

1 JOHN

Because
You Know  That You
May Know

Sh'ma! Chazak! Bible Studies

ב"ה

B'ezrat HaShem

1John

“Because You Know, That You May Know”

A Bible Study

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Sh'ma! Chazak! Bible Studies

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Use of Extant Jewish Texts

People who have come from Protestant backgrounds are often wary of “extra-biblical sources.” Although there is a healthy motivation behind this, that position is actually harmful for the very people of that background. Sooner or later, those of us in the Messianic movement will have to deal with the questions about the authenticity of the “New Testament.” It may be easy to ignore those questions at first, but eventually, one must come to grips with this troubling fact: it appears that the Apostolic Scriptures, the “New Testament” has been corrupted. There are too many places that the English translation clearly teaches things that are contrary and even in opposition to the Torah.

When confronted by this realization, some conclude that the Second Century “church fathers” altered the text. That seems like a simple answer, but in the answer the very authority of the Apostolic Scriptures is suspect. This leads some to ignore the Apostolic Scriptures to their detriment. Eventually, many will deny their faith in Messiah Yeshua.

There is a better way. Bereans Online has always sought to explain the seeming discrepancies as proof not only of the authenticity of the Apostolic Scriptures, but their inerrancy was well. Like the Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki Z”L (also known as Rashi), we feel that the “odd” things of Scripture invite us to dig deeper. The same is true regarding the places of seeming disagreement between the TaNaKh and the Apostolic Scriptures. Sometimes we need a glossary. Sometimes we need a dictionary. This is where extant texts come in. Our premise is this: if an extant text can give us the needed key to a difficult passage, it provides more than information about the passage in question in the Apostolic Scriptures – it proves the authenticity of the passage. You see, if the “church fathers” had changed the text, then they would not have done it in such a way to be **agree** with normative Judaism.

When we started down this road of discovery, it became clear that the greatest proofs of the authenticity (and hence the authority) of the Apostolic Scriptures came from them being authentically Jewish. For example: Nowhere in the TaNaKh is there a clear description of a Person described as “Messiah.” While there are many passages in retrospect that one can draw from –there is no prophecy where HaShem says, “I am going to send Israel the Messiah, and He will do this and be like that...” So why did Judaism and later Christianity develop such similar perspectives regarding the Messiah? While Christianity had the writings of the Apostles, Judaism in large part rejected them when Gentiles became the predominate force in early Christianity. So what was the common source? ***It was the Jewish way of reading and studying Scripture.*** The men who wrote down the Apostolic Scriptures were Jewish Sages. There are many extant Jewish texts that confirm this truth: If you want to understand the Apostolic

Scriptures, ***you need to learn to think like the men that wrote them under the supervision and inspiration of HaShem.*** You need to learn the wisdom of Jews.

Our use of extant Jewish texts are not included in this study for the purpose of proving their authenticity nor their authority. Although we find them interesting and often enlightening, they are not Scripture. On the other hand, they provide context for our study of the Apostolic Scriptures, so they can lend a hand in authenticating the Apostolic Scriptures.

It is our hope that what you will learn will not only give you a better appreciation for the gift we have been given in the Apostolic Scriptures, but that you see them as authoritative in your life – and that seeing, you might ***do***.

Rick Spurlock

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Introduction

Authorship and Date

John the Apostle, the “beloved disciple,” likely wrote the three letters that bear his name in the Apostolic Scriptures. The similarity in themes and usage of certain words indicate a likelihood that the Gospel of John was also written by John the Apostle. Additionally, very early tradition¹ teaches that Revelation was written by this same John. For this study, we will assume the traditional view that John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee (Yochanan ben Zavdai) wrote the book of 1John.

The Gospel of John was likely written first, around 90 CE. Revelation is dated around 95 CE. The Epistles, including 1John are dated around 100 CE, making 1John, 2John, and 3John the last books written in the Apostolic Scriptures.

Practical Yet Mystical

From the first verses, 1John invites participation. The writer clearly outlines his reasons for writing the book, as well as providing very practical instructions for the reader.

As practical as the book is, like the Gospel of John it has some very deep water that invites the reader to dive deeply. The concepts are mystical but carry with them clear teaching on identifying errant mysticism. Particularly, throughout the book, the writer is intent on warning the reader against Gnosticism and Docetism, which stem from philosophical theories of reality. Although both of these heresies were still in their infancy when 1John was written, they have forms that would be expressed in early Christianity and later in Judaism. Considering the errant mysticism that John is teaching against, it is all the more remarkable that he utilizes biblical mystical concepts in a favorable way in the book.

When the mystical concepts of 1John are compared to those in the Prophets it becomes clear that their origin is Hebraic, not Greek. On the other hand, most commentaries on the Apostolic Scriptures use Hellenistic Platonism as the perspective into mystical topics. This has led to countless theological errors, some of which are the very ones that John is warning against in this epistle. As with all things biblical, it is best to overlay the Hebraic perspective to the mystical themes of the Gospel and Epistles of John.

Some later Jewish mystical writings have a common biblical source with 1John. Although we will reference such works at various times, it is not meant as a wholesale endorsement of those writings. We are merely making the “Jewish” connection that is sadly missing from most studies of the Apostolic Scriptures.

¹ Irenaeus 2nd Century

Controversial

1John has been called one of the most controversial books in the Apostolic Scriptures. The controversy of 1John arises from the King James Version of 5:7-8 which is seen as a Trinitarian proof text. The controversial text, called “Comma Johanneum,” is not found in any Greek manuscript prior to the Fifteenth Century, although it showed up first in the Latin Vulgate in the Fifth Century. This study avoids the controversy by using the Hebrew Names Version which is based upon the American Standard Version, which itself uses different Greek manuscript sets than does the King James Version.

Continuity of the Torah

When viewed through the prism of later “church” theology, 1John seems to break no real theological ground. With an emphasis on love, and dealing with sin, it seems quite average in depth. However, when laid next to the Torah and the Jewish mysticism found in the Prophets, it reveals a remarkable thing for a book written so late in the Apostolic era: ***its thorough “Jewishness.”*** When understood with a Hebraic background, the book loudly shouts the continuity of the religion of the Scriptures... not new, but ancient!

Thematic Study

This study will follow a thematic arrangement of the text of 1John. The entire text is arranged following these themes:

- Purpose for writing
- Righteousness and Sin
- Light
- Life
- Love
- Know
- Overcome

Verb Tenses and Number

A very big problem exists with English Bibles, particularly in the Apostolic Scriptures. We are at the mercy of the translators’ biases when we read only in English. One way that theological biases are expressed are in masking the Greek verb tenses in English grammatical ambiguities. Some of these translator tricks are more subtle than others. The Epistle to the Hebrews has multiple examples of blatant bias in the manipulation of Greek verbs. Notice the tense of the verbs in the New King James version of Hebrews 9:1-7:

*Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which **had** the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which **were** the golden pot that **had** the manna, Aaron’s rod that*

budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance.

Hebrews 9:1-7 NKJV

Each of the underlined verbs are either not found in the Greek or are in the Present Tense. In other words, the translators changed the verb tenses in order to make it appear that the Tabernacle/Temple was not functioning or operable when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. The text should be translated as follows:

Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which has the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which the golden pot that has the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it the cherubim of glory is overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always go into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest alone once a year, not without blood, which he offers for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance.

Hebrews 9:1-7 NKJV, with verbs corrected

This is only a part of the translation errors that exists in Hebrews 8-10. The conclusion is obvious, the translators were unable to wrap their minds around the idea that the Tabernacle and the later Temple actually performed a necessary service, **even after the resurrection of Yeshua**. Their theological bias against the Temple is evident.

For 1John, and possibly in a more subtle way, the "plural-ness" of verbs as well as pronouns make it difficult to follow who is being addressed in a passage. Is the audience the collective "you all" or is it the singular "you"? English grammar permits the translators to mask the difference. For instance, the collective "you" points to a corporate body, whereas the singular "you" points to the individual. A prime example of this is found in the English text of the Shema. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is written to the singular "you." The instructions are for the individuals. The collective community's responsibility is found in the second paragraph of the Shema found in Deuteronomy 11:13-21, where the instructions are in the plural, given to the community. In the case of the Shema, the instructions are nearly the same, first given to individuals, and then to the collective community. The ambiguity of the English "you" can be confusing when the focus is only for the collective "you" or only for the individual "you." An example of that is found in

the instructions for bringing a murder to justice in the Torah. The instructions for judgment are to the collective, not the individual.

1John has problems with verb tense as well as verb number masking. We will point out the underlying Greek verb tenses and number where it can make a difference in our understanding. This is vital for a Hebraic understanding of Scripture; because throughout Scripture, the focus of the individual is how they relate to the collective body – and the collective body is Israel. We will explore this concept more as we dig into the Scripture texts.

Verb Tense Formatting

In order to identify some of the verb tenses that are ambiguous, those verbs are formatted in a special way in the thematically arranged Hebrew Names Version text of 1John, located in the Appendix. Where a verb's ambiguity (or mistranslation) might make a difference to the reader, we have identified those present tense verbs like this:

^{3:6} Whoever **remains** in Him **doesn't sin**. Whoever **sins** hasn't seen Him, neither knows Him.

This text shows that “remains”; “doesn’t sin”; and “sins” are all in the present tense. In this case, the translators could have made the text more clear by saying “continues to remain” “doesn’t continue sinning” and “keeps on sinning.” The formatting of the present tense verbs will help you identify them. In the case of the remaining verbs in this verse, they are not present tense, even though it may appear that way. In any verse where the present tense verbs are identified with the special formatting, the remaining verbs are not present tense.

Verb and Pronoun Number

To better identify the plural “you” found in verbs and pronouns, they will be formatted in a special way in the thematically arranged Hebrew Names Version text of 1John, located in the Appendix. Where number of a verb or pronoun might make a difference to the reader, we have identified plural verbs or pronouns like this:

^{2:27} As for **you**, the anointing which **you received** from Him remains in **you**, and **you** don't need for anyone to teach **you**. But as His anointing teaches **you** concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught **you, you** will remain in Him.

