

## In the Beginning the Ruach Elohim Hovered Over the Waters<sup>i</sup>

♪ *En el principio el espíritu de Di-s, se movía sobre las aguas. Pero ahora, se está moviendo dentro de mi corazón.* ♪ *In English, "In the beginning the Spirit of the L-rd was moving over the waters. But now the Spirit's moving, He is moving in my heart..."*

<sup>2</sup>*The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Ruach Elohim hovered over the surface of the water...* <sup>3</sup>*Then Elohim said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.* <sup>4</sup>*Elohim saw that the light was good, and Elohim divided the light from the darkness.* <sup>5</sup>*Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. So there was evening, and there was morning, the first day. (Gen 1:3-5)*

In the beginning, we are told, the *Ruach Elohim*, hovered over the waters (the waters of creation) but it did not land anywhere—the earth was unformed and void. Evidently, the first step in the new creation was being immersed in water. Similarly we humans, after conception, are immersed in the waters of our mother's womb. Creation needed an immersion, that is, a *mikvah*. The very next thing created is light (*Or*, Hebrew), and "*the light was good.*" The light is then divided (separated) from the darkness as one on the very first acts of creation on the very first day of creation. We also needed a *mikvah* to separate the light of Messiah in our hearts from the former darkness of our lives before we came to Messiah.

Immersion (*mikvah*) in *Yeshua's* day was not a Christian sacrament. It was a Jewish purity ritual—a symbolic cleansing regularly practiced by all observant Jews. It was accomplished by a full body immersion into "*mayim chayim*" (living waters). *Mayim chayim* was regarded as naturally flowing water that had not been artificially drawn from a well or cistern or manipulated through plumbing. The immersion into living water was performed by descending into a naturally fed pool or natural gathering of water (such as a lake, a river, the sea, or the pool at *Siloam* in the City of David) and submerging oneself completely below the surface. The Hebrew word for such a gathering of water is, מִקְוֵה, *mikvah* (literally, a natural pool of flowing water). The immersion accomplished the "washing away" of uncleanness based on principles found in *Vayikra* in the *Torah*. The symbolism is clearly one of death and rebirth. Thus, in the congregation we can sing: ♪ *"En el principio el espíritu de dios, se movía sobre las aguas. Pero ahora, se esta moviendo dentro de mi corazón."* ♪

As we experience our Messianic Lifestyle, we, like our Jewish brethren, are also starting the season of *Bereshit* (beginnings) in the *Torah*. Last week we read *Parashat Bereshit* and this week we read *Parashat Noach*. In fact, we read *Bereshit* 1:1-2:3 as part of our annual *Simchat Torah* celebration. The days of *Tishrei* have come to a close and the days of *Cheshvan* are upon us (today is the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the eighth Hebrew month, *Cheshvan*). The refreshing days of the autumn season are upon us here in North Central Florida. According to Wikipedia: "*Before the 16th century, harvest was the term usually used to refer to the autumn season. However as more people gradually moved from working the land to living in towns (especially those who could read and write, the only people whose use of language we now know), the word harvest lost its reference to the time of year and came to refer only to the actual activity of reaping, and fall and autumn began to replace it as a reference to the season.*" We are in the refreshing days of the *harvest* season and it is time to reap!

About the time of *Succot*, nearly two thousand years go, "...the word of God came to Yochanan Ben-Z'kharyah in the desert" and immediately he began immersing the people in *Y'hudah* and surrounding areas (see Luke 3:2 and Matt. 3) But people began to wonder if perhaps the long-awaited Messiah had now come in the person of Yochanan. We are told: "<sup>15</sup>*The people were in a state of great expectancy, and everyone was wondering whether perhaps Yochanan himself might be the Messiah;* <sup>16</sup>*so Yochanan answered them all, "I am immersing you in water, but he who is coming is more powerful than I -- I'm not worthy to untie his sandals! He will immerse you in the Ruach HaKodesh and in fire.* <sup>17</sup>*He has with him his winnowing fork to clear out his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the straw with unquenchable fire!"*" This is the staging chosen by *Adonai* for Messiah *Yeshua* to

