

If we, as a Torah movement, expect that our efforts will be used of the Lord in a “generation to generation” way, we must reconsider our leadership model and do whatever it takes to align ourselves with the Scriptures. For it is in putting to practice what Yeshua and His Apostles taught that we will realize the fuller blessing of God upon our work, and will experience the value that comes from the wisdom given to us by our Lord’s Apostles.

to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; – Typical of letters (epistles) written in the early centuries of the common era, John opens this epistle by identifying himself and then the recipients of the letter. In this case, both the author’s identity as well as that of the recipients are veiled by using designations other than personal names.

Commentators, both ancient and modern, have generally taken one of two views as to the identity of the designations “chosen lady” (ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ, *eklektē kuria*) and “her children” (τέκνοις αὐτῆς, *teknois autēs*).

Some have considered that John is addressing this epistle to

...a particular family consisting of a woman and her offspring. The broader family, of course, includes the children of the woman’s sister (v. 13).¹

Clement of Alexandria (150–215 CE), in his *Hypotyposes*, apparently took this interpretation.² Plummer notes that the name of the woman may have been *Kyria*, since this Greek feminine name does occur in ancient documents, but he discounts this on the fact that if John is writing to a woman named *Kyria*, he would have written “to *Kyria*, the elect” rather than “to the elect *Kyria*.”³ Others consider the term “*elect Lady*” not to designate an individual but that the phrase would simply be a “natural expression of Christian courtesy.”⁴

But a number of things make this interpretation unlikely. First,

The fact that ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ appears without a definite article indicates that, if an individual is involved at all, she is not named.⁵

Further, the epistle is clearly addressing a community and its problems

1 Kistemaker, *2John*, p. 374.

2 See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, vi. xiv. 1; Plummer, *2John*, p. 57.

3 Ibid.

4 Brooke, *2John*, pp. 166–67.

5 Smalley, *2John*, p. 318.

rather than addressing an individual or a single family. It is obvious that vv. 2-3 are addressed to a community rather than an individual or one family.¹

for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:

Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Yeshua Messiah, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. (vv. 2-3)

It seems, therefore, that the best explanation of John's words in this opening line of the epistle is that by the expression "elect lady and her children," he is using a veiled reference to the *ekklesia* of believers in Yeshua. This fits perfectly with the fact that in the Scriptures Israel is viewed as a woman,² Jerusalem is referred to as the "mother" of Israel,³ and the *ekklesia* Yeshua promised to build is viewed as "the bride of Messiah."⁴

Consider also that Peter, in the salutation of his first epistle, uses both a feminine gender as well as the word "elect" to refer to the believing community residing in Babylon.

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. (1Pet 5:13)

This is consistent with John's record of the words of John the baptizer when he refers to the *ekklesia* as the bride of the Messiah (Jn 3:29), and Paul uses the same metaphor in Eph 5:25ff in his admonition that a husband ought to love his wife in the same way that Messiah loves His *ekklesia*.

While we may not have enough data to be dogmatic, it would seem that the weight of evidence is on the side of saying that John addressed his second epistle to a community of believers who would also share it with other communities (designated as "her children") in the region. That he would use such a veiled title would be consistent with the fact that rising persecution against the followers of Yeshua increased in the latter half of the 1st Century, and therefore writers would have tried

1 Though see the comments of F. F. Bruce, *2John*, p. 137, who does not consider the corporate language of the epistle to negate the possibility that it was addressed to an individual family.

2 E.g. Jer 3:6, 8; Amos 5:2; Mic 5:3.

3 Cf. Is 54:1–8; Gal 4:25; Rev 12:17; 21:2.

4 Cf. 2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22–32.

to safeguard the recipients by using veiled references to designate the *ekklesia* of Yeshua.

But in spite of the fact that we cannot be dogmatic as to whether John sent this epistle to a known individual and family, or to a community as a whole, we should not overlook the importance of the fact that he refers to them as “elect” (ἐκλεκτός, *electos*), i.e., chosen by God to be members of His family, and therefore loved eternally, with unending covenant love which secures for them eternal life, having been saved from the just wrath of God against sinners through the substitutionary death of Yeshua by Whom redemption is fully realized.

...whom I love in truth; – John has opened this epistle with a clear, personal expression of his love for these fellow believers. The Greek includes the added pronoun (which is not technically needed) in the phrase “whom I love in the truth” (οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ), which thereby makes the pronoun “I” emphatic. Moreover, the verb “love” (ἀγαπῶ, *agapō*) is in the present tense. We might therefore translate the phrase “Whom I, myself, love as a constant expression of my heart.”¹

John expresses his own love for the believers in the community to which he writes, a love that is anchored in their mutual love for and loyalty to Yeshua. Indeed, that which should foster genuine love among believers in Messiah is their mutual love for God and His Messiah, Yeshua, through the work of the Ruach within them.