This text shows that it is directed not at the individual reader, but the collective body. This subtle difference has theological implications. For instance, the “anointing” mentioned is a collective one, and it is **in** the collective body of believers.

Lesson One: Purpose for Writing

“I Write to You...”

It is always helpful to understand a writer’s purpose in writing. Most books of the Bible do not clearly define the writer’s purpose. For those we must examine the text for clues. Clues such as the intended readers, direct instructions, warnings, and benedictions. 1John is one of the few books that tell us up front its purpose. Knowing the purpose for 1John will allow us to better focus on the message within the themes of the book.

Read, Read, and Read Again

Start this lesson by reading the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan’s First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

Now read the read *Yochanan’s First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* also located in the Appendix. Read all the verses found in the themes: *Purpose for Writing; Righteousness and Sin; Light; Life; Love; Know; and Overcome.*

Lastly, once more read the *Purpose for Writing* verses found in *Yochanan’s First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix.

Now let’s dig in!

In the table that follows, list the purpose(s) for 1John that are clearly stated.

The Purpose for Writing	
Verse	Purpose

“We” or “I”?

Did you notice the switch between 1:4 and 2:1? “*We write these things*” became “*I write these things*.” Read 1:1 through 2:1 and explain why you think John changes from “we” to “I.”

John is writing to “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers.” Is this meant to be descriptive of the entire believing community, segments within it, or varying stage of maturity? Let’s consider that question.

The word for “little children” is the Greek word *teknon* and is the plural diminutive form of the Greek word for child. It is not gender-specific. It is most often found in 1John. Read and comment on the other passages where the word is used.

John 13:33:

Galatians 4:19:

The word in 2:13 for “young men” is the Greek word *neaniskos*. It is a masculine word that is translated “young men” or “young man” each time in the Apostolic Scriptures. One of those occurrences is found in Acts 2:17. Read and comment on its usage as it relates to 1John.

Acts 2:17:

The Greek word used for “fathers” is *pater*. It is used very frequently in the Apostolic Scriptures. It is not used very often to refer to a physical father. Read the following and write out the precise relationship meant in the word “fathers.”

Matthew 3:9:

Luke 6:26:

John 6:31:

Romans 4:11:

Acts 22:1 (read the context):

1Timothy 5:1:

Does the audience of “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers” refer to the whole community, those specific groups within the community, or stages of spiritual/community maturity?

Believe In the Name?

Lastly, we want to look the end of the book in 5:13, where John states his purpose for writing. Write out 1John 5:13 in the space below:

What is it to “*believe in the name of the son of God*”? Read and comment on the following passages.

John 1:12:

John 2:23:

Acts 3:16 (read the context):

John 17:6 (read the context):

Isaiah 50:10:

In a commentary on Isaiah 5:10, the Talmud says,

If a man is accustomed to attend Synagogue [daily] and one day does not go, the Holy One, blessed be He, makes inquiry about him. For it is said: Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, and now walketh in darkness and hath no light? [And still] if he absented himself on account of some religious purpose, he shall have light. But if he absented himself on account of a worldly purpose, he shall have no light. Let him trust in the name of the Lord. Why? Because he ought to have trusted in the name of the Lord and he did not trust.

b.Berachot 6b

What do you think it means to “believe in the name” based upon what you have read?

Lesson Two: Righteousness and Sin – Part One

Like Embers

In the previous lesson, we explored the idea that a corporate audience is not the same as writing to an individual. It may be something you have not thought of before; particularly if you come from a traditional Christian background, especially Protestant. The Protestant Reformation focused upon the individual. Believers were taught to read each passage of the Bible as if it was written to them individually. This perspective brought some very good things with it, namely personal responsibility.

Without losing the positive perspective on the individual message of Scripture, we need to consider another side: the corporate, or collective side. Although individual believers make up the collective body of believers, sometimes we have lost sight of the purpose for the collective. For many, the “church” hijacked the collective aspect of Scripture and it merely became a venue for institutional power and control. That is *not* what we are talking about. We are talking about something far deeper, and yet still highly practical.

Imagine embers in a fire. The heat that they produce together far exceeds the heat that comes from the individual embers. Separate the embers and the fire goes out. It is the embers relationship to the other embers that promotes the fire and the heat. Of course, you need an igniter... now hold that thought as we consider righteousness and sin in a way you may not have previously considered.

Scripture, HaShem’s Self-Revelation - Revealing His Righteousness Standard

In biblical thinking, we know someone (or something) by observing how the person (or thing) functions. Form truly does follow function – and function reveals character. The Hebrew language itself conveys this as it boldly communicates through action. Virtually all the words are derived from verbs. Languages like English are subtle and static, whereas Hebrew bluntly demands action.

We know HaShem because of what Scripture says that He *did*, *does*, and *will do*. He defines Himself with the verbs of the holy tongue. How does His righteous standard, the Torah’s commandments, fit into it? He does not merely reveal Himself, He *compels* His creation to act upon that revelation: either toward, or away from Him. Within man’s obedient response, man sees the *shape* of the Holy One Himself, blessed is He.

With the hundreds of daily decisions, man’s will is exercised, and we must act. When we act, we either submit or rebel against HaShem’s righteous standard. When we submit, we permit our will to be subsumed in His. When His will becomes more active than our own, we resemble Him, in His righteousness. “Resemble” is too strong a word. His righteousness is the very definition of perfect righteousness. Rather, we *more* resemble Him than not. In those moments, we are acting righteously.

When we rebel against His will, we resemble rebellious man – we sin. The more we rebel against Him, the more we resemble, well, ourselves – and less like Him. It really is that simple. It really is something we can choose to do: to resemble Him, or resemble ourselves.

Now, some will tell you that we are only “righteous” because Messiah’s righteousness has been imputed to us. While it is true that Messiah’s perfect righteous is imputed to His disciples, it misses the point that we have been making: righteous is as righteous *does*. The Scriptures demand action on our part. Either we act in accordance with the revealed will of HaShem (as expressed in His commandments), or we act in rebellion to them and thus to Him. *We are never static.*

So what does all this have to do with *being like embers*? Let’s explore Scripture and see...

Read It Again!

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan’s First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

Now, read the *Righteousness and Sin* verses found in *Yochanan’s First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix. Pay particular attention to the number of the pronouns and verbs (plural or singular). Plural pronouns and verbs are formatted like this:

you received

Also watch the verb tenses. If a verb is *not* present tense, it has no special formatting. All present tense verbs are formatted like this:

doesn't sin

Tamei and Tahor

You may be familiar with the Torah concepts of *tamei* [impure] and *tahor* [pure]. You may know that your sin is not directly related to *tamei*. You cannot live a normal life without at some time becoming *tamei*. In fact, with regard to dead bodies, we can see that one of the highest expressions of righteousness would be honoring father and mother by caring for their dead bodies – an action that would render one in the most extreme form of *tamei*. Following contact with a dead body, not only is someone *tamei*, the only way to become *tahor* [pure] is through a seven day process that requires the ashes of a red heifer. Consider another form of *tamei*, from *tzarat* [incorrectly translated “leprosy”]. The person with the condition must leave the community camp.

The bottom line regarding *tamei* – it is a state that reminds us of death. Therein the connection to sin. Death entered the world through sin – and *tamei* is a state that reminds HaShem of death. Sinful people and people that are *tamei* are not permitted in the Presence of the Holy One, blessed is He.

Lesson Two: Righteousness and Sin – Part One

Read the passages that follow and comment on the relationship between *tamei* and the community. Be sure to read the context of each passage.

Leviticus 7:21:

Leviticus 12:1-8:

Leviticus 13:1-46:

Leviticus 14:1-32:

Leviticus 15:1-17:

As you can see, some of the causes of “uncleanness” [*tamei*] are what simply appear to be normal human occurrences? Yet, the individual’s relationship to the community was affected. Did you see that in some cases, *tamei* could be transmitted to someone else? Imagine the concern that someone might be *tamei*, and enter the Tabernacle. Could that affect the Tabernacle itself? It appears that is one of the purposes of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement: to cleanse the Tabernacle of inadvertent “impurity” that had been brought near to the Holy Sanctuary, and the Presence of the Holy One, blessed is He.

Comment on the consequences to the community if the Sanctuary became defiled.

Either diagram, or write out, the relationship between the individual who was *tamei*, the community, and ultimately the community's relationship to HaShem in the Tabernacle.

As we saw, being *tamei* does not always mean the person engaged in sinful deeds. In fact, with regard to childbirth, it was because of obedience to the command to “*be fruitful and multiply*” that the mother is *tamei* for a time after childbirth. So what is the relationship between being *tamei* and sin? As we discussed, they both are related to death. Can you see another relationship? Do they both have a bearing not only on the individual, but the community?

Read and comment on the following passages. Note how they relate individual sin and the effect on the community. Using these Scripture passages, complete the table that follows.

Leviticus 17:12-14:

Leviticus 18:19-27:

Leviticus 20:1-10:

Numbers 35:10-29:

Deuteronomy 13:6-18:

Individual Sins that Infect the Community		
Reference	Sin	Penalty

What does it mean to be “cut off from his people”? The verb “cut off” is the Hebrew word **כָּרַת** [*karat*]. In relation to this penalty of *karat*, at least from the time of Mishnah it was considered to be a divine penalty. In other words, the guilty would have their penalty meted out by HaShem – apart from the community. More modern Judaism took this to mean excommunication. Read the following passage in light of what we have seen and comment on where Paul may have gotten this penalty.

1Corinthians 5:1-13:

Now read what appears to have been the result of “cutting off” of this man:

2Corinthians 2:4-10:

“Great is repentance,” said Rabbi Meir, the compiler of the Mishnah. Where do you think that Paul got the idea that repentance could mitigate the judgment of *karat* that is meted out by the community?

