

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 6

The Apostles' Creed ~ Part 5

This post will continue our closer look at the **Apostles' Creed** to learn more about what we affirm that we believe.

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, **GOD'S ONLY SON, OUR LORD:**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,**

suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Who Was Conceived By The Holy Spirit

At the beginning of Luke's Gospel, the angel visits **Miryam** and tells her that: ***The Ruach HaKodesh will come over you, the power of Ha'Elyon will cover you. Therefore, the holy child born to you will be called the Son of God*** ~ Luke 1:35 (CJB). This opening act of **Yeshua's** story is meant to remind us of the creation story in Genesis 1, which we reviewed in **The Apostles' Creed ~ Part 3**.

So, when the **Ruach** covers **Miryam**, we see a picture of **God's** creative work happening all over again. **Yeshua** is brought into being by the creative breath of **God's Ruach**.

In the third century, the Origen of Alexandria, widely regarded as one of the most important **Messianic** theologians in the third century, came up with a striking image to illustrate how **Yeshua's** humanity was united to the eternal **Son of God**. He pictured a piece of iron placed in a fire until it is glowing with heat. This iron, he says, has become wholly fire since nothing else is discerned in it except fire; and if anyone were to attempt to touch or handle it, he would feel the power of that fire. In this way, **Yeshua's** human soul is like the iron in the fire.

Yeshua is genuinely human: nothing but iron. He is truly divine: nothing but fire. **Yeshua** is so permeated by the divine presence that every part of His humanity is filled with divine energy. He is born of a woman. The **Ruach HaKodesh** conceives Him. He is human: He is divine.

This way of thinking about **Yeshua's** humanity and divinity is just an attempt to make sense of the complex things that are said about **Yeshua** in the **Gospels**. The **Gospels** portray **Yeshua** as someone whose life is drawn directly from the source of **God's** creative energy. Even in His mother's womb, He is already the bearer of the **Ruach**. In Luke's Gospel, the same **Ruach** that brooded over **Miryam's** womb is constantly flashing out and touching the lives of those who come into contact with **Yeshua**. When **Miryam** greets her cousin **Elisheva**, the baby in **Elisheva's** womb leaps for joy, and **Elisheva** is filled with the **Ruach** (Luke 1:41).

The same **Ruach** who rested on **Yeshua** in His mother's womb now rests on the whole company of **Yeshua's** followers.

Born of the Virgin Mary

There are **Believers** that the idea of the virgin birth is a relic of bygone days when people were more straightforward and found it easier to believe in impossible things. They can handle the rest of the creed, but

the virgin birth stretches credulity too far. To understand the virgin birth, we need to see how it fits into the whole story of Scripture - a story in which miraculous births play a starring role.

Isra'el's story begins with a promise to **Avraham** and **Sarah** (Gen 12–17). A couple who cannot conceive are chosen by **God** and told that they would have a family. **Sarah** laughs at the promise. But later, when she has given birth in her old age, the child is named Laughter (Hebrew: **Yitz'chak**) because of the astonished joy of his parents. **Sarah** can hardly believe her own body: and yet it is true. She has given birth to the promise.

The next great turning point in **Isra'el's** story is the arrival of **Moshe** (Ex. 2:1–10). Although **Moshe's** conception is not a miracle, his infancy is marked by a miraculous escape from danger. He is snatched away from the murdering hand of **Pharaoh**. He is placed in a basket and set adrift on the river, where he is found and adopted by a member of the royal household, an Egyptian princess. She then appoints the baby's biological mother to be his nursing maid. The whole story portrays a unique providential design by which **Moshe** is spared and, as it were, smuggled right into the heart of Egyptian power. All this is meant to anticipate the great miracle to come when **God** delivers the people of **Isra'el** from slavery.

When **Isra'el** has come to the promised land, God raises up judges to lead the people before the establishment of the monarchy. The greatest of the judges is **Shimshon** (Samson), and his story begins with another miraculous birth (Judges 13:1–25). **Shimshon's** mother is unable to conceive. But she is visited by an angel who tells her that she will give birth to a son who will triumph over the **P'lishtim** (Philistines).

That is how it goes in the **Tanakh**: at the great turning points of history, we find a woman, pregnant, and an infant child brought into the world by the powerful promise of **God**. **Isra'el's** story is a story of miraculous births.

Later the people of **Isra'el** were taken from the promised land and led away into Babylonian captivity. It was the darkest hour of their history. Out of the depths of despair, the promise of **God** was heard again through the prophet Isaiah. The prophet compared the coming deliverance to the joy of a miraculous pregnancy in Isaiah 54:1–3, 13.

Against this backdrop, it should come as no surprise to find **Isra'el's Mashiach** entering the world through a miraculous birth.

The confession that **Yeshua** was born of a virgin is not a random miracle story. It is a reminder that our faith has deep roots in **Isra'el's** story and **Isra'el's Scriptures**. The coming of the **Savior** was not just a new thing. It was the culmination of the whole incredible story of **God's** loving faithfulness to the people of **Isra'el**. When we confess that **Yeshua** is "**born of the Virgin Mary**," we see Him silhouetted against the backdrop of **God's** promise to Avraham, the exodus from Egypt, the rule of the judges, the coming of the prophets, and the promised deliverance from exile.¹

In my next post, we will continue to unpack this second article of faith that **Yeshua is Adonai** in the **Apostle's Creed**.

¹ The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism.