

Teaching *from* Zion

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah
and the word of the Lord from
Jerusalem." – Isaiah 2:3

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

*Don't take vengeance on or bear a grudge against any
of your people; rather, love your neighbor as yourself;*

I am ADONAI."

Leviticus 19:18



Netivyah נתיביה
Teaching from Zion

ISSUE 50 | ELUL 5783 | AUGUST 2023

Published by Netivyah Bible Instruction
Ministry, Jerusalem, Israel

The articles printed in this issue of Teaching from Zion are the sole responsibility of their authors. Feel free to contact us at tfz@netivyah.org or by mail at **Mordechai Narkis St. 16, Jerusalem 9246208, ISRAEL**
Design & layout: itzodesign.com

About Netivyah

Netivyah in Hebrew means "the Way of the Lord." "The Way" was one of the names by which the early community of believers was known in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Paul says, "I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect). I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets." (Acts 24:14 CJB). As followers of "the Way," we believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We try to be faithful to God's law (the Torah) and to the rest of Scripture—the Prophets and the Writings. We believe that the Messiah promised in God's word is Yeshua (Jesus), the one who "saves His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

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News from Netivyah

Shalom Dear Friends,

We are so busy, and time absolutely flies by. Through it all, every step of the way, we so need and feel your prayers and support.

This year's Soldiers Gifts for Purim is finished, and we had such amazing participation from all of you. Folks from all over the world joined us and made the gifts for our believing soldiers very special.

We are launching one of our new programs, Houses for Healing. Netivyah has been working in conjunction with Brian Massey, who is the founder and head of the same organization in Abilene, Texas, for more than a year. Now, in God's perfect timing, there is the first "House" available for those who need extended medical treatment and housing for their supporting family members who want to be close to them/ the hospital. The apartments are near Hadassah Ein Kerem and Shaare Zedek hospitals. What do we provide? Along with the fully furnished apartment (Kosher kitchen, microwave, refrigerator, oven, washing machine, bedding, and towels, free Wi-Fi, and parking!), we are offering support and encouragement for the families in a calm and quiet place, a nutritious supply of fresh fruit, vegetables, and meat (and more) and the opportunity to receive the treatment and recovery so often needed by the families along with the patients themselves. Please keep this important project in your prayers as we desire to be God's hands and feet in helping the poor and needy in our beloved Israel.

Passover has just passed! It is the time we remember our redemption from Egypt, as God brought us out of slavery and bondage into His Promised Land. As believers, we know that this story of redemption and freedom from sin is the ongoing story for all who put their faith and trust in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and His Son, our Messiah Yeshua.

Thank you always for your prayers and support for everything we put before Him.

May this year be more meaningful than ever before.

Blessings,

Daniel Stern

LOVE IS THE HARDEST COMMANDMENT

By Moshe DaCosta

This month's issue is one of the most important issues ever produced by Netivyah. I mean that not because we haven't addressed important issues in the past—we certainly have—but because "love" is the main difference between followers of Yeshua and other expressions of faith. And it is the difference not because we consider ourselves the only people capable of love; that wouldn't be true, but because love according to the God of the Bible is often expressed in a unique and unexpected way.

Our Messiah and Rabbi established (Matt. 22:36–40) that our love for the Creator and towards other human beings is the foundation upon which our faith should be based. In this edition, we're addressing one of these two important pillars, the famous "love thy neighbor" commandment, and as I write these words, I pray that my fellow collaborators in this month's edition succeed in covering, through their respective articles, all the aspects of such an amazing mitzvah. I also pray that through reading this magazine, you will not only understand the Jewish viewpoint of loving others but also find practical ways to obey this uniquely difficult commandment.