The Talmud says,

Rabina said: "After all [the various explanations offered] we must come back to the original statement of Rabbi Akiva, namely, 'that if those liable to karat should resort to repentance the Heavenly Tribunal would grant them remission.' And in regard to the objection, 'Now, after all, they have not yet repented?' I retort, 'the penalty of karat is not yet decided either.'"

b.Makkot 13b

Read the following passage and comment on the four sins listed, as to why they might be serious, not only for the individual, but for the community.

Ezekiel 33:25-26:

List the four sins:

What is it about these sins in particular? What is the relationship to the Land and the community?

Read and comment on the following passages and how they relate to the concept of individual sins that pollute the community:

Acts 15:19-21 (list the four sins):

Ephesians 5:5:

1Corinthians 6:14-20:

1Thessalonians 4:3-4 (note: verse 3 is in the plural, verse 4 is in the singular):

Revelation 22:14-15:

Lastly, read 1John 5:16-18. Can you list at least four sins that “lead to death”?

Lesson Three: Righteousness and Sin – Part Two

The All-knowing Judge Does Not Need Convincing

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.
Isaiah 64:6

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.
Romans 7:18

Using a few passages as proof text, Christianity, particularly after the Protestant Reformation, has placed the issue of righteousness in the courtroom. In their efforts to thwart what they saw as the evil of “works-based salvation” that they saw in Roman Catholicism, they arranged the theological theater of the heavenly court.

In this court, we stand to face our accuser, Satan. Playing the role of prosecuting attorney, he makes mention of our each and every failing of “the Law” – and the Righteous Judge, looking quite convinced, asks for our defense. What defense can we offer? After all, it is clear that we are guilty of each and every offense that the father of lies has spoken. Then rising from His seat in the courtroom, our Defense Attorney approaches the bench. Messiah stands before the heavenly court and declares that for each and every offense, He has already paid the penalty. Any and all convictions are rendered moot by His work.

While much of this theological parable is based upon Scripture and HaShem’s eternal plan of redemption – the setting is not quite right. You see, it is in this setting that the issue of righteousness comes up in evangelical Christianity. It is called “imputed righteousness” or “forensic righteousness.” It is “forensic” because it pertains to the courtroom, the heavenly courtroom. In the theological mindset of the Reformers, this heavenly court is where the balance of our puny efforts (i.e. “our righteousness”) is weighed against our sins. Of course, our own efforts are insufficient before the Righteous Judge of the Universe. Ultimately, they actually see God as having a “works-based” system of salvation – one in which we simply can’t measure up – but where Messiah does what we could not do not only to cover our sins, but adding His good works for good measure. They see that even our attempts at “good works” are a sin because they presumptuously attempt self-salvation. So ultimately, practical righteousness is incidental, accidental, and even somehow harmful in this setting. All that matters is that we have a place in the World to Come. But is that what John is speaking of in 1John, when he speaks of “righteousness”?

The Reformer’s had the wrong view of righteousness. Good deeds, righteous deeds cannot cover sin, in the way that they viewed imputed righteousness. Even Messiah’s righteous deeds

were not meant to cover our sin. Only Messiah's work on our behalf can atone. Only Messiah can cover our sin – but it is not with His righteousness that He does this. Nothing but blood can atone. The heavenly courtroom is the right place for discussing atonement, because it is true that we cannot cover our offenses, our sins, before the Holy Judge. It is true that our Accuser is ready to rightly point out every failure of the Law on our part. It is true that Messiah's work on our behalf is His work alone. However, it is not true that our obediently walking out HaShem's righteous standard is somehow offensive to God, because in their minds it resembles a feeble attempt at self-salvation.

The all-knowing Judge of the Universe is not ignorant. He does not need proof of the condition of our heart, nor does He merely want to get us to "heaven." The setting for discussing righteousness is **not** the courtroom. It is not the Righteous Judge that needs to be convinced... **we do**.

Righteousness Is Not Neutral On The Sin-Meter

No one would argue that the righteousness of God is neutral, that it merely makes up for iniquity. There is no sin in the Righteous One. Herein lies the problem, when we add ourselves to the mix we play that very game.

Even though we know that our righteousness cannot make up for our sin, we merge sin and righteousness in our minds as if they were negative and positive values of the same element. True, we have seen that all sin is disobedience to HaShem's revealed righteous standard. But is "not sinning" the same thing as righteousness? To think in that way demands a passive religious practice that is unknown in the Bible.

Read It Again!

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read the *Righteousness and Sin* verses found in *Yochanan's First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix. Remember to pay attention to the number of the pronouns and verbs (plural or singular). Plural pronouns and verbs are formatted like this:

you received

Also watch the verb tenses. If a verb is *not* present tense, it has no special formatting. All present tense verbs are formatted like this:

practices

Filthy Rags

Is practical righteousness, that is, righteous deeds, really “filthy rags”? That is what we are told by some. Is that what Isaiah is speaking of?

Read Isaiah 64:1-12 and answer the questions that follow.

In verses 1-4, what event in Israel’s history does this remind you of?

In verses 9-12, what event in Israel’s history does this remind you? Note: Isaiah wrote this over 100 years before it actually occurred.

Now read Daniel 9:4-19. Daniel is writing this at the end of the 70 years of exile in Babylon. He is entreating HaShem in the same way that Isaiah did in Isaiah 64. Do you think that Isaiah’s prayer recorded in Isaiah 64:1-12 and Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:4-19 were prayers that HaShem answered? If so, why? Be specific.

According to Isaiah 64:6, and Daniel 9:18, can righteousness atone for sin?

Read Daniel 4:27. Was Daniel telling Nebuchadnezzar that his sins could be covered by doing righteous deeds? Note: the word פָּרַק [p’rek] is used – which in the piel verb form literally means to “tear off.”

Daniel is giving the king an important and practical lesson in righteousness. What is it?

Is Paul a False Prophet?

Deuteronomy says it quite plainly when it speaks of righteousness.

And HaShem commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear HaShem our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before HaShem our God, as He has commanded us.'

Deuteronomy 6:24-25

Yet, many think Paul taught the opposite. If true, then Paul would fulfill the very definition of the false prophet. How can we reconcile what Paul says about righteousness?

Read and comment on the following passages. They should be very familiar. They are foundational to the Protestant Reformer's concept of "forensic" righteousness.

Romans 3:21-26:

Romans 4:1-13:

Romans 4:22-25:

Romans 9:30-31:

Galatians 2:21:

Does it sound like Paul is disagreeing with Deuteronomy 6:24? Is it the Torah only that it seems that Paul disagrees with? Read and comment on the following:

Psalms 119:86:

Psalms 119:172:

Ezekiel 33:12-20:

Romans 6:13-16:

Romans 10:1-10:

1Timothy 6:11:

Titus 3:4-6:

If we are to believe that Paul contradicted the Torah, then we must also admit that Paul contradicted himself. It seems that Paul must be speaking of righteousness in two distinct manners. Could it be that the confusion is thinking that Paul is always teaching about passive, or “forensic” righteousness, when in fact he also spoke of practical righteousness?

Read the following and comment:

Romans 2:4-11:

Ephesians 2:8-10:

Titus 3:4-8 (notice the relationship between “works of righteousness” and “good works” – both using the same Greek word for “work”):

James 2:17-24:

1Peter 1:17:

John’s Call to Righteousness

Has all of this made your head spin? Rest assured, this is a deep subject and one that has brought endless debate, and much theological rambling. Is that what John wants us to focus on when he mentions sin and righteousness? Beloved, remember that John is writing a practical book. Remember John’s purpose in writing this? He wants his reader to know ***with certainty that he has eternal life***. So in simple language, he shows the believer’s relationship to sin and righteousness. Making sure to use the special formatting of 1John found in the Appendix, comment on the following:

1John 2:3-6:

1John 2:28-29:

1John 3:5-11

1John 4:21-5:3:

John and Paul Agree with the Torah

While it is easy to take Paul's words out of context, and to be confused by them – by careful examination we can see that Paul agrees that the keeping HaShem's commandments is righteousness for us. Likewise, we can see that John makes the direct correlation between obedience to the commandments and righteousness. He says plainly that the righteous continually do righteousness deeds.

Paul and John were faithful disciples of Messiah. They taught what He taught.

*Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works** and glorify your Father in heaven. Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but **whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great** in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that **unless your righteousness exceeds** the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:17-20

Like Embers...

We began our study of sin and righteousness with the picture of embers. We saw how individual sin can affect the congregation. In the space below, explain how the righteous deeds of individuals expands and fuels righteousness within a congregation.

Lesson Four: Light

The Great Enlightenment?

This is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

1John 1:5

Because we often use biblical words to describe theological ideas, we have a tendency to ignore the fact that we may not understand the use of those words in their original context. We tend gloss over them in our study because their meaning is well-established in our minds. The concept of “light” is one of those words. We think we know what it speaks of metaphorically, so we do not ask the questions necessary of a true student of the Word. For instance, how do reconcile these two passages:

He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, Whom no man has seen or can see, to Whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

1Timothy 6:15b-16

So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

Exodus 20:21

Does HaShem dwell in thick darkness, or in unapproachable light? Who thinks of darkness when they think of HaShem, and yet Scripture is replete with reference to “thick darkness” being His dwelling place.

Maybe there is something about “light” that we have failed to consider.

Light in Greek Philosophy

The Greek philosopher Plato died in 348 BCE, but his influence is felt in philosophy and theology to this day. Early Christian theologians adopted his philosophy to explain away the parts of Scripture that they were uncomfortable with. So much did they revere Plato, that some even ascribed “believer” status to him. In Plato’s “Analogy of the Cave,” he gives a framework for education and enlightenment. It is upon this concept that most Western movements of “enlightenment” are based. The New World Encyclopedia explains it this way:

The Analogy of the Cave captures in a more dynamic manner the idea of knowing as a passing through various stages... There are four distinct stages, which ultimately culminates in the mind’s beholding the Good, but in this analogy there

is a more narrative structure, which suggests the journey of the soul in its ascent to the Good.

