

EPISTLE OF JAMES

Approximate date: 45-50 C.E.

Time period: prior to, or just after, the Jerusalem Council

Author: James the Just, brother of Yeshua

Location of author: Jerusalem or Judea

Target audience and their location: Jewish Believers in the immediate Diaspora:
Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch

People:

James the Just, Jewish Believers in Yeshua (primary), non-Jewish Believers in Yeshua (secondary)

People mentioned:

Yeshua the Messiah, Abraham, Isaac, Rahab

Places:

the synagogue or assembly

Key Themes:

perseverance for one's faith in suffering / not showing favoritism in the assembly / the proper place of faith and works / the proper way to speak (or use of the tongue) / godly versus ungodly wisdom / humble submission to God

Key Scriptures: James 2:18; 4:7-10 / **Greeting** (1:1); **Trials and how to meet them** (1:2-4); **Wisdom and how to obtain it** (1:5-8); **Wealth and how to regard it** (1:9-11); **Temptation and trial distinguished** (1:12-15); **Good gifts** (1:16-18); **Hearing and doing** (1:19-27); **Against partiality** (2:1-13); **Against a barren faith** (2:14-26); **Qualities required in teachers** (3:1-18); **Dangers** (4:1-17); **Warnings to wealthy oppressors** (5:1-6); **Encouragements to the oppressed** (5:7-11); **Against oaths** (5:12); **The power of prayer** (5:13-18); **Help for the backslider** (5:19-20)¹

Theological Summary: The Epistle of James is widely considered by theologians to have the most "Jewish character" of all of the other writings of the Apostolic Scriptures,² perhaps save the Gospel of Matthew. This is largely due to its emphasis on works and the moral conduct of

¹ Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 757-759.

² Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 727-718; W.W. Wessel, "James, Epistle of," in *ISBE*, 2:960.

the individual, deeply rooted within the Torah or Law of Moses. Some have suggested that aside from the few references to Yeshua the Messiah, that the Epistle of James would more appropriately fit within the canon of the Tanach (Old Testament) than the Apostolic Writings (New Testament). James' letter certainly does address many of the practical aspects of faith, with his communication style being most assertive and authoritative. There are many parallels between the Epistle of James and the teaching style of the Messiah seen in His Sermon on the Mount, as well as the Wisdom literature of both the Tanach and the Apocrypha. Some of James' letter even parallels that of ancient Greco-Roman moralists,³ which can be taken as meaning that a rather broad audience was intended to receive this letter. Viewpoints of James as a letter, wisdom literature, a midrash, a sermon, a homily,⁴ and even some kind of diatribe—have all been made by various examiners.⁵ The summary offered by Bauckham is quite good for readers of James to consider:

“He draws creatively on the wisdom of Jesus, as also on the Jewish wisdom tradition, using the teaching of Jesus as the focal point and principle that guides his appropriation of the wisdom tradition in general. This is the way in which we should understand the specifically Christian character of James. There is nothing un-Jewish in his teaching, any more than there is in that of Jesus, but the particular shape and character, emphases and concerns of James's wisdom have been determined by the corpus of the sayings of Jesus” (*ECB*).⁶

While some critics of the Epistle of James claim that Yeshua the Messiah is only mentioned twice (1:1; 2:1), the fact remains that “there are more parallels in this epistle than in any other New Testament book to the teaching of our Lord in the gospels” (Guthrie).⁷ The notable connections that are seen between James and Yeshua's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount are:

- 1:2: Joy in the midst of trials (cf. Matthew 5:10-12).
- 1:4: Exhortation to perfection (cf. Matthew 5:48).
- 1:5: Asking for good gifts (cf. Matthew 7:7ff).
- 1:20: Against anger (cf. Matthew 5:22).
- 1:22: Hearers and doers of the Word (cf. Matthew 7:24ff).
- 2:10: The whole law to be kept (cf. Matthew 5:19).
- 2:13: Blessings of mercifulness (cf. Matthew 5:7).
- 3:18: Blessings of peacemakers (cf. Matthew 5:9).
- 4:4: Friendship of the world as enmity against God (cf. Matthew 6:24).
- 4:10: Blessing of the humble (cf. Matthew 5:5).
- 4:11-12: Against judging others (cf. Matthew 7:1-5).
- 5:2ff: Moth and rust spoiling riches (cf. Matthew 6:19).
- 5:12: Against oaths (cf. Matthew 5:33-37).⁸

³ Sophie Laws, “James, Epistle of,” in *ABD*, 3:623.

