



ONE TORAH FOR ALL

One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
Exodus 12:49

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Testing the Spirits

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 4:1-6

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of Elohim; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby you know the Spirit of Elohim; every spirit that confesses that Yeshua Mashiach has come in the flesh is of Elohim;

3 and every spirit that does not confess Yeshua is not of Elohim; and this is the spirit of the anti-Mashiach, whereof you have heard that it comes; and now it is in the world already.

4 You are of Elohim, my little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world; therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.

6 We are of Elohim; he that knows Elohim hears us; he who is not of Elohim does not hear. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

We are faced with several immediate difficulties from this passage of Scripture. We are told in this passage to test the spirits, but we are not told exactly what those spirits are. Furthermore, we are not told exactly how to test those spirits. What this shows us is that we are going to have to do some digging to get to what is being said in this passage. Also, we do not want to be guilty of adding to Scripture to come up with some man-contrived means to test the spirits that ultimately will not work and lead us into deception!

First, let us examine just exactly what a spirit is in this context.

A person, when he comes to you, can come in any number of ways or spirits. He could come to you in a spirit of anger. He could come to you in a spirit of jealousy. He could come to you in a spirit of deceit. I think you are getting the picture. On the other side he could also come to you in a spirit of love and compassion. There is any number of spirits that a person can come to another in.

Towards the end of the pagan calendar year, many people get into the spirit of Christmas. Or at other times people refer to get into the spirit of Easter.

I remember many years ago when the USA had their 200th year birthday in 1976. It was a very big deal all over the USA. One of the major themes of that time was "The Spirit of '76".

Strong alcoholic drink is often referred to as "spirits". Please take prayerful note of this passage.

Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit;

It has been demonstrated medically, that from the first drink of alcohol, one begins to become inebriated; one comes under the influence of the alcohol. The more one drinks the greater influence the alcohol has upon a person. Now why, pray tell, would a person want to be under the influence of the spirit of alcohol rather than under the influence of the Spirit of YHWH? One can be under the influence of one or the other, but not both! As Yeshua taught us, one cannot serve two masters. Now please understand me, I am not in any way suggesting that drinking any alcoholic beverage is sin. I am not saying that at all. What I am presenting to you is a question that the majority of those who partake of alcohol do not face head on, let alone answer. What you do is between you and YHWH our Elohim.

One of the things this shows to us is this. One of the ways in which we are to test the spirits that come to us, whether they be in human form or some other form, is to be filled with His Spirit. If one is not filled with His Spirit, then how could one effectively test those spirits? Simply put, he could not!

When attending sports games and events, there is "team spirit" that is often referred to in the entire hullabaloo. The very idea of a pep rally in high school is to boost the team spirit and support for the team. This activity is designed to foster and promote team spirit.

Then we could also list spirits of pride, lust, deceit, greed, rebellion, cowardliness, timidity, idolatry, and many more that could be named and are named in Scripture. We do not feel the need in this article to list every single spirit which is mentioned in Scripture. Our point is to show that there is a vast diversity of spirits that one could come in.

Basically, each person that you meet has a spirit about him. This is not to say that the person is possessed in any way. Please refer above as one can be "in a spirit" without necessarily having an unclean spirit in possession of him. Our task is to test that spirit and determine whether that spirit is from YHWH or somewhere else.

I think that most reading this article can easily see that the spirits of Christmas and Easter are not necessarily from YHWH. But what about some of these other spirits, like a team spirit of a

person's favorite sports team? Some reading this article will find this idea offensive. It would behoove such a person to test that spirit to see if it is from YHWH or not. Could it be that if you find this offensive it is not you, but that spirit which is not from YHWH which is being offended and is acting in this manner because he is about to be found out? And if one will do as Scripture commands and tests these spirits and they are found not to be from YHWH, then why would anyone want them around anyway? One should want them gone and take steps to put them out!

In the above context can a person be a spirit?

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from Elohim; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Please take careful note of exactly what the above sentence states.

