

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

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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)
NJSB: *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)

Matthew 10:28

How can your ministry adhere to an ongoing punishment for the condemned in the Lake of Fire, when Yeshua Himself clearly said that the condemned will be destroyed?

In Matthew 10:28 Yeshua said,

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28, NASU).

The emphasis of His remark was clearly how His followers were to fear God, versus fearing human beings. While human beings might have the power to kill a person, God has the power to do something much worse. What this something actually is, however, is debated among expositors.

The traditional view of eternal punishment is often that the unrighteous condemned will be eternally tormented in a literal Lake of Fire, concurrent with Revelation 14:11, “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (NASU). Many evangelical Protestant interpreters believe that the unrighteous condemned will be punished in a literal Lake of Fire, with literal fire and smoke and brimstone. Many others, however, believe that the images of fire, smoke, and brimstone are only representative, and that they were the worst images that a First Century Jew could conjure up in regard to God’s punishment on sinners. A metaphorical view of eternal punishment, *while adhering to the Lake of Fire as an ongoing punishment*, holds that the images of the Lake of Fire are often representative of the separation which the unrighteous will experience, and should not be pressed too (hyper-)literally. What both a traditional and metaphorical view of eternal punishment have in common, is that they consider the condemned to suffer a judgment which never ends.

Annihilationism is the idea that the process of being eternally condemned, is not something which will be ongoing. Rather, what will be ongoing, will only be the effect of being eternally condemned, and the unrighteous will experience an obliteration from existence. The primary Scripture passage upon annihilationism is based in Matthew 10:28, and annihilationists often make the strong point of indicating that Yeshua said “to fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (RSV). Since it would seem that God will *destroy* the condemned, it is then assumed that this means that rather than punish them indefinitely forever, that He will simply cause the unrighteous to suffer extinction. Hence, this is why proponents of this view are often called *annihilationists*. There are annihilationists present in the Messianic movement, but there are also annihilationists in both evangelical and liberal Protestantism.

Advocates of annihilationism pay particular attention to the English word “destroy,” and insist that God will “destroy” sinners in the Lake of Fire, when in English itself “destroy” has a wider variety of definitions than just “wipe out of total existence.” Indeed, the main English definitions of destroy include: “to tear down, demolish,” “to ruin,” “to do away with,” and “to kill” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*).¹ “Destroy” in an entirely English context need not be what annihilationists insist it means. “Destroy” can very well mean existing in a completely decrepit and demolished or ruined state—as opposed to meaning completely extinct.

¹ *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002), 170.

Not surprisingly, the Greek verb *apollumi*, used in Matthew 10:28, likewise has considerable variance. Some possible definitions of this verb include: “To destroy, ‘kill,’ in battle or prison;” “to suffer loss or lose,” “to perish,” and “to be lost” (TDNT).² A related noun, *apōleia*, likewise means “destruction,” “ruin,” “perishing,” or “loss” (TDNT).³ AMG notes that in many cases, “the verb must not be thought of as indicating extinction, but only change from one state of being to another. Nothing actually becomes extinct, but everything changes.”⁴ So, when one applies the definition of “ruin, destroy” (BDAG)⁵ for *apollumi*, a strict definition of “destroy” as meaning “obliterated from existence” is hardly necessary.

On the contrary, when one takes into consideration the varied usages of *apollumi* throughout the Greek Apostolic Scriptures, including references to ruined wineskins (Matthew 9:17), lost sheep (Matthew 15:24), and rotten food (John 6:27), it is valid for one to interpret Matthew 10:28 as meaning something *other than* complete and total annihilation. Synthesizing all of the varied applications of *apollumi*, Matthew 10:28 can be rendered with “fear Him who is able to **utterly ruin** both soul and body.” With this rendering, the reality of an ongoing, eternal punishment is maintained—while recognizing that the condemned sinner is going to undergo a severe change for the worst.

Many are agreed that the closest Hebrew equivalent for *apollumi* is the verb *avad*, as *avad* is typically rendered with *apollumi* in the Greek Septuagint. *Apollumi* is rendered as *l’avdan* in the UBSHNT in Matthew 10:28, and provides some clues as to what Yeshua may have orally spoken.

In the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), *avad* can mean “**become lost**,” “**go astray**,” “**perish**,” “**be ruined**,” or “**be carried off**” (CHALOT).⁶ In the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), *avad* can mean “**give up** as lost,” “**let perish**,” “**destroy**,” and “**dissipate**” (CHALOT).⁷ These definitions provide the same basic array of options which *apollumi* gives, regarding how one is to consider the “destruction” of the wicked as either a complete annihilation, or utter ruin/devastation. In the Hebrew Scriptures, *avad* is used to represent utter defeat (Joshua 1:7), the overthrow of a nation (Deuteronomy 28:51), as well as the taking of a life (Exodus 10:7; Leviticus 23:30; Deuteronomy 7:10, 20; 2 Kings 10:19). *Avad* can likewise refer to the enslavement or loss of a people (Numbers 21:29), as well as broken objects (Psalm 31:12).

Avad has the same basic array of meanings as does *apollumi*. From this connection and the uses of *avad*, must one likewise insist upon an annihilation of the unrighteous condemned?

While exegetically, both the verbs *apollumi* and *avad* allow for the “destruction” of the wicked to be something other than annihilation (namely being “utterly ruined” for eternity), the question of what will actually occur **is ultimately one of ideology**. If one believes that a loving God could never eternally torment sinners in some way or another, then one’s examination of the Scriptures will reflect this belief. Likewise, if one believes that a loving God would not allow sinners to only be “snuffed out,” and that some kind of an ongoing punishment is the only just and proper punishment, then one’s examination of the Scriptures will reflect this belief. But note that the One who will dispense such punishment is God Himself. The punishment which is meted out upon the unrighteous condemned *can only be* something which an Eternal Being can deliver. Are there things worse than being snuffed out of existence and annihilated? This is a question which will continue to be debated, as each interpreter has to decide which value judgment to make.

The message of the good news, however, is that no one has to experience such punishment. All of us can eternally commune with the Lord, and be spared from the eternal condemnation which awaits those who reject Him.⁸

² A. Oepke, “*apólymi*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 67.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 230.

⁵ Frederick William Danker, ed., et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 115.

⁶ William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, the Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1988), 1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ For a further review, consult the author’s book *Messianics and the Afterlife*.