I'm not sure if you'll agree with me, but I think love is usually taken for granted

among believers in our congregations. If we ask people who consider themselves Christians, most will obviously agree that love is an important concept. They will quote that God is love (1 John 4:8) and probably have a positive opinion of themselves and of their churches on this issue. Almost all of them will say that they practice this commandment, but I don't have the same confidence; to my sadness, I believe the exact opposite. Yeshua emphasized these two pillars of our faith mentioned above precisely because He knew how hard it is for human beings to express real love. When questioned about it, He mentioned that true love should be the intrinsic ingredient of our expression as His disciples.

Without love, our attempts to perform in a "Christian" way would be merely superficial expressions of religion and a human desire to fit within a community. It would never be a fulfillment of the perfect instructions established in the Scriptures. As an experienced believer, I've witnessed several brothers and sisters who honestly wanted to feel included and be part of a believing community. In order to successfully integrate themselves into a religious framework, these brethren usually learn how to mimic certain behaviors, simulate certain emotions, and answer

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with the right phrases and intonations. Please notice that I don't consider this a bad thing; we need these tools to survive human society, but within a religious community, the "language" people learn and force themselves to speak often develops into a stumbling block for a true believer, masking problems and preventing growth.

We need to consider that when our

brothers and sisters arrive in our midst, they usually carry loads of emotional baggage. People join us full of trauma, family issues, failed relationships, and unhealed scars from past disappointments or mistakes. Although salvation has an effective healing aspect, it usually takes time and a lot of conscious effort to actually start to affect the believer. People use masks in their secular relationships, and when those masks are used within our churches or congregations, they hide true feelings, making it difficult to be noticed by more mature brothers in faith and making it harder for them to help. That's the main reason we get surprised when someone we've known for years suddenly leaves our congregations due to some issue or when we hear about known Christian families being destroyed by divorce without any previous notice or warning signs. All the problems were hidden under the cover of good manners and pious behavior.

You must be asking yourself: But what is the connection between these issues and the subject of expressing our love to the people that surround us? First, how can we love, and I mean truly love someone, if we don't know what biblical love is? Next, how can we express godly love if our bodies and souls are contaminated with sin and emotional baggage? And finally, if we're not

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properly taught about biblical love in our congregations and cannot express it due to our limitations, how can we say that we're truly Yeshua's disciples?

The last question is probably the easiest to answer, I suppose. Being considered His disciple will never depend on our merit. The Scriptures say that God chose us. He enabled us to believe in Him, and He ultimately saved us through Yeshua. The whole concept of salvation by faith alone affirms that because we'll never completely fulfill our side of the covenant by obeying Him in all His commandments, Yeshua had to do it in our place, and by His merit, God will perfectly fulfill His side of the contract. So, yes, although we're not perfect and never will be, due to unmerited Grace and immense Mercy, we can say that if we truly put our faith in Yeshua, we're His disciples. It's as simple as that, and if we're His disciples, we must be able to love.

Expressing real love is extremely difficult, and prior to salvation, mankind lacks the necessary spiritual and emotional tools to do it. For an unredeemed person, it is impossible to love. There are many different ways to express love, and all of them need the Holy Spirit to do it properly and according to the Scriptures. One can express love through words, specific actions, and even thoughts, but in order to do it in alignment with God's Word, we need the assistance of the Ruach haKodesh. The Holy Spirit is the only One Who truly understands His Word, and only with His help can one express love to family, friends, and neighbors. And we're expected to do much more than this; we need to love even our enemies.

But what is love, my friends? This is probably the most important question we need answered, especially in a world

Love can be risky. When we decide to love others, we open ourselves up to the possibility of being hurt. We may be rejected, or we may be taken advantage of.





that is often full of hatred and division. Biblical love is a subject much deeper than feeling good or doing nice things for others. Real love is about putting the needs of others before our own. It is about sacrificing our own comfort and convenience for the sake of others. It is about forgiving those who have wronged us. And that's what makes it almost impossible, since real love is always expressed through talking the hard way and making unpleasant choices. Loving someone who treats you right is easy, but it is difficult to love someone who is unlovable. It's difficult to love someone who hurts you.

