

What is a Righteous Person According to Yochanan (John)?

By

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1 John (Yochanan) 2:1 -2 *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Yahshua HaMashiach the righteous [one] (tzaddik): And he is the propitiation (atonement/kapparah) for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1 Yochanan 2:1-2 *And if anyone does commit averos, a Melitz Yosher (Advocate) we have with HaAv, Yehoshua (Yeshua), Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach the Tzaddik.¹ And he is the kapparah for chattoteinu, not for ours only, but also for the kol HaOlam HazeH. [VAYIKRA 5:15; YESHAYAH 53:10] OJB*

1 Yochanan 2:1-2 *My little children, I write this to you, so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Intercessor with the Father, Yahshua Messiah, a righteous One. 2 And He Himself is an atoning offering¹ for our sins, and not for ours only but also for all the world. The Scriptures*

Our teaching in this short lesson will focus upon the Greek word (since most people accept the Greek rather than the Hebrew) used in the text above for righteous one- *dikaion*. We must beg the question, “Did Yochanan use the Greek word *dikaion* to suggest the same Hebrew word for a Torah² observant person-*tzaddik*?”

Since Yochanan *ben* Zavdai (John son of Zebedee) was from the Galilee and was a Hebrew, he would have been familiar with the usage and true meaning of the Hebrew word-*tzaddik*,³ as understood in the context of his

¹ *Kapparah*. Greek *ilaste/Erion* appears twice in the New Testament; at Hebrews 9:5 it means the “mercy seat” which formed the cover of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, where the *Cohen hagadol* entered once a year, on *Yom-Kippur*, to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16). In the present verse it means “propitiation, expiation, and atonement” and corresponds to Hebrew *kapar*, which has the same meaning in the *TaNak* and has the root sense of either “cover” or “wipe clean.” These two root meanings both express what YHWH does when he accepts expiation for sin: he covers the sin from his sight and/or wipes or washes it away.

² Torah means instruction in Hebrew, not law as many think and teach.

³ *Tzaddik*, “righteous one.” In Jewish tradition generally, a spiritual, holy, and righteous man. In Hasidic tradition such people, thought to have had supernatural powers, attracted followers and taught their disciples how to live. It means **righteous, just** (*tsadeek*) to be true, honest, meritorious, fair, right: to be in accordance with the Principles of Life; *lit.*, to carry forward/pursue/ the paths/illumination by demonstrating holiness and appointments of wisdom by fulfilling the crown of life in accordance with the appointment of wisdom. The Talmud (compendium of Jewish law, lore, and commentary) asserts that the continued existence of the world is due to the merits of 36 individuals, each of whom is *gamur tzaddik* (“completely righteous”). While recognizing that *tzaddikim* have special privileges, the Talmud also notes their special obligations. They are at least partially responsible for the sins of their generation. In the 18th-century Pietistic movement known as Hasidism, the Jewish religious leader (*tzaddik*) was viewed as a

times, its usage in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the Jewish culture in Yisrael. Yochanan used this Hebrew word to portray his Master, Yahshua *HaMashiach*. Yochanan was a disciple of Yahshua, and had walked with Him in during His itinerate teaching ministry as a rabbi (**1 Yochanan 2:1-2**). For Yochanan and the other first generation disciples (*talmidim*), like the other followers of Yahshua, there was only one Rebbe to whom he devoted his whole life and service. The *HaRav HaTzaddik* usually inherits this position from his father. Thus, his “ordination” or *semikhah* testifies to his authority and fitness to lead his flock in the paths of righteousness. The Rebbe was to be a master of prayer, expert in the Torah, and could also be a worker of miracles.

- **Mat 7:28-29** *And it happened, when Yahshua had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at His doctrine. For He was teaching them as having authority, and not as the scribes.*
- |28| *And it came about when Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach finished these divrei torah (words of teaching), the multitudes were filled with fear and wonder at his torah. |29| For his ministry of moreh (teacher) was as one having samchut (authority) and not as their Sofrim (scribes, torah teachers, Rabbonim).***OJB**

The Greek text does not have the definite article before the word *dikaion*,⁴ so we must prove that we are reading a Greek translation of a Hebrew term .The Hebrew term *-tzaddik-* understood within the Jewish rabbinical circles and first century Judaism meant a person who strictly kept the *mitzvot*⁵ of the Torah and their life reflected this Torah-observance by their actions in a community setting.

