlet cloth was tied to the horn of the second goat and then taken twelve miles out into the wilderness to a mountain cliff. The scarlet cloth was taken off the horn of the goat and placed on a rock, the goat was then pushed off the cliff being torn to shreds before hitting the bottom. It is said when atonement was made the scarlet cloth turned snow white. All the people assembled at the Temple were awaiting the news ... has the cloth turned white this year? When the word came of the change in color, there was great rejoicing among the people. In Isaiah 1:18 our L-rd says it this way: *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"*.

After Messiah was slain in 30 C.E. until the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., it is said that the cloth never again turned from scarlet to white.

The *Kohen*/priest that was responsible to take the scapegoat in the Azazel ceremony into the wilderness must have a total immersion of himself and his garments. In Leviticus 16:26 it is written: *"And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and immerse/bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp"*.

The *Kohen*/priest that burned the ox and the sin offering must have a total immersion for himself and his garments. In Leviticus 16:28 it is written: *"And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and immerse/bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp"*.

### **THE RED HEIFER CEREMONY - A RIGHT OF PURIFICATION**

Without the ashes of the red heifer, the purification process for all the implements used in Temple worship could not be performed. The ashes were mixed with water and sprinkled on all implements, including the brazen altar, the golden lampstand, table of shewbread, etc. for the purpose of purification.

According to the *Mishnah*, the rede heifer was to meet very strict specifications (For more detailed information consult the tractate, "*Parah*" in the *Mishnah*). The red heifer was to be two years old or younger without any sort of blemish, mark. She must not have two dark hairs coming from the same hair follicle. A yolk must never have been placed on her neck.

Today the *Kohen*/priest are preparing to start Temple worship as quickly as they can. They have prepared many of the vessels used in worship. They have the garments that are necessary. To find the ashes of the last red heifer is not necessary or even advisable because there is no way of knowing if they have been contaminated. They do not need to have a fully constructed Temple building before worship can begin (Ezra 3:2) but they must have access to the Temple mount so that they can build an altar. This precedence is set in Ezra 3:2 as it is written: *"Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God"*.

What is needed, however, it to be able to place the new altar over the exact spot where the altar was in the previous temples. There has been much speculation, by many credible archaeologists, as to the exact location of the

Temple. In the March/April 192 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, twelve possible theories were presented. One in particular is worthy of mention here. In the *Mishnah*, there is a passage describing drain holes around the altar for the blood of the sacrifices to empty into the Kidron Valley (*Mishnah, Middoth 3:2*). It seems that drain holes have been found under the Dome of the Rock. The altar must be positioned in the same location of the past altars. If these are the same drain holes used around the altar, this will eliminate the theory that the Dome of the Rock and the Holy Temple will stand side by side on this most holy of spots. The Lord is releasing information on a "need to know basis".

The red heifer was taken outside the camp to be slaughtered. The heifer was to be burned with all its blood, flesh, hide and refuse. Cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet material cast into the fire and burned also. After burning, the ashes were beaten and then gathered. There was approximately four gallons of ashes. The ashes were then mixed with water and all in the Temple was sprinkled with this mixture. Everything that could be immersed was but what could not be immersed was sprinkled for purification.

A new red heifer is being sought. Red Angus cows are thought to be the best breed for the prospective candidate. Some cows that are with calf are already being shipped to Israel from America. The hope is that one will fit the criteria. None of Temple worship can begin without the ashes of the red heifer. The ashes of the red heifer is needed to perform the purification process.

The *Kohen*/priest who slaughtered the red heifer was unclean for a day, a total immersion was required for this purification. In Numbers 19:7 it is written: *"Then the kohen/priest shall immerse/wash his clothes, and he shall immerse/bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even"*.

The *kohen*/priest who burned the red heifer was unclean for a day, a total immersion was required for his purification. In Numbers 19:8 it is written: *"And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even"*.

### **PROSELYTE**

When a person converts to Judaism he must enter the covenant in the same manner as Israel did when they first accepted the Torah on Mount Sinai. In Numbers 15:15, it is written: *"One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD"*

Every male that converts to Judaism must, therefore, undergo the special ceremony of ritual circumcision. If he is already circumcised blood of the covenant called the *Dam B'rit* must be drawn. Both men and women must then undergo immersion. When the Holy Temple, the *Beit haMikdash*, stood in Jerusalem and the sacrificial system was in force, the third element of conversion involved bringing a sacrifice. As the Holy Temple is no longer standing and the sacrificial system cannot be performed that is not required. However the immersion and circumcision are required.

The ritual of immersion as well as circumcision, which were required of a male is not something that a convert can do on his own. Since it involves a major change in a persons communal status it must be treated as a community function. When a person converts to Judaism he undergoes a ritual purification and a change in status to a higher degree of holiness. Therefore, these rituals are administered by a three man Rabbinical Court, called a *Beit Din*. Unless done in the presence of such a court the conversion is not valid.

