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The Background of the Messianic Mikveh

6: 1-3a

The background of the Messianic mikveh DIG: Why is baptism a scary word for Jews? How does the Jewish mikveh differ from Christian baptism? How does Chapter 6 interpret the word “sin?” Why? What should be the believer’s relationship to sin? What does it mean to be immersed into Messiah’s death? Why doesn’t unlimited grace mean unlimited sin?

REFLECT: What does your relationship to sin look like in your life? How can you choose your divine nature over your sin nature? How can you win the battle of the mind? What examples can you think of where you have chosen your divine nature over your sin nature? How can you help someone else? What areas of your life are you struggling with right now?

The key to interpreting the entire chapter is every time the word “sin” is used as a noun, it refers to the [sin nature] in the believer.

Mikveh is the Jewish immersion. *Baptizo* is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew *t’vilah*, which means *to totally immerse*. The Hebrew word *mikvah* comes from the same root word as *hope*, and there is some word play between the two in **Jeremiah 17:13: Hope of Isra’el, ADONAI! All who abandon you will be ashamed, those who leave You will be written in the dust, because they have abandoned ADONAI, the source of living water.** Here **mikvah** is translated **hope**, and then described as **a fountain of living water**, which was the requirement for a **mikvah** . . . natural flowing water.



The Jewish concept of **mikveh** is different than the Christian observance. Christians believe in one physical baptism after salvation with no need to do it again. It's like, "Have you been baptized? Yes, I have." That's it. That's all that needs to be done. One time, and you're covered. But in Judaism there are several **mikvah's**. **Lepers** had a **mikvah (Leviticus 14:1-4, 7 and 9)**, **the priests** had a **mikvah (Leviticus 8 and 16)**, **women** have a **mikvah (Leviticus 15)**, and couples have a **mikvah** before their wedding. In addition, many Jews **immerse** themselves before Yom Kippur, or a bar or bat mitzvah, or to mark a celebratory event like a graduation, or to signify a new start after an illness, trauma, or loss, or after having gone through a dry period in their lives and want to rededicate themselves.¹³⁹

The antagonist (6:1): As **he** frequently does, **Paul** anticipates the major objections of **his** critics. **He** knew that some readers would misinterpret **his** claim that **the Torah came into the picture so that the offense would increase; but where sin increased, grace increased more (5:20)**. They would foolishly accuse **him** of teaching that **sin itself** glorifies **ADONAI** by causing **His grace to increase**. If that were true, they reasoned, then they were not only free to **sin**, but were *obligated* to **sin more** in order to enable **YHVH** to expand **His grace**! People who thought like that merely corrupted the Good News by saying that if salvation is all about **Ha'Shem** and all about **grace**, and if **God** is glorified by the providing of **grace**, then the **sinful heart** may be inclined to say, "The more I **sin** . . . the more **grace** is provided! Therefore, I should **sin** even more!" Or as some others falsely put it, "If **God** delights in justifying the ungodly, as **Romans 4:5** clearly states, then the doctrine of **grace** puts a premium on ungodliness, because it gives **God** more opportunity to demonstrate **His grace**."

To this doctrinal error, **Paul** replied: **What then will we say? Should we continue in sin (Greek: *ta 'amaptia*) so that grace may increase (6:1)?** The first thing we must settle is regarding the word **sin**. Does it refer here to specific acts of **sin** committed by the believer, or to **the [sin nature]** still within him? A rule of Greek syntax settles the question. The

definite article (*ta*) appears before the word **sin** (*'amaptia*) in the Greek text. Here, the definite article points back to a previously mentioned **sin** defined in its context. And that reference is **sin "ruling"** as a king: **All this happened so that just as sin** (Greek: *ta 'amaptia*, meaning, *sin nature*) **"ruled" by means of death, so also grace might rule through causing people to be considered righteous, so that they might have eternal life, through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord (5:21)**. Here, in this verse, **sin** is personified since it **"rules"** as king. Consequently, *ta 'amaptia* can only refer to **the [sin nature]** still living in the believer. Here is the key to the interpretation of the entire chapter: every time the word **sin** is used as a noun, it refers to **the [sin nature]** in the believer. As a result, I will be using the words **[sin nature]** in brackets to reflect the Greek text.

But the question remains: Should **we continually** give-in to our **[sin nature]** so that **grace may increase?** The word **continue** (Greek: *meno*, meaning *to remain*) is used in the B'rit Chadashah of a person remaining in some one's house as a guest. It has the idea of fellowship, or even dependence. It is as if **Paul** were saying, "Should we **continue** to have the same relationship with our **[sin nature]** that we had before we were saved? A relationship in which we were fully yielded to, and dependent on, **the [sin nature]** and all **its** evil habits?" Therefore, **Paul** is not talking about specific acts of **sin**, but the believer's relationship to his **[sin nature]**.¹⁴⁰

