

FAQ VOL II

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: *The New Testament* by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJPS: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*

OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Born Again at Resurrection

Is it, or is it not, true, that many of those who advocate a doctrine of psychopannychy (“soul sleep”), also believe that the redeemed are “born again” at the future resurrection of the dead?

The terminology of being “born again,” has been employed in much of evangelical Protestantism, to speak of spiritual regeneration,¹ and most in in the Messianic community follow suit. Today, when people say that they have been “born again,” their emphasis is how on a particular day or point in their lives, they recognized their sinfulness, they recognized the salvation or redemption available in the good news or gospel, they confessed their sins, and they experienced a spiritual transformation in Yeshua or Jesus. There are two main places within the Apostolic Scriptures (NT), which speak to the concept of being “born again” (John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:3, 23).

Yeshua first used this terminology in His dialogue with Nicodemus:

“Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God’” ...Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:3, 7, NASU).

In Yeshua’s words to Nicodemus, the actual Greek of John 3:3 states how he had to be “born again” (Brown and Comfort),² *gennēthē anōthen*, sometimes rendered as “born anew” (RSV) or “born from above” (NRSV). In order to see the Kingdom of God, Nicodemus would have to go through a significant transformation, transcending normal human disposition: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6, NASU).

The Apostle Peter used this terminology, to detail the great change his audience had gone through, in their experience of faith:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable

¹ J.I. Packer, “Regeneration,” in Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), pp 1000-1001.

² Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, trans., *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1990), 325

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but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:3, 23, NASU).

The two main verbs of note here, are *anagennēsas*, an aorist active singular, “having regenerated” (1 Peter 1:3, Brown and Comfort),³ and *anagegennēmenoi*, a perfect passive plural participle, “having been regenerated” (1 Peter 1:23, Brown and Comfort).⁴ Both of these verbs are notably past tense, describing an action which has already taken place within the lives of the redeemed persons addressed by Peter.

The terminology “born again” can be frequently associated with the New Covenant promise, detailed in the Tanach (OT), of the people of God being given a new heart to obey Him (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-27). Perhaps more significant, is how it has been widely recognized how the terminology of new birth, was widely appropriated from ancient statements made regarding proselyte conversion to Judaism.⁵ The ancient pagan, who recognized Israel’s God, and formally became a proselyte, is noted in Rabbinical literature to be like a newborn baby:

“R. Simeon b. Laqish says...*for lo, a proselyte is classified as a newborn baby*” (b.Yevamot 62a).⁶

That the new birth or spiritual regeneration, is something which occurs when an individual comes to Messiah faith, and is forgiven of sins, has been explicitly denied by various cults. Herbert W. Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God (WWCOG), was expressly known for supporting the concept that the new birth was something to take place at the future resurrection of the body—not something which was to take place at the moment when an individual came to saving faith in Yeshua or Jesus.⁷ In a great deal of past Messianic experience, many of us have encountered former members of Armstrong’s WWCOG enter into Messianic assemblies and groups, and bring their theology of being “born again” at the resurrection with them. This waned somewhat, in the early 2010s, mainly as former WWCOG members started passing away.

By the mid-2010s to the present, however, some within the Hebrew Roots sphere of influence, are seen to have popularized the concept of being “born again” at the resurrection, explicitly tying this to their theology of psychopannychy or “soul sleep.”⁸ It is doubtlessly true

³ Brown and Comfort, 807.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 809.

⁵ Kent Dobson, *NIV First-Century Study Bible: Explore Scripture in Its Jewish and Early Christian Context*, 2011 NIV (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 1343; Barry Rubin, gen. ed., *The Complete Jewish Study Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), pp 1524-1525.

⁶ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. MS Windows XP. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM.

⁷ “The Worldwide Church of God: The New Birth—a New Twist,” in Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), pp 326-328; Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today’s Religions* (San Bernadino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, 1983), 120.

⁸ Lex Meyer, *Immortal: The Truth About Heaven, Hell, and the Resurrection* (Author: 2015), pp 92-98.

that the ultimate focus of the Holy Scriptures, especially for the redeemed, is for them to take on full embodied immortality at the resurrection (Romans 8:19-23), and with it the incumbent New Heavens and New Earth. What specifically needs to be worked through, though, is what the Apostle Paul intended in 1 Corinthians 15:42-50, when writing a largely Greco-Roman Corinthian audience, which was hardly raised in a religious background which emphasized a future resurrection, as he had been in Second Temple Judaism:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*. So also it is written, ‘The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL’ [Genesis 2:7]. The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Corinthians 15:42-50, NASU).

In this passage, it is witnessed how Paul expressed the unique nature of the resurrection body, with unique and distinct abilities, as something which would come from Heaven (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1). This resurrection body is mandatory to possess, in order to enter into the New Creation which is coming.

But is being given an immortal body at the resurrection, the same as being born again? No, it is not. The word Yeshua issued to Nicodemus makes this contextually clear:

“Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’ Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?’” (John 3:7-10, NASU).

Yeshua’s emphasis to Nicodemus on, “You hold the office of teacher in Isra’el, and you don’t know this?” (John 3:10, CJSB), rightly points readers in the direction of the Rabbinic background of “born again” taken from ancient proselyte procedures (b.Yevamot 48b; 62a). For followers of the Messiah, who have been past tense “born again” (1 Peter 1:3, 23)—long before the future, general resurrection of the dead—they are to be regarded as new people, with a new heart, because of the spiritual transformation accessible in Him. **Those who are born of the Spirit are given a new nature as followers of Yeshua**, no different than how an ancient pagan would turn his or her back on polytheism, and be committed to a new way of life rooted in the One God of Israel.

Born Again at Resurrection

Among those who support the concept of being “born again” at the resurrection, Yeshua the Messiah Himself, having been resurrected, is actually claimed to have been the first person actually “born again.”⁹ And why is this the case? Is it not true that Yeshua is “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18, NASU) and “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29, NASU)? If one concludes that “firstborn” (Heb. *bekor*; Grk. *prōtotokos*) implies that Yeshua’s resurrection resulted in Him being “born again,” then they are not sufficiently aware of the Biblical background in the Tanach (OT), of this honorific title as one of **prominence**.

Anyone familiar with the Tanach should immediately note how the title “firstborn” is one of high, preeminent status. It is applied to people regardless of where or when they were “born,” sometimes even if they were actually not the first born in their family line. Firstborn describes Reuben the son of Jacob (Genesis 49:3-4), the people of Israel as God’s “son” (Exodus 4:22), King David (Psalm 89:27), and the Northern Kingdom of Israel/Ephraim (Jeremiah 31:9). The title “firstborn,” possessing royal distinction, is appropriate for the King of Kings and His ultimate authority (Revelation 1:17-18). As it was said of King David, “I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Psalm 89:27, RSV). Similarly, Yeshua being firstborn of creation—and Him actually being the Creator of it all (Colossians 1:16b)—by necessity draws “firstborn over all creation” (NIV), as involving the One who is the preeminent over everything, Yeshua being the “heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:2).

How much of the concept of being “born again” at the resurrection, is just bad exegesis? How much of it is a reflection of a leader or teacher’s spirituality? Speaking entirely for myself, if someone says they are not born again or spiritually regenerated, there is a good possibly—quite sadly and lamentably—that they probably are not.

⁹ Meyer, pp 97-98.