⁴ Carson and Moo, 630.

⁵ R.B. Wall, “James, Letter of,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, pp 551-554; Duane F. Watson, “James, Letter of,” in *EDB*, 671.

⁶ Richard Bauckham, “James,” in *ECB*, 1484.

⁷ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 729.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid*, pp 729-730.

Other important parallels with the teachings of Yeshua include:

- 1:6: Exercise of faith without doubting (cf. Matthew 21:21).
- 2:8: Love to one's neighbor as a great commandment (cf. Matthew 22:39).
- 3:1: On the desire to be called teacher (cf. Matthew 23:8-12).
- 3:2ff: On the dangers of hasty speech (cf. Matthew 12:36-37).
- 5:9: The Divine Judge at the doors (cf. Matthew 24:33).⁹

The author of James claims only to be a servant of Yeshua (1:1), even though Roman Catholic tradition espouses that James the son of Alphaeus was the author.¹⁰ Traditionally throughout history, though, the Epistle of James is believed to have been written by the half-brother of the Messiah Yeshua. Yet even within a traditional framework that somehow acknowledges James the half-brother of the Lord as the originator of this material, there are divergent viewpoints regarding how the Epistle of James came to be. The various options before the examiner include this letter being (1) an authentic work of James the half-brother of Yeshua (possibly with secretarial assistance), (2) a pseudepigraphal work written to honor James, or (3) a collection of genuine Jamean sayings edited together in an epistolary form to preserve James' teachings.¹¹ While it might be preferable for many to read the Epistle of James as being composed entirely by James himself, the proposition that the Epistle of James was meant to preserve James' sayings and/or teachings cannot be haphazardly disregarded. Wall summarizes this point of view with,

"James the Just is responsible for most of the book's raw material, delivered first as homilies and preserved by the Jewish Christian Diaspora (Jas 1:1; cf. Act 8:4; 11:19). This may help explain the letter's 'primitive' theological content....These precious memories of James were then edited and written by another, probably (although not necessarily) after James's death, under the pressures of the educational mission of an expanding church. The editor who actually wrote James may have done so without a religious agenda of his own: his intent was to compile and preserve the most enduring 'sayings of James' for future readerships."¹²

Viewing the Epistle of James as an editor's compilation of genuine Jamean sayings near or after his death, is certainly more inviting than thinking that James was composed in the early Second Century C.E. as a pseudegraph—dating almost three-quarters of a century from the 40s-early 60s C.E.

There is strong evidence in favor of James, the half-brother of the Messiah, being the author of this text. The thematic overlap between the content of James and Yeshua's teachings in the Gospels, and the personality of James witnessed in Acts chs. 15 and 21,¹³ help support Jamean authorship. This would likely place James' composition somewhere in the 40s C.E., although it could be dated as late as 62 C.E., when James the Just is believed to have died.

⁹ Ibid., 730.

¹⁰ Watson, "James, Letter of," in *EDB*, 670.

¹¹ Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 546.

¹² Ibid., 547; against: Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 746.

¹³ Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, pp 546-547.

Liberal scholars who deny genuine Jamean authorship place its composition to the first half of the Second Century.¹⁴ A few liberals, though, have begun to recognize that James the half-brother of Yeshua could have been the author, even if he employed a professional secretary in the letter's transcription.¹⁵

There are conservative interpreters who are notably divided between James the half-brother of the Lord composing a letter for First Century Messiah followers, and those who think that a colleague of James wanted to preserve his teachings or sayings in a written form, perhaps as a kind of homily.¹⁶ The Fourth Century Church historian Eusebius probably regarded James the half-brother of Yeshua as the authentic author of this epistle, even though its inclusion within the Biblical canon was disputed by some (cf. *Ecclesiastical History* 3.25.3; 6.14.1).