The phrase “whom I love in truth” may be understood a couple of ways. It could be communicating John’s *genuine* love for them (he loves them truly) or that he loves them as a fellow-believer in Yeshua, that is, as together being those who love the truth as it has been revealed in Yeshua. Consider the parallel to these verses in 1John.

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him. (1Jn 3:18–19)

Here we have both aspects: to truly love those who are believers in Yeshua, and who therefore have shown themselves to have a genuine love for the truth.

Once again, we find an important application of these inspired words: those who are true children of God through faith in the Messiah will evidence the reality of their being “in Messiah” by the fact that they have an enduring love for the truth as revealed in the written word of God and demonstrated in the living Word Who is Yeshua. John

¹ Akin, 2John, p. 220.

emphasizes this in the next sentence.

...and not only I, but also all who know the truth – Here, John classes himself as equal with all true believers even though he personally had a privileged relationship with Yeshua, being one of the twelve. Thus, though John was commissioned by Yeshua Himself and given the task as one of His apostles, in terms of his being part of the *ekklesia* of Yeshua, he sees himself as equal with all who have been chosen and granted eternal life through faith in Yeshua.

This is an important truth for all of us to espouse. While surely some within the body of Messiah will be given authority as leaders and teachers, this does not put them in a “higher ranking” when it comes to saving faith in Yeshua. This is in concert with the very words of Yeshua:

It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matt 20:26–28)

And Paul emphasizes the same truth:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua. And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:28–29)

for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: – Throughout this epistle, John is emphasizing love and truth. That is, the love that we have for Yeshua will inevitably foster a love for other believers. And the truth that John emphasizes is the truth as found in Yeshua. He is not speaking of a philosophical category, but of the truth that is embodied in Yeshua Himself, Who is the promised Messiah, and Who alone has procured eternal salvation for all who come to Him in faith. Even as Yeshua spoke to Thomas:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. (Jn 14:6)

Thus, those who come to Him in faith, and who therefore become His disciples, will be enabled through the power of the Spirit to become more and more like Him, thus loving those who are His and loving the truth that binds them together.

Furthermore, John makes the categorical statement that saving faith, which is grounded in the truth as it is in Yeshua, “abides in us and will be with us forever.” These words of John find a similarity to the words of Yeshua as He spoke to His disciples in the upper room:

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be¹ in you. (Jn 14:16–17)

Note F. F. Bruce’s comment:

There is nothing surprising if what is said of the Spirit in one place is said of ‘the truth’ in another place: ‘it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth’ (1Jn 5:7). It is through ‘the Spirit of truth’ that He who is Truth incarnate dwells perpetually in and with His people.²

Here, once again, in these inspired words of Scripture, we are made to know that those who are saved by faith in Yeshua will never be lost but through the very work of God Himself, by His Spirit, all those He has redeemed will be eternally saved. This is precisely what John means when he writes that the truth “abides in us and will be with us forever.” This truth is also emphasized in the high priestly prayer of Yeshua, as He prays for all those given to Him by the Father, those who receive Him as the Savior promised by Israel’s prophets.

I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me... I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word... Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (Jn 17:9, 20, 24)

1 The Greek manuscripts evidence variant readings here: some have the present tense ἔσται but the weight of manuscript evidence supports the future tense, ἔσται [P^{66c}, 75^{vid} & A Θ Ψ f13 28 33^{vid} 700 syr^{s, h}]

2 F. F. Bruce, *2John*, p. 138.

3 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Yeshua Messiah, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

This triplet, “grace, mercy, and peace,” is also used by Paul in both his first and second epistles to Timothy (1Tim 1:2; 2Tim 1:2). Jude has “mercy, peace, and love” (Jude) while the majority of the Pauline epistles utilize the twofold “grace and peace” (Rom, 1Cor, 2Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1Thess, 2Thess, Philemon). Peter uses “grace and peace” in both of his epistles, as does John in his greeting to the churches in Asia (Rev 1:4). So we see that these terms were commonly used for openings and/or closings of epistles.

But just because these words were regularly used as “greetings” or “salutations” in letters of the early centuries does not diminish their value in terms of their scriptural meaning. Clearly, as the Apostles wrote their inspired epistles, they greatly desired that the blessings of God would be realized by those to whom they wrote. Westcott reminds us that

The succession of ‘grace, mercy, peace’ marks the order from the first motion of God to the final satisfaction of man. ‘Mercy’ defines as it were the manifestation of the divine ‘grace’ and prepares for the restoration of ‘peace’ to man’s disordered life.¹

John states that grace, mercy, *and* peace “will be with us.” He does not write “may grace, mercy, *and* peace be with us” but makes a categorical statement that such will inevitably be the case. For in as much as the “truth is in us and will be in us forever,” we are assured that grace from God flowing from His mercy through the work of the Ruach will maintain the peace with God that Yeshua has won by His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. Note also how John states that the peace we enjoy with God comes both “from Him and from Yeshua Messiah.” That John repeats the word “from” (παρὰ, *para*), makes it clear that saving grace, mercy, and peace flow from the Father and from the Son. In using this language, John places Yeshua our Messiah on the same level as God the Father. This is an explicit reference to the deity of Yeshua, Who is eternal, without beginning or end.

