

own self-evident life of righteousness, and now of John and his associates as well. It seems probable that John has the Torah axiom in mind, that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses a matter is confirmed” (Deut 19:15).¹

Here, the Apostle John himself bears witness of the godly life of Demetrius, and is confident that Gaius will accept his word along with the accompanying word of those who are traveling with him as the capstone of witnesses, assuring the acceptance of Demetrius as a living example of one who has accepted the truth and is living it out in his daily life.

Once again, we may take the inspired words of this epistle and apply the principles they teach to our own lives and situation. Those who would take on the responsibility of teaching others cannot expect their words to have God’s blessing unless their lives conform to the righteousness of the message they intend to teach. May the Lord grant us, in this Torah movement, to raise up workers, servants, and teachers of integrity so that the word of God would go forth both in word and life.

13–14 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face.

John now comes to the conclusion of his epistle to Gaius, and utilizes verbiage that is very similar to that by which he concluded his second epistle.

Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full. (2Jn 1:12)

In our text, “pen and ink” (διὰ μέλανος και καλάμου) takes the place of “paper and ink” (διὰ χάρτου και μέλανος) in the salutation of 2John, but the choice of different words is not significant. Both expressions essentially say the same thing, that John needed to have a close conversation with Gaius in regard to other important matters he wishes to discuss, i.e., “delicate personal and ecclesiastical questions.”² The Greek χάρτης (*xartēs*), translated as “paper,” is actually “papyrus,” the plant that was used by stripping the stalk and then pressing the strips together in a criss-cross fashion to form sheets for writing. The English “pen” translates the Greek κάλαμος (*kalamos*) which was a writing utensil (pen)

1 cf. Matt 18:16; 2Cor 13:1; 1Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28.

2 F. F. Bruce, *3John*, p. 155.

made from a reed. The English “ink” translates the Greek *μέλαν* (*melan*) which means “black,” and when used of ink, describes a mixture of lampblack or soot mixed together with a binding agent, such as gum arabic or animal glue and water.

Once again, the elder John shows himself to be wise as he communicates with Gaius, for surely the matter relating to the divisive actions of Diotrephes would need to be handled very carefully, and would thus be better undertaken face to face rather than in writing. Questions that may have been in the mind of Gaius, including how he and the other leaders of the community should handle the situation, would be far better explained in person where questions and details of the dispute which Diotrephes had voiced could be better elucidated. Yes, John would confront Diotrephes when he arrived (v. 10), but he also wants to encourage Gaius and the other leaders of the community, and enjoy the fellowship with them based upon their common faith in Yeshua.

But even beyond the contrary actions of Diotrephes, the elder Apostle may also have wanted to encourage and strengthen Gaius and the other leaders, enabling them to act wisely in the face of the division that had occurred. And such divisiveness would only increase if the truth of the Gospel and the teachings of Yeshua’s Apostles continued to be questioned and even abandoned by those who were leaving the communities of The Way and denying Yeshua in the process. When members of a believing community leave and deny what they had previously confessed to be true, it is often the first impulse of the leadership as well as the community to view those who have left as enemies and thus to cut off communication entirely and sever all relationships. Such stringent measures may ultimately be required if no repentance is forthcoming from those who have denied Yeshua. Remember what John wrote in his second epistle:

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. (2Jn 1:10–11)

But the first response, as modeled by the overseers of the community, ought to be one of concern and compassion with a view to helping them see the error of their way and return to a full, heartfelt confession of Yeshua as the true Messiah and only Savior of sinners. Indeed, Paul teaches this in his second epistle to Timothy, describing how overseers are to act toward those who oppose the teaching of the truth.

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2Tim 2:24–26)

...but I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. – In the conclusion of 2John, the Apostle simply states "I hope to come to you and speak face to face." In 3John, however, he makes it clear that his coming is imminent, i.e., "shortly." The Greek word (εὐθέως, *eutheōs*) translated as "shortly" by the NASB, often carries the sense elsewhere in the Apostolic Scriptures of "immediately" or "at once."¹ But in terms of travel and visiting, the sense here surely means "soon" or "without long delay." This would strengthen the perspective that 3John was written near the time when John was departing on his travels to visit various communities, with the community in which Gaius fellowshipped being on the Apostle's itinerary.