The authorship of the Epistle of James is agreed by a majority of conservative theologians to in some way be James the Just, the half-brother of Yeshua.¹⁷ (This is not the Apostle James, the brother of the Apostle John and one of the two sons of Zebedee, who was killed by Herod in Acts 12:2.) As early as Acts 12:17 where Peter commanded, "Report these things to James and the brethren," James the half-brother of the Lord was an instrumental player in the assembly of Jerusalem. If genuine Jamean authorship is assumed, it is quite possible that the Epistle of James was written between 45-50 C.E., concurrent with James' position as the leader of the Jerusalem assembly. It is also possible it was written in the early 40s, as no direct reference to the events or controversies surrounding the Jerusalem Council are mentioned. The Apostle Paul attests that during his relief mission to Jerusalem, he sought out no one but Peter and James (Galatians 1:18-19), and is notably given the right hand of fellowship by James, as "James and Cephas and John...were acknowledged pillars" (Galatians 2:9, NRSV), as these three individuals, beginning with the half-brother of the Lord, were the main leaders of the First Century *ekklēsia*.

There are some important things witnessed about James the Just in the writings of the early Church. Following the ascension of Yeshua into Heaven, Eusebius describes that James was chosen to be one of the deacons for the public service of the Jerusalem assembly: "Then also James, called the brother of our Lord, because he is also called the son of Joseph...This James, therefore, whom the ancients, on account of the excellence of his virtue, surnamed the Just, was the first that received the episcopate of the church at Jerusalem" (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.2).¹⁸ Eusebius also details that "Clement, in the sixth book of his Institutions, represented it thus: 'Peter, and James, and John after the ascension of our Savior, though they had been preferred by our Lord, did not contend for the honor, but chose James the Just as bishop of Jerusalem'" (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.3).¹⁹ These historical attestations tell us of the position that James held in the Jerusalem assembly, and the regard that others had for him as

¹⁴ A.E. Barnett, "James, Letter of," in *IDB*, 2:795.

¹⁵ Watson, "James, Letter of," in *EDB*, 670; Bauckham, in *ECB*, 1483.

¹⁶ Wessel, "James, Epistle of," in *ISBE*, 2:962.

¹⁷ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 726-727.

¹⁸ *Ecclesiastical History*, 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

the half-brother of Yeshua. We have to infer from this that James' Epistle must likewise be held in high regard.

Eusebius further tells us, "James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed Just by all, from the days of our Lord until now, received the government of the church with the apostles. This apostle was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woolen, but linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camel's, in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God" (*Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.4-5).²⁰ This is the kind of devotion that James had regarding his faith in God and his Torah adherence.

James the Just was likely martyred in 62 C.E.,²¹ as the First Century historian Josephus records that Ananus, the high priest, had James stoned to death: "Ananus was of this disposition [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 20.200).²² What is interesting, of course, is that even though James was brought forward on the charge of breaking the Torah, the historical record attests that James was quite faithful to Moses' Teaching, and was very much permitted to enter into the Temple complex.

There is no agreement as to who the original audience of James' Epistle was intended to be.²³ Jewish Believers in Yeshua are undeniably involved, but are non-Jewish Greek and Roman Believers to be completely discluded? The greeting of James 1:2b says, "To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings." The three approaches to this include: an audience (1) of Jewish Believers in the Diaspora,²⁴ (2) the Christian Church as a "new Israel" superseding the ethnic Jewish people,²⁵ or (3) God's restored people in the eschaton which is to include all Twelve Tribes of Israel recognizable (Isaiah 11:11-16; Zechariah 10:6-12). Dispensational interpreters have at times looked at James' Epistle as only being applicable for Jews, and not non-Jewish Believers (especially given James' high value for the Torah or Law of Moses).

²⁰ Ibid., 59.

²¹ Laws, "James, Epistle of," in *ABD*, 3:622.

²² Flavius Josephus: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 538.