...Yeshua Messiah,² the Son of the Father, in truth and love. – Even as John

1 Westcott, 2John, p. 225.

2 The KJV, following the majority text, adds the word “Lord,” resulting in “the Lord Yeshua Messiah.” However, this is clearly a later addition to the text, since the earliest codices do not include it. Further, there is good reason to postulate why later scribes

emphasizes the divine nature of Yeshua in the previous clause, so he concludes this opening greeting with the same emphasis, namely, that Yeshua, Who is the true Messiah, is the Son of God. He emphasized this fundamental truth in his first epistle as well.

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the anti-Messiah, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (1Jn 2:22)

Whoever confesses that Yeshua is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1Jn 4:15)

Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1Jn 5:5)

John's designation of Yeshua, that He is the "Son of the Father" (τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς) is found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. But even though the wording is unique, the truth that it expresses is found throughout the Scriptures. For the point that must be emphasized, whether in the title "Son of God" or "Son of the Father," is that a son shares the same nature as his father. Thus, when Yeshua is called "the Son of the Father," this is once again a bold statement that in His incarnation He was and is God in the flesh.

This foundational truth is that which John enjoins upon his readers and upon us, that the "mystery of godliness" (to use Paul's words, 1Tim 3:16) is the mystery of the incarnation, that Yeshua is truly "God with us" (Immanuel) and that He came in the flesh, in the very form and substance of a man, a human being in every way. To deny this fundamental truth taught throughout the Scriptures is likewise to call into question all that the Scriptures teach regarding eternal salvation through the person and work of the Messiah Yeshua.

...in truth and love. – This is why, once again, John emphasizes "truth and love." Faith that saves is not based upon feelings, or one's personal efforts, or even upon some mystical experience. Saving faith is based upon receiving the truth of the Scriptures and laying hold of that truth by exercising faith in the One to Whom the truth of the Scriptures points. And the truth which the Scriptures teach is that the Father, the Messiah, and the Spirit are one, indivisible in their divine nature and in their infinite unity or oneness.

Even as nascent Gnosticism in the 1st Century was teaching a mys-

would have inserted "Lord," rather than earlier scribes deleted it. See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the NT*, p. 652.

tical philosophy which denied that the body and flesh of the Messiah Yeshua was real, resulting in deep divisions among the confessed followers of Yeshua, so in our day the deity of Yeshua is increasingly under attack. But if we will accept the Scriptures as the final authority in all matters relating to our faith and the manner in which we live out our faith, then we will be firm on the deity of Yeshua as well as His real manhood, not thinking that in our finite abilities we could ever fathom the mystery of Yeshua's incarnation. What we cannot fully explain, we most certainly must fully believe and confess, for it is the very truth that the Scriptures repeatedly enjoin upon us.

4 I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father.

As John begins the body of the epistle, he recounts an event in which he apparently met some of the members of the community (here referred to as “children” since the *ekklesia* or community to which he is writing is considered the “mother”), or about whom he had received a report, who evidenced an outward and vibrant faith, for they were “walking in the truth.” Given the emphasis in the opening of the epistle on the truth being centered in Yeshua and in His being the true, incarnate, divine Messiah, it seems clear that what caused John to have real joy was to know in fact that these believers were strong in their confession of Yeshua as Immanuel, “God with us,” and that He is the promised Messiah Who had accomplished eternal redemption for all who would believe in Him. In the face of increasing persecution and the rise of false teachers and teaching, they had remained firm in accepting and living out the truth as it is in Yeshua the Messiah. And this means to live in accordance with God's revealed will, that is, the inspired Scriptures. Obviously, in the late 1st Century when John is writing this epistle, the Apostolic Scriptures as we now have them had not yet been completely gathered. But the Scriptures of the Tanach, as well as the teachings of the Apostles which they had, were entirely sufficient for faith and *halachah* (walking out God's truth) pleasing to God.

And thus John adds “just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father.” The commandment received is another way of simply referring to the “Torah,” i.e., God's teaching and instructions for living righteously before Him. Here, at the very beginning of this epistle, John emphasizes that the word of God, the Scriptures revealed and inspired by His Spirit, are the very foundation and rule by which God's people may live out the truth. And ultimately, this truth is summed up in God's Son, Yeshua, our Messiah.