

Yochanan (John) Chapter 3 contains some of the most foundational yet profoundly misunderstood theological concepts in the New Testament. Seen through a **Messianic Jewish perspective** using the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) style, **this chapter does not outline a break from Judaism, but rather the ultimate fulfillment of the Torah and the Prophets through Yeshua the Messiah.**

Here is a deep exposition of the chapter's core theological movements.

1.1. The Night Encounter: Parush meeting Parush (Verses 1–2)

The chapter opens with **Nakdimon (Nicodemus)**, a *Parush* (Pharisee) and a member of the Sanhedrin, coming to Yeshua by night.

- **The Context of Night:** In rabbinic tradition, studying Torah at night

represents the deepest devotion and a time when spiritual secrets are uncovered. Nakdimon does not come merely out of fear, but to engage in serious theological dialogue with a fellow Rabbi.

- **The Recognition:** Nakdimon addresses **Yeshua** as "**Rabbi**," validating His authority because of the *otot* (miraculous signs) **Yeshua** performs. He acknowledges that God's *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) is clearly with Him.

1.2. 2. Born from Above: The Concept of *Miriam* and *Teshuvah* (Verses 3–8)

Yeshua presents a paradigm shift that confuses Nakdimon: "*Unless a person is born again from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*"

- **The Translation Dilemma:** The Greek word *anōthen* carries a dual meaning: "again" and "from above." **Yeshua** intentionally employs this wordplay. Nakdimon reacts to the literal, physical meaning ("again"), while **Yeshua** intends the spiritual reality ("from above").
- **Water and Spirit (*Ruach*):** **Yeshua** specifies being born of "**water and the Spirit.**" To a 1st-century Jew, this immediately evokes two concepts:
 - **Mikveh (Ritual Immersion):** A *Ger yoshav* (convert to Judaism) was viewed by the Sages as a "newborn child" upon emerging from the waters of the *mikveh*.
 - **Ezekiel's Prophecy:** **Yeshua** is directly referencing **Ezekiel 36:25-27**, where God promises to sprinkle clean water

on Israel, cleanse them from idols, and put a *Ruach Chadashah* (a New Spirit) within them.

- **The Wind and the Ruach:** **Yeshua** utilizes a Hebrew wordplay on ***Ruach***, which means both "wind" and "Spirit." Just as the wind blows where it wills and you hear its sound (*kol*), so it is with everyone born of the *Ruach*.

1.3. The Ultimate Teacher and the Bronze Serpent (Verses 9–15)

When Nakdimon asks how these things are possible, Yeshua gently rebukes him: "*You are a rabbi of Israel, and you don't know this?*" As a master of the Tanakh, Nakdimon should have recognized the prophetic necessity of spiritual regeneration.

Yeshua then grounds His mission in a famous Torah narrative: **The Bronze Serpent** (*Nechushtan*) from **Numbers 21**.

- **The Midrashic Parallel:** In the wilderness, B'nei Yisrael sinned and were bitten by venomous snakes. God commanded Moses to lift a bronze serpent on a pole. Anyone who *looked* at it with faith in God's provision was healed.
- **The Lifted-Up Messiah:** Yeshua states that the **Son of Man must be lifted up** in the same way. The healing was not in the bronze object itself, but in the turning of the heart toward God. Similarly, execution on the stake (*execution stake*) becomes the ultimate focus of faith, transferring the curse of sin from the believer to the Messiah.

1.4. 4. *Ahavat Hashem* and the True Nature of Judgement (Verses 16–21)

Verse 16 is often treated as a standalone theological universe, but in CJB style, it reflects the ultimate expression of **Ahavat Hashem (God's Love)** for His creation: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only and unique Son...*"

- **Abraham and Isaac (*The Akedah*):** The phrasing deeply echoes the *Akedah* (the Binding of Isaac) in **Genesis 22**, where Abraham is asked to offer up his "only son, whom you love." **Yeshua** is the ultimate fulfillment of this picture; where God spared Abraham's son, He did not spare His own.
- **Light vs. Darkness:** The text transitions into a discussion of *Nakdimon's initial setting*—the dark. The Messiah did not

come to condemn the world (*Yom HaDin* or Day of Judgment is reserved for its proper time), but to offer rescue.

Mankind's condemnation is self-inflicted; people naturally prefer the darkness to shield their *ma'asim ra'im* (evil deeds) from the piercing light of Torah and Messiah.