- 1) We are not to believe every spirit;
- 2) We are to test every spirit;
- 3) The purpose of the testing is to determine the source of the spirit;
- 4) The reason for testing is because of the multitude of false prophets.

Thus, we can see above that false prophets come in a wrong spirit, a spirit that is against YHWH or anti-Torah. It would follow that in order truly to know who is a false prophet and who is a true prophet, a person would have to know what the Torah says. In order to know if a spirit is not from YHWH, then a person would have to know Torah.

Perhaps we need to define the duties and calling of a prophet at this point. Most would understand that a prophet is one who utters prophetic sayings of what the future holds. And truly this is one of the lesser tasks of a prophet. However, this is not the main task of a prophet. The main task of a prophet is to declare YHWH's words to His people. Thus, Moshe was a prophet; David was a prophet; Yeshua was a prophet; because in each case they clearly fulfilled the roll of a prophet in declaring, "Thus says YHWH Elohim..."

So when a person comes before His people and delivers a message, whether that is in written form or in verbal form, that person is standing in the office of a prophet. When one stands in the office of a prophet, this does not necessarily make him a prophet.

The question then becomes, is that person a prophet speaking truth or lies? What is the spirit that he comes in? How is this determined? First, his words must be measured against Torah and the rest of Scripture. (Please see the study [Israel's Commanded Duty towards False Prophets and Teachers](#) for a more complete exposé of this subject). We are not dealing with things that are merely a matter of interpretation, but rather outright against Torah, in particular, when a person adds to or takes away from His word. This is clearly against Torah.

Another area that should be looked for is when something is being taught as right or wrong, good or bad, that is outside of what Scripture says. This is eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and this will always lead one away from following YHWH's commandments. Whenever one eats from this tree, then one will end up following a man. When one eats of this tree, then such a one is not coming in His Spirit.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 4:2

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it, that you may keep the commandments of YHWH your Elohim which I command you."

This is a very important sign to watch for in testing the spirits. Has YHWH's Torah been added to or taken away from in any manner? If so, then such a spirit is not from YHWH our Elohim. Perhaps the most common way in which this is done is with traditions. Now traditions are not bad in and of themselves. In fact, many traditions are good and helpful for us to do and follow. The thing about traditions is that they cannot ever have the weight of written Torah commandments.

Let us examine one example of how this happens using the commandment of tzitziot. YHWH has commanded us that we are to wear tzitziot on the corners of our garments with which we cover ourselves. What this commandment does not specify is how to tie them. The only specification is that they must have a thread of techelet (blue) in them. So, if a person takes one way, of which there are many, and elevates it over and above all the others and states that the way that he is tying the tzitziot is right and all others are wrong, then he has come in a wrong spirit for he has added to the commandment of YHWH.

One thing that we need to understand is the context of this passage dealing with testing the spirits. This is one of those passages that has been misappropriated and misapplied simply because the time has not been taken to understand the historical context of the letter and especially this passage. When one takes the time to understand the historical background of this passage, then the application of what this passage contains will be solidly grounded and help to keep one on the strait and narrow.

The main thing about this letter from Yochanan is that he was writing it to combat Gnosticism. This was a system of belief that predated the coming of Messiah; and when He came, there were adherents to the Gnostic discipline that came into the early faith, but did not shed all the tenets of Gnosticism. One of the main tenets of Gnosticism is that matter is evil. The way this played out to those who had accepted Yeshua as Mashiach, was that they believed that He did not, and could not, have had a physical body. Or, if He did, then the spirit of Mashiach left the physical body of Yeshua before He died upon the cross.

Understanding this, one can easily see what it is that Yochanan is saying about testing the spirits. Since there were those who believed and taught that Mashiach did not have a physical body, rather only the appearance of a physical body, then in order to test those spirits that were teaching such, would be simply to ask them if Yeshua Mashiach came in the flesh. If the

answer to this question was 'no', then one immediately would know the one being questioned was Gnostic in their beliefs and practice, and were not of the truth. Such a person would have been considered a false prophet.