The first stage depicts prisoners inside a cave whose bodies and necks are chained so that they so are forced to stare at the wall before them. Behind their backs is a great, blazing fire which casts light and before the fire are artifacts, which have been made in the form of real things like trees, animals, and human beings. Shadows of the artifacts appear like puppets on the wall and so from the prisoners' perspectives these shadows appear to be real things, for they are the only reality they know.

Stage two commences when one of the prisoners is suddenly freed from his chains and so is able to turn his head around. At first the strength of the light of the fire blurs his vision. Over time his eyes adjust, and so he begins to see the artifacts and the fire behind them. This, then, appears to be reality.

Stage three begins when this prisoner is dragged along the path that winds up and out of the cave. Eventually the prisoner arrives above ground and out into the world above. He now beholds the daylight and his eyes are even more bedazzled. Again, it takes time to adjust but when he does he sees the reflections of things (such as trees, animals, and human beings) as they appear in the water of ponds.

After that he enters stage four where he can look directly at the things themselves, the real trees, animals, and people. Finally, at the highest degree he looks up into the light itself and sees the sun. In this way, the former prisoner is finally free from the illusions below and is able to see things as they really are. In fact, he pities the prisoners below who are still in the dark and so only see images and imitations of real things but not the things themselves.

Having arrived at this enlightened state (of philosophy) the man wishes he could remain above ground in contemplation of the light of truth. Having pity on those below who are still imprisoned, however, he descends back down into the cave. It is so dark, though, his eyes again need time to adjust and everything looks disoriented and unclear. Although the returned philosopher tries to help the others see, he is not welcomed but ridiculed. In fact, when he persists in revealing to them their illusions, he ultimately is killed. For the people prefer to live in the darkness than to make the difficult ascent into the light above ground.

New World Encyclopedia "Plato"

Perhaps you can see how easy it is to adapt Plato's metaphor of "light" into the biblical model, or what we think is the biblical model for using light as a metaphor. In this perspective, "light" is about "enlightenment" – about God giving us knowledge, or perspective, into His plan and even His being. We even see the ultimate martyrdom of those that wish to enlighten those that dwell

in darkness. With this paradigm it is only a few steps from the sacred Scriptures into a teaching for the advancement of Western civilization.

Is that what Scripture is? Is it merely about information? Is that what God does, simply reveal in His light, the truth about man's sorry state of understanding? Even if watered down for the masses, such a perspective quickly creates a religion of knowledge (call it "belief") where thoughts and feelings reign supreme in our expression of faith"

Chassidic Use of Light

Although Chassidic works are not devoid of Plato's influence, they do offer some interesting perspectives on the use of light in biblical passages. Although these works are often very technical, light is used repeatedly in ways that are sometimes surprising.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi lived from 1745-1812. Also known as the Alter Rebbe [the elder Rebbe], he was an Orthodox Rabbi of the Chassidic branch of Judaism. His followers today are known as the Chabad-Lubavitch branch of Orthodox Judaism. He was a brilliant Talmudist and was also well-versed in mathematics, astronomy, and geometry.

Rabbi Zalman's best known work was a systematic exposition of Chassidic philosophy, entitled *Likkutei Amarim* [Collection of Sayings]. It is also known as *Tanya*, which refers to the way the Talmud's Gemara is an outside explanation of what is inside the Mishnah's six orders.

Rabbi Zalman wrote *Tanya* to give greater philosophical and intellectual basis to Chassidic mysticism. Although it draws from mystical sources such as *Etz Chaim* and the *Zohar*, it is much more philosophical.

Exchanging Greek philosophy for Chassidic philosophy does not seem to be a worthwhile exchange, however by examining some of the concepts we may be able to see an earlier tradition, one not tainted by Western theology.

Rabbi Zalman connects the biblical concept of light with life, and the act of creation.

For it [the Divine Name Elohim] conceals the supernal light that brings the world into existence and gives it life, and it appears as the world exists and is conducted according to the laws of nature.

Lessons in Tanya, p 893

Can you see hints of Platonist philosophy in that explanation? However, notice that here HaShem [by His Name *Elohim*], uses light not to reveal or enlighten, but rather to create (and to continually create *ex nihilo* – out of nothing) – and then conceals this act. Light to conceal. Conceal what? Again, like Plato, although in reverse. Instead of to reveal information, this is to conceal information. However, when we lay this against Rabbi Zalman's statement regarding the purpose for creation, we have to wonder if it is only information that he is concerned with.

It is known that the Messianic era, especially the period after the resurrection of the dead, is indeed the ultimate purpose and the fulfillment of the creation of this world. It is for this [purpose that [the world] was originally created.

Lessons in Tanya, p 478

One of the more famous uses of light in *Tanya* is clearly not about information. Drawing from the *Zohar*, Rabbi Zalman explains something that Western theology has not considered about light.

We have learned that man must not go four cubits while bareheaded. Why? Because the Shechinah [the Divine Presence] rests upon his head. Therefore every wise man has his “eyes” [his interests and concerns] and his speech “in his head” in that [light of] the Shechinah which rests and abides above his head.

Lessons in Tanya, p 455

Here, the Divine Presence [the *Shechinah*] is pictured as a light above a wise man’s head, a constant reminder, making man mindful of his responsibility to HaShem. Now watch how the Alter Rebbe takes this concept, and makes it practical.

Now when his “eyes” [his interests and concerns] are there, he must know that this light kindled above his head [the light that shines on his soul] requires oil. For man’s body is the wick that retains the luminous flame and the light is kindled above it; and thus King Solomon cried out, “Let there be no lack of oil above your head.” For the light over his head requires oil, meaning good deeds and for this reason “the wise man’s eyes are in his head.”²

Similarly, the Shechinah does not rest upon a man’s body, which is compared to a wick, except through good deeds.

Lessons in Tanya, p 455-456

This picture is of man as a lamp, a wick, with the Shechinah over him as a flame. What attracts the Divine Presence of HaShem? Oil, which is seen as good deeds. But is that how it works? Is this a concept that John would draw from when he used light? It certainly is not an idea that was drawn from Western theology. Let’s see what Scripture says.

Read It Again

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan’s First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

Then read the *Light* verses found in *Yochanan’s First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix.

² Ecclesiastes 2:14

Yochanan's Use of Light

Light is only in a few verses in 1John, and yet it is a major theme in all of John's books. Read and comment on the following references to light in John's books. Consider whether these references are about information, and if not what.

John 1:1-9 (notice the connection between light, creation, and life):

John 3:17-21:

John 8:12:

John 9:4-5:

John 12:35-36:

1John 1:5-7:

1John 2:9-11:

Revelation 21:23-24:

Revelation 22:3-5:

Who Is the Light of the World?

In John 8:12, Yeshua declares Himself to be the “Light of the World” – with that in mind, read the following and comment on what light is signifying:

Matthew 5:14-16:

Matthew 6:22-23 (can you see a connection to “man is a wick”?):

Information or Relationship?

The picture of a wick, fed by the oil of good deeds, with a flame, not physically attached is compelling for a number of reasons. It points to a relationship between the wick (man) and the flame (HaShem). It also makes illumination a result, not the purpose for the result. Unlike the Platonists’ model where information is the purpose for illumination (light); this concept evokes words like “cleave,” “love,” and “zeal.” It speaks of relationship.

Read the following Scripture passages:.

Proverbs 6:23:

Matthew 5:14-16:

Isaiah 4:5:

Job 29:3:

In the space that follows, draw an oil lamp that is burning. Label the various parts of your picture using the elements from the Scripture

Lesson Five: Life

Existence or Life?

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2

Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father. This is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life.

1John 2:24-25

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

John 10:10b

A difficulty in reading 1John is that when we get to the promise of eternal life in 1John 2:24-25, it is likely that we have “eternity in heaven” as the image. Extrapolating from various passages, a popular religious distortion was created: “*accept Jesus and get eternal life in heaven, reject him and go to hell.*” There are elements of truth in this, but is that what 1John is promising when it speaks of “life” and “eternal life” – is it all just about getting a ticket to heaven (and not going to hell)?

Escaping or Enduring Suffering and Persecution?

Christianity has endured various persecutions throughout its history. At various times, Christians were hated, hunted, persecuted, and murdered. While many Christians have rightly seen that the righteous are promised eternity with Messiah, sometimes it was merely seen as an escape from an evil and fallen world. Certainly, Christians have endured suffering and persecution – but wanting escape is something of which they are rightly accused. This is most evident in the doctrine of the Rapture that many evangelicals adhere to.

Jews, on the other hand, have always endured persecution. Judaism sees the nations in rebellion to HaShem but read Scripture in such a way that HaShem seeks our participation in bringing the world under the dominion of HaShem in the Messianic Age. Instead of escape, the eschatological theme of Judaism is **active perseverance**. This theme is not merely patient waiting, but diligence in *tikkun olam* [repairing the world]. Having a part in the World to Come is not seen as escape, or a goal, but rather a simple consequence of being among the righteous (“Israel”).

Is “eternal life” simply a reassurance of escape? Is it an escape from the persecutions and sufferings of this world, as well as the torment of hell?

Read It Again

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan's First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

Then read the *Life* verses found in *Yochanan's First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix.

The Eternal Soul of Man

What is eternal life? Does it mean to live forever? Wait, doesn't Scripture indicate that man's soul is eternal already? With that question in mind, read and comment on the following Scripture passages:

Daniel 12:1-2:

Isaiah 66:22-24:

Matthew 13:41-43

Matthew 25:31-46:

Revelation 20:11-15:

Revelation 22:14-15:

If man's soul is eternal, we might be able to argue about the qualitative nature of life after death, but if life means "existence" then all men have "eternal life" – the wicked and the righteous. Surely, this is not what Scripture calls "eternal life" – it is not simply eternal existence. Maybe our view of what "life" is needs some Scriptural perspective.