1.5. Yochanan the Immerser's Final Testimony: The Bridegroom (Verses 22–36)

The chapter concludes by returning to **Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist)**, whose disciples are concerned that Yeshua is drawing larger crowds. Yochanan responds with perfect humility rooted in Jewish wedding imagery.

- **The Shoshbin (Best Man):** Yochanan defines his role not as the King, but as the *Shoshbin*—the friend of the bridegroom.

In Jewish tradition, the *shoshbin's* entire joy is fulfilled when he successfully delivers the bride (Israel) to the bridegroom (Messiah).

- **He Must Increase:** Yochanan's statement, "*He must become more important, while I must become less important,*" is the ultimate posture of a true prophet.
- **The Heavenly Authority:** The final verses reinforce that Yeshua speaks the very words of God because God does not ration the *Ruach* to Him. To trust in the Son is to possess *Chayei Olam* (Eternal Life), while to reject Him leaves one under divine displeasure.

Summary Thoughts

Yochanan 3 presents Judaism not as an archaic system to be discarded, but as a rich tapestry of prophecy, ritual cleanings, and

historical types that **converge entirely upon Yeshua**. To be "born from above" is to have the Torah written on human hearts by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, enabling true obedience and intimacy with the Father.

Expond in deeper thoughts The Dialogue of Mashiach with Nakdimon. The Midrash and Immersion (Tevilah טבילה) of Yochanan, and what witness he bears of Mashiach. The first discourse (chronologically) of Yeshua that was recorded in the Brit Chadashah.

explore the linguistic connections between Ezekiel 36 and Yochanan 3,

look into how the Talmud portrays Nakdimon as a historical figure. Both direction

From Messianic Jewish Perspective, Using CJB version and style

1.1. The Historical Identity of Nakdimon: The Gospel and the Talmud Compared

To appreciate the profound weight of the dialogue in Yochanan (John) 3, we must understand the identity of Nakdimon (Nicodemus). Both the *Brit Chadashah* (Renewed Covenant) and Rabbinic tradition record him not as a theological caricature, but as a real, towering historical figure of 1st-century Jerusalem.

Dimension	Yochanan (John) 3 Description	Talmudic Description (Ta'anit 19b, Git. 56a)
Status & Identity	A Parush (Pharisee), Ruler of the Jews, "The Rabbi of Israel"	Given name: Boni. One of three ultra-wealthy leaders supplying Jerusalem under siege
Miraculous Association	Recognizes Yeshua's authority through "otot" (miraculous signs)	Prays in the Temple; God tears open clouds to bring rain, halting the sun for him
Post-Destruction Fate	Depicted as spending wealth on Messiah's burial (Yochanan 19:39)	His daughter is found picking barley from animal dung; he is entirely impoverished

The Talmudic Portrait (*Ta'anit 19b–20a, Gittin 56a, Ketubot 66b–67a*)

The Sages record that his true Hebrew name was **Boni** (בּוֹנִי). He was given the Greek name *Nakdimon* because the sun broke through (*nikdera*) specifically for his sake after he

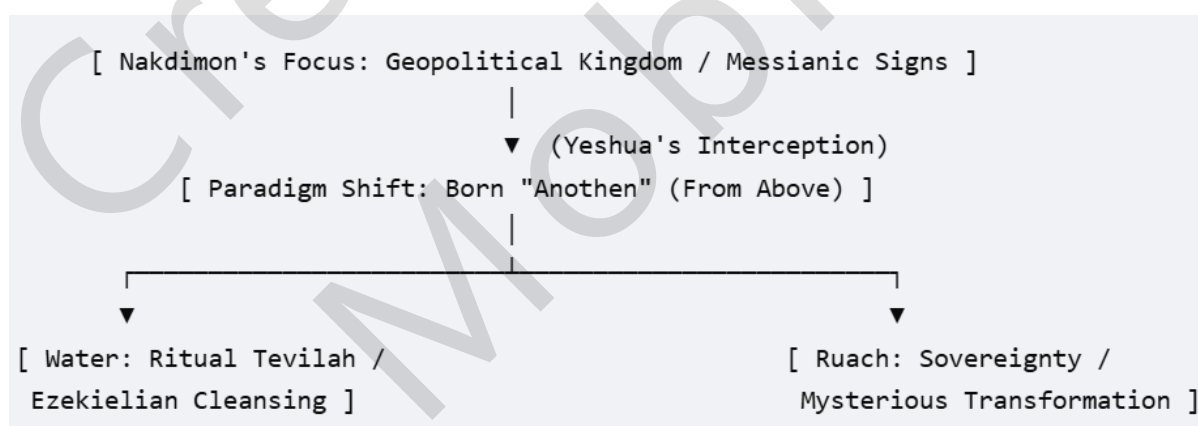
petitioned the Master of the Universe for water to assist pilgrims during a severe drought.