The expression "face to face" is an idiom used in biblical Hebrew to describe the close companionship and heartfelt communication which exists between true friends. In this regard, note the use of "face to face" to describe the relationship between God and Moses:

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. (Ex 33:11)

Here, once again, the Apostle John shows his deep desire to shepherd those who were leaders among the communities of The Way, helping them to carry on the vitally important commission given by Yeshua Himself, that through the Gospel and the very word of God, disciples for Yeshua would be made from every nation in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham (Gen 12:3).

15 Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

John uses the common semitic "Peace to you" (שְׁלוֹם לְךָ, *shalom l'cha*), here in the singular since he is addressing Gaius directly. Used for both "hello" and "goodbye," the true meaning of "shalom" is that of "completeness," of events and situations that are whole or right, which bring joy and comfort in life. Thus both the greeting and salutation of

¹ See BDAG, "εὐθέως," p. 405.

“Shalom” is expressing one’s hope for the good things to surround the one who has come or who is leaving. But among the followers of Yeshua, the word took on additional, spiritual significance, for true shalom is found in the finished work of Yeshua, making eternal redemption for all who have believed and will believe in Him as the promised Savior. To have “peace with God” is the ultimate shalom, for it not only brings settled hope and joy in this life, but is the very means by which we have life in the world to come. Note the following verses which highlight the Apostolic use of the word “peace” (εἰρήνη, *eirēnē*) as found in Yeshua as one’s Savior.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (Jn 14:27)

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Yeshua came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Yeshua said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.” But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Yeshua came. So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Yeshua came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” (Jn 20:19–26)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Yeshua Messiah, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Rom 5:1–2)

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua. (Phil 4:7)

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all who are in Messiah. (1Pet 5:14)

This, then, is the sense that John intends to give as he ends his epistle to Gaius, even with a common salutation, but one which is equally endowed with spiritual richness and meaning. Even in the specific situation in which Gaius found himself, one in which division and false doctrine threatened the shalom of the community, those who would cling to the truth of the Scriptures and live in accordance with the eternal truth revealed in them, would be guarded by that very peace that surpasses human understanding.

...*The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.* – John’s final salutation consists of a greeting from “the friends” (οἱ φίλοι, *hoi filoi*) as well as the request or admonition to “greet the friends by name.” In the early communities of The Way, people commonly referred to community members as “brothers” or “sisters.” But Yeshua referred to His disciples as “friends” and John may thus be using this terminology as he learned it from his Lord.

You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (Jn 15:13–15)

We should therefore understand John’s use of the word “friend” to denote “fellow believers,” those who remained faithful in their confession of Yeshua, to their service to Him, and thus to one another. The fact that the definite article is used (i.e., “the friends”) gives to the word “friends” a specific and limited sense in this context.

Here, at the end of the epistle, we have another indication that though John is writing his epistle to Gaius, it actually is meant for the community as a whole, for he instructs Gaius to “greet the friends by name” (ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ’ ὄνομα). The addition of “by name” is because such a greeting of acceptance by the Apostle John could not be given in a corporate fashion, since there may well have been those who were siding with Diotrefes or who had already followed him in denouncing the Apostles and their teaching. Additionally, “by name” highlights John’s own relationship with the members of this community and expresses his desire that Gaius communicate his warm affections for them. In short, he wants Gaius to make sure that he personally conveys both the message of the epistle as well as John’s own concern and care for the community as a whole.

Thus, he ends the epistle in the same way that he opened it. He began the epistle by expressing his close friendship with Gaius, and ends it by extending this same affection to the community of believers as a whole. In so doing, he emphasizes the victory that is inevitable to those who remain faithful to the truth of the word of God and who thereby are strengthened in the “faith once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

May we likewise hold fast to the truth of God’s word, having confidence and sure hope in the victory that is ours in Yeshua our Messiah and Savior.