What this teaches us then, is that while verses one through three give us instructions on how specifically to test the spirit of Gnosticism, it is not a specific test for all spirits. Verses 5-6 then contain the general principle of testing the spirits. What we need to learn from this passage is how to understand the type of spirit one is dealing with, in order to know how to test that particular spirit. This is where His Spirit helps us to know the specifics of how to test any given spirit. Basically, then, for any given error, there is a specific passage or passages of Scripture that one can bring forward with which to test the spirits on any given subject.

The principle contained in verses five and six is that the Spirit of YHWH in one person will hear and listen to the Spirit of YHWH in another person. If one who claims to have His Spirit does not listen to another who does have His Spirit, then it is likely that the one who will not listen does not have the Spirit of YHWH. And if he does, then He is not listening to His Spirit, nor is he allowing His Spirit to have control. Either way it is an indication of a problem that one needs to investigate rather than ignore.

If an unclean spirit enters into the situation and acts or speaks through a person, and if the hearer is not being diligent in testing the spirits, then the unclean spirits will be able to give him thoughts and ideas. All thoughts and ideas that come into our hearts and minds are not from our heavenly Father. And this is true whether a person has walked with YHWH for a short time or all his life. The difference should be that the longer one has walked with YHWH the quicker these spurious thoughts and ideas are rejected. This is where the life of study will come into play. The more we study and apply His written word to our lives, the more we will have to draw upon in testing these thoughts and ideas (spirits) that come into our minds and hearts, whether they are from an outside human source, either from YHWH or an unclean spirit, or from within ourselves.

An unclean spirit will often plant an idea or a thought into a person's mind in the first person. For example, an unclean spirit typically will not say, "You should take that apple, because you are hungry and you don't have enough to pay for it." No; what an unclean spirit will do is phrase the thought something like this, "I should take that apple. I don't have enough money and I am really hungry and YHWH will understand." In the first instance one would most likely recognize that this was not his own thought and reject it out of hand. However, because these unclean spirits are lying spirits, they attempt to trick us into accepting and believing that the thought is our own by making us think that it is our own thought by phrasing the thought in the first person, as if we were thinking it, when in fact it is not our own thought. This way, if the unclean spirit can get us to "own" the thought, the likelihood of our acting upon it is much greater. When we remember this and test the thoughts according to what Scripture teaches us, testing even our "own" thoughts, it will save us much heartache.

One of the ways in which a spirit that is not from YHWH can be detected is by asking who is being elevated. When a person always has to be spouting his own personal qualifications, and those qualifications are not exalting YHWH, then one has a right and duty to question from where that spirit is coming. The Spirit of YHWH exalts Yeshua our Mashiach, not us! Remember that, for it can spare you from a lot of heartache. Also, use it to test what is coming out of your own mouth: Is what I am saying exalting Yeshua or myself? Do not be deceived by faulty reasoning. Be brutally honest with yourself and it will pay the high dividends of eternal life! Please understand that much of what comes forth out of one's mouth is a direct reflection of one's spiritual maturity.

In these days there is a lot of discussion about just exactly who Yeshua was, namely, whether He was YHWH manifested in the flesh or if He was just a man. There are those who believe that He was just the son of Miriam and Yoseph, rather than what Scripture teaches us as His being YHWH manifested in the flesh.

1st Timothy 3:16

And in great truth He was revealed in righteousness; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

Please note the phrase above, "He who was manifested in the flesh". The wording of this phrase strongly suggests to us that since Mashiach was manifested in the flesh, He existed long before in the Spirit. We find this truth to be evident in other places in Scripture.

Ivrim (Hebrews) 1:2-3

2 Has at the end of these days spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the radiance of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Yochanan (John) 14:9

Yeshua says to him, "Have I been so long time with you, and do you not know me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

While it is not spoken outright in Yochanan Aleph, at a deeper level it is suggested that one of the ways in which to test the spirits to see if they are from Elohim is to ask, "Who does one say Mashiach is?" Does he say that He is YHWH manifested in the flesh? If so, then he is from Elohim. If he does not say this, but that He was only a man, then he is not from Elohim.