The Talmud paints a tragic picture of his house following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. In ***Ketubot 66b***, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai encounters Nakdimon's daughter picking out undigested kernels of barley from animal dung to survive. When asked where her father's immense wealth went, the narrative suggests it vanished.

From a Messianic perspective, this aligns perfectly with **Yochanan 19:39**, which reveals Nakdimon spent a literal fortune—a hundred pounds of expensive myrrh and aloes—to wrap Yeshua's dead body. Nakdimon liquidized his earthly security to honor the *Mashiach* before the Roman desolation swept away what remained.

1.2. The Dialogue of Mashiach with Nakdimon

Chronologically, this encounter stands as the **first discourse of Yeshua** recorded in the *Brit Chadashah*. As the "Rabbi of Israel," Nakdimon approaches the conversation hoping to map out the geopolitical blueprints of the coming Messianic kingdom. **Yeshua** immediately redirects the entire paradigm from external national restoration to internal cosmic re-creation.



When **Yeshua** declares, "*Unless a person is born again [from above / anothen], he cannot see the Kingdom of God,*" He uses a deliberate

double entendre. Nakdimon, tracking on a linear plain, asks how an old man can re-enter his mother's womb. **Yeshua** answers by invoking the core criteria for entering the Commonwealth of Israel: **Water and the Ruach (Spirit)**.

To a master of the law, this was an implicit rebuke regarding the ***Tevilah (immersion) of converts***. A Gentile coming out of the *mikveh* waters was legally considered a *katan she-nolad*—a newborn child. **Yeshua**'s shocking message to Nakdimon was that even the most pious, observant, aristocratic natural-born son of Abraham must undergo a spiritual *tevilah* to even see the Kingdom.

1.3. 3. The Deep Linguistic Connections: Yechezkiel 36 & Yochanan 3

When Nakdimon asks, "*How can these things happen?*" **Yeshua** responds, "*You are a rabbi*

of Israel, and you don't know this?" **Yeshua**

expects him to know this because it is explicitly promised in the *Tanakh*—specifically in **Yechezkiel (Ezekiel) 36**.

The linguistic, conceptual, and thematic threads link these two passages seamlessly:

Yechezkiel (Ezekiel) 36:25-27 (Hebrew Tanakh)

"I will sprinkle clean WATER on you..."

"A new spirit (RUACH chadashah) I will put..."

"I will put My Spirit (RUACHI) within you..."

Yochanan (John) 3:5 (CJB Style)

"Unless a person is born of WATER..."

"...and the SPIRIT (Ruach)..."

"...he cannot enter the Kingdom of God."

The Prophetic Mechanics of Regeneration

- **The Cleansing Water (וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם \$ טְהוֹרִים \$)**: In Yechezkiel 36:25, the water is not merely an outward sign; it is God's active agent of purging corporate and individual defilement. **Yeshua** references this to show that the *tevilah* of the New Covenant fulfills this definitive cleansing.
- **The Internal Transmutation (Veruach chadashah eten bekirbechem) (וְרוּחַ)**

