

In His Dust is a series based on my notes from Dwight Pryor's teaching. My words are in blue. The arrangement, headers, and additional verses are mine. Yeshua and His disciples were thoroughly Jewish. Understanding the Hebraic context, meanings, idioms, and culture gives clarity to the New Testament writings.



In His Dust – 7. Immersion and the Spirit

How First-Century Judaic Immersion Relates to our New Birth!

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The Meaning

The Greek word **baptizmo** means **to make fully wet**. The original Hebrew word from which the Greek was translated is **tâbal** (taw-bal') meaning **to immerse, dip, or plunge**. **Tâbal** was a foreshadow and symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word **baptizmo** was transliterated into English as **baptism** and so the full meaning was lost. (*Transliterate* means to create a new word using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet. When the Church of England translated the Greek texts, they were in a quandary because they did not immerse. So, rather than translate the Greek word **baptizmo** as *immerse*, they transliterated it as *baptize*, thereby making a new word that did not convey the original meaning.)

The Context and Culture

Jewish ritual immersion in the first century was used for **purification**. Everyone had to be immersed to enter the Temple; therefore, many pools (*miqvehs*) were located at its southern end. They contained *mayim hayim* (pronounced MY-eem HY-eem) or *living waters*, meaning they were not stagnant but flowed from a natural source.

Non-Jews (Gentiles) who were converts were immersed for **repentance**. Rabbis called these waters the *waters of the womb of the world* for when a convert emerged from the waters, they would say of him, "he is now a child born again," just as a child comes from the waters of its mother's womb during birth.

Immersion was administered by oneself with a witness present. Every part of the body had to be touched by the water for complete cleansing, so one was unclothed with fingers separated and mouth open. One immersed three times and then made a confession. (Leviticus 15:16) (*The baptism of John* did not mean that John baptized, but that people responded to his message. His message was so convicting that the people self-immersed in repentance and in anticipation of the forgiveness of their sins.)

The Water and the Spirit

In the Bible, water is a metaphor of the Holy Spirit; the *water* and the *Spirit* are the same. Rabbis understood the Spirit to be for **purification** and **prophecy**. (The words of the prophets were God-breathed and ended with the latter prophets. The first disciples believed that the Spirit returned to them at the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) and had come to indwell them.

Yeshua (Jesus) said to Nicodemus, "You must be born of the water and the Spirit," implying that Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was a proselyte in need of *repentance*. Since only Gentiles had to repent and be born anew, Yeshua challenged Nicodemus on a radical level by telling him he must repent and be born into God's kingdom out of the waters of the Spirit, i.e., that both Jew and Gentile must come into the kingdom the same way, not by purifying themselves but by repenting and becoming completely new!

Other Scripture References

- The Apostle John makes this clear when he wrote,
“But as many as received Him (Yeshua) to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)
- Yeshua said to the woman at the well,
“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never be thirsty; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)
- On the last day of the great Feast of Tabernacles, a priest poured water on the altar in the Temple to symbolize the winter rains God would send for the next year’s harvest as well as the latter rains of His Spirit when He would come to set His sanctuary in their midst forever.
On this same day, Yeshua cried out, saying,
“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ This He spoke of the Spirit whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Yeshua was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37-39; Ezekiel 37:26-28)
- At the end of his life, the Apostle John wrote of his vision on the isle of Patmos:
“And he showed me a river of the water of life clear as crystal coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:1-2)

Father in heaven, thank you for the Life-Giving Spirit!

Thank you for causing us to be born again to a living hope!

You have immersed us and taken away our thirst through the sacrifice of Your Beloved Son!

Spring up in us as a fountain of living water!

Flow from our innermost being!

We praise You!

We worship You!

We can’t wait to see You, our Lamb, our King with that glorious river flowing with healing from Your throne!