²³ Cf. Wessel, "James, Epistle of," in *ISBE*, 2:964-965; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 747-748; Laws, "James, Epistle of," in *ABD*, 3:623, 624.

²⁴ Carson and Moo, 628.

²⁵ Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, pp 548-549; Watson, "James, Letter of," in *EDB*, 670.

Who is the intended audience of the Epistle of James? It need not be overlooked how during the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, James is the one who delivers the final ruling concerning the non-Jews coming to faith in the Messiah of Israel and what is to be done. He makes a reference to the Prophets from Amos 9:11-12 (cf. Acts 15:16-18), and associates the salvation of the nations as being a key part of the restoration of all Israel. Even with significant parallels to be detected between the Epistle of James and much ancient Jewish literature from the Second Temple period, the parallels that can be evidenced from Greco-Roman classicism cannot be easily dismissed. A primary Jewish audience does not at all exclude non-Jews from among James' audience. The third option of "the twelve tribes" representing a Kingdom of Israel in the process of being restored, which would make James' audience broader than just First Century Jewish Believers, actually seems to be the best choice.²⁶

The circumstances of James' audience can be easily understood. Rich people are denounced (4:13-17; 5:1-6) as being sinners against the poor (2:1-12; 5:1-11). There is a setting of landowners and farm laborers in view, with the workers not adequately paid (5:4). While many of these Believers were Jewish, the situation is general enough to the human condition that it probably involved a greater mix of people to some degree (cf. 4:3-5).²⁷ The tenor of James also seems to suggest that there may have been some kind of agricultural famine, or at least a non-productive season, occurring (5:17-18), and that "the economic pressures of field hands and harvesters became more intense and their economic well-being more precarious as landowners tried to maximize their profits (Jas 4:4-6). The result is that some lacked even the basic requirements of a humane existence (see Jas 2:15-16)" (Wall).²⁸ It has been proposed at times that the wealthy who are criticized were aristocratic Sadducees,²⁹ but this is hard to tell. Furthermore, given James' reference to not only suffering (5:10), but to trial (1:12) and the crown of life (*ton stephanon tēs zōēs*, τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς), it can be thought that James' primary audience was composed of Jewish Believers who had fled the Land of Israel following the martyrdom of Stephen.³⁰ Because Stephen was a Hellenistic, Greek-speaking Jew (Acts 6:5-9), James' primary audience may have been Hellenistic Jews living in the Diaspora, with a substantial part of them living in "Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch" (Acts 11:19).

Conservative examiners of James have little problem dating the epistle before the destruction of the Second Temple, and rather early in the development of the First Century Messianic movement. The discussion witnessed on faith and works (2:14-26) would indicate that it was composed some time around Paul's relief visit to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-29), and

²⁶ Cf. Dan G. McCartney, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 79.

²⁷ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 749.

²⁸ Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 550.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Donald W. Burdick, "James," in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed. et. al., *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976-1992), 12:163.

his writing to the Galatians (Galatians 2:1-10). The faith-works misunderstanding that arose from Galatians seems to place James' composition after Galatians.³¹

Could the Epistle of James have originally been written in Hebrew or Aramaic, and not Greek? While a large degree of Second Temple Jewish influence is easily detected in the letter, particularly in terms of connections with a wide array of ancient Jewish literary sources, the Semitic linguistic influence witnessed in James is consistent with that seen in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Tanach.³² An array of scholars, both conservative and liberal, recognize that a Septuagintal style of Greek is what is present in the Epistle of James. "[T]he author is obviously at home in the Greek language, a fact revealed by the vocabulary and style of the Epistle" (*ISBE*),³³ meaning that "Despite the good Greek of the Epistle, Semitic influences are evident" (*ISBE*).³⁴ The main focus of the reader, as always, should be to balance what has been transcribed in the source text with the relevant background materials in history, as well as religious and philosophical literature. Carson and Moo are keen to direct us, "James's style is not that of a literary Atticist but that found in other Hellenistic-Jewish works of his day, such as *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *Sirach*,"³⁵ with Guthrie simply asking readers of James to consider him bilingual, given his position of leadership within the Jerusalem assembly.³⁶