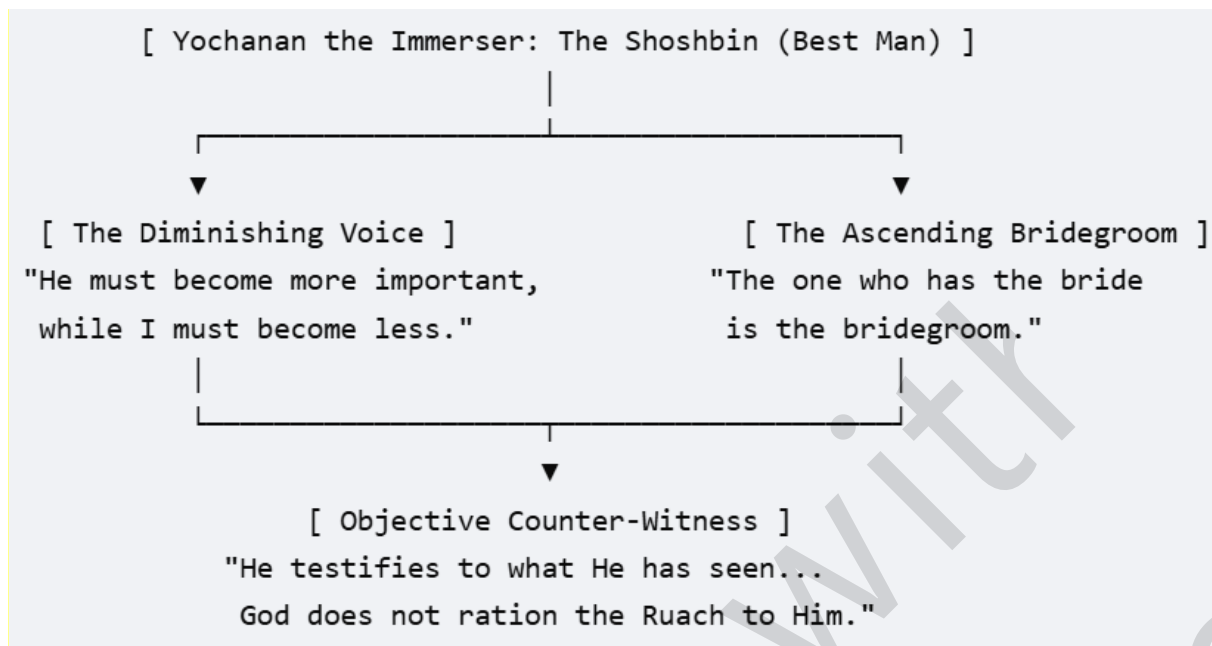
(בְּקִרְבְּכֶם אֶתֶּן חַדְשָׁה): Yechezkiel promises that the structural core of man—the stony heart—will be replaced with a heart of flesh, animated by God's own *Ruach*. Yeshua clarifies that flesh can only reproduce flesh. For a human being to interact with an eternal, spiritual Kingdom, an entirely different engine of life—the ***Ruach HaKodesh***—must be breathed into them.

1.4. The Tevilah of Yochanan and His Witness of the Mashiach

Immediately following the dialogue with Nakdimon, the narrative shifts directly to the waters of 'Einayim near Shalem, where **Yochanan the Immerser** is performing *tevilah*. This is not a literary accident; it bridges Yeshua's theological teaching on "water and spirit" to its current historical reality.

The Midrash of Yochanan's Immersion

Yochanan's immersion was revolutionary because it was a *Tevilah of Teshuvah* (Repentance) directed at *native Jews*. Historically, *tevilah* was for ritual purity (*taharah*) or Gentile conversion. Yochanan was declaring midrashically that Israel had spiritually become like the nations—defiled by unfaithfulness—and needed to pass through the waters again, just as their ancestors passed through the Jordan with Joshua, to prepare for the *Malchut HaShamayim* (Kingdom of Heaven).



The Testimony of the Shoshbin (Best Man)

When Yochanan's disciples try to spark a holy rivalry by noting that everyone is now flocking to **Yeshua**, Yochanan grounds his identity in Judean marital tradition. He declares himself the ***Shoshbin***.

In ancient Jewish weddings, the *shoshbin* was responsible for guarding the bridal chamber, ensuring the bride's purity, and introducing her to the groom. The *shoshbin* did not desire the bride; his supreme joy was realized simply

by hearing the voice of the **Chatan** (**Bridegroom**).

Yochanan's witness is clear and ultimate:

- **The Source of Authority:** He states that **Yeshua** comes "*from above*" (*anothen*, the very word that confused Nakdimon) and is therefore above all.
- **The Unlimited Ruach:** While prophets of old received measures of the Spirit for specific times, Yochanan testifies that God **does not ration the Ruach** to **Yeshua**. The Messiah possesses the full, uninterrupted residency of the **Divine Spirit**, enabling Him to execute the ultimate immersion: baptizing believers not merely in physical water, but in the fire and life of the ***Ruach HaKodesh***.

1.1. 1. The Sectarian Debates: Hillel vs. Shammai on *Olam HaBa* (The World to Come)

To understand why Nakdimon was startled by **Yeshua**'s parameters for entering the Kingdom, we must look at the fierce 1st-century debates between **Beit Shammai** (the House of Shammai) and **Beit Hillel** (the House of Hillel).

