

22 Iyar, 5766 (May 20, 2006) *Understanding the Gifts of the Spirit* J. M. Terrett

Behar/Bechukotai **On the Mountain/In My Statutes**
Torah: Lev. 25:1-26:2/26:3-27:34
Haftarah: Lev. 32:6-27/16:19-17
Brit Chadashah: Luke 4:16-21 (F); 2 Cor. 6:14-18(L)/Matt. 22:1-14(F & L)

Next week I would like to examine what the Bible says happens when the Holy Spirit fills, or immerses someone, so that when we celebrate Shavuot, we can understand how the Holy Spirit wants to operate in our midst. But before we discuss today's topic, which is understanding the gifts of the Holy Spirit, let me do a bit of review

- (1) **The Holy Spirit Series:** We need to understand the nature of the supernatural in our midst.
- (2) **How the Spirit speaks.** The first and primary function of the Holy Spirit is to make His Word burn in our hearts so that neither our hearts, nor the contents of our lives disintegrate in the flames of G-d's coming judgment.
- (3) **Hearing what the Spirit is saying.** What kind of flavour, or mentality would the Spirit want to speak into our life as a community of believers?
- (4) **Speaking what the Spirit is saying.** We need to discern and share messages which G-d is sending our way.
- (5) **Service Protocol and Spiritual Gifts** We want orderly freedom in all of our services.

This week I would like to talk about (6) **Understanding the gifts of the Spirit.** For over a century now, the topic of the gifts of the Holy Spirit has both revitalized and polarized the international community of believers around the globe. Historians are even calling it the third force/wave – the Catholic/orthodox churches being the first wave, the protestant/evangelical churches being the second and the charismatic/Pentecostal churches being the third.

In general spiritual communities are divided into those who are open to and seeking for the charismatic/ecstatic and those who do not believe in the need for a second or subsequent experience in the Spirit. Once believers have encountered the L-rd when they come to faith, this school of thought says that they already have everything they need and among these people it is generally believed that the charismatic manifestations of the Book of Acts were a one time, birthday bash for the inauguration of the church and they ceased shortly after (I Cor. 13:8 – tongues will cease).

Next week, we will see that rather than being a temporary, unusual and unrepeatable experience, what is variously called: the infilling, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the second blessing or the latter rain, was established as the normal intended pattern for the generational community of believers, just as it had been throughout the history of Israel.

This week, I want to examine what kind of gifts the Holy Spirit bestows, so we can both anticipate His activity and distinguish between His activity and any counterfeits or imitations which may try to masquerade themselves into our midst. As we turn to what is the authoritative or definitive description of the giftings of the Holy Spirit, I need to establish three guiding principles.

- (1) We have an extensive guidebook of spiritual jurisprudence in the Bible, so that the prophetic or spiritual experience of Israel must remain our standard (I Cor. 10:6-11). The Messiah of Israel would never introduce innovations which would be foreign or strange to the generational spiritual experience of Israel since Abraham.

(2) The list is not exhaustive in I Corinthians and there are other places where the list is presented differently – it is intended to be descriptive, so that we could recognize the kind of work of the Spirit does as He moves in our midst.

(3) It is not a competitive talent show where attention grabbers want to grab the lime light and show off their talent (or the lack there-of). It is a Messiah focused gathering, where the Spirit focuses our attention on His activity, to gather us in our diversity to express and experience a common purpose. Let's look at the passage.

I Cor. 12:4-11

4-6 uses the trinity, to speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the corporate oneness of the body (community)

- (4) The **same** Spirit gives a **diversity** of **gifts**
- (5) The **same** L-rd operates a **diversity** of **ministries**
- (6) The **same** G-d works a **diversity** of **activities** (all in all)

(7) To **each** is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the good of **all**

(8-10) outlines **nine** giftings (spiritual abilities, functions) (the menu)

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| (1) word of wisdom | spiritual how to |
| (2) word of knowledge | spiritual information |
| (3) faith | spiritual vision |
| (4) gift of healings | spiritual restoration |
| (5) operation of miracles | spiritual intervention |
| (6) prophecy | spiritual insight |
| (7) discerning of spirits | spiritual recognition |
| (8) diversity of tongues | spiritual celebration |
| (9) interpretation of tongues | spiritual enriching |

(11) Reiterates the purpose and the procedure of the gifts: A **single** (echad) and **same** Spirit **operates** all of these things **distributing** them to **each** as He desires.

Why nine? In Greek nine symbolizes the divine empowering/gifting of mankind by the gods – Paul is speaking of nine because He wants his hearers to understand that the gifting is complete, to cover every area of spiritual need which a community might encounter (whole) AND is something which comes from G-d – and is not something which people drum up when they come together – it is the coming together of diversity, where diversity and oneness become both the glue which holds the community together and also the means whereby all the needs of the community are met by all the members of the community, under the superintending of the Spirit.

The spirit operates the gifts for three main purposes:

- (1) To unite the diverse members of the body into a single community of praise.
- (2) To meet the various spiritual needs of the diverse members of the spiritual community.
- (3) To renew the spiritual focus of the community and to keep its personal vision of eternal purposes both current (fresh, responsive, wise) and kosher.

Next week: the scriptural experience of the infilling of the Spirit