Many within today's Messianic community try to suggest that as a Jew, largely writing to fellow Jews, James would have composed his letter in Hebrew or Aramaic. But how probable is this if his (Jewish) audience was in the Diaspora (1:1), meaning that it would have included a sizeable number of Greek-speaking Jews, as well as new non-Jewish Believers added to the fold? James was notably included rather late within the Aramaic Peshitta version, being translated from Greek into Aramaic by the Fifth Century C.E.³⁷ Yet even though the Epistle of James was written in a very high quality of Greek,³⁸ it includes many Hebraisms and Septuagintisms. For a person of James' caliber as leader of the Jerusalem assembly, it is highly probable that he learned Greek as a secondary language, especially with many of the early

³¹ Wessel, "James, Epistle of," in *ISBE*, 2:965.

Carson and Moo, 626 actually think that James responds to a "garbled form of Paul's teaching...because he is writing before he had the opportunity to learn from Paul himself just what Paul means by the doctrine" of justification by faith.

³² Laws, "James, Epistle of," in *ABD*, 3:627.

"There is no doubt that James was written in Greek, especially in view of the fact that the author employs frequent wordplays (2:22; 4:13), catch-word connections (1:4, 5, 12, 13), alliteration (1:2), and other linguistic devices which can only be explained if Greek were the original language. But James is also characterized by many instances of Semitisms, including direct, spontaneous Semitisms to the LXX...With reference to sentence syntax James displays more Semitisms—in distinction from septuagintisms—per page of the text than any other NT letter except I-III John. The author knew ordinary Koine Greek as it was written by people of some education, but he also had recourse to a Semitic style" (R.B. Ward, "James, Letter of," in Keith Crim, ed., *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1976], 469).

³³ Wessel, "James, Epistle of," in *ISBE*, 2:962; cf. Carson and Moo, pp 623-624.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:963; cf. Bauckham, in *ECB*, 1483.

³⁵ Carson and Moo, 624.

³⁶ Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 735.

³⁷ Barnett, "James, Letter of," in *IDB*, 2:795; Laws, "James, Epistle of," in *ABD*, 3:621.

³⁸ Barnett, "James, Letter of," in *IDB*, 2:795.

Jewish Believers coming from Greek-speaking lands. This would account for James' usage of Hebraisms in the Greek text, while still retaining a high Greek linguistic style.

Theologically speaking, no reader of the Epistle of James can deny that its author has a very high view of the Torah or Law of Moses. The stellar regard that is demonstrated in 1:25, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty...," as though the Torah brings a degree of liberty or "freedom" (NIV) to God's people, is sometimes immediately reworked by various Christian readers as only being a reference to "love."³⁹ At the same time, there are those Christians who at least recognize that the moral and ethical instructions of Moses' Teaching are to be in view here,⁴⁰ which must be adhered to in *any* generation that God's people may find themselves.

James definitely attacks any of those who fail to demonstrate the expected works of kindness, mercy, and grace toward others in the Body of Messiah (2:2-9). Throughout much of Christian history, at least—and certainly in the post-Reformation period—various pietistic movements which have focused upon a social gospel of good works toward the downtrodden, have taken a great deal of inspiration from the Epistle of James. Because of this, James continues to urge people up until today to stand up against oppression of the poor and exploited. The Torah in action, as envisioned by James, is very much concerned with issues of social justice, equality, and making sure that the basic needs of all human beings—such as food, clothing, and shelter—are surely met. The positive legacy that James has, especially among Christian theological traditions that look to the so-called "moral law" of the Old Testament for guidance in the emulation of Jesus, does very much speak for itself.