In the **late Second Temple period**, entry into *Olam HaBa* (the World to Come) was heavily debated. The foundational Pharisaic consensus, later recorded in ***Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1***, declared: "*All Israel has a portion in the World to Come.*" However, the two schools split radically on the *protocol* of maintaining that portion:

- **Beit Shammai (The Strict Legalists):**
Maintained a highly exclusive, merit-

based boundary line. They argued that only those whose **righteous deeds** (*mitzvot*) heavily outweighed their **transgressions** (*aveirot*) would pass through the final judgment. For **Shammai**, national identity was a baseline, but strict, flawless adherence to oral and written halakha determined ultimate entry.

- **Beit Hillel (The Lenient Inclusivists):**
Tended to emphasize God's attribute of mercy (*Hesed*). They believed that if a person's merits and sins were evenly balanced, God would tip the scale toward mercy, allowing the vast majority of Israel to enter based on the ancestral covenant.

Yeshua's Radical Interception

When Nakdimon approaches **Yeshua**, he is trying to see where this new Galilean Rabbi fits into this theological grid. Yeshua

completely up ends both schools by bypassing their scale-balancing metrics altogether.

By declaring that one must be **born *anotthen* (from above)**, **Yeshua** states that **natural lineage and legalistic scaling are entirely insufficient**. **Yeshua** doesn't side with Hillel's lenient scaling or Shammai's strict scaling; He introduces a third paradigm: **supernatural regeneration**. For **Yeshua**, entering the Kingdom is not about adjusting the weights on the scale of human effort—it requires a complete re-creation of the individual by the *Ruach HaKodesh*.

1.2. The Akedah Imagery in Yochanan 3:16 and Divine Justice

In the West, **Yochanan 3:16** ("*For God so loved the world...*") is often detached from its Hebrew context. However, through a Messianic lens, the phrase "*He gave His only*

and unique Son" profoundly echoes the **Akedah (the Binding of Isaac) in Genesis 22.**

[Genesis 22: The Akedah (Shadow)] → "Take your son, your only son, whom you love..." → Provided Ram Spares Isaac
|
(Ultimate Fulfillment)
▼
[Yochanan 3:16: The Ultimate Akedah] → God gives His only, unique Son (Yeshua) → Messiah Dies to Spare the World

When God commands Abraham, *"Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Yitz'chak... and offer him there as a burnt offering"*

(Genesis 22:2), the stage is set for understanding divine justice. In rabbinic theology, the *Akedah* is the ultimate merit-producing event in Israel's history. The Sages taught that God constantly remembers the binding of Isaac and the ashes of the ram to extend mercy and forgiveness to Israel during *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

Transforming Our Conception of Divine Justice

When Yochanan 3:16 borrows this specific vocabulary, it radically alters our understanding of divine justice:

- **Cosmic Extension of Mercy:** In Genesis, Abraham's devotion is tested, and Isaac is spared by a substitutionary ram. In Yochanan 3, God is the Father who *actually carries out* the ultimate offering. The object of this love is extended past the physical borders of Israel to include the entire *olam* (world).
- **The Harmonization of Justice and Hesed:** Western theology often pits God's wrath against His love, framing justice as a cold legal mechanism. From a Messianic perspective, the *Akedah* framework demonstrates that divine justice is governed by **covenantal devotion**. God does not lower His standard of absolute holiness; instead, out of immense *Ahavat*

Hashem (God's love), He provides the ultimate, unrepeatable substitutionary sacrifice Himself. Justice is satisfied not by a detached legal transaction, but by the ultimate, agonizing self-giving of the Father and the Son.

1.3. Diverging Streams: Christian vs. Messianic Jewish Perspectives on Salvation

While both Orthodox Christians and Messianic Jews share a core faith in Yeshua’s death, resurrection, and deity, they interpret the *manner and context* of this "protocol of salvation" through different lenses.

Feature	Traditional Western Christian View	Messianic Jewish View
Paradigm of Identity	Discontinuity / Conversion out of old identity	Continuity / True alignment within Israel
Concept of Salvation	Escape from Hell / Transfer to a new religion	Restoration of Covenant / Heart Circumcision
Role of the Torah	Replaced by Grace / Abrogated for believers	Validated by the Ruach / Written on the heart

The Traditional Western Christian View

In standard Western Christian thought, salvation in John 3 is frequently viewed through a lens of **discontinuity**.