enter the scene—a *mikvah* service after the days of *Succot* in the *Yarden*. As His first step in public ministry, he undergoes a *mikvah*. Here we see the principle of the first step in establishing “new creations” (the beginning of “Kingdom of Heaven” on the earth) is being immersed in water. “*Yeshua was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry...*” (Luke 3:23) *Yeshua* was about thirty years old immediately before or immediately after His birthday, that is, during the season of *Succot*, the festival of the ‘Joy in the Harvest.’

In *Parashat Noach*, we see that when it comes time to leave the ark (after 40 days, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, i.e., *Shevat*) we see that *Noach* sends forth a dove (Hebrew, *yonah*) from him (Hebrew, *meOto*) {perhaps from his bosom?} “*But the dove found no place for her feet to rest.*”

*6After forty days Noach opened the window of the ark which he had built; 7and he sent out a raven, which flew back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. 8Then he sent out a dove, to see if the water had gone from the surface of the ground. 9But the dove found no place for her feet to rest, so she returned to him in the ark, because the water still covered the whole earth. He put out his hand, took her and brought her in to him in the ark. 10He waited another seven days and again sent the dove out from the ark. 11The dove came in to him in the evening, and there in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf, so Noach knew that the water had cleared from the earth. 12He waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, and she didn't return to him any more. (Gen. 8:6-12) 8Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. (Vv. 8, KJV)*

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat* he sends her out again, this time returning with a *freshly plucked olive leaf!* On the 24<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, he sends her out again, and this time “*she didn't return to him any more.*” In our mind we can see the stark and graceful image of *Noach*'s dove circling over a world covered with water, hovering over the waters, circling and returning. The Spirit of *Adonai* hovered over the waters of creation in Genesis 1:2. And so we see that *Elohim* had washed the world clean to remake it with *Noach*'s offspring—to remake it into a new creation. And thus, we see once again a symbol of the Spirit of *Adonai* hovering over the waters of the new creation. What a beautiful *Torah* picture? What ever happened to *Noach*'s *yonah* (dove)?

*Kefa Shimon ben Yonah* (ben *Yonah*? Must be a coincidence, don't you think?) apparently saw this revelation as well. *Kefa* wrote: “*This also prefigures what delivers us now, the water of immersion, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but one's pledge to keep a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah.*” (1 Peter 3:21) *Kefa* makes a connection between the waters of immersion and *Messiah*'s resurrection.

## ***Eliyahu is on the Scene***

*1It was during those days that Yochanan the Immerser arrived in the desert of Y'hudah and began proclaiming the message, 2"Turn from your sins to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!" 3This is the man Yesha'yahu was talking about when he said, "The voice of someone crying out: 'In the desert prepare the way of ADONAI! Make straight paths for him!'" (Matt. 3:1-3)*

*Yochanan* the Immerser is none other than *Yochanan ben Z'kharyah*, the one whose miraculous birth precedes the birth of *Yeshua* some thirty years earlier. *Yochanan* and *Yeshua* were nearly the same age (six months apart) and related by blood (family) as it is written:

*13But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Z'kharyah; because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elisheva will bear you a son, and you are to name him Yochanan. 14He will be a joy and a delight to you, and many people will rejoice when he is born, 15for he will be great in the sight of ADONAI. He is never to drink wine or other liquor, and he will be filled with the Ruach HaKodesh even from his mother's womb. 16He will turn many of the people of Isra'el to ADONAI their God. 17He will go out ahead of ADONAI in the spirit and power of Eliyahu to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready for ADONAI a people prepared... 36You have a relative, Elisheva, who is an old woman; and everyone says she is*

*barren. But she has conceived a son and is six months pregnant!* <sup>37</sup>*For with God, nothing is impossible.*" (Luke 1:13-17; 36-37)