In our teaching "[Testing of the Set-apart Ones](#)" we examine who and why it is that YHWH tests us and the purpose of that testing. Towards the end of that study we list a summary of the reasons as to the purpose given in Scripture of why we are tested. That list appears below. Please read through that list keeping in mind our current study of testing the spirits. What one

will discover is that the very reasons given in Scripture that YHWH our Elohim tests us also applies to us testing those spirits and people that come to us.

One should be able to see that testing the spirits on a consistent basis will help one to grow and mature in his spirit and in his walk with Mashiach Yeshua.

- To see if we will walk in Torah.
- To have the fear of YHWH that we may not sin
- To know what is in our hearts
- To humble us
- To call upon His Name and to be His people
- To discipline us
- To be perfected in Him
- To instill righteous character traits in us
- To have endurance
- To have eternal life

Now if one is interested in where each one of these purposes is found one can go to the link above and read through that study with testing the spirits in mind. When we test the spirits as YHWH tests us, then our walk in Torah will be strengthened greatly! Examining these Scriptures will also help to teach us that in the same way that YHWH tests us, so we should test those who come to us, which in turn will help us to remain in Mashiach Yeshua.

Let me just say this as a point of clarification. We are not suggesting that we are to test other people in the same way that YHWH tests us. That is not our duty, calling, or task. But rather we are to test what they are telling us through their spoken and written words. In this way we test the spirits who come to us, for just because one declares that he has come in the name of YHWH our Elohim does not make it so.

Finally, let us understand that we can understand many things in Scripture, but if we do not have His Spirit to lead and guide us, then it will be of no blessing to us in the end.

Yochanan [John] 14:26

“But the Helper, the Set-Apart Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

A person can understand all Scripture, but if that person does not shema (hear and obey) the Set-apart Spirit, then it is highly doubtful that the one hearing a false teaching will be able to properly discern truth from error. Having a good solid base of Torah learning will be used by the Set-apart Spirit to speak in His Still Small Voice in order to inform the hearer whether what he is reading or hearing is false.

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 2:27

And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that any one teach you; but as His anointing teaches you; concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and even as it taught you, you abide in Him.

If you are confronted with something that is questionable to you personally, then do not just accept it simply because of who said it. Whoever said it is also human and subject to making mistakes. One must remain true to Mashiach Yeshua and sometimes this will mean that one must put something in the category of "I don't know", at least for a while. This will give time to test the spirits and time to listen to His Voice in the matter at hand.

Of all those who will read this, I firmly believe and am convinced, that many of you have a strong desire and longing to obey YHWH in all things. If you know without any doubt that something is YHWH's will for you, you will do it. The problem seems to be actually getting tuned into the right channel, being able to hear clearly His Voice.

There are false prophets in the world; and according to our passage, there are many. To weed through all the spiritual noise each one of us needs to reduce that noise. This is done by removing from our midst those who seem to be intentionally teaching a mixture of truth and error. If we are not willing to do that, then how can we expect to hear clearly His Voice in all things especially since we are not obeying this commandment?

One of the signs that there is truth and error mixed together is if the one teaching is attempting to control those he is teaching. What should come across is that those being taught are learning how to have the Spirit of YHWH in control of their lives, rather than a man.

It takes practice, but it is possible to hear His Voice clearly. It is when the busyness of life crowds in and pushes us along the way that we fail to step aside for a season and just listen. The importance of this cannot be overstressed. In your times of praying, when was the last time you just listened?

If you are always telling YHWH what you need and want, but never take the time to listen, how can you be sure that you are where you should be in your walk with Him? If you are always the one speaking and not the one listening, then may I be so bold as to ask you who is the servant and who is the Elohim?

If we are to discern properly the spirits around us, then we must be able to hear His Voice. The hearing of His Voice so that one can in turn obey His Voice is tantamount to being able properly to test the spirits as Scripture commands us to do.

ABBA YHWH, continue to teach us Your ways and how to test all spirits; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein!

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