- **The Break from Judaism:** Being "born again" is often interpreted as a clean break from the "old, dead religion of legalistic Judaism." Nakdimon is viewed as a representative of an obsolete system that needs to be discarded.
- **The Legal Transaction:** **Salvation** is largely understood as an individualized, forensic legal transaction: a person confesses faith, their sins are judicially transferred to Christ, they are saved from hell, and they cross over into a brand-new religious category called "Christianity." The Torah is often viewed as an past administrative era of law that has been completely replaced by the era of grace.

The Messianic Jewish View

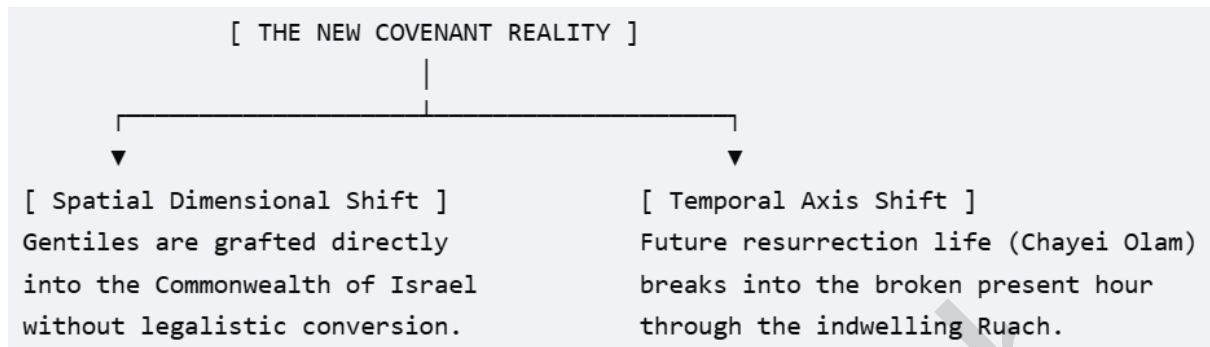
Messianic Judaism views this protocol through the lens of **covenantal continuity and fulfillment**.

- **The Internalization of Torah:** To a Messianic Jew, being "born from above" is the long-awaited fulfillment of the **New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36**. It is not a conversion *away* from Judaism, but the divine mechanism that allows a Jewish person to truly live out their Jewish calling. The *Ruach HaKodesh* does not abolish the Torah; rather, **He circumcises the heart** so that the **internal essence of the Torah** can be naturally lived **out in love and faith**.
- **Corporate Integration: Salvation** is not just an individual ticket to heaven, but an invitation into **the restored**

Commonwealth of Israel. When a Gentile is **born from above**, they are **grafted into the olive tree of Israel (Romans 11)**, becoming **fellow citizens with God's chosen people**.

- **The Ultimate Taharah (Purity):** Messianic Jews see the water and Spirit in Yochanan 3 as the ultimate, **cosmic *tevilah***. Just as ritual immersion restores a defiled person to a state of ritual fitness so they can enter the physical Temple, being born from above cleanses a person from spiritual defilement, turning *them* into a living temple fit for the indwelling of God's *Shechinah*.