The answer (6:2): Paul now proceeds to deal with **his** answer to the question of the antagonist: **Should we continue in sin so that grace may increase (6:1)?** To which **he** explodes: **Heaven forbid** (Hebrew: *chalilah*, meaning *that's a contradiction, it makes no sense*)! **How can we, who have died to the [sin nature], still live in it (6:2)?** For a believer to **continually** depend upon his **[sin nature]**, and yield to it as if to revert to the same state as before **God** saved him, is impossible. It's as if **Paul** were saying, "How is it possible for such as we, born-again children of **God**, to do such a thing? It is against our **new life in Messiah** to habitually yield to **the [sin nature]**." **If anyone is united with the Messiah, he is a new creation — the old has passed; look, what has come is fresh and new (Second Corinthians 15:17)!**

We have **died** to **the [sin nature]**, and **death** means separation. The Master Surgeon uses **His Ruach** to cut **the** believing **sinner** loose from his **[sin nature]** at the moment of salvation. From then on, the believer is justified and stands before **God** as being **righteous** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith**). The tense of the verb **died** in **6:2** is aorist, which speaks of a once-and-for-all past action. **YHVH** has already performed a spiritual operation, separating

the believer from his **[sin nature]**. This surgical operation never needs to be repeated.

But, unfortunately, because of the frailty of mankind, the believer, at times, will yield to **the [sin nature]**, which still resides in our bodies. But the point is . . . we don't have to. We have a choice! We can hate **sin** and love **righteousness**! In addition to this, **the Ruach** takes-up permanent residence in us and aids us in our battle against our **[sin nature]**, and to live a holy, separated life from the world (**First John 2:15-16**). It is as if **Paul** were saying, "How is it possible for such as we, believers, who have been separated once-and-for-all from our **[sin nature]**, to live any longer in its grip." **Yeshua's death** not only frees us from *the penalty of the [sin nature]*, but also from *the power of the [sin nature]*.¹⁴¹

How can you win the battle of the mind? The first thing is to realize that you are in a battle. There is nothing worse than being in a battle, and not knowing that you're in one. The nature of the battle is presented in **Second Corinthians 10:3-5**, "**For although we live in the world, we do not wage war in a worldly way; because the weapons we use to wage war are not worldly. On the contrary, [we] have God's power for demolishing strongholds. We demolish arguments and every arrogance that rises itself up against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey the Messiah.**" The weapons in this passage are different from the defensive armor described in **Ephesians 6**. The image present here is similar to an offensive battering ram that is designed to tear down strongholds.

No matter what you are struggling with, you don't have to remain a victim for the rest of your life. But you have to want to **renew your mind**. But how? Satan is a liar, and is behind every struggle that you have. If he can get you to believe the lie, you can lose some element of control in your life. Because Satan's primary weapon is the lie, your defense against him is **the truth**. Dealing with Satan is not a power encounter; it is a **truth** encounter. That is why **Yeshua** said: **You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32)**. Satan's lie cannot withstand **the truth** any more than the darkness of night can withstand the light of the rising sun. We are not called to dispel the darkness; we are called to turn on the light.

There are three ways to win the battle of the mind:



First, prepare your **mind** for action by **being transformed** (Greek: *metamorphis*, meaning *to be changed*) **by the renewing of your mind (12:2)?** As the caterpillar prepares to become a butterfly, it hangs tight onto a branch as a chrysalis to begin an internal nature change. Consequently, we must hold tight onto **God** who gives us his **Ruach Ha’Kodesh** to live within us and to help us win the battle. Our responsibility to win the battle is to **renew our mind** by filling it with **God’s Word** and **letting the Shalom which comes from Messiah be your heart’s decision-maker, and let the Word of Messiah, in all its richness, live in you (Colossians 3:15a and 16a)**. As you continue to stockpile your mind with **God’s truth**, you will equip yourself to recognize Satan’s lies and **take them captive**.

Second, take every thought captive to obey the Messiah (Second Corinthians 10:5). Evaluate every thought by **the truth** of **God’s Word**. Do away with fruitless fantasy. If you tell yourself a lie long enough, you may start to think it is true. Scripture always tells us to use our minds actively, never passively, and direct our thoughts externally, never internally. Satan will seek to bypass your mind, but **ADONAI** works through it. Don’t even consider tempting, accusing, or lying thoughts. Don’t waste your time, energy, even your life, on negative thoughts. You now have a divine nature, and you can choose **the truth**, and keep choosing it until it becomes the normal pattern of your life.

Third, turn to **YHVH** when you are having anxious thoughts. **Don’t worry about anything; on the contrary, make your requests known to God by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6)**. When your thoughts are challenged by **the things of the world - the desires of the old [sin nature], the desires of the eyes, and pride of life (First John 2:16)**, bring **them** to **God** in prayer. By doing so, you are acknowledging **ADONAI** and exposing your thoughts to **His truth**. Your doublemindedness will dissolve and **God’s shalom, passing all understanding, will keep your heart and mind safe in union with Messiah Yeshua** Then **God’s**

shalom, passing all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Messiah Yeshua (Philippians 4:7).