Holiness according to Scripture is not an ascetic lifestyle or withdrawal from everyday life. It is the full participation in the stream of community life, sharing the joy and sorrows within the community and world. It is using and developing discernment in choosing right and wrong, clean and unclean, pure and impure, and the sacred from the profane. The greater the sense of ethical-moral-spiritual discrimination, the greater holiness of the individual. Holiness is not a removal from life, but rather a removal from idolatry, secularism, and the profane.

mediator between man and YHWH. Because the Tzaddik’s life was expected to be a living expression of the Torah, his behavior was even more important than his doctrine.

⁴ **G1342- dikaio** **Thayer Definition:** 1) righteous, observing divine laws 1a) in a wide sense, upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of YHWH 1a1) of those who seem to themselves to be righteous, who pride themselves to be righteous, who pride themselves in their virtues, whether real or imagined1a2) innocent, faultless, guiltless1a3) used of him whose way of thinking, feeling, and acting is wholly conformed to the will of YHWH, and who therefore needs no rectification in the heart or life1a3a) only Messiah truly 1a4) approved of or acceptable of YHWH 1b) in a narrower sense, rendering to each his due and that in a judicial sense, passing just judgment on others, whether expressed in words or shown by the manner of dealing with them

⁵ Hebrew for the commandments in the Torah. The mitzvot reflect the Divine Mind and Will of the Creator. Yahshua always chose to do the will of His Father in the heavens. We learn to obey His will rather than follow our own desires. These commandments encompass every aspect of human life and concern. They reflect the sanctity of the person, place, or period of time.

- **1John 3:7** *Little children, don't let anyone deceive you. The person who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.*
- **Deut 6:25** *And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before YHWH our Elohim, as he hath commanded us.*
- **Luke 1:6** *And they were both righteous before Elohim, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of YHWH blameless.*
- **Rom 2:13** *For not the hearers of the law are just before Elohim, but the doers of the law shall be justified.*
- **Rev 22:11** *The one acting unjustly, let him still act unjustly; and the filthy, let him still be filthy; and the righteous, let him still do righteousness; and the holy, let him still be holy.*

A Modern Hebrew translation of this verse uses the definite article to describe Yahshua- *Ha* (the) *Tzaddik* (Righteous One). By using the definite article in Hebrew before the word *Tzaddik*, the Hebrew translators were inferring that because Yahshua was *The Tzaddik*, He could be the atonement (*kapparah*/covering) for our sins (Torah breaking according to **1 Yochanan 3:4**) and the Torah breaking of the whole world.

• **1John 2:1** בני הנני כתב אליכם את־הדברים האלה לבלתי תחטאו ואם־יחטא איש ישלנו לפני אבינו מלפני ישוע המשיח הצדיק;

The ***Even-Shoshan Hebrew Biblical Concordance*** lists at least 206 uses of the Hebrew term –*tzaddik*. It is usually used as a noun; however, there are a few cases of the term being used as an adjective. The Scriptures are very clear in its description of a righteous person. Any Jewish person in First Century Yisrael would have been familiar with the term and that it meant to be Torah observant in one's lifestyle. Here is the list of a few of the Scriptures for you to examine and see for yourself.

- **Ezekiel 18:5-9;13:22;3:21, Proverbs 13:5; 12:5;18:10;24:16;10:7-16;11:30;23:24;29:2,Isaiah 26:7, 1 Kings 8:32, Habakkuk 2:4,Psalms 32:11;33:1;58:10-11;64:10**

Through the inspired Scriptures, we get a good description of righteousness and who is righteous:

- Does not commit idolatry, adultery, nor breaks the *mitzvot* of family purity
- Does not economically oppress others and is generous
- Does not charge interest on money loaned to the poor
- Observes the Torah
- Seeks truth in all matters

- Lives according to the Torah
- Does not break the *mitzvot* on purpose
- Lives a life of faith (*emunah*/ faith with action)
- Meditates on the Torah and how to apply it in life (social interaction)
- Rejoices in Elohim
- Relies on Elohim in times of trouble
- Blesses others

The unrighteous person reflects the actions mentioned in **Ezekiel 18:10-13**:

- **Ezek. 18:10-13** *If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife, Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? He shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.*

Yochanan writes the same characteristics of an unrighteous person (a sinner) in his letter.

- **1 Yochanan 3:4** *4 Everyone doing sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.*⁶

According to the prophet Ezekiel, the lifestyle and social interaction of the *tzaddik*, would be the opposite:

- **Ezek. 18:15-17**: *That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Yisrael, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife, Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.*

Ezekiel praises the person who “executes My ordinances (*mishpatai*), and walks in My statutes (*chukotai*).” According to the Scriptures, the characteristics of a *tzaddik* are one who walks in the Torah of YHWH. Therefore, we can easily see how Yahshua fits the Scriptural description of a *tzaddik*. Yochanan meant that

⁶ A simple yet profound truth from the Scriptures. A sinner is one who does not observe the Torah.

Yahshua was Torah-observant (kept the instructions of YHWH) and fit the Scriptural characteristics of a righteous man.

- **1 John 5:2 -3** *By this we know that we love the children of Elohim, when we love Elohim, and keep his commandments (Greek-entolas, Hebrew-mitzvot). For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*
- *12| By this we have da'as that we have ahavah for the yeladim of Hashem, when we have ahavas Hashem and we are shomer over His mitzvot. 13| For this is the ahavas Hashem, that we are shomer over His mitzvot, and His mitzvot are not burdensome. **DEVARIM 30:11/OJB***
- *2 By this we know that we love the children of Elohim, when we love Elohim and guard His commands. 3 For this is the love for Elohim, that we guard His commands, p and His commands are not heavy. **The Scriptures***

Yochanan writes that if we truly love (*ahavah*) Elohim, then we will keep His commandments given to us in the Torah. The **Greek Septuagint** uses the Greek word-*entolas*- six times to refer to the commandments of the Torah. The ancient Hebrew sages who translated the Hebrew into the Greek chose the cognate Greek word that expresses the *mitzvot* found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Each time the word –*entolas* –is used in the **Septuagint** it parallels the Hebrew usage of the word-*mitzvot* (commandments).

- **Exodus 24:12, Deuteronomy 6:25;8:1;11:2-8;30:8;30:10**

We can conclude that Yochanan clearly wrote that if we love Elohim, then we will be Torah-observant. The love that YHWH showered upon us in Yahshua can be lived out in our lives by keeping the Torah. The writers of the Renewed Covenant were all Torah-observant who looked for practical ways to live out the love that was in their hearts through Yahshua HaMashiach. Their foundation was the Torah and Yahshua was the Cornerstone in building their spiritual Temple for YHWH.

- **1 John 2:1-4** *My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you might not sin. Yet if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father-Yahshua HaMoshiach, one who is righteous. It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's. This is how we can be sure that we have come to know him: if we continually keep his commandments. The person*

who says, "I have come to know him," but does not continually keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.⁷ **ISV**

- 13| And by this we have da'as that we have da'as of Him, if over the mitzvot of Him we are shomer 14| The one making the claim, "I have da'as of Him" and not being shomer over His mitzvot is a shakran (liar) and in this one HaEmes is not. **OJB**
- 3And by this we know that we know Him, if we guard His commands. A 4The one who says, "I know Him," and does not guard His commands, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **The Scriptures**
- ¹ My children, I am writing you 'these things so that you won't sin. But if anyone does sin, we have Yeshua the Messiah, the Tzaddik, who pleads our cause with the Father. ² Also, he is the kapparah for our sins—and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world. ³ The way we can be sure we know him is if we are obeying his commands. ⁴ Anyone who says, "I know him," but doesn't obey his commands is a liar the truth is not in him. **JNT**⁸
- **1 John 2:4** The person who says, "I have come to know him," but does not continually keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in that person.
- ⁴ I was very happy when I found some of your children living in truth, just as the Father commanded us. ⁵ And now, dear lady, I am requesting that we love one another—not as if this were a new command I am writing you, for it is the one which we have had from the beginning. ⁶ Moreover, love is this: that we should live according to his commands. This is the command, as you people have heard from the beginning; live by it! **2 Yochanan 4-6**
- **2Jn 1:5-6** And I now request you, lady, not writing as a new commandment, but one which we had from the beginning, that we should love one another. And this is love, that we should walk according to His commandments⁹. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk¹⁰ in it.