Summary: The Synthesis of Yochanan 3, Acts, and Chayei Olam

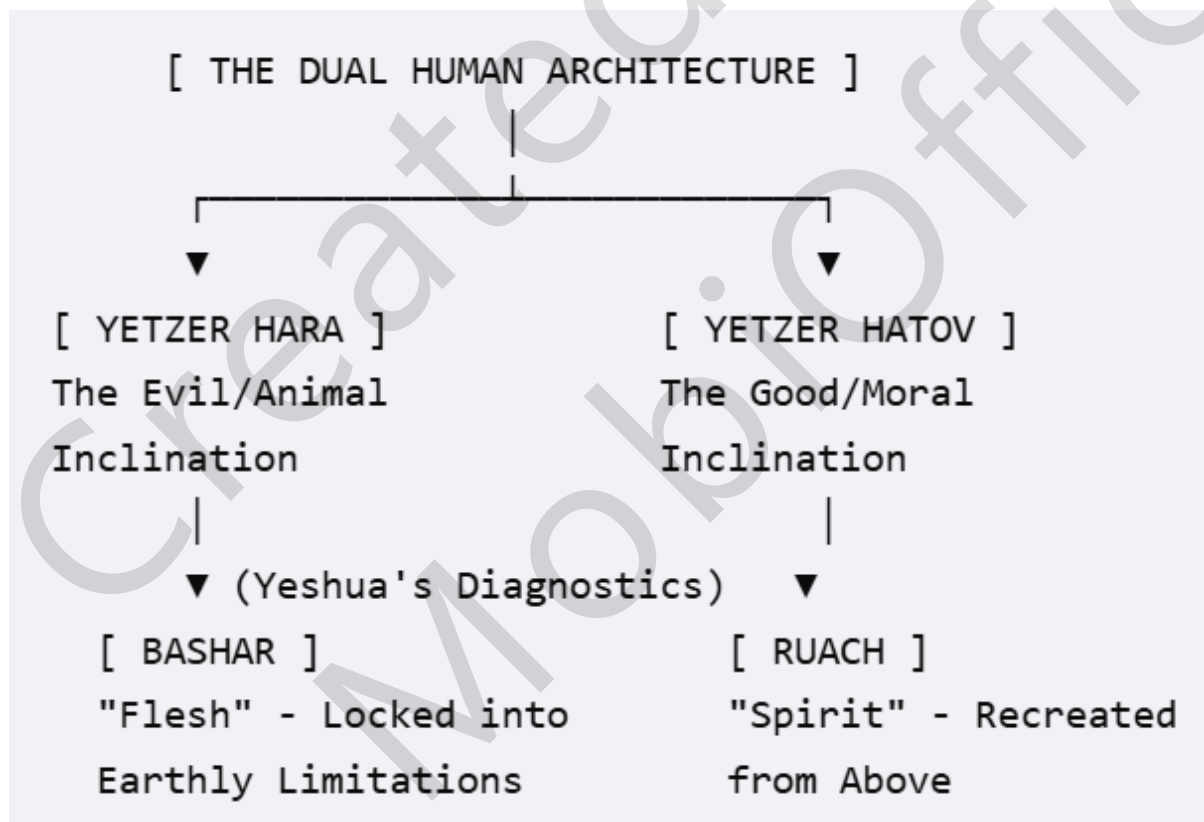


When we bring these pieces together, we see the beautiful cohesion of the **New Covenant**.

What **Yeshua** explained to Nakdimon in secret under the cover of night became the public, earth-shattering reality that expanded the boundaries of God's covenant people in *Ma'asei HaShlichim*. The "born from above" protocol proved that God's plan was never to make the world Jewish through legal conversion, nor to abandon the Jewish roots of faith to create a new religion. His plan was to unleash *Chayei Olam* into the world, transforming both Jew and Gentile into a unified, living temple by the power of His *Ruach*.

1.1. 1. The Two Inclinations (*Yetzarim*) vs. Flesh and Spirit

When **Yeshua** tells Nakdimon, *"What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (Yochanan 3:6), he taps directly into the foundational Jewish anthropological understanding of human nature: the **dual inclinations** built into every human soul.



The Rabbinic Anatomy of the Soul

In classical Second Temple and Rabbinic thought, a person is driven by two internal forces:

- **Yetzer HaRa** (יֵצֶר הָרָע): The evil or animal inclination. It is not viewed as pure cosmic malevolence, but as the raw, untamed drives of the body (survival, ego, reproductive desire). Left unchecked by Torah, it metastasizes into systemic sin and rebellion against God.
- **Yetzer HaTov** (יֵצֶר הַטוֹב): The good or moral inclination. This is the conscience, the part of man that yearns for justice, compassion, and alignment with God's commandments.

The standard Pharisaic cure for the *Yetzer HaRa* was deep immersion in the study of Torah. As the famous rabbinic maxim goes: "*I created the Evil Inclination, but I created the*

Torah as its antidote" (Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 30b).

Yeshua's Radical Diagnostics

Yeshua takes this concept and deepens the diagnosis. He shifts the vocabulary to **Bashar** (בָּשָׂר)—flesh—and **Ruach** (רוּחַ)—spirit.

Yeshua teaches that the problem is far more critical than merely an unbalanced scale between two internal inclinations that can be managed by human grit or intellectual study of the law. *Bashar* (flesh) is locked into its own dimension. It can only generate more *bashar*. A person cannot use the resources of the flesh to conquer the flesh.