This is Your Life

In Hebrew, there are primarily two words that are translated into English as “life.” The first is most widely used. It is **חַי** [*chai*]. The other word is **נֶפֶשׁ** [*nefesh*]. Nefesh is often translated “soul.” Of great interest, derivatives of both words are first used in the same verse in Scripture, as well as a famous one that follows:

*Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living [derived from *chai*] creatures [derived from *nefesh*], and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.”*

Genesis 1:20

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [*nefesh chaiah*].*

Genesis 2:7

It might be easy to always equate life with biological life – or maybe just as easy to equate it with spiritual life. Is there a difference? In the chart that follows, look up the Scripture passages and indicate whether you think it is speaking of physical life or spiritual life – or both.

Passage	Physical	Spiritual	Both
Deuteronomy 6:5 (note: “soul” = “ <i>nefesh</i> ”)			
Deuteronomy 30:14-16			
Deuteronomy 30:20			
Deuteronomy 32:45-47			
Psalms 16:11			
Psalms 103:1-4			
Psalms 119:93			
Proverbs 3:18			
Matthew 7:13-14			
Matthew 10:39			
Matthew 19:16-17			
John 3:36			
John 10:10			
John 12:49-50			
John 20:31			
Romans 2:5-7			
Galatians 2:20			
Colossians 3:2-4			
1John 5:11			
1John 5:16			
1John 5:20			

Eternal Life

Some of the passages you looked up used the term “eternal life” or “everlasting life” – it is long been seen that this is speaking of the “length” as to say “infinite life.” Is that what eternal life is speaking of? Is HaShem drawing our eye to the lack of termination, or is He speaking about a quality?

The Greek word for “eternal” used in the Apostolic Scriptures is αἰώνιος [*aionios*]. The same word is used often in the Septuagint. The Hebrew word that the Septuagint translated is the word עולם [*olam*].

Like *ainios*, *olam* can also mean “without end.” It is found most often in the Torah where it is used to teach the eternity of HaShem’s instruction in righteousness. Read and comment on the following usage of “*olam*” – specifically answer the question: is the word being used to describe the fact that God has no end, or is it speaking about some other characteristic.

Genesis 21:33 [“HaShem El Olam”]:

Heaven, or Himself?

You have looked up many usages for “life” in Scripture. We have only scratched the surface. It is a dominant theme in Scripture. In the passages that follow, comment on the significance of the relationship between HaShem and His people.

Deuteronomy 30:20:

John 17:3:

1John 5:11-13:

Summary

For it [the Divine Name Elohim] conceals the supernal light that brings the world into existence and gives it life, and it appears as the world exists and is conducted according to the laws of nature.

Lessons in Tanya, p 893

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:1-4

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Colossians 1:16-17

Summarize in the space below, what you have learned about “life” and “eternal life” and how it relates to your relationship to HaShem through Messiah.

Lesson Six Love

Fear or Love?

***You shall love** HaShem your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*

Deuteronomy 6:5-6

*We know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but **perfect love casts out fear**, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love.*

1John 4:16-18

“Perfect love casts out fear” – that sounds like a good (and biblical) definition for “love” doesn’t it? When you consider the way that John uses “love” in the Gospel of John and the Epistles, you would never define love this way, even though John is the one who wrote the phrase. You see, love and fear are *not* like oil and water – they do *not* repel one another. In fact, the opposite is true: you cannot understand biblical love apart from biblical fear.

Fear and Love

Both fear and love are misunderstood in our modern culture. They are treated as emotions. They are treated often as uncontrollable emotions. No wonder some approach Scripture with the perverted view that the “god of the Old Testament” is an angry god that must be feared, whereas the “god of the New Testament” is a loving god that puts flowers in our hair and gives us a harp to play. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and God of Jacob does not change. He must be feared, and **He commands His people to love Him**.

Think about that for a moment. God commands His people to love Him. When you can grasp the significance of that in defining “love” then you can begin to see how fearing God and loving God are two different things, which result in similar action.

Love is always about action. It motivates to act in a certain way. Fear is always about action. It motivates to act in a certain way. Who/what you love and fear tells everything about you.

Abba bar Yosef bar Chama was a Third Century Babylonian *amora*. This great Talmudist is quoted often in the Babylonian Talmud under the name “Rava.” Rava understood how fear of God and love for God are revealed in what we do.

Two disciples were once sitting in the presence of Rava. One said to him, "In my dream they read to me, 'O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee [Psalms 31:19].'" The other said to him, "In my dream they read to me, 'But let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice, let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them; let them also that love Thy name be joyful in Thee [Psalms 5:11].'" He replied to them, "Both of you are completely righteous Rabbis, but one is actuated by love and the other by fear."

b.Sotah 31a

Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!

Psalms 31:19

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You.

Psalms 5:11

Notice that both of the disciples chose passages that spoke of those who put their trust in God. Yet one chose a passage that used fear as the characteristic of that faith, whereas the other disciple chose love as the characteristic. Rava wisely identified that both resulted in righteousness – one from fear and one from love. Fear, in this respect is not a negative – it is not the antithesis of love.

It is not fear or love, it is fear and love.

Read It Again

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan's First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

Then read the *Love* verses found in *Yochanan's First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix.

God is Love

Therefore because of the love which God shows to Israel it is written, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God", which means that man should bind himself to Him with very strong love, and that all service performed by man to God should be with love, since there is no service like the love of the Holy One, blessed be He. Rabbi Abba said: "These words are the epitome of the whole Law, since the Ten Commandments are summed up here, as the Companions have explained. Nothing is so beloved of God as that a man should love Him in the fitting manner."

Zohar Devarim Vol 3, 267a

That God has condescending love for man, or *chesed* [lovingkindness], is obvious in Scripture. But why is it that when men read “God is love” in 1John 4:8 and 1John 4:16 they think it is speaking as if the object is man? This human-centric approach to love is precisely why we fail to understand biblical love. No beloved, the object of “God is Love” is not man, but God. Read the following passages and name the focus. Is it God, or man? Consider each passage carefully.

1John 3:1:

1John 3:16-18:

1John 4:7-12:

1John 4:19-21:

1John 5:1-3:

Did you see the relationship that we have to God because of, and in order to, love? Love, as demonstrated by God’s love, becomes the character of those who know God. Instead of ourselves as the object of love, the object is reflected back to God, and evidenced in our love for our brothers. God truly is love, it is the characteristic of His people.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-35

How Do I Know If I Love My Brother?

Does that seem like an odd question? Most people that emphasize the “new commandment” of Messiah as some form of replacement for the “old commandments” have not even paused to consider this question. With man’s perversion of “love” – how do we know by what definition we are to “love one another”? A parent who fails to discipline a child, may think that they are acting in love – and yet Scripture tells us that a parent who loves a child disciplines him.

Anytime we quote John 13:34-35's "*a new commandment I give you*" we need to consider the context. Let's look at the context of John 13. Read and comment on John 13-15's use of "love" and the relationship to "obedience" and "commandments."

John 14:15:

John 14:21:

John 14:23-24:

John 14:31:

John 15:8-10:

John 15:12-13:

John 15:17:

Now, read 1John 5:1-3 again. How do I know if I love my brother?

You Shall Love HaShem Your God

Rabbi Abba said: "To return to the words 'and thou shalt love': one who loves God is crowned with lovingkindness on all sides and does lovingkindness throughout, sparing neither his person nor his money. We know this from Abraham, who in his love for his Master spared neither his heart nor his life nor his money. He paid no heed to his own desires because of his love for his Master; he spared not his wife, and was ready to sacrifice his son because of his love for

his Master; and he sacrificed his money also by standing at the cross-roads and providing food for all comers. Therefore he was crowned with the crown of lovingkindness. Whoever is attached in love to his Master is deemed worthy of the same, and what is more, all worlds are blessed for his sake."

Zohar Devarim Vol 3, 267b

It is not accidental that we are first introduced to the Hebrew word **אהב** [ahav = love] in Genesis 22:2, where God says to Abraham: *"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

Abraham demonstrated his love for God by obedience. God called Abraham His friend.

But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend.

Isaiah 41:8

We too demonstrate our love for God by obedience. As we have seen, it is impossible to separate love from God's commandments. Like David, another friend of God, our love-relationship with God is inseparable from His Torah. Read and comment on that relationship in the following passages:

Psalms 119:47-48:

Psalms 119:97-98:

Psalms 119:111-114:

Psalms 119:126-127:

Psalms 119:39-40:

The First Book of Love

John's books are called "the Love Books" because love is a dominate theme in his Gospel and Epistles. But before there was John, there was Moses. The book of Deuteronomy also has love as a theme. Consider the following passages:

Deuteronomy 5:10:

Deuteronomy 6:5:

Deuteronomy 10:11-12: (note the relationship between fear, love for God and love for others):

Deuteronomy 12:32-13:3:

Deuteronomy 30:6; 16:

Fear and Perfect Love

Perfect love is the kind which remains steadfast in both phases, whether of affliction or prosperity. The right way of loving one's Master is expressed in the traditional teaching which says: "even if he deprive thee of thy life". This is, then, perfect love, embracing two phases.

Zohar Bereshit Vol 1, 12a

So what is 1John 4:16-18 speaking of when it says, "*perfect love casts out fear*"? Comment on what you have learned about love, as well as how you think it relates to fear.

Lesson Seven Know

How can I Know if I Know?

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. This is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He listens to us. And if we know that He listens to us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.