The conversion of the proselyte required *Kavvahah*/intention and the recitation of a benediction. The proselyte recites the benediction after the immersion because until then he cannot affirm the part which says "...God of our fathers...who has commanded us." The blessing for immersion of a convert is as follows; *"Blessed are You, O G-d, King of the universe, who has set us apart by your commandments, and commanded us concerning the immersion"*. The Talmud states, "as soon as the convert immerses and emerges he is like a Jew in every way." How does immersion in a Mikvah change a person: This can best be understood by another Talmudic teaching, that "a convert who embraces Judaism is like a new born child." We see an example of this in the conversion of the proselyte, he becomes a Jew in every way just as if he had been born a Jew.

A Jewish person who converts to another religion is still considered a Jew and does not require any form of conversion when returning to Judaism. However, it is customary for him to immerse as a sign of repentance and spiritual re-birth.

Timothy circumcised by *Rav Shaul*/Rabbi Paul as recorded in Acts 16:3 was to show intention and acceptance of the covenant to a higher degree of Holiness. An immersion was also a part of the ceremony of Timothy. Undoubtedly *Rav Shaul*/Rabbi Paul was part of the *Beit Din*. In Acts 16:3 it is written: *"Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek"*.

There is a tradition with some evidence that the conversion with immersion goes back to the time of the Patriarchs. The reason that Abraham was chosen to become the father of many nations was that he would teach his household of the ways of God. In Genesis 18:19 it is written: *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgement; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him"*.

Abraham was deeply concerned with others and taught those around him concerning God. Abraham was what we might call an evangelist. He spread the teachings of God and began what was to become Judaism. According to tradition, he literally converted people to this new way of life. His son Isaac and grandson Jacob continued the message. Today, we might call their converts proselytes. It is said, by tradition, the convert was immersed. We receive a hint of this when Abraham receives a visit by three angels in Genesis 18:14 as it is written: *"Let now a little water be taken, and wash your feet"*.

The *Zohar* explains that this alluded to the fact that Abraham had a *mikvah* and practiced immersion.

### **WASHING OF THE HANDS**

Washing of the hands as a form of immersion is by far the most widespread. The method of washing is either by immersion up to the wrist or by pouring 1/4 log (approximately 1/2 pint) of water over both hands from a receptacle with a wide mouth, the lip of which must be undamaged. The water should be poured over the whole hand up to the wrist, but is effective as long as the fingers are washed up to the second joint. The hands must be clean and without anything adhering to them; rings must be removed so that the water can reach the entire surface area. The water should not be hot or discolored and it is customary to perform the act by pouring water over each hand three times. The hand washing ritual is commonly known as *netilat yadayim*/taking water to the hands, or lifting of the hands.

Clean hands are seen as a symbol of a guiltless soul, one that could stand before G-d with a clean heart. Upon entering the sanctuary and ministering to G-d one must be free of guilt and all impurity. In Psalm 134:2 it is written: *"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD"*.

In Psalm 28:2 it is written: *"Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle."*

*Rav Sha'ul/Rabbi Paul* put it this way in 1 Timothy 2:8 as it is written: *"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"*.

When a murder was committed, the body found out in a field, and the perpetrator unknown, a determination was made as to which village was nearest to the slain person. The elders of the village that was nearest to the slain person were to go out into the field with a heifer of the herd that had not had a yolk placed on her neck or had ever been worked. They were to take the heifer to a valley with running water, which had not been plowed or sown. The neck of the heifer was to be broken in the valley. The elders were to say "Our hands have not shed this blood nor did our eyes see it." the elders were to wash their hands over the heifer's neck asking for forgiveness of Israel and ask the L-rd not to place the guilt of innocent blood on the people. In Deuteronomy 21:6 it is written: *"And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: (7) And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. {8} Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. {9} So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD."*

At the trial of our Messiah when the sentence of death had been passed by Pilate, to show to everyone that *Yeshua/Jesus* was a just and innocent man Pilate washed his hands. This act was to convey to all present that he was not responsible and was guilt free of this death. In Matthew 27:24 it is written: *"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it"*.

By the first century washing of the hands had developed into a tradition of the elders and expanded into other areas besides removal of guilt. Washing the hands is a rabbinic ordinance to correct the condition of *tomeh yadayim*/impurity of hands. According to one tradition "impurity of the hands" (and washing them as a means of purification) was instituted by King Solomon. while another has it that the disciples of Hillel and Shammai were responsible for it. It seems that the custom spread from the *kohen*/priests, who washed their hands before eating consecrated food, to the pious among the laity and finally became universal. The detailed regulations concerning "impurity of the hands: constituted one of the 18 ordinances adopted in accord with the opinion of the school of Shammai against the school of Hillel, and it met at first with considerable opposition. In order to establish the practice the rabbis warned of dire consequences for those who disregarded it, even going so far as to predict premature death. The reasoning was that in the marketplace one may touch ceremonially impure things; the impurity is removed by rinsing up to the wrist. Orthodox Jews today observe *n'tilat-yadayim*/ritual hand washing before meals. The rationale for it has nothing to do with hygiene but is based on the idea that "a man's home is this Temple," with the dining table his altar, the food his sacrifice and himself the *kohen*/priest. Since the *Tanakh*/Old Testament requires the *kohen*/priest to be ceremonially pure before offering sacrifices on the Temple altar, the *rabbinic ordinance* requires the same before eating a meal. We see an example of this in Mark 7:3 as it is written: *"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders." (They were also careful that all their pots, pans, dishes etc. were immersed in the mikvah). {4} "And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables"*

We see in Mark 7:5 what seems to be a contradiction in scripture. Messiah appears to be condemning all of Pharisaic tradition, in the answer He gives to the Pharisees, when criticized for not keeping the tradition of the elders.

{5} "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?'"

The answer is recorded in Mark 7:7-8 as it is written: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. {8} For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."

Actually Messiah was only opposed to those practices of the Pharisees that placed human tradition above G-d's command. Please remember that Messiah never broke any commandment but He did break quite a few of the traditions of the elders.

### **WASHING THE HANDS AND FEET**

Washing of the hands and feet is a type of immersion and was a requirement for the *kohen*/priests before participating in the Temple service. Each time before entering into the Tabernacle or the Temple the *kohen*/priest must wash his hands and feet under a penalty of death. In Exodus 30:17-21 it is written: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, {18} Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. {19} For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: {20} When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: {21} So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.

Messiah washed the feet of this *talmidim*/disciples/students at the last passover Seder. This act has inspired many traditions in many dominations. Actually several dominations have been formed on this one act alone. Messiah was preparing His *talmidim*/students to receive their ministry just as the sons of Aaron had. Yeshua was also acting as a priest installing/consecrating His *talmidim*/students into the office of *kohen*/priest. In Exodus 30:20 it is written: "When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD"

The sons of Aaron were already cleansed from impurity, but even so they had to wash their hands and feet, or under penalty of death they could not serve in the Temple. Just as the *talmidim*/students could not receive their ministry until they had been washed. In John 13:4 it is written: "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. {5} After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. {6} Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? {7} Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. {8} Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. {9} Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

### **SPRINKLING**

I am often asked, "What about Sprinkling?" Sprinkling was a form of Ablution used in the purification of the Tabernacles and the Temple. The ashes of the red heifer was mixed with water and in some cases blood and sprinkled on items that could not be immersed. It is said that the water Yeshua/Jesus turned to wine at the wedding in Cana was mixed with ashes of the red heifer. In John 2:6-9 it is written: "And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. {7} Jesus saith unto them, fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. {8} And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. {9} When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;)"

Sprinkling was a part of the purification process of cleansing the leper. In this case, a person was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. Always a total immersion was to follow. In Leviticus 14:6-7 it is written: "As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: {7} And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field".

If a person was exposed to a dead body of either a human or unclean animal, or if a person went into a tomb/grave, then this person became unclean. Part of the purification process was to be sprinkled with the water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer. His tent, cooking vessels, and anything that he touched was sprinkled with this mixture on the third and the seventh day after he had become unclean. The seventh day he was to totally immerse himself (Numbers 19:18-19).

There are other times that sprinkling is used as part of the purification process. They are very similar to what was just mentioned in the previous paragraph.

### **CUSTOMS**

It was customary for the sages (those who recorded the scriptures) to immerse each day before beginning work. If during the day they had a bad thought or began to perspire they had to go and immerse. The understanding being that they must be pure to work in the scriptures.

Before the young boys would begin to study the scriptures each day they would go through an immersion.

Before presenting a sacrifice in the Holy Temple the person would go through the *Mikvah*. Even today many people immerse before *Yom Kippur*/Day of Atonement, *Rosh haShanah*/Feast of Trumpets and the Sabbath.

Immersion in the *mikvah* is an act of self re-newal and re-birth and therefore, it is customary to immerse as a sign of repentance. When a person had been through an area of sin it was customary for him to go through the *mikvah*. If a person had been very sick he would go through the *mikvah*.

Some upon rising in the morning would go through the *mikvah* before studying Torah.

One passing under an Asherah tree becomes impure and must go through an immersion. An Asherah tree is described in Jeremiah 10:3-5 as it is written: *For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. {4} They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. {5} They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne because they cannot go".*

To some this description resembles the modern Christmas tree.

After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, tradition tells us that Adam set in the river and repented of his sin of high treason.

### **WASHING OF THE DEAD**

There was a custom in some communities to immerse the body after death in the *mikvah* as a final purification ritual to prepare the person for resurrection. The practice was strongly discouraged by many rabbis, however, on the grounds that it discouraged women from attending the *mikvah*/ritual bath, when their attendance was required by Torah. The most widespread custom is to wash the deceased with 9 *kav* (approximately 4 1/2 gallons) of water. We even today practice washing and dressing our dead. However it is not for the purpose of a final purification rite. *Rav Shaul*/Paul was asked about this custom and answered this way. In 1 Cor 15:29 it is written: *"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead"?*

Basically what he is saying "this is an act that states that you believe in the resurrection, if you do not believe in the resurrection why are you doing this". This was only a custom and not a commandment. It was also the custom to anoint the dead person before burial, we see an example of this in Luke 7:36-38 as it is written: *"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. {37} And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, {38} And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*

Remember there was a very short time after the death of *Yeshua* until they buried him. In the story in Luke 7:36-38, the woman was a sinner as we all are if we do not receive the cleansing blood of *Yeshua*. She was giving Him the preparations for His burial and resurrection.