⁷ Two ways not to have the truth: (1) to claim not to have sin (1:8), and (2) to say "I know him" but not obey his commands (James 2:14–26). In the *TaNaK* the word "know" can mean "have intimate experience"; here "knowing Yahshua" means having intimate spiritual experience with him, to the degree that one obeys his commands from the heart. Anything less is not true knowledge.

⁸ Two ways not to have the truth: (1) to claim not to have sin (1:8), and (2) to say "I know him" but not obey his commands (as James 2:14–26 teaches). In the *TaNaK* the word "know" can mean "have intimate experience"; here "knowing Yahshua" means having intimate spiritual experience with him, to the degree that one obeys his commands from the heart. Anything less is not true knowledge; there is a difference between giving mental assent to Yahshua's Messiahship and knowing him. Elsewhere Yochanan reports that Yahshua said, "If you love me, you will keep my commands," and "If you keep my commands, you will stay in my love" (Yn 14:15, 15:10; compare Yn 14:21, 15:14). Rav Ed notes: Our love for YHWH is expressed by our actions and desire to keep his Torah as we recite in the Shema.

⁹ **Thayer Definition:** 1) an order, command, charge, precept, injunction 1a) that which is prescribed to one by reason of his office 2) a commandment 2a) a prescribed rule in accordance with which a thing is done 2a1) a precept relating to lineage, of the Mosaic precept concerning the priesthood 2a2) ethically used of the commandments in the Mosaic Law or Jewish tradition. Rav Ed notes: This means to follow strictly a commandment given from one in authority.

¹⁰ **Thayer Definition:** 1) to walk 1a) to make one's way, progress; to make due use of opportunities 1b) Hebrew for, to live 1b1) to regulate one's life 1b2) to conduct one's self 1b3) to pass one's life. Rav Ed notes: We are to walk in the path of righteousness (the Torah). the Greek here indicates it is a well worn path that one walks upon continuously.

זאת היא האהבה אשר נתהלך במצותיו זאת היא המצוה אשר שמעתם מראש להתהלך

1John 2:6 The one who says that he abides¹² in him must live the same way He himself lived.

If we say we are followers or disciples of the Master Yahshua, then we should live as He lived, a Torah – observant or righteous life-style. Yochanan in his letters to the early followers of the Messiah is clear and understandable in his directions that if anyone says that they know the Messiah and loves YHWH, then that person should demonstrate it through their actions and not just their words. In this age we live in, being so far removed from the original writers and culture of the *Brit Chadasha* (Renewed Covenant), it is too easy to just say the right words and mouth the religious clichés we have been taught from pulpits, however, it is far more difficult to live the instructions given to us by our Rebbe HaMashiach Yahshua in the community setting of this modern age. We are instructed to walk continuously in the path that the Master Himself walked, the Way of Life which is YHWH's Torah.

¹¹ HaMitzvah: THE mitzvah or commandment. A mitzvah is a commandment -- one of the taryag mitzvot, 613 commandments, relating to Torah observance and religious practice. Mitzvah observance gives the promise of living an enlightened and meaningful existence. This is because the Torah system differs from all other legal systems, as it is the YHWH-given blueprint for living. The mitzvot reflect the infinite and eternal nature of their Author (The Beginning). It is only through mitzvah observance that man can build a deep, enduring, and meaningful relationship with YHWH. A mitzvah is the very process of forging the bond is contained within the very word mitzvah "commandment," closely related to the word tzavta, meaning "a connection" or "a binding." Mitzvah performance creates a connection between YHWH, the Commander, and man, the one being commanded. A mitzvah is the point of transcendence where man meaningfully connects with his Creator, where opposite realms converge, where the physical becomes spiritual, where finite actions dovetail into infinity, where the ephemeral becomes eternal. This is not legalism in any sense of the word.

¹² **Thayer Definition:** 1) to remain, abide1a) in reference to place1a1) to sojourn, tarry1a2) not to depart1a2a) to continue to be present1a2b) to be held, kept, continually1b) in reference to time1b1) to continue to be, not to perish, to last, endure1b1a) of persons, to survive, live1c) in reference to state or condition1c1) to remain as one, not to become another or different2) to wait for, await one