Yeshua told us that true love demands laying down our lives if necessary. He loved us when we were sinners. He loved us even when we didn't deserve it. He put the needs of others before His own. He forgave those who had wronged Him. He truly loved His enemies.

Why could expressing love be the hardest commandment listed in the Bible?

Firstly, love is a verb. It is not something that we simply feel; it is something that we do. Secondly, biblical love is often inconvenient to us. It often requires us to go out of our way to help others or to speak the truth in order to confront people with their situation. It can cost us our time, our money, our comfort, and our friends and family. Love can be risky. When we decide to love others, we open ourselves up to the possibility of being hurt. We may be rejected, or we may be taken advantage of.

As Christians, our inability to love others will probably have a negative impact on our relationships. Even Christians sometimes become resentful, angry, or, God forbid, hateful. That's because we don't really love people, and this can lead to conflict and division among believers who are supposed to behave like brothers and sisters.

In the book of 1 John, we are told that "if anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20). What this verse actually teaches us is that our love for God is exponentially reflected in our love for others. When we fail to love others, we are completely failing to love our Creator.

No teaching would be complete without some directions on how to fight our normal human limitations. So how can we overcome the challenges of expressing love? Here are some final thoughts that may help some of you as much as they helped me:

- Start by loving and accepting yourself. As taught in the Scriptures, we should love others as ourselves, but many don't. How can we love others if we do not love ourselves? Forgive yourself, incentivize yourself, and accept that you'll never be perfect, nor are you expected to be. When we love ourselves, it becomes easier to love others.
- Practice forgiveness. I mentioned that

Love is a journey, not a destination. It's a way of seeing life. Besides, it takes time and effort to learn how to love others perfectly; the more you love, the more selfless you'll be.

you should forgive yourself first, but remember to forgive others. Anger and resentment prevent us from expressing true love toward others. When we forgive those who have hurt us, we free ourselves to love them unconditionally.

- Put others before yourself. It's hard for some to understand this, but the Kingdom of God is not about you and how you feel; it's about Yeshua and

When we love others, we are following God's instructions and Yeshua's example. We are practicing something that in Hebrew is called Tikkun Olam, which means "fixing the world", making the world a better place.

the Father's plans for mankind. Human beings are self-centered, egotistical beings, and biblical love is about altruism, putting the needs of others before our own. It's about sacrifice; it will cost you things you like.

- Be patient and know that love and kindness won't probably be returned. Love is a journey, not a destination. It's a way of seeing life. Besides, it takes time and effort to learn how to love others perfectly; the more you love, the more selfless you'll be. Be patient with yourself and with others, and don't give up.

- Read your Bible. These two practices are paramount to Yeshua's disciples. That's how we immerse ourselves in the Spirit and connect ourselves with the source of all Love. How can we understand love if we don't talk with and listen to the only One who really loves us perfectly?

When we love others, we are following God's instructions and Yeshua's example. We are practicing something that in Hebrew is called Tikkun Olam, which means "fixing the world", making the world a better place.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This verse shows that we are all sinners, and our sin separates us from God.

1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." Our love for God is a response to his love for us. We cannot love God on our own, but only because he first loved us.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 lists some characteristics of divine love. These include patience, kindness, humility, and self-control. These are all qualities that are difficult for humans to exhibit in a consistent way; only the Spirit can help us on this issue.

In the book of Hosea, God compares his love for Israel to the love of a husband for his unfaithful wife. It looks obvious to some, but this comparison shows God's love as being forgiving, even when we are not. And that's usually our situation. Again, it shows why love for others is a difficult task to pursue since it requires us to love people who may be very different from us and who may do things that we find offensive. Human love is imperfect, and we will never fully express divine love on our own. However, God's love is perfect, and he

wants us to love others in the same way.

God's love is based on compassion and empathy. If Tikkun Olam is the idea of repairing the world, this can be done only through acts of kindness and compassion. It's not just about wishing people well and supporting them; it's about taking action to make things better for them. "Love thy neighbor" is not just about feeling compassion for others; it's about doing something to really help them. And the first thing people need most is to hear the truth about Yeshua, our Messiah. That's a priority; keep that in mind.