### **IMMERSION OF THE EARTH**

The earth went through an immersion in Genesis 1:2 it seems to make it ritually pure for the creation of Adam. It is said in Midrash that God intended to give Torah/instruction to the generations of Noah. That generations was so vile and corrupt that it could not accept Torah. Only eight souls were found to be righteous at that time. Thus we see another immersion of the earth. If water could not rectify man by purifying him, it would do so by destroying all who were evil.

The covenant has been given that the earth will not go through another immersion by water but the next time it will be a purification of fire. Just as the men of war returned from battle all the spoils received that could be put through the fire were to be purified in that manner. The men of war could not enter the camp for seven days. We will be with *Yeshua* for a seven year period while the purification by fire is being performed on the earth.

### **THE SECOND COVENANT/KINGDOM OF GOD**

When we speak of the "New Covenant" or "Second Covenant" just what are we talking about? The First Covenant that was given to Moses for the people on Mount Sinai was a covenant that was written on stone. There was a legend that the stone the commandments were written on was blue sapphire weighing 40 *sa'ah*/670 pounds each (*The Midrash Says* by Rabbi Moshe Weissman: Benai Yakov Publications). We see that blue was used a great deal in the declaration of the tabernacle. Sapphire was one of the stones that was used on the breastpiece of judgement worn by the priest to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. We see it also used as the second of the twelve foundations in the new Jerusalem. The sapphire stone represents, according to the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, "showing forth, speaking out, or marking as a tally or record". This certainly is a description of the commandments.

The commandments were written, by the finger of God, in such a fashion that one could read them from either side of the stone. As you can see, for Moses to carry them down the mountain was a supernatural event. The Second Covenant was spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah as a covenant written on the hearts of men not stone. In Jeremiah 31:31-33 it is written: *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: {32} Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: {33} But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people".*

The kingdom of God or second covenant came into the hearts of men at the festival of *Shavuot*/Pentecost. Spiritually, the temple is our body. We are to take great effort to make sure our temple is pure. In II Corinthians 6:16 it is written: *"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"*.

Three things were required to establish a covenant ... sacrifice, immersion, circumcision. The second covenant was established on these three principles just as the covenant God made with Moses and the people at Mount Sinai. God told Moses to have the people consecrate/purify themselves by sacrifice and immersion. They were already circumcised through the command given to Abraham and his descendents. The gentile/non-Jew that was living with them was also responsible to carry out these commands. In Numbers 15:15 it is written: *"One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance forever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD"*.

The sacrifice for the second covenant is *Yeshua*/Jesus, the perfect Passover lamb. Not only did *Yeshua* fulfill all that was required of a Passover Lamb but He also was the perfect *hata'at*/sin offering, *olah*/burnt offering, and *minchah*/bread offering, *sh'lamim*/peace offering and *asham*/guilt offering. The immersion required is the immersion into Messiah, and the circumcision is of the heart. In Colossians 2:11 it is written: *"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Messiah"*.

### **SO WHAT WAS YOCHANAN HAMATVIL/ JOHN THE BAPTIST DOING?**

In John 1:6-8 it is written: *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. {8} He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."*

*Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist was seen by the people as bringing the covenant just as his predecessor Elijah had done. It is the understanding of the people that before Messiah can come Elijah must come to prepare the way. Even today in the Passover Seder, there is a place set at the table for Elijah and during the evening a child is sent to the door to see if Elijah is coming. When they do not see him, they answer "next year in Jerusalem". *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist was born on Passover six months before his cousin *Yeshua*/Jesus. (for documentation of this consult Luke the first Chapter and I Chronicles 24, taking note as to when Zachariah from the family of Abijah would be serving in the Temple and adding nine months.) The last place we see Elijah in scripture is on the banks of the Jordan river being taken to heaven in the chariot of G-d. The first place we see *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist in his ministry is on the banks of the Jordan river announcing the new covenant ... the kingdom of G-d is at hand. He plainly said that he was preparing the way for this covenant. Just as Moses had brought the people out of Egypt to Mount Sinai to meet with G-d to accept the covenant. In *Exodus 19:10* it is written: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and immerse/sanctify them to day and to tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes"*

As you can see G-d commanded the people to prepare themselves for the meeting by immersion/ritual purification of themselves and their garments. *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist is telling the people to prepare themselves to meet the Messiah and receive the new covenant. The act of immersion into repentance was necessary for ritual purity. Immersion was also necessary to elevate them to a higher state of Holiness to enter into the kingdom.

*Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist was not a reincarnation of Elijah. There is not a teaching in the Bible that substantiates such an idea. *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist had been given the same assignment or anointing as Elijah, to prepare the people for the kingdom. As we have seen, those people just as we do today, need a time of reflection and repentance in order to partake of the things of our L-rd, the kingdom of G-d, just as the people prepared themselves each time to enter the Temple by going through a *mikvah*. *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist is telling the people they must do the same. In order to move on in G-d, we must strive for a higher degree of holiness, (without holiness no man shall see G-d). Just as the priests were immersed/installed into the priesthood, we today are kings and priest to our G-d and must be cognizant of our place in holiness. We must remember that the water does not defile and the water does not purify ... it is heart attitude. Just as the *niddah* and the proselyte had to have intention, so must we. We can never immerse ourselves enough to wash away our sins. Only the Blood of *Yeshua* can do that. We will never work our way to heaven by just doing the commandments, we arrive by faith.

We see an incident in Acts 2 that has produced many different understandings and several denominations. I would like to comment on it. In Acts 2 it is written: *"And when the festival of Shavu'ot/Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. {2} And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. {3} And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. {4} And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"*.

When G-d met with the ones that came out of Egypt on Mount Sinai to confirm the covenant with them, He spoke to them out of a cloud. In *Exodus 19:16-18* it is written: *"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. {17} And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. {18} And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke,*

*because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.*

This was a very impressive event to the people. The L-rd knows how to get our attention and He sure had their attention. The L-rd is speaking to them the covenant, part of this covenant is what we commonly call the "Ten commandments". The text actually says in Hebrew that He spoke to them with the voice of words and gives the idea that the words were visible...such as tongues of fire. In Hebrews 12:18 it is written: *"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, {19} And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: {20} (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: {21} And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:"*

On the festival of *Shavu'ot*/Pentecost, which means Feast of Harvest, The L-rd is giving the new covenant to the people. They are at the Holy Temple area as they would be to participate in this great feast day. Suddenly, there came a sound from the sky like the roar of a violent wind, and it filled the whole area. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on each one of them. After the covenant had been confirmed, *Shimon*/Peter stands to give an explanation of what has happened. They have been offered the new covenant, they are experiencing a higher degree of holiness with elevated status in the kingdom. The natural thing to do would be to be immersed, just as the L-rd had commanded before meeting with the people on Mount Sinai. In Acts 2:41 it is written: *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"*.

It has greatly been debated how three thousand people could be immersed in one day. But lets remember that we are at the Holy Temple area where there are many *mikvot*/immersion baths. Each person entering the Holy Temple would be immersed in a *mikvah* so there was ample *mikvot* for each person to be immersed. On some feast days as many as ten thousand people would enter the Holy Temple area. The text indicates a house, so the assumption has been made over the years that it was a literal house. This has caused some confusion as to how those passing by would be able to witness this great event ... hear the different languages etc. The simple fact is that the Temple was also called a house. We even use that term today for a church ... house of God.

### **IMMERSION INTO MESSIAH**

Immersion into Messiah is different than immersion into repentance. In Ephesians 4:5 it is written: *"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"*.

The immersion into Messiah is to install a person into the priesthood, the kingdom and elevate that person to a higher degree of holiness. Just as Aaron and his sons that were to become *Kohen*/priests were immersed as an act of "change of status", when we enter the kingdom of G-d, we are undergoing a change in status. In Revelation 1:6 it is written: *"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."*

It is an act of accepting the new covenant. *Yochanan haMatvil*/John the Baptist immersion was an immersion of repentance to prepare the people to be ritually pure. In Acts 19:1 it is written: *"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, {2} He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. {3} And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. {4} Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. {5} When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"*.

A good example of immersion into Messiah is recorded in Acts 8. There is a devout Ethiopian man returning from worship at the Holy Temple in *Yerushalayim*/Jerusalem reading from *Yeshayahu*/Isaiah. By the way this man was not a eunuch, if he were he would not have been allow to worship in the Holy Temple and the scripture states that he was returning from worshipping. In Acts 8:27 it is written: *"...and had come to Jerusalem for to worship"*.

*Adonai* sent Philip to tell him about Messiah helping him to understand and expanding on the passage in *Yeshayahu*/Isaiah 53:7,8 as to the deity of *Yeshua*/Jesus. In Acts 8:35 it is written: *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. {36} And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the Ethiopian said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? {37} And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. {38} And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Ethiopian; and he baptized him."*

This man was ritually pure, but he wanted to accept the covenant of Messiah and attain a change of status, doing so by immersion.

The account of *Rav Sha'ul*/Paul accepting the covenant in Messiah is another example of immersion into Messiah. As soon as he realized who Messiah was He wanted to be immersed for a change of status. In Acts 9:18 it is written: *"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized"*.

Peter was summoned by the *Ruach haKodesh*/Holy Spirit to present the covenant to the *Goyim*/Gentiles. This was an amazing thing to the Jews ... that the covenant would be offered to the pagan world. *Adonai* in the vision he gave *Shimon*/Peter of the sheet filled with unclean things was to show *Shimon*/Peter that he was cleansing the *goyim*/gentiles. The vision does not do away with the dietary laws as stated in Leviticus 11 as has been the teaching in the Christian world. The vision was only understood by *Shimon*/Peter after the men arrived from Cornelius of Caesarea. In Acts 10:44-48 it is written: *"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. {45} And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. {46} For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, {47} Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? {48} And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days".*

After the covenant had been presented to Cornelius and his group on behalf of the whole pagan world, The Holy spirit confirmed the covenant by descending. The most natural thing for Cornelius and his group was to accept the covenant of Messiah by immersion.