The angel Gabriel told *Z'kharyah* that in his son *Malachi* 4:5-6 (<sup>5</sup>*Behold, I will send you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of ADONAI: <sup>6</sup>And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.*) would be fulfilled. *Yochanan* was to be filled with *Ruach HaKodesh* from his mother's womb (while immersed in her body) and he would walk in the *Spirit and Power of Eliyahu*. Thus, the forerunner, after approximately 30 years of relative anonymity, walks on the scene. After king Herod died, his kingdom was divided into three heirs, so there was no king over Jerusalem while *Yeshua* was in *Netzeret*. As a *cohen*, *Yochanan* was entitled to serve in the Temple and to perform priestly functions. But we do not see him emerging in the Temple, he emerges from the wilderness of *Y'hudah*. His message—*T'shuvah* (Repent)! His theme song—"I hear a sound coming from the mountain, and it says 'Prepare Ye the Way.'" (*I Hear a Sound*, from the CD *Up to Zion*, by *Paul Wilbur*)

*Yochanan* the Immerser is the *Eliyahu* mentioned in the Gospels. *Yeshua* himself said: "Indeed, if you are willing to accept it, he is *Eliyahu*, whose coming was predicted." (Matt. 11:14) His call to repentance was a call to right behavior. In Luke 3, he urges people to (1) share with the needy, (2) conduct business fairly, (3) to treat people equitably, (4) to avoid the misuse of authority, and (5) to be satisfied with your wages. Let us hear *Eliyahu* the forerunner's words and see for ourselves:

<sup>10</sup>*The crowds asked Yochanan, 'So then, what should we do?'* <sup>11</sup>*He answered, 'Whoever has two coats should share with somebody who has none, and whoever has food should do the same.'* <sup>12</sup>*Tax-collectors also came to be immersed; and they asked him, 'Rabbi, what should we do?'* <sup>13</sup>*Collect no more than the government assesses,' he told them.* <sup>14</sup>*Some soldiers asked him, 'What about us? What should we do?'* To them he said, 'Don't intimidate anyone, don't accuse people falsely, and be satisfied with your pay.' (Luke 3"10-14)

To *Yochanan* (and to every Jewish author of Scripture), repentance is way more than an intellectual assent to a creed of beliefs (the Greek mindset)—it demanded fruit (*"If you have really turned from your sins, produce fruit that will prove it! And don't start saying to yourselves, 'Avraham is our father'! For I tell you that God can raise up for Avraham sons from these stones!"* Luke 3:8) The fruit of repentance is a life of good deeds, righteous lives of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* practiced as justice toward men and devotion toward *Adonai*. Repentance is a call to return to *Torah*. This is the mission expressed in *Malachi* 4:4-5 *"Remember the Torah of Moshe my servant, which I enjoined on him at Horev, laws and rulings for all Isra'el. Look, I will send to you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible Day of ADONAI"* His message was nothing short of a call for Israel to honor the provisions of the Covenant. In this way *Yochanan* was no different from *Yechezk'el*, *Eliyahu*, *Yesha'yahu*, *Yermayahu*, *Z'kharyah* or any of the prophets before him.

### **The Anointing of the King – the Proclamation**

When was *Yeshua* anointed? *Sha'ul* and *David* were anointed by the prophet *Shmu'el*. In other occasions it was accomplished by the *cohen*. *Yochanan* is both a prophet and a *cohen*! Further, the Anointed One of Israel (the *Mashiach*) is also to be a king. His anointing is to be accompanied with a vestment of the Spirit of *Elohim*. In both *Shmu'el* and *David*, this was the case. But this is no earthly king, this is THE KING of kings and the L-RD of lords. While the anointing of *Yeshua* was not done with oil, it was an anointing nonetheless, for here comes the *Ruach Elohim*, the *yonah* (dove) sent out from the bosom of our *Abba* (our *Noach*, so to speak,) to find a resting place upon the earth, after thousands of years of wandering, after finding the source of human anointing, the olive tree, lands in the shoulders of the Root of the Olive Tree people, Messiah *Yeshua*. And to leave no stone unturned, *Abba* speaks and says:

**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**

Like in *Exodus 19*, our people did not see *Adonai (Abba)*, they only hear Him speak in what was described as a thunderous and exceedingly frightening voice. When the Father spoke, VERY IMPORTANT THINGS WERE GIVEN TO US. We received the *Torah* and we said “*Na’aseh V’Nishma.*” In a similar manner we are now being spoken to by the Father as He gives us *HATORAH (THE TORAH)*, the living Word, *Yeshua HaMashiach, Immanuel*. The Father throws His ring in the hat and tells us Himself, in an audible voice, that *Yeshua* is His Anointed Son. Furthermore, He is well-pleased with Him (which gives approval to *Yeshua*’s 30 years of living in the earth with mankind.)

### ***The Yonah of Elohim (Dove of G-d), the Ruach Elohim, has found His resting place.***

Remember that Noah sent two birds out of the ark. The *yonah* (dove) was a clean bird whereas the *orev* (raven) was an unclean bird. The Talmud observes regarding the raven, “*After forty days Noah... sent out a raven*” whereas with the dove the Torah says, “*he sent forth a dove from him.*” Regarding the unclean bird it only says *Noach* dispatched it out of the ark. Regarding the dove it says that he sent it forth from him. The dove came from *Noach*. The raven did not. The dove returned. The raven did not. The dove was a clean bird. The raven was not. The Talmud goes on to make a whimsical *midrash* on the incident explaining that *Noach* exiled the raven and in the process called it “Evil One” because it had sinned in the ark, whereas the dove was sent forth from the Ark on a reconnaissance mission.

If we accept Ben Zoma’s *midrash* symbolically linking *Noach*’s *yonah* (dove) and the *Ruach Elohim*, it is a small step to make a similar connection between the raven and Satan (may his name be blotted out) the Adversary. Like the raven, the enemy was exiled from heaven. Like the raven he spends his time going to and fro (cf. Job 1:7) circling and returning through the earth.

The first time *Noach* sent out the dove it could find no place to rest. There was no place to set its feet. The *Zohar Chadash* compared this to G-d’s *Dwelling Presence* finding no righteous man on whom to rest. The second time he sent out the dove, however, it returned with an olive leaf. The dove had found an olive tree, a place to rest her feet. The olive tree is the Biblical representation of our Jewish people in the Book of Romans.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit of G-d found *Yeshua*, the Righteous Branch, and rested upon Him. How appropriate that the dove found an olive tree! The olive tree is compared to the people of Israel, of whom he was but a single leaf. More than that, however, the olive is the source of the oil with which the kings of Israel were anointed. It is the source of anointing. So it follows that at His anointing, the Holy Spirit came upon *Yeshua* in the form of a dove, like *Noach*’s dove, to find a place to rest her feet. He is the Righteous Man on Whom the *Dwelling Presence* came to rest.

And so the Spirit of *Adonai*, in the form of a dove finally finds its Shabbat rest in the shoulders of the Messiah (in the shoulders of the Beloved Son, *Yeshua*.) by the *mikvah* waters of the *Yarden*. Thus we see a great connection between beginnings, *mikvah*, *al p’nei hamayim*, the olive leaf returning to the Branch, the Spirit of *Adonai*, and the voice of *Abba*.

“*And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*” (Luke 17:26-27, also Mat. 24:37-38) Similarly today *Yeshua* is asking you and I this question: *Are you ready for my return?* What will your response be this year? L-rd, you know everything! L-rd, You know I love you and I want to *oseh* and *sh’ma* and serve You forever...

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<sup>i</sup> Portions based loosely on *Parashat Noach*, *Torah Club* Volume IV, ©First Fruits of Zion, Colorado Springs, CO. 2002