Perhaps the most striking and self-condemning statement found in James, for his audience, is: "one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself**" (2:16-17). James the Just highly emphasizes the lifestyle character of God's people in accordance with their actions, and it is because of this emphasis on works that many Christian readers have had difficulty understanding the Epistle of James over the centuries. Many have viewed James and his emphasis on works as being contradictory to Paul's letters, which are viewed to favor grace. Martin Luther notably viewed James as an "epistle of straw," because he thought that James invalidated Paul's doctrine of justification by faith.⁴¹ However, James' clear and traditional position as the half-brother of the Lord has assured the epistle a place in the canon, and Catholics and Protestants alike have highly valued James' message throughout history, although in Protestantism this has varied from denomination to denomination. "Many believers and their...faith traditions still agree with Luther's negative verdict of its usefulness for Christian formation...At the same time, others have come to depend on the book's wise solutions to everyday situations..." (Wall).⁴² "James insists that true faith is always marked by obedience and that only such faith evidenced in works will bring salvation" (Carson and Moo),⁴³ because "On both historical and

³⁹ Cf. Carson and Moo, pp 624-625.

⁴⁰ Wessel, "James, Epistle of," in *ISBE*, 2:960.

⁴¹ Laws, "James, Epistle of," in *ABD*, 3:622.

⁴² Wall, "James, Letter of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, pp 545.

⁴³ Carson and Moo, 621.

theological grounds, James fully deserves the canonical status that the church has accorded it” (Ibid.).⁴⁴

The Epistle of James is one of the most highly valued texts within the Apostolic Scriptures for today’s Messianics. The classic challenge, of course, is that James’ letter is sometimes *pitted against* the Pauline letters—but rather than James being disregarded as unimportant compared to Paul, Paul is cast aside as being sub-standard to James. Within such an unfortunate paradigm, the vantage point of James’ letter is frequently not considered, because James and Paul are approaching *different* mishandlings of “works.” “James’s use of the word ‘works’ differs significantly from Paul’s. For James, ‘works’ are works of faith, the ethical outworking of true piety and include especially the ‘work of love’ (2:8)” (*ISBE*).⁴⁵ Even those who are more liberal in their reading of James think, “Paul talks specifically about works done in obedience to and fulfillment of the Jewish law, while James makes no such reference to the law, but thinks of works of charity in general” (*ABD*).⁴⁶ There is a tendency among many Messianics for them to think that the “works” James primarily expects are those of keeping the Sabbath, the appointed times of Leviticus 23, or eating kosher—when this is not the case. An honest reading of the Epistle of James demonstrates how its author is much more concerned about those required actions of people of faith that help instill a sense of human wholeness in others. As he summarizes,

“Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world” (1:27).

Messianic Believers today should know the appropriate place that works play in their lives. They follow the Torah’s commandments because the Messiah Yeshua did. They cannot just have “faith in one’s faith”; our faith in the God of Israel must be evidenced by good conduct in the world, and the standard that the Lord has set forth in His Torah. James, the half-brother of Yeshua, continued to live by this standard, and instructed others to live by it as well. He emphasizes the ethics and morality that all Messiah followers *and* emulators should have, as they live forth God’s love in the world. This is not contrary to the words of Paul which emphasize grace and faith. Faith, grace, and works are not contradictory to one another, as they all play a role in the life of a Believer—but faith and grace by no means invalidate the need to live properly in obedience to God. Balancing all of these critical concepts together is important for readers of the Epistle of James.⁴⁷

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⁴⁴ Ibid., 632.

⁴⁵ Wessel, “James, Epistle of,” in *ISBE*, 2:961.

⁴⁶ Laws, “James, Epistle of,” in *ABD*, 3:625.

⁴⁷ Consult the author’s commentary *James for the Practical Messianic* for a more detailed examination of James.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON JAMES:

- 1. Why do you think Yeshua the Messiah is mentioned only twice in James (1:1; 2:1)?**
- 2. Do you think James' message would *only* have had an appeal to First Century Jews? Why or why not?**
- 3. Do you think there is any major disagreement between James' letter and Paul's letters? Do you think that these two early Jewish Believers are at odds, or that the situations they addressed were sizably different?**
- 4. In examining the whole of James' letter, elaborate what James talks about when he refers to "deeds" or "works." Does James write about anything that you need to improve upon in your life?**

REFLECTION ON JAMES' PLACEMENT IN THE CANON

Write two short paragraphs about what struck you about reading the Epistle of James: