

Introduction: Mikveh

As believers we are originally taught that baptism is an outward expression of an inward transformation. This is true, but there is so much more...

We are also taught as believers that one of the ordinances that is unique to the New Covenant is baptism, with the other being communion.

Baptism is not neither unique to the New Covenant but has been incorporated into the New Covenant as a representation of several aspects that are prevalent throughout the Tanakh.

The word used to translate baptism from the Greek is...

baptizō

bap-tid'-zo

From a derivative of [G911](#); to *make whelmed* (that is, *fully wet*); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial *ablution*, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian *baptism*:

In both cases, neither is new nor unique, but both are of Jewish origin.

With the derivative being bapto...

baptō

bap'-to

A primary verb; to *whelm*, that is, cover wholly with a fluid; in the New Testament only in a qualified or specific sense, that is, (literally) to *moisten* (a part of one's person), or (by implication) to *stain* (as with dye): - dip.

Yet, when we read the following verses...

Joh 1:24 Some of those who had been sent were P'rushim.

Joh 1:25 They asked him, "If you are neither the Messiah nor Eliyahu nor 'the prophet,' then why are you immersing people?"

Joh 1:26 To them Yochanan replied, "I am immersing people in water, but among you is standing someone whom you don't know.

Mat 3:6 Confessing their sins, they were immersed by him in the Yarden River.

Act 2:38 Kefa answered them, "Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh!

Act 2:41 So those who accepted what he said were immersed, and there were added to the group that day about three thousand people.

What Yochanan was doing and what Yeshua's tamadim were doing wasn't just something they made up or invented. There is an entire origin behind baptism.

Today we are going to look further in to what is known as Mikveh (baptism)

There are many aspects regarding Mikveh, Torah, oral law (Talmud)

What is Mikveh?

- Pool or gathering

Torah does not make any direct statement regarding what Mikveh is, nor its use. However, when we look at Leviticus 11:36 we begin to see how it came about.

Leviticus 11:36

Ach Ma'yan u'bor mikveh mayim yihyeh tahor

Lev 11:36 although (only) a spring or cistern for collecting water remains clean.

Ach – is restrictive

Leviticus 11 talks about those animals which are unclean for food. From Leviticus 11:29 – 36 talks of the impact these animals will have, should anyone come in contact with them, should they be dead, including should they fall into a clay pot that contains.

In order to understand 11:36 we must go back to 11:34 to understand the first rule

Lev 11:34 Any food permitted to be eaten that water from such a vessel gets on will become unclean, and any permitted liquid in such a vessel will become unclean, water.

Lev 11:35 Everything on which any carcass-part of theirs falls will become unclean, whether oven or stove; it is to be broken in pieces — they are unclean and will be unclean for you;

Lev 11:36 although (only) a spring or cistern for collecting water remains clean.

The pot is restrictive, in relation to the spring or cistern, and therefore whatever contaminates it remains, whereas flowing water allows for the contamination to exit.

Much of the administration of Mikveh is found in the Talmudic writings – Tractate Taharot (Cleansings)

According to oral tradition there are six necessary conditions that a body of water must fulfill before it can have the status of a Mikveh:

1. must consist of water – no other liquid can be used
2. must be built into the ground or part of a building – it cannot be associated with anything that can be disconnected and carried away, such as a tub, vat or barrel
3. the water cannot be running unless it is derived from a natural spring or river
4. the water cannot be drawn, it cannot be brought as a result of human intervention
5. the water cannot be channeled to the Mikveh through anything that can become unclean.
6. The mikveh must contain at least 40 Sa'ah (200 gallons)

Water: the primary element of Mikveh

We first read about water in Genesis 1:2 as part of the account of creation:

Gen 1:2 The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water.

Association of water with the Spirit of Adonai...

All that was created was birthed out of the water, thus placing man in perspective with the rest of creation. At creation's completion, all was good. At this time man's relation to the world in respect to Adonai as creator is uncomplicated and unencumbered.

A midrash (Genesis Rabbah 2) from the Talmud says this:

- The Spirit of Adonai which was over the waters refers to the Spirit of Messiah.
- The Messianic age represents the final fulfillment of God's purpose in creation.
- Evil will be vanquished and good will reign over all mankind.
- The Spirit of Adonai directs all change and movement in a positive force, moving the world, His creation back to its ultimate goal, which is its original state of perfection – The Messianic age.

Gen 1:9 God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let dry land appear," and that is how it was.

Gen 1:10 God called the dry land Earth, the gathering together of the water he called Seas, and God saw that it was good.

What did Adonai say at the end...

It was good.

It was pristine, undefiled, without blemish.

This gathering is a Mikvah in which Adonai will create all things, hence what we read in 1:2 represented the womb of life for creation.

In this case, water represents the purest form of creation.

Throughout Torah, water comes to represent cleansing, restoration to a pure state.

At this point of creation, nothing had yet grown because Adonai had not yet brought water (rain) to the earth.

Gen 2:4 Here is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created. On the day when Adonai, God, made earth and heaven,

Gen 2:5 there was as yet no wild bush on the earth, and no wild plant had as yet sprung up; for Adonai, God, had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no one to cultivate the ground.

Gen 2:6 Rather, a mist went up from the earth which watered the entire surface of the ground.

Gen 2:7 Then Adonai, God, formed a person [*Hebrew: adam*] from the dust of the ground [*Hebrew: adamah*] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living being.

Before He brought forth rain, there was no life at all.

The aspect of water is a very important part of our creation yet is never truly emphasized. We are always taught that we were created from the dust of the earth. However, when you look at the verses prior to 2:7, nothing had life until water (living water) was present.

Man was formed from the dust of the earth, but it was only after Adonai brought forth water and breathed His Spirit into us that we had life.

Think of how important water is for the existence of living things – plants, animals and humans

The main spiritual aspect of water is change and development. Water represents growth and development of the world towards the fulfillment of Adonai's purpose.

When we look at the Garden of Eden:

- The waters that came forth were the waters that sustained life for Adonai's creation.

Gen 2:8 Adonai, God, planted a garden toward the east, in `Eden, and there he put the person whom he had formed.

Gen 2:9 Out of the ground Adonai, God, caused to grow every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Gen 2:10 A river went out of `Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided into four streams.

Gen 2:11 The name of the first is Pishon; it winds throughout the land of Havilah, where there is gold.

Gen 2:12 The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there.

Gen 2:13 The name of the second river is Gichon; it winds throughout the land of Kush.

Gen 2:14 The name of the third river is Tigris; it is the one that flows toward the east of Ashur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

Gen 2:15 Adonai, God, took the person and put him in the garden of `Eden to cultivate and care for it.

Gen 2:16 Adonai, God, gave the person this order: "You may freely eat from every tree in the garden

Gen 2:17 except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You are not to eat from it, because on the day that you eat from it, it will become certain that you will die."

Time would pass and Adonai would chose a people who would be tapped on the shoulder to recreate the state of Eden with the intent of elevating mankind. Through Avraham, would come the nation of Israel, who would be given the Torah of Adonai. The intention of Torah is to aid Adonai's creation in overcoming the evil that was acquired as a result of our transgression.

Because of Adam and Eve's sin, evil has become an integral part of human life, that has been reinforced by hundreds of generations, that our only hope to overcome such nature is through the intervention of Adonai. The first step of that intervention was in the giving of Torah.

It would be through Torah given to Israel that mankind would come to realize the aspects of our transgressions towards Adonai:

Rom 7:7 Therefore, what are we to say? That the Torah is sinful? Heaven forbid! Rather, the function of the Torah was that without it, I would not have known what sin is. For example, I would not have become conscious of what greed is if the Torah had not said, "Thou shalt not covet."

In establishing a goy kadosh – a holy nation, separate and distinct from all other nations. A nation for which Adonai would put His name on it.

Num 6:27 "In this way they are to put my name on the people of Isra'el, so that I will bless them."

A nation through which He would deploy the power of His Spirit upon the fulfillment of the promise of Messiah, empowering those who would return back to Adonai the means to live an empowered life.

Through Torah we would come to learn more about Mikveh, even though it doesn't give us specific details, it is through the use of water that we base our understanding.

There are two primary aspects of the use of water and Mikveh.

Ritual Impurity: Purification

- Restoration of ritual impurity through washing for the purpose of entering the Mishkan / Temple area.
- If you were ritually unclean, you were not allowed to bring a sacrifice to the Mishkan / Temple.