1John 5:13-15

When Israel left Egypt they were devoid of all knowledge until God made them taste bread of that earth called “eretz”, of which it says: “As for the earth (eretz), bread cometh of it” Then Israel began to know and to recognize God. God, however, desired that they should know also of that place which is the fitting counterpart of this earth, but they were not able to do so until they tasted bread from that place, to wit, heaven, as it says: “I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you” (Exodus 16:4). It was only then that they attained to a knowledge and a vision of that realm.

Zohar Bereshit Vol 1, 157b

Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism

Ironically, it is the word “know” in 1John that is normally given the Greek philosophical approach by traditional Christianity. I say “ironically” because it is the philosophical approach that John is arguing against. The philosophy of Gnosticism, which itself is founded upon a mystical form of Platonism was a real concern of John’s. Ultimately, it is the opposite of true faith. We have seen that the danger of early Gnosticism is one of his primary motivations for writing the epistle.

The concept that there was an “inner circle” of members who had special “knowledge” of God was compelling to the first readers of the Epistle of 1John. Most of the first readers came from a Greek-speaking society that promoted elite “knowledge” and deeper insights into “truth.” John draws from the Hebrew Scriptures to battle the promotion of ideas over deeds. We have already seen that he lays the truth out in simple and compelling terms. His approach is quite pragmatic and practical. And yet, traditional Christianity seems to delight in the exploration of the “idea” of knowledge.

In Hebrew, it is cut and dried. You know something, or someone – or not. Evidence of knowledge is what is important. Knowledge is not a concept – it is a relationship to truth, or someone, or both. Nothing more, nothing less.

Christianity's Neo-Platonism is no different from ancient Gnosticism in this way: beliefs, ideas, and concepts are the goal. Think about how many times you have heard the words "we believe," or "I think," or "I know." They are common phrases. Now think how many times you see actions that belie those very "beliefs."

Our problem is what we think we "know."

Read It Again

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan's First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

While you read, make not of what John says that we know in the chart that follows.

After that, read the *Know* verses found in *Yochanan's First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix.

What We Know

Reference	What We Know

Reference	What We Know

God Knows Us, and Wants Us to Know Him

Without fail, we always tend to talk about relationship at the expense of living it. Can you imagine spending all your time discussing the one you love, and never actually spending time with them, or expressing that love in real ways? We have a word for that: fantasy. The problem with so many is that they have a fantasy relationship with God. It is a relationship of “we believes” or emotional experiences. It is often a “relationship” that is confused with religious activities like sermons, meetings, and social times. When compared to the relationship that John is promoting, those are marks of a fantasy relationship, not a real one.

Read the following passages and comment on how they compare to the fantasy relationship so often promoted in religion.

Genesis 15:1-15:

Genesis 22:4-18:

Exodus 3:7-8:

Exodus 6:3-8:

Exodus 16:11-15:

Exodus 29:42-46:

Exodus 31:13:

Leviticus 26:1-12:

Deuteronomy 4:33-39:

Deuteronomy 12:32-13:4:

Psalms 9:10:

Jeremiah 24:5-7:

Jeremiah 31:33-34:

John 17:3:

1John 2:3-6:

1John 4:-7:

A Relationship

God compares His relationship to His people as a marriage. During most weekdays, observant men tie tefillin on their head and their arm. The wraps are reminders of the “marriage” relationship that HaShem has to Israel. As the bride walks around the bridegroom 7 times, so too the arm wrap goes around seven times. The last wrap is around the “ring” finger, while quoting from Hosea:

*“I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and **you shall know HaShem.**”*

Hosea 2:19-20

So what is it to “know God”? Can you describe that relationship based on the examples you have seen in the passages we just read?

Write out some examples of what it “looks like” to not know God.

The Torah plainly teaches that we can know that God is Who He says He is by what He did for our forefathers and for us. We also told that our love relationship with Him is expressed in how we respond to His commandments. The Zohar ties the freedom from slavery, and God's provision for us in the wilderness in a compelling way.

AND I WILL TAKE YOU TO ME FOR A PEOPLE AND I WILL BE TO YOU A GOD, AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. This is the first of all commandments, the root of all precepts of the Torah: the knowledge of God in a general way, namely that there is a Supernal Ruler, Lord of the universe and of all life, Creator of heaven and earth and all their hosts.

But this general knowledge of God must lead on to a particular knowledge of Him. This is the inner meaning of man being "male and female together,". When the Israelites were about to come out of Egypt they had no knowledge of the Holy One, blessed be He, and Moses had to teach them the first principle of Divine knowledge. Without this doctrine they would not have believed in all those signs and wonders which they were about to experience. At the end of the forty years in the desert, after having been instructed by Moses in all the commandments, both in those which are directly connected with the Holy Land and in those which are not, he taught them in an individual, particular way, the knowledge of God, as it says: "Know therefore this day and consider it in thine heart that the Lord he is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath; there is none else" (Deut. 4:29). "That the Lord (TETRAGRAMMATON) is God (ELOHIM), this is the particular aspect of cognition. This particular mode of knowledge is essentially identical with the general concept of God as Creator and Lord.

Should the question arise: Is not "the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 1:7, ie. the first commandment)? the answer would be that the fear of the Lord (which is connected with the commandments) must precede the second, the particular grade of knowledge, although, of course, one has to fear the Lord even before one has an intellectual knowledge of Him in His revelational individual aspects. Thus the ultimate and whole duty of man is to know the Holy One, blessed be He, in a general and in a particular way.

Zohar: Shemot Raya Mehemna p 25a

All men should know God in a general way. After all, evidence of His power is all around us in nature. Some call this "head knowledge" - God does want this from His people, but He wants more. You might think that He wants what some call "heart knowledge" – no, this "particular" knowledge that He wants is the knowledge of **relationship**. We hear Him, and respond to Him. That is truly knowing Him. What do you think?

Lesson Eight: Overcome

Overcome... What?

I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him Who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, isn't the Father's, but is the world's.

*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: **your** faith.*

1John 2:14-16; 5:4

Rabbi Judah said:... "There are thus two parallel and opposing influences. From the one there flows all the inspiration of true Faith and all supernal sanctifications; from the other flows whatever is evil, all kinds of death and all sorts and conditions of mischief in the world." Rabbi Hizkiah said: "Assuredly it is so. Happy is he whose portion is firmly established on the good side, and who does not incline himself to the other side [sitra achra], but is delivered from them." Said Rabbi Judah: "Assuredly it is so, and happy is he who is able to escape that side, and happy are those righteous who are able to wage war against that side." Rabbi Hizkiah asked: "How?" Rabbi Judah, in reply, began to discourse on the verse: "For by wise guidance thou shalt make thy war, etc. (Prov 24:6). "This war," he said, "alludes to the war against the evil side, which man must combat and overcome, so as to be delivered from it."

Zohar Bereshit Vol 1, Page 160a

Flip Wilson's famous saying, "the Devil made me do it" may seem like a silly extreme to some; but acting as if personified evil does not exist is just as unscriptural. For some, there is a demon behind every sin. On the other hand, there are some who never give it a thought that we have an Enemy, and that he is actively engaged in every effort for our defeat. What can we draw from Scripture and other sources, not only to find balance, but to find the secrets to our success against unseen enemies?

It's a War

At times the Bible uses the language of war to describe the walk of the righteous. Pious men and women are engaged in a struggle that is nothing less than all-out war. Paul uses military terminology in Ephesians 6:11 where he enjoins us to "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." All of the Apostles described a personified spiritual evil – the Enemy, the "devil." Yet they did not stop with this unseen external threat;

they also describe an external threat that is not personified. Paul speaks in 2Corinthians of this war against spiritual enemies (plural):

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Messiah.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Scripture does not stop there. Paul uses the language of battle when he describes the war within. In a passage that has been debated since the Second Century, he says,

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the Law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Romans 7:14-24

This description of a war against an external unseen enemy, and an internal war in ourselves did not end with the Apostles. The Sages of Israel discussed these same things in light of Scripture. The discussions show up in the Talmud and Midrash. They are also found in the Zohar. A large portion of *Likkutei Amarim* (also known as *Tanya*) is devoted to this very subject. Although not all these sources would find Paul in complete agreement, one thing is true in what they describe: we are in a war, and we are **supposed to overcome**.

Read It Again

Go back to the text of 1John located in the Appendix. Read all five chapters in *Yochanan's First Letter* in the Hebrew Names Version of the Bible.

After that, read the *Overcome* verses found in *Yochanan's First Letter (Arranged Thematically)* located in the Appendix.

The Life of the Beinoni

In Rabbi Schneur Zalman's *Likkutei Amarim* (or *Tanya*), he describes what is called the "beinoni," or the "intermediate man." In his description, the *tzadik*, the righteous man, is someone who has ceased from being influenced by the evil inclination. On the end of the spectrum lies the *rasha*, the evil man. The *beinoni* lies between the two. While the world sees the actions of the *beinoni* and assumes that he is wholly righteous, the *beinoni* knows that he is tempted and at times fails. The *beinoni* has a consistent life of righteousness, and yet still is not sinless. He is in between.

In *Tanya*, the Rabbi Zalman describes man's heart as divided. The right side is influenced by God through Him and His instruments, whereas the left side (*sitra acher* = other side) is influenced by the evil inclination. Whether for evil or good, man's nature is "clothed" by three things: thought, speech, and action. In other words, the "side" in control is manifest in a man's life by his thoughts, his speech, and his actions.

Although we may not agree with all we read about in *Tanya*, there is a level of authenticity to the description of the *beinoni* and his struggles. For example:

The difference between "him who serves God" [the beinoni, from Malachi 3:18], and a righteous man [a tzadik], is that "him who serves God," is written in the present tense, describes one who I still presently laboring in his divine service. This service consists of the struggle with the aim of overpowering it, and banishing it from the "small city" [i.e. the body, which is like a city whose conquest is the objective of both the good and evil nature], so that it should not vest itself in the organs of the body through evil thought, speech, or action. This constant battle with one's evil nature truly entails much effort ("service") and toil. This is the Beinoni.

The Tzadik [the completely righteous], on the other hand, is designated "a servant of God," as a title similar to the title "sage" or "king" bestowed on one who has already become a sage or king. So, too, he has already effected and completely accomplished his service of waging war with the evil in him. He has banished it, and it is gone from him, leaving his heart void within him.

Lessons in Tanya p 216-217

Even if one's entire aspiration is in God's Torah, which he studies day and night for its own sake, this is still no proof whatever that the evil has been dislodged from its place. Perhaps, rather, the essence and substance of the evil are in their full strength and might in its abode in the left part of the heart, except that its garments – namely the thought, speech, and action of the animal soul – are not invested in the brain, mouth, and hands and other parts of the body because God has granted the mind supremacy and dominion over the heart. Therefore the "divine soul" [i.e. the seat of the inclination for good] rules over the "small city"

i.e. over all the parts of the body, making them, serve as “garments and vehicle” through which its three “garments” – namely the thought, speech, and action of the Torah’s 613 commandments – are expressed (“clothed”).

Lessons in Tanya p 192-193

This, then, is the important principle regarding the divine service of the Beinoni: The essential thing is to govern and rule the nature that is in the left part of the heart, by means of the Divine light that illuminates the divine soul abiding in the brain, and to rule the desires of the heart. When he meditates in his mind on the greatness of the blessed Infinite God, so as to create through his understanding a spirit of knowledge and fear of God in his mind, this will cause him to turn away from evil... also, a love of God in the right part of the heart – with a longing and desire to cleave to Him by fulfilling the precepts of the Torah and of the Rabbis, and the study of Torah which is equivalent to them all.

Lessons in Tanya p 224-225

Paul, Chassidic Thinker

Although Paul would not agree with everything that Rabbi Zalman taught in Tanya, there are similarities in their description of man’s struggles against an internal enemy. The Talmud, Zohar, and Tanya call that enemy the “evil inclination” – whereas Paul calls it the “flesh.” Let’s look in depth at Romans 7:5-25 and how Paul describes his struggle against the flesh.

Read Romans 7:5-25 and write your comments and questions in the space that follows. Note: Do not be distracted by Paul’s use of the word “law.” In this passage, he uses the word in several different contexts. Sometimes he is referring to Torah commandments, and other times he uses the word to describe a “principle” or “influence.”

Now fill out the table that follows. The first part is done for you.

Contrasting The Flesh and the Spirit in Romans 7		
Reference	The Flesh (or synonym)	The Spirit (or synonym)
7:5	Sinful passions aroused by the law were at work to bear fruit to death	We should serve in the newness of the spirit
7:6		
7:8		
	Sin produced in me all manner of evil desire	

The Internal Struggle

Let's look at some other passages that seem to deal with this internal enemy. Read and comment on the following passages and how they relate to the struggle that Paul describes in Romans 7:

1Kings 8:38-39 (check out the context!):

Psalms 40:8:

Psalms 119:1-6:

Psalms 119:20:

Psalms 119:40:

Psalms 119:97-112:

Psalms 119:143; 176:

Proverbs 8:13:

Ecclesiastes 7:20:

Jeremiah 17:9:

1Corinthians 4:4:

Romans 8:13:

Galatians 5:16-25:

Philippians 3:12-14:

2Timothy 4:18:

The External Struggle

Our struggle is not only within ourselves. The war wages around us, with unseen combatants. The effects of that struggle are evident in every part of the world. There is a war for the world: to serve the Almighty King of the Universe, or to serve the god of this world, the Enemy himself. The Scriptures are replete with reference to this war. We will only touch on it here. Read and comment on some of the following passages and how they relate to John's use of the word "overcome."

2Corinthians 4:3-4:

Ephesians 2:1-2:

Ephesians 6:10-11:

1Peter 5:8:

Revelation 12:9:

Here's to the Overcomers!

1John provides a marvelous backdrop for understanding the struggles in the life of the believer. We struggle against our own evil inclination. We battle against the ideas of a fallen world in need of repair. We know that HaShem's Enemy is seeking not only to destroy HaShem's plan of redemption through His Messiah; but to destroy us personally. This Enemy is opposed to Israel and all those that love HaShem's chosen. There is hope. The hope is found in our All-Powerful King. Comment on the following passages:

Romans 12:21:

1John 2:13-14:

1John 4:4:

1John 5:4:

Revelation 2:7:

Revelation 2:11:

Revelation 2:17:

Revelation 2:26:

Revelation 3:5:

Revelation 3:12:

Revelation 3:21:

Revelation 22:7:

You Have Overcome, So Overcome

Rather, the evil inclination in the Beinoni is no more than, for example, a magistrate or judge who expresses his opinion on a point of law, yet in fact his decision is not necessarily final, for there is another magistrate or judge who disagrees with him. It then becomes necessary, to arbitrate between the two, and the final verdict will rest with the Arbitrator. Similarly in the battle between the evil inclination and the good: The evil inclination states its opinion in the left part of the heart. From the heart, the desire ascends to the mind for contemplation. Immediately, it is challenged by the second judge, the divine soul residing in the brain which extends into the right part of the heart where the good inclination abides. The final verdict rests with the Arbitrator – the Holy One, blessed be He, Who comes to the aid of the good inclination.

Lessons in Tanya p 186-187

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God — through Messiah Yeshua our Lord!

Romans 7:24-25

Appendix

Yochanan's First Letter

1John Hebrew Names Version

^{1:1} That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we saw, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life ^{1:2} (and the life was revealed, and we have seen, and testify, and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us); ^{1:3} that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Yeshua the Messiah. ^{1:4} And we write these things to you, that our joy may be fulfilled.

^{1:5} This is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ^{1:6} If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and don't tell the truth. ^{1:7} But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yeshua the Messiah, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. ^{1:8} If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ^{1:9} If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ^{1:10} If we say that we haven't sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

^{2:1} My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Yeshua the Messiah, the righteous. ^{2:2} And He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. ^{2:3} This is how we know that we know him: if we keep His commandments. ^{2:4} One who says, "I know him," and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in Him. ^{2:5} But whoever keeps His word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in Him. This is how we know that we are in him: ^{2:6} He who says He remains in Him ought himself also to walk just like He walked.

^{2:7} Brothers, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. ^{2:8} Again, I write a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines. ^{2:9} He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in the darkness even until now. ^{2:10} He who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no occasion for stumbling in Him. ^{2:11} But he who hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and doesn't know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

^{2:12} I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

^{2:13} I write to you, fathers, because you know Him Who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, little children, because you know the Father. ^{2:14} I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him Who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

^{2:15} Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him. ^{2:16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, isn't the Father's, but is the world's. ^{2:17} The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does God's will remains forever.

^{2:18} Little children, these are the end times, and as you heard that the Anti-messiah is coming, even now many anti-messiahs have arisen. By this we know that it is the final hour. ^{2:19} They went out from us, but they didn't belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have continued with us. But they left, that they might be revealed that none of them belong to us. ^{2:20} You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ^{2:21} I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ^{2:22} Who is the liar but he who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the Anti-messiah, He who denies the Father and the Son. ^{2:23} Whoever denies the Son, the same doesn't have the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.

^{2:24} Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father. ^{2:25} This is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life. ^{2:26} These things I have written to you concerning those who would lead you astray. ^{2:27} As for you, the anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and you don't need for anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, you will remain in Him. ^{2:28} Now, little children, remain in him, that when He appears, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ^{2:29} If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

^{3:1} Behold, how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! For this cause the world doesn't know us, because it didn't know Him. ^{3:2} Beloved, now we are children of God, and it is not yet revealed what we will be. But we know that, when He is revealed, we will be like him; for we will see Him just as He is. ^{3:3} Everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure. ^{3:4} Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. ^{3:5} You know that He was revealed to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. ^{3:6} Whoever remains in Him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen Him, neither knows Him.

^{3:7} Little children, let no one lead you astray. He who does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. ^{3:8} He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. To this end the Son of God was revealed, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ^{3:9} Whoever is born of God doesn't commit sin, because His seed remains in him; and he can't sin, because he is born of God. ^{3:10} In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the

devil. Whoever doesn't do righteousness is not of God, neither is he who doesn't love his brother. ^{3:11} For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ^{3:12} unlike Cain, who was of the evil one, and killed his brother. Why did he kill him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. ^{3:13} Don't be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. ^{3:14} We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He who doesn't love his brother remains in death. ^{3:15} Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in Him.

^{3:16} By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ^{3:17} But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart of compassion against him, how does the love of God remain in him? ^{3:18} My little children, let's not love in word only, neither with the tongue only, but in deed and truth. ^{3:19} And by this we know that we are of the truth, and persuade our hearts before him, ^{3:20} because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ^{3:21} Beloved, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have boldness toward God; ^{3:22} and whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. ^{3:23} This is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son, Yeshua the Messiah, and love one another, even as He commanded. ^{3:24} He who keeps His commandments remains in him, and he in Him. By this we know that He remains in us, by the Spirit which He gave us.

^{4:1} Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ^{4:2} By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is of God, ^{4:3} and every spirit who doesn't confess that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the Anti-messiah, of whom you have heard that it comes. Now it is in the world already. ^{4:4} You are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ^{4:5} They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. ^{4:6} We are of God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not of God doesn't listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

^{4:7} Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. ^{4:8} He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love. ^{4:9} By this God's love was revealed in us, that God has sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. ^{4:10} In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ^{4:11} Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another. ^{4:12} No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God remains in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

^{4:13} By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ^{4:14} We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. ^{4:15} Whoever confesses that Yeshua is the Son of God, God remains in him, and He in God. ^{4:16} We know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and he who remains in love

remains in God, and God remains in him. ^{4:17} In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, even so are we in this world.

^{4:18} There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. ^{4:19} We love him, because He first loved us. ^{4:20} If a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ^{4:21} This commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should also love his brother.