Keep your mind and **heart focused** on eternity by choosing what you meditate on, and by bringing to mind the joy and peace of life in perfect and everlasting heaven. **In conclusion, brothers, focus your thoughts on what is true, noble, righteous, pure, lovable or admirable, on some virtue or on something praiseworthy. Keep doing what you have learned and received from me, what you have heard and seen me doing; then the God who gives shalom will be with you (Philippians 4:8-9).**¹⁴²

Winning the battle of the mind is a sure victory when **ADONAI-Tzva'ot, Commander of heaven's angelic armies (Joshua 5:13-15; Second Kings 19:31; Psalm 24:10; Second Corinthians 6:18)**, is followed. Win the mind battle by preparing for battle. First, take every thought captive; second, fill your mind and **heart** with **God's Word**; and third, keep your mind and **heart focused** on eternity, your **citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20)** - bringing to mind the joy and peace of life there.

*Dear Living Heavenly **Father**, How wise and wonderful you are! By dying as **the Lamb of God (John 1:29)**, You not only took the death penalty for our **sin** but you also cleansed us like an eternal **mikveh** cleansing, giving us your complete and perfect **righteousness**. He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21). This eternal cleansing opened the door so we can have fellowship with our Holy **God**. It allows those who love/trust/follow **Yeshua** to enter into your **righteous** heavenly home. **Yeshua said to him: I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6).***

*I lovingly choose to thank **You** with my life for your eternal **mikveh** which cleanses **Your** children. Focusing my eyes on the reward of life forever with you in heaven, makes the trials here seem so small. Sometimes on earth there is much pain and hurt, but it will be over soon and all who have undergone your cleansing will live in your holy heaven forever. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** You are our Awesome and Wonderful **Father**, Amen.*

Therefore, don't let **the [sin nature] rule** as king in your **heart**. It is a dethroned monarch. **Paul** personifies **it** as a king **ruling (5:21)**. At the moment of your salvation, you sat **the Lord Yeshua Messiah** on the throne of your **heart**. And **He** stays there so

long as you are yielded to **the Ruach** and reject the temptations of **the [sin nature]**. However, **the Adversary** is **the prince of this world (Ephesians 2:2)**. He is **your enemy, stalking around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (First Peter 5:8)**. Later, **Paul** will say: **Do not let the [sin nature] rule in your mortal bodies, so that it makes you obey its desires (6:12)**. When you yield to the dethroned king for a long enough period of time, **the [sin nature]** mounts the throne and **rules** in **Messiah's** rightful place. These are cold, hard facts; nevertheless, true to the Word of **God**. The point is, you don't have to put **the [sin nature]** back in control. By **His death, Yeshua Messiah** has made it possible for you to choose between the divine nature, and **the [sin nature]**.¹⁴³



The argument (6:3a): Paul now proceeds to show us how this choice was made possible. He says that it was brought about when **YHVH** immersed **the** believing **sinner** into **Messiah** so that he would share with **the Lord's death** on the cross. **Don't you know that those of us who have been immersed into Messiah Yeshua (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5, 11:16; First Corinthians 12:13), have been immersed into His death (6:3)?** The **immersion** here is not water immersion because water doesn't have that much power. **The death** of our **Lord** had a two-fold effect on our **sin**. First, in **3:21 to 5:11 He died** with reference to our acts of **sin** (see [Ax - The Universal Solution: Justification](#)). He paid the penalty for us which was demanded: **The wages of sin is death (6:23a)**. And secondly, later in this chapter, **Paul** declares: **Consider yourselves to be dead to the [sin nature] once-and-for-all (6:11)**. **His death** brought about a separation between **the** believing **sinner** and **the [sin nature]**. We now have a choice.

The Messianic mikveh refers to the act of **God** introducing a believing **sinner** into vital union with **Messiah** (so what is true of **Messiah** is true of the believer, minus **His** deity), in order that **the** believing **sinner** might have the power of his **[sinful nature]** broken, and the divine nature implanted through his identification with the **death**, burial, and resurrection of **Messiah**, thus changing him, and bringing him into the Kingdom of **God**.¹⁴⁴

The **mikvah** ceremony is simple yet powerful. A wonderful part of the event can be having the **immersed** person share a personal testimony of how they found **Messiah**. A **mikvah** can take place at any time, but many Messianic congregations observe it at two special times of the year. On the afternoon of Rosh Ha'Shanah, there is a ceremony of repentance called *Tashlikh* that takes place in a body of water. This is the perfect context for a Messianic **mikvah**. The second **mikvah** takes place shortly after Pesach (Passover), as believers reflect on their redemption. Appropriate scripture readings and music can also enhance this joyful time. As the people are **immersed**, the traditional blessings can be recited with some Messianic adaptations:

Barukh atah ADONAI, eloheynu melekh ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al ha-t'vilah. B'shem Ha'Av, Yeshua Ha'Mashiakh v'Ruakh Ha'Kodesh.

Blessed are You, O **Lord** our **God, King** of the universe who has sanctified us by **His** commandments and commanded us concerning the immersion. In the name of **YHVH the Father, Yeshua the Messiah, and the Ruach Ha'Kodesh.**¹⁴⁵