In relation to the Mishkan / Temple service

The laws of ritual purity and impurity belong in the category of commandments known as Chukim, decrees for which

no reasons are given. These laws were to be taken on faith, because they were given by Adonai. Just as Israel accepted the covenant first, without hearing what would be required of them.

Exo 19:8 All the people answered as one, "Everything Adonai has said, we will do." Moshe reported the words of the people to Adonai.

Who says there isn't faith in the Tenach...Israel was instructed to keep certain instructions without an explanation.

When we think of water, we think of it as a cleansing agent. Therefore when we think of purification and cleansing in the spiritual sense, we would use water as a purifying agent. It is through Mikveh that we are able to cleanse ourselves spiritually and bodily.

For our purposes today, I am not going to go into great detail regarding ritual impurity because of its relation to the Temple for which is not currently in existence.

I am also not going to go into detail with regards to the other primary aspect of impurity that involves a woman.

For the remaining time, I want to focus on the reason we are talking about Mikveh. It is more than just a means for purification - that being one for consecration and conversion:

Consecration:

Our first example is Aaron and his sons being chosen to be Kohanim:

Aaron and his sons were chosen to serve Adonai as the people's representative. In taking on such a position.

Torah tells us that the first aspect in consecration was immersion:

Exo 29:4 "Bring Aharon and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water.

Exo 40:12 "Then bring Aharon and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.

Lev 8:6 Moshe brought Aharon and his sons, washed them with water,

In this case immersion didn't involve purification, but rather a change in status – elevation from one state to another.

Aaron and his sons were just like any other Israelite. However, with selection and immersion they attained a new status as Kohanim. The only Kohanim were to be Aaron and his direct male descendants. Their status amongst Israel forever changed.

There are other aspects of immersion that are prevalent to the priesthood that relate to immersion and ritual purification for the purpose of service, which we won't go into.

Conversion:

Our first example is that of the consecration of Israel as a nation, set apart from all other nations. They were being transformed into a nation for Adonai. In accepting the covenant of Adonai, Israel was instructed to wash...

Exo 19:10 so Adonai said to Moshe, "Go to the people; today and tomorrow separate them for me by having them wash their clothing;

Exo 19:11 and prepare for the third day. For on the third day, Adonai will come down on Mount Sinai before the eyes of all the people.

They had yet to receive Adonai's Torah, but were instructed to wash their garments. When washing one's garments it is understood that they are to purify their bodies as well.

This is one of the three aspects of the covenant – sacrifice, circumcision and immersion.

How does immersion in Mikvah change a person?

Another person asked a similar question:

Joh 3:1 There was a man among the P'rushim, named Nakdimon, who was a ruler of the Judeans.

Joh 3:2 This man came to Yeshua by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know it is from God that you have come as a teacher; for no one can do these miracles you perform unless God is with him."

Joh 3:3 "Yes, indeed," Yeshua answered him, "I tell you that unless a person is born again from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Joh 3:4 Nakdimon said to him, "How can a grown man be 'born'? Can he go back into his mother's womb and be born a second time?"

Joh 3:5 Yeshua answered, "Yes, indeed, I tell you that unless a person is born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

Joh 3:6 What is born from the flesh is flesh, and what is born from the Spirit is spirit.

Joh 3:10 Yeshua answered him, "You hold the office of teacher in Isra'el, and you don't know this?"

Yeshua was surprised that Nakdimon didn't know what He was referring to. Up to this point, the aspect of immersion and being born of the water and Spirit are very Jewish teachings.

In the past I have talked about born again experiences that are understood in Jewish culture as a change in one's status:

- Bar / Bat Mitzvah
- Marriage
- Becoming a parent
- Becoming a Rabbi.
- Becoming Jewish - conversion

As with Aaron and his sons, whose status changed, so to does our status

Mikveh represents the womb. When an individual enters it they are reentering the womb and when they emerge from it they are born again – born anew. The result – a completely new status.

In addition to its representation of the womb, likewise it also represents the grave. When a person immerses, they are for a moment in a state of nonliving and when they emerge they have been resurrected into a completely new status.

This may appear to be a contradiction, however, when you understand that both the womb and the grave are points of entry into the next cycle of life and ending from the current cycle. In passing through one of these points leads to a new status.

The Hebrew word Kever, which usually means grave is also used on occasion to represent womb.

The very aspect of water that I spoke of earlier Yeshua Himself spoke of as well. The very living water that came into existence at creation and emanated from Eden to nourish the world, is the very living water He is speaking of here:

Joh 4:10 Yeshua answered her, "If you knew God's gift, that is, who it is saying to you, 'Give me a drink of water,' then you would have asked him; and he would have given you living water."

Joh 4:11 She said to him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket, and the well is deep; so where do you get this 'living water'?"

Joh 4:12 You aren't greater than our father Ya`akov, are you? He gave us this well and drank from it, and so did his sons and his cattle."

Joh 4:13 Yeshua answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again,

Joh 4:14 but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty again! On the contrary, the water I give him will become a spring of water inside him, welling up into eternal life!"

Joh 4:15 "Sir, give me this water," the woman said to him, "so that I won't have to be thirsty and keep coming here to draw water."

Thus returning us to our original status...thus completing the plan of Adonai that I spoke of earlier.

Mikveh represents spiritual cleansing and renewal.

Mat 3:1 It was during those days that Yochanan the Immerser arrived in the desert of Y'hudah and began proclaiming the message,

Mat 3:2 "Turn from your sins to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!"

Mat 3:3 This 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!'" "

Mat 3:4 Yochanan wore clothes of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Mat 3:5 People went out to him from Yerushalayim, from all Y'hudah, and from the whole region around the Yarden.

Mat 3:6 Confessing their sins, they were immersed by him in the Yarden River.

Mat 3:7 But when Yochanan saw many of the P'rushim and Tz'dukim coming to be immersed by him, he said to them, "You snakes! Who warned you to escape the coming punishment?"

Mat 3:8 If you have really turned from your sins to God, produce fruit that will prove it!

Mat 3:9 And don't suppose you can comfort yourselves by saying, 'Avraham is our father'! For I tell you that God can raise up for Avraham sons from these stones!

Mat 3:10 Already the axe is at the root of the trees, ready to strike; every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown in the fire!

Mat 3:11 It's true that I am immersing you in water so that you might turn from sin to God; but the one coming after me is more powerful than I — I'm not worthy even to carry his sandals — and he will immerse you in the Ruach HaKodesh and in fire.

Mat 3:12 He has with him his winnowing fork; and he will clear out his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn but burning up the straw with unquenchable fire!"

Mat 3:13 Then Yeshua came from the Galil to the Yarden to be immersed by Yochanan.

Mat 3:14 But Yochanan tried to stop him. "You are coming to me? I ought to be immersed by you!"

Mat 3:15 However, Yeshua answered him, "Let it be this way now, because we should do everything righteousness requires." Then Yochanan let him.

Mat 3:16 As soon as Yeshua had been immersed, he came up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, he saw the Spirit of God coming down upon him like a dove,

Mat 3:17 and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; I am well pleased with him."

Through t'shuvah and immersion we have become consecrated and changed / transformed.

Keep in mind these words:

Deu 29:9 (29:8) Therefore, observe the words of this covenant and obey them; so that you can make everything you do prosper.

Deu 29:10 (29:9) "Today you are standing, all of you, before Adonai your God - your heads, your tribes, your leaders and your officers - all the men of Isra'el,

Deu 29:11 (29:10) along with your little ones, your wives and your foreigners here with you in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water.

Deu 29:12 (29:11) The purpose is that you should enter into the covenant of Adonai your God and into his oath which Adonai your God is making with you today,

Deu 29:13 (29:12) so that he can establish you today for himself as a people, and so that for you he will be God - as he said to you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya`akov.

Deu 29:14 (29:13) "But I am not making this covenant and this oath only with you.

Deu 29:15 (29:14) Rather, I am making it both with him who is standing here with us today before Adonai our God and also with him who is not here with us today.

Deu 29:16 (29:15) For you know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we came directly through the nations you passed through;

Deu 29:17 (29:16) and you saw their detestable things and their idols of wood, stone, silver and gold that they had with them.

Deu 29:18 (29:17) So let there not be among you a man, woman, family or tribe whose heart turns away today from Adonai our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Let there not be among you a root bearing such bitter poison and wormwood.

Conclusion: Mikveh, immersion with water