^{5:1} Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God. Whoever loves the Father also loves the child who is born of Him. ^{5:2} By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ^{5:3} For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. His commandments are not grievous. ^{5:4} For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: your faith. ^{5:5} Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God? ^{5:6} This is He Who came by water and blood, Yeshua the Messiah; not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ^{5:7} For there are three who testify: ^{5:8} the spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three agree as one. ^{5:9} If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is God's testimony which He has testified concerning His Son. ^{5:10} He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who doesn't believe God has made Him a liar, because He has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. ^{5:11} The testimony is this, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ^{5:12} He who has the Son has the life. He who doesn't have God's Son doesn't have the life. ^{5:13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

^{5:14} This is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He listens to us. ^{5:15} And if we know that He listens to us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.

^{5:16} If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for those who sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death. I don't say that he should make a request concerning this. ^{5:17} All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. ^{5:18} We know that whoever is born of God doesn't sin, but he who was born of God keeps himself, and the evil one doesn't touch him. ^{5:19} We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ^{5:20} We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we know Him Who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Yeshua the Messiah. This is the true God, and eternal life.

^{5:21} Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

Yochanan's First Letter (Arranged Thematically)

Plural (throughout); **present tense** (in "Righteousness and Sin" only)

Purpose for Writing:

^{1:4} And **we** write these things to **you**, that **our** joy may be fulfilled.

^{2:1a} My little children, I write these things to **you** so that **you may not sin**.

^{2:12} I write to **you**, little children, because **your** sins are forgiven **you** for His name's sake.

^{2:13} I write to **you**, fathers, because **you** know Him Who is from the beginning. I write to **you**, young men, because **you** have overcome the evil one. I write to **you**, little children, because **you** know the Father.

^{2:14} I have written to **you**, fathers, because **you** know Him Who is from the beginning. I have written to **you**, young men, because **you** are strong, and the word of God remains in **you**, and **you** have overcome the evil one.

^{2:21} I have not written to **you** because **you** don't know the truth, but because **you** know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

^{5:13} These things I have written to **you** who believe in the name of the Son of God, that **you** may know that **you** have eternal life, and that **you** may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

Righteousness and Sin:

^{1:8} If **we** say that **we have** no sin, **we deceive ourselves**, and the truth **is** not in **us**. ^{1:9} If **we confess our** sins, He **is** faithful and righteous to forgive **us** the sins, and to cleanse **us** from all unrighteousness. ^{1:10} If **we** say that **we** haven't sinned, **we make** Him a liar, and His word **is** not in **us**.

^{2:1} My little children, I **write** these things to **you** so that **you may not sin**. If anyone sins, **we have** a Counselor with the Father, Yeshua the Messiah, the Righteous. ^{2:2} And He **is** the atoning sacrifice for **our** sins, and not for **ours** only, but also for the whole world.

^{2:12} I **write** to **you**, little children, because **your** sins are forgiven **you** for His name's sake.

^{2:28} Now, little children, **remain in** him, that when He appears, **we** may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ^{2:29} If **you** know that He **is** righteous, **you know** that everyone who **practices** righteousness is born of Him.

^{3:2} Beloved, now **we** are children of God, and it **is** not yet revealed what **we** will be. But **we** know that, when He is revealed, **we** will be like him; for **we** will see Him just as He **is**. ^{3:3} Everyone who **has** this hope set on Him **purifies** himself, even as He **is** pure. ^{3:4} Everyone who **sins** also **commits** lawlessness. Sin **is** lawlessness. ^{3:5} **You** know that He was revealed to take away **our** sins, and in Him **is** no sin. ^{3:6} Whoever **remains** in Him **doesn't** sin. Whoever **sins** hasn't seen Him, neither knows Him.

^{3:7} Little children, let no one **lead you** astray. He who **does** righteousness **is** righteous, even as He **is** righteous. ^{3:8} He who **sins is** of the devil, for the devil **has been sinning** from the beginning. To this end the Son of God was revealed, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ^{3:9} Whoever **is** born of God **doesn't commit** sin, because His seed **remains** in him; and he **can't sin**, because he is born of God. ^{3:10} In this the children of God **are revealed**, and the children of the devil. Whoever **doesn't do** righteousness **is** not of God, neither **is** he who **doesn't love** his brother.

^{5:16} If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for those who sin not leading to death. There **is** a sin leading to death. I don't say that he should make a request concerning this. ^{5:17} All unrighteousness **is** sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. ^{5:18} **We** know that whoever is born of God **doesn't sin**, but he who was born of God **keeps** himself, and the evil one **doesn't touch** him. ^{5:19} **We** know that **we are** of God, and the whole world **lies** in the power of the evil one. ^{5:20} **We** know that the Son of God has come, and has given **us** an understanding, that **we know** Him Who **is** true, and **we are** in Him Who **is** true, in His Son Yeshua the Messiah. This **is** the true God, and eternal life.

^{5:21} Little children, keep **yourselves** from idols.

Light:

^{1:5} This is the message which **we** have heard from Him and announce to **you**, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ^{1:6} If **we** say that **we** have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, **we** lie, and don't tell the truth. ^{1:7} But if **we** walk in the light, as He is in the light, **we** have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yeshua the Messiah, His Son, cleanses **us** from all sin.

^{2:7} Brothers, I write no new commandment to **you**, but an old commandment which **you** had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which **you** heard from the beginning. ^{2:8} Again, I write a new commandment to **you**, which is true in Him and in **you**; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines. ^{2:9} He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in the darkness even until now. ^{2:10} He who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no occasion for stumbling in Him. ^{2:11} But he who hates his brother is in the

darkness, and walks in the darkness, and doesn't know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Life:

^{1:1} That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we saw, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life ^{1:2} (and the life was revealed, and we have seen, and *testify*, and *declare* to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us); ^{1:3} that which we have seen and heard we *declare* to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with His Son, Yeshua the Messiah.

^{1:4} And we write these things to you, that our joy *may* be fulfilled.

^{2:24} Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father. ^{2:25} This is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life.

^{5:11} The testimony is this, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ^{5:12} He who has the Son has the life. He who doesn't have God's Son doesn't have the life. ^{5:13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

Love:

^{2:5} But whoever keeps His word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in Him. This is how we know that we are in him: ^{2:6} He who says He remains in Him ought himself also to walk just like He walked.

^{2:15} Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him. ^{2:16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, isn't the Father's, but is the world's. ^{2:17} The world is passing away with its lusts, but he who does God's will remains forever.

^{3:1} Behold, how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! For this cause the world doesn't know us, because it didn't know Him.

^{3:11} For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ^{3:12} unlike Cain, who was of the evil one, and killed his brother. Why did he kill him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. ^{3:13} Don't be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. ^{3:14} We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He who doesn't love his brother remains in death. ^{3:15} Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in Him.

^{3:16} By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ^{3:17} But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart of compassion against him, how does the love of God remain in him? ^{3:18} My little children, let's not love in word only, neither with the tongue only, but in deed and truth. ^{3:19} And by this we know that we are of the truth, and persuade our hearts before him, ^{3:20} because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ^{3:21} Beloved, if our hearts don't condemn us, we have boldness toward God; ^{3:22} and whatever we ask, we receive from him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. ^{3:23} This is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son, Yeshua the Messiah, and love one another, even as He commanded. ^{3:24} He who keeps His commandments remains in him, and he in Him. By this we know that He remains in us, by the Spirit which He gave us.

^{4:7} Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. ^{4:8} He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love. ^{4:9} By this God's love was revealed in us, that God has sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. ^{4:10} In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ^{4:11} Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another. ^{4:12} No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God remains in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

^{4:13} By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ^{4:14} We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. ^{4:15} Whoever confesses that Yeshua is the Son of God, God remains in him, and He in God. ^{4:16} We know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. ^{4:17} In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, even so are we in this world. ^{4:18} There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. ^{4:19} We love him, because He first loved us. ^{4:20} If a man says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who doesn't love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ^{4:21} This commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God should also love his brother.

^{5:1} Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God. Whoever loves the Father also loves the child who is born of Him. ^{5:2} By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ^{5:3} For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. His commandments are not grievous.

Know:

^{2:3} This is how we know that we know him: if we keep His commandments. ^{2:4} One who says, "I know him," and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in Him. ^{2:5} But whoever keeps His word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in Him. This is how we

know that we are in him: ^{2:6} He who says He remains in Him ought himself also to walk just like He walked.

^{2:13a} I write to you, fathers, because you know Him Who is from the beginning.

^{2:13c} I write to you, little children, because you know the Father.

^{2:14a} I have written to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

^{2:18} Little children, these are the end times, and as you heard that the Anti-messiah is coming, even now many anti-messiahs have arisen. By this we know that it is the final hour. ^{2:19} They went out from us, but they didn't belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have continued with us. But they left, that they might be revealed that none of them belong to us. ^{2:20} You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ^{2:21} I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ^{2:22} Who is the liar but he who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the Anti-messiah, He who denies the Father and the Son. ^{2:23} Whoever denies the Son, the same doesn't have the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.

^{2:24} Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father. ^{2:25} This is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life. ^{2:26} These things I have written to you concerning those who would lead you astray. ^{2:27} As for you, the anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and you don't need for anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, you will remain in Him.

^{4:1} Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ^{4:2} By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is of God, ^{4:3} and every spirit who doesn't confess that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the Anti-messiah, of whom you have heard that it comes. Now it is in the world already. ^{4:4} You are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ^{4:5} They are of the world. Therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. ^{4:6} We are of God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not of God doesn't listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

^{5:13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. ^{5:14} This is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He listens to us. ^{5:15} And if we know that He listens to us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.

Overcome:

2:13b I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

2:14b I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: your faith. 5:5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God? 5:6 This is He Who came by water and blood, Yeshua the Messiah; not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 5:7 For there are three who testify: 5:8 the spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three agree as one. 5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is God's testimony which He has testified concerning His Son. 5:10 He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who doesn't believe God has made Him a liar, because He has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.

5:14 This is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He listens to us. 5:15 And if we know that He listens to us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.

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