God's true love is also about hope. If we really believe we can make the world a better place, we also conclude that we can make a difference in the lives of others. We are tools in the hands of our creator, through which He molds the world according to His plans. That's one of the good parts of our calling as disciples—the belief that we can somehow make a difference in the world by being partners of a deity so much higher than us yet a God who "raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy out of the ash, that He may seat with him with princes, yes, with princes of His people" (Psalm 113).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Moshe is a husband, father, and servant at the Roeh Israel congregation. He has a background in Business Consulting and Advertising, but always longed for the Ministry. As a Messianic Jew, he developed interests connected to Jewish traditions and with time became a Hazan (liturgical cantor), a Sofer STaM (trained scribe), and a certified Mohel (circumciser). He has been serving the messianic community for 11 years in Israel and has joined Netivyah's team with a desire to build ways of communication and mutual support between observant and non-observant believers in Israel.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THE TORAH

By Pnina

Probably one of the most well-known Bible verses both in and outside the Judeo-Christian world is ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. Though its meaning seems obvious, there is much to learn from this short phrase, both from putting it in its original context and from seeing how Yeshua explains its meaning.

The Hebrew sentence *וואהבת לרעך כמוך* is only a part of Leviticus 19:18. The entire verse reads:

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the LORD.” Chapter 19 of Leviticus contains a list of commandments, both relating to the relationship of a person with God and relationships between people. The underlying, foundational commandment is found in verse 2:

“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”. This is the base for keeping all the rules that follow. Interestingly, the verses relating to interpersonal relationships all start with “you shall not”, including verse 18. Why these negative commandments? To understand this important principle, we might turn to the explanations given first and foremost by our rabbi Yeshua but also by other Jewish Sages.

In Matthew 22, we read that the Pharisees come to Yeshua, and one of them, a learned Torah scholar, asks Him, with the purpose of testing Him, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?” Yeshua answered him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Torah and the Prophets.” (vss. 37-40).

A similar claim is attributed to Rabbi Akiva, who lived not long after Yeshua. He said about the phrase ‘love your neighbour as yourself’: “This is a fundamental principle of the Torah”. Rashi, a Jewish scholar in the 11th century, explains these words and says that this is so fundamental that without love for your neighbour, you cannot fulfil all the other rules mentioned in Leviticus 19. Only if you love your neighbour are you able to not steal from him, not lie to him, and so on. Therefore, this is the fundamental principle of the Torah.

But the rules regarding behaviour towards our fellowmen do not end with the commandment to love. Two small but very important words follow: *אני ה'* I am the LORD. These words connect again to verse 2, where the people of Israel are instructed to be holy, for the

*Only if we
accept our
brother as our
brother can we
accept Him as
our Father, and
He can accept
us as His child.*

LORD is holy. It also connects to the importance of Yeshua’s famous parable about the Good Samaritan.

To understand this commandment, it is important to take a closer look at the Hebrew words *וואהבת לרעך כמוך*. We saw already that the phrase is the second part of a verse, explaining why it starts with a vav in Hebrew, translated as ‘but’. You shall not do this and this, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. Instead of focusing on the negative, even if we are trying to avoid it, our focus should be on the positive, on adding love, kindness, and grace to the world.

The verb to love, (*Ahav*) *אהב*, is a root found 251 times in the Hebrew Bible,



The commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves is unique to the Bible. Many of the Torah commandments have similarities to rules and laws found in texts from the ancient Near East, but for this commandment, there are no parallels.

often as an antonym for שׂוֹנֵא to hate. The verb usually refers to affectionate love for someone or the deep desire to be intimately connected and united with someone. When referring to the LORD, the verb is used for His covenantal love for Israel, shown through His actions. In return, He asks Israel to show her love for Him by keeping His commandments. Yeshua commands the same in John 15:9–10: “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

The second letter in Hebrew that is important is the ל (lamed), which gets lost in the English translation. This letter is a prefix with the general meaning ‘to, for, in order to’. This little letter teaches us we need to love ‘to’ our neighbour, but what does that mean? It means that we are not only commanded to have some abstract feeling of love for someone, but that we actually need to make sure that ‘it is well to him’, or in better English: ‘it is well with him’. This already takes us from an abstract feeling or attitude to a level of action, making sure that the circumstances of life are good for our fellow neighbour, so that he may be well.

The next word, רַעַךְ, re’ekha (your

neighbour, form re’a, neighbour) brings us to the question the Torah scholar asked Yeshua, “Who is my neighbour?” The word re’a is found in a variety of contexts: for instance, a close friend (Job 2:11), an acquaintance (Job 20:10), an ally (1 Sam. 30:26), a neighbour or fellow man (Prov. 25:17). In all those cases, the word applies to a fellow Israelite. Another word for fellow is עִמִּית (amit), which occurs rarely in the Bible but seems to have a similar meaning as re’a. The sons of your people (בְּנֵי עַמְךָ) is another term used for fellow men; it occurs in Leviticus 19 as well and clearly indicates the people of Israel. This is even more enforced by Leviticus 19:34, where we find a specific commandment to love the stranger (גֵּר, אֲהַבְתָּ לוֹ כַּמּוֹךְ, a similar phrase to the one in Leviticus 19:18. Therefore, it seems that the re’a, the ‘neighbour’ is a fellow Israelite.

The last word, כַּמּוֹךְ (kamokha), is translated mostly ‘as yourself’, though the Hebrew can also mean ‘as you’. A possible meaning is that one should love his fellowmen as one loves oneself. As we are all created in God’s image, loving ourselves means showing gratitude to God for giving us our lives. As David says in Psalm 139:14, “I will give thanks to you because I have been so amazingly and miraculously made”. Only if we accept ourselves as beloved children of

God do we have the ability to truly love someone else. This relates to the other possible meaning of the word ‘kamokha’: we are to love our neighbour since ‘he is as you’, meaning he is a human being, created by God, just like you.

The next two words, ‘I am the LORD’, frame this sentence. As the LORD shows covenantal love to His people, to both

The clear message is that one should not turn one's head when seeing a person in need and that the true 'neighbour' is the one who helps.

you and the other, we are to follow His example and show love to one another. He is the Creator of both you and him. He is the Father in heaven of both you and him, and therefore you should relate to this other person as your brother.

Coming back now to Yeshua's parable, we can better understand the importance of His teaching. First, the one asking the question was a Torah scholar, someone who studied and knew the Scriptures very well. When Yeshua (or any other rabbi) quotes a few words of a verse, the Torah scholar would immediately know its continuation and context. He would have known that the verse is taken from a context of rules on how to relate to a fellowman, an Israelite, and ends with 'I am the LORD'.

The simple meaning of the well-known parable is that 'your neighbour' is the one who shows compassion, even if it is your enemy. As might be known to most, the Samaritans and the Jews were enemies. The Samaritans had been living in Samaria for some hundreds of years already and identified themselves as a

distinct group from the Jews. Flavius Josephus calls them a Jewish sect. In Yeshua's time, they had their own place of worship on Mount Gerizim for some time already, and until this very day, that is where the Samaritans have their place of worship.

It was generally believed in Jewish tradition that the Samaritans were descendants of the people living in Samaria and the new groups brought in by the Assyrians. After the Assyrian empire, under king Tiglath Pileser III, destroyed the kingdom of Israel in 732 BCE, they brought new groups of people. The Bible mentions in 2 Kings 17:24: "Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities".

This is a well-known policy that the Assyrians used. After conquering large areas, they took the local elite into exile and put another conquered population in their area instead. In this way, it was hard for the local people to create new alliances and try to rebel against Assyria because their leaders had been taken away. Furthermore, the land did not