Therefore, the **Yetzer HaTov** (good inclination) is not powerful enough on its own to inherit the *Malchut HaShamayim* (Kingdom of Heaven). The soul requires a total supernatural infusion. Being "born from

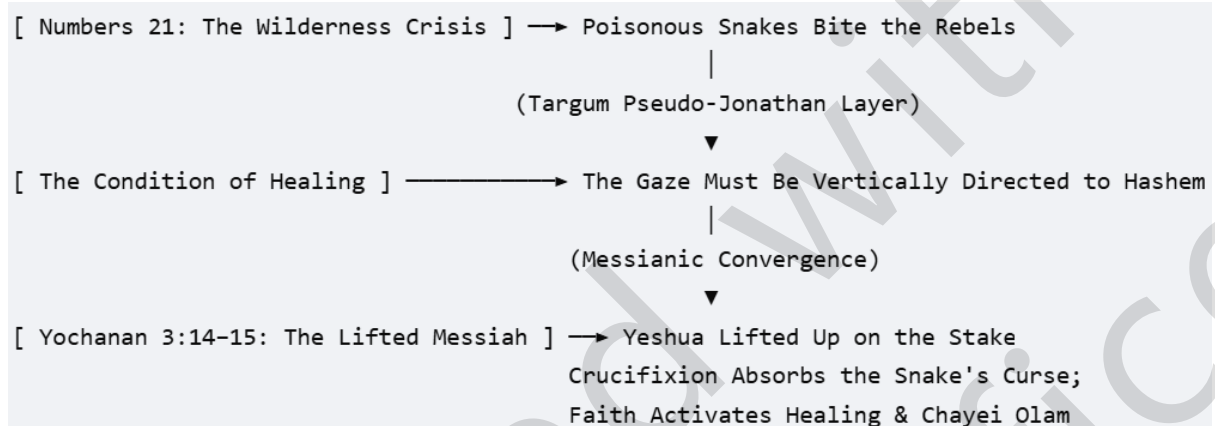
above" means the human spirit is structurally coupled with the **Ruach HaKodesh** (the Holy Spirit). The New Covenant solution is not just an *antidote* to contain the *Yetzer HaRa*; it is the introduction of a completely new life engine that puts the old nature to death and writes the Torah permanently onto a resurrected heart.

1.2. 2. The Midrashic Secrets of the Bronze Serpent (*Nechushtan*)

To explain His ultimate mission to Nakdimon, **Yeshua** triggers a deep text-memory from **Numbers 21:4–9**, comparing Himself to the **Bronze Serpent** raised by Moshe in the wilderness.

To modern readers, a serpent on a pole sounds like a bizarre, almost occult symbol of salvation. However, early Jewish translations and midrashim—specifically **Targum Pseudo-**

Jonathan (an ancient Aramaic translation and expansion of the Torah)—reveal the deep layers of Semitic thought **Yeshua** was invoking.



The Insights of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

When we open the Aramaic text of *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Numbers 21:9*, it uncovers a crucial theological detail about how 1st-century Jews processed this event:

*"And Moshe made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a high place; and it was that if a serpent had bitten any man, and he looked toward the bronze serpent, **and directed his***

heart to the Name of the Word of the Lord (Memra de-Yeya), he lived."

The **Aramaic translation** preserves a profound truth: the physical piece of brass held no magical virtue. Healing was explicitly tethered to a relational transaction. The stricken Israelite had to look upward, casting their gaze past the serpent, and direct their ultimate internal focus to the **Memra** (**מֵימְרָא**)—the living Word of Yahweh.

This is matched by the wisdom of the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* 16:7, which states: *"For he that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by Thee, that art the Saviour of all."*

The Convergence in Yochanan 3

When **Yeshua** tells Nakdimon that the Son of Man must be lifted up just like that serpent, the pieces align perfectly:

- **The Paradox of the Curse:** The snake was the very source of death in the wilderness. By looking at a *representation* of the curse cast in bronze (a metal symbolic of judgment), the people were saved. Likewise, **Yeshua**, who knew no sin, became a curse for us on the execution stake (*Galatians 3:13*). He took the ultimate shape of our **Yetzer HaRa** and our rebellion, nailed it to the wood, and exhausted its lethal potency.
- **Looking to the Living Memra:** **Yeshua** is the **Memra incarnate**—the Word made flesh (*Yochanan 1:14*). When a person looks upon the crucified and resurrected Messiah with a heart directed toward the Father, they are doing exactly what Targum Pseudo-Jonathan described. They are looking past the horror of the execution stake straight into the heart of

God's provided mercy, instantly shifting from the domain of death into the reality of *Chayei Olam*.

Moving Forward in Our Study

We have journeyed from the dark streets of Jerusalem with Nakdimon to the wilderness of Moshe and the heights of New Covenant theology.