How does immersion relate to us now...believers in Messiah without the temple in force? Emerging from the *Mikvah* is very much like a process of rebirth. The *Mikvah* represents the womb. When a person enters the *Mikvah*, he is reentering the womb, and when he emerges, he is as if "born again". Thus he attains a completely new status. In John 3:3 in the Jewish New Testament version, *Yeshua*/Jesus is having a conversation with a righteous man by the name of Nicodemus who has asked how to enter the kingdom of heaven. *Yeshua* answered him: *"I tell you that unless a person is born again from above he cannot see the Kingdom of G-d."* (4) *Nicodemus said to him, "How can a grown man be 'born again' can he go back into his mother's womb and be born a second time? (5) Yeshua answered, "Yes, born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of G-d."*

The womb is a place that is completely free from all concepts of *tumah*/ritual impurity. A baby enters the world in complete purity, and there is no way in which he can be defiled while in the womb. Thus when an individual enters the *Mikvah*, he leaves all *tumah*/ ritual impurity behind and comes forth as a new, ritually purified person. In a sense, water represents the womb of creation. When a person immerses in the *Mikvah*, he is placing himself in the state of the world yet unborn, subjecting himself totally to G-d's creative power. Immersing then nullifies ego and asks "What am I?" Ego is the essence of permanence, while water is the essence of impermanence. When a person is ready for the mighty hand of G-d to replace his ego with a question, "What am I?", then he is also ready to be reborn with its answer. When a person enters the *Mikvah* he subjugates his ego to G-d. Another way of looking at the immersion is a state of non-existence or non-life, an environment where a person cannot live. If a person stays submerged for any length of time he will die from lack of air. Since breath is the essence of life, this is placing him in non-existence or non-life. According to Torah, if a person stops breathing he is no longer considered among the living. Upon entering the *Mikvah*, a person momentarily enters the realm of the nonliving, so upon emerging, he is like one reborn.

The *Mikvah* also represents the grave. When a person immerses, he is temporarily in a state of nonliving, and when he emerges, he is resurrected with a new status. The representation of immersion as both womb and grave is not a contradiction. Both are places of non-breathing, and are end points of the cycle of life. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew word *kever*, which usually means a "grave" is also occasionally used for the womb. Both are in the cycle of birth and death, and when a person passes through one of these, he attains a totally new status.

Please remember that there is not enough water to wash away our sins or to make us righteous, only the blood of *Yeshua*/Jesus can do that. Ultimately all purification comes from G-d and His gracious kindness. In Titus 3:5 it is written: *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"*

In Hebrews 10:22 it is written: *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water".*

All that we have seen up to now seems to be a rehearsal for the time that Messiah will catch us away for the great wedding. The first miracle that Messiah performed was to turn the purification water into wine at the wedding in Cana. We might consider all the times that we go through the immersion/purification process as a rehearsal for the time that the bride will be presented to Messiah without spot or blemish. We will receive our glorified body and join Him for the great festivities. In Ephesians 5:25b-27 (Jewish New Testament version) it is written: *Messiah loved the Messianic Community/church, indeed, gave himself up on its behalf {26} in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the mikvah, so to speak, {27} in order to present the Messianic Community/church to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without defect*

We might ask, "why does Messiah have a bride"? *Yeshua* fulfilled Torah completely as we have previously stated. In Genesis 1:28, there is a commandment to marry. To understand more about the wedding of the bride to Messiah, we must look at the Jewish wedding ceremony that was performed in ancient Israel.

There was not any dating or courtship or even teenage years as we think of today. A boy became a man at age 13 when he had his *Bar-Mitzvah* (son of the commandment). A girl also went through a ceremonial *Bat-Mitzvah* (daughter of the commandment) at age 12 or 13 declaring she had reached the age of religious majority. Marriage

was a practical legal matter which was established by contract and carried through by exacting procedure. The marriage ceremony consisted of two parts *kiddushin*/betrothal and *nissu'in*/marriage proper. A form of these customs exist today in the Jewish wedding ceremony.

A young Jewish man would select a young Jewish lady or perhaps his parents would select a young Jewish lady that they thought would make him a good wife. In some cases, the selection was made while the children were quite young. Sometimes a person called a "Matchmaker" would make the arrangements for the families. The Broadway play "*Fiddler on the Roof*" gives us a glimpse into the roll that a matchmaker would play.

The young man would go to the house of the young lady with a marriage contract. This contract or covenant is a true legal agreement giving the terms of the marriage proposal. We might call this today *kiddushin*/betrothal. The price that the young man was willing to pay for this bride was the most important consideration of the contract. In parts of the world today there is still a "bride price". The old saying "put your money where your mouth is" was surely true in this case.

He would ask the young lady and her father to read the contract. If the terms were suitable, the bride and groom would drink a cup of wine together thus sealing the contract and they were betrothed. This cup is of great importance. If the bride chose not to enter into this agreement, she would not drink the cup. The *kiddushin*/betrothal period is considered a sacred relationship. The bride is consecrated to her husband and forbidden to all others during the betrothal. This contract is so binding that a divorce is needed for dissolution. The groom, by drinking the cup, signifies his willingness to sacrifice in order to have this bride.

After drinking the cup, the groom would pay the price. The price was set so that the new bride would be a costly item and not just a modest token. The young man had no delusions that he was getting something for nothing. He would pay dearly to marry this girl. Genesis 29 is an example of the "bride price". Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, then is tricked into marrying Leah, then must work another seven years for Rachel. Fourteen years of labor is a very high price. The price that Messiah paid for us is even higher ... He gave His very life as the "bride price".

After the transactions were concluded, the groom would depart. But before leaving, he would make a speech to his bride ... "I go to prepare a place for you". He would return to his fathers house to prepare a honeymoon cottage for his bride. There was never a doubt in the bride's heart that he would not return for her. She knew that he would return for her because of the high price he had paid. We can be just as sure that Messiah will return for us, just as He has promised, because of the high price he has paid for us.

The wedding would take place at the father's house. After the wedding, the bride and groom would stay in the honeymoon cottage for a period of seven days. The guests would be having a great party during this time. When the seven days were completed, the bride and groom would return to the brides house for another party. We see a parallel here to the seven year period when we will be at the Father's house while the tribulation or the "birth pains of the Messiah" is transpiring on the earth. In Luke 21:36 it is written: *"Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man"*.

In Revelation 19:7-8 it is written: *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. {8} And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine line is the righteousness of saints"*.

After that time, we will return to the earth with our bridegroom for the reign of a thousand years. In Revelation 19:14 it is written: *"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean"*

Yeshua, our bridegroom, has gone on to His father's house after He brought the covenant/marriage contract, drank the cup and paid the price. In Luke 22:20 it is written: *"Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you"*

The announcement that He made to His disciples is very much like the words of a Jewish bridegroom. In John 14:1 it is written: *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. {2} In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. {3} And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

During the *kiddushin*/betrothal period, there were "friends of the bridegroom". One was assigned to the groom and one to the bride. *Yochanan HaMatvil*/John the Immerser declares that he is the "friend of the Bridegroom". In John 3:29, it is written: *"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled"*

The "friend of the bride" was responsible for the bride. At the wedding, the friend of the bride was to present the bride to the groom. He was to make sure that the bride had remained pure and acted as a liaison between the bride and the groom. We know that the "friend of the bride" is the Holy Spirit. In Romans 8:26 it is written: *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"*

This person also gave gifts to the bride. In this, we see a beautiful picture of the works of the Holy Spirit with us today. He has given us wonderful gifts ... the gifts of the Spirit. Not only gifts of the Spirit but beautiful attributes also. In Galatians 5:22-26 it is written: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith {23} Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. {24} And they that are Messiah's have*

*crucified the flesh with affections and lusts. {25} If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. {26} Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another"*

In Ephesians 4:11-12 it is written: *"And he gave some, apostles: and some, prophets: and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; {12} For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Messiah/ Christ"*

While in the *kiddushin*/betrothal period the bride had the responsibility to beautify herself. She would purchase expensive oils and perfume and had a detailed beautification regiment that she strictly adhered to. In I Peter 3:3-4 it is written: *"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel: {4} But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is the sight of God of great price"*

We today have that responsibility also, to beautify ourselves with the gifts of the Spirit. We are in the *kiddushin*/betrothal period with our bridegroom Messiah and the Holy Spirit is keeping us pure and will soon present us to Messiah at the wedding. In II Corinthians 11:2 it is written: *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Messiah/Christ."*

The Holy Spirit also has the job of pointing out sin in our lives that we are not even aware of in some cases, and pointing the way to Messiah for cleansing of that sin. In Genesis 24, there is a picture of *Avraham*/Abraham sending his servant, to a far land to bring a wife back for his son, *Yitzchak*/Isaac. We can see in this passage that *Avraham*/Abraham is a type of God the Father. The son of *Avraham*/Abraham, *Yitzchak*/Isaac is a type of Yeshua, the bride Rebekah is a picture of us, mankind in a far and pagan country. The servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit and his work to present us to the son of promise.

*Avraham*/Abraham's servant gave to Rebekah gifts of golden bracelets and a nose ring. The servant escorted the bride on the long journey to the father's house protecting her from all harm. When she saw her bridegroom, she knew who he was instantly, jumped from the camel's back and ran to him. Likewise, we are on that long journey but not alone, we are being escorted by the "friend of the bride" the Holy Spirit. I am sure that on the long journey Rebekah asked the servant many questions about the man with whom she would spend the rest of her life. In like manner, we have questions from time to time about what Messiah is like and what heaven is like. When we arrive, we will fly to Messiah in a moment and in a twinkling of an eye.

While we are in this waiting period, we are being immersed daily in the spiritual *mikvah* by the Holy Spirit to prepare us for the day when we will be presented to *Yeshua* our bridegroom. The Holy Spirit is writing the covenant on our hearts each day and cleansing us by that word. In Ephesians 5:25b-27 (Jewish New Testament version) it is written: *Messiah loved the Messianic Community/church, indeed, gave himself up on its behalf {26} in order to set it apart for God, making it clean through immersion in the mikvah, so to speak, {27} in order to present the Messianic Community/church to himself as a bride to be proud of, without a spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without defect*

In Ephesians 1:17 it is written: *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him"*

Not only will we be wed to our Messiah but we will participate in His coronation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In Revelation 22:14 (Jewish New Testament) it is written: *"How blessed are those who wash their robes, so they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"*

A beautiful picture of both the wedding and the coronation is found in Psalm 45 as it is written: *"To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. {2} Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. {3} Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. {4} And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. {5} Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. {6} Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. {7} You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore, God, your God, has anointed thee with the gladness above thy fellows. {8} All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of thy ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. {9} King's daughters were among your honourable women: upon your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. {10} Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; {11} So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. {12} And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour. {13} The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. {14} She shall be brought unto the king in raiment and needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. {15} With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. {16} Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom you may make princes in all the earth. {17} I will make your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever"*

We that make up the bride of Messiah have a responsibility to prepare ourselves for that role. Each time we drink the cup of communion we are reaffirming the marriage contract that we have with our Messiah. In I

Corinthians 11:24 it is written: *"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me"*

Each time we enter the spiritual *mikvah*, we are renewing our mind and becoming more like Messiah. In Romans 12:2 it is written: *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"*

Immersion in the *mikvah* is an outward sign of the changes that the Holy Spirit is making in our hearts. An outward sign is death to self and selfish motives. An outward sign of the blessed day when we will all be changed into our glorified bodies. An outward sign of the changes of status, going from one level of holiness to another. As we beautify our spirits with the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit and we asked Him each day to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, we enter the spiritual *mikvah*.

Will you make a decision to immerse as an outward sign of the many changes that the Holy Spirit, "friend of the bride" is doing in your life?

In light of what we have seen ... do we need to immerse ourselves today? Do we have any times we need to repent? Is there any desire to achieve a higher degree of holiness? The answer is yes just as in a marriage covenant the vows are renewed and reaffirmed, we need to renew and reaffirm our covenant with Messiah. How often? You pray and ask Adonai!

### **NOW WHAT DO I DO?**

Many times after doing a study on immersion, people come to us and ask this question. They desire to "elevate themselves" to a higher level of dedication in their hearts in their relationship with the Messiah Yeshua. They now know more about what was done during the time Messiah lived and want to "imitate Him". So, we offer these guidelines:

I offer these suggestions as possible sights to be immersed; a river, creek, spring, lake, the ocean, and perhaps a swimming pool. Wear modest attire, remembering that this is a time of serious dedication to Yeshua. You will need a witness that will help you say the prayers and to observe you as you immerse. It is the responsibility of the witness to see that your hair is loose and not tied with a hair band or ribbon, and that you go fully under the water three times. Often, the first few times you may not go deep enough, so they should declare "kosher" or "not kosher" when you come up so you will know if you need to go under again or not. They are to keep track of the three times for you.

People often are terrified of water. Please do not be legalistic about their immersion. I have seen two physically challenged people desiring to be immersed but fearful of completely covering their heads with water. I have known people that have accepted Yeshua on their death bed ... for them it is not possible to be immersed. Please remember salvation does not have two steps .. the blood of Yeshua and the Passover lamb is enough. Please do not put guilt or condemnation on the person to be immersed if they are not physically able. I have heard of people being immersed in their bathtub or setting in the chair. That is not safe or necessary.

Discuss with a person before entering the water about their swimming skills, and try to have them stand in water that they are comfortable with the depth. Discuss with them about the preparation of their heart instead of dwelling on possible drowning. Do realize that God looks at the heart as you go under the water, and each immersion is a growing experience. Just as your heart grows each time you commune with Him in your daily reading of the scripture, so will your relationship grow as you seek Him in your immersion.

When immersing we pray the prayers as a group before entering the water, and then stand quietly while each immerses. The witness is the only one speaking and guiding us through the prayers individually. If you wish to play some quiet music, you may, but most people desire a time of quiet meditation before they are immersed.

### **THE SERVICE FOR A NON-JEW**

The person will enter the water and dip completely one time. If you are not comfortable with the Hebrew prayer then you may pray in English. This is not meant to be a religiously restrictive ceremony. Come with joy and peace to your immersion each time. Then, these prayers are either said or sung.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, Asher Kid'shanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu al ha-vilah  
Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with Your commandments and has commanded us concerning the immersion.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, Shehech'yanu V'kiy'manu V'higiyanu, Laz'man Hazeh  
Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive and preserved us and brought us to this appointed time.

Y'hi Ratzon Prayer: May it be your Will, O Lord our God and God of our Fathers, that the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our days, and grant our portion in Your Torah. And there we will serve you with awe, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. Then shall the offering of Yehuda (Judah) and Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) be pleasant to You O Lord, as in the days of old and as in ancient years.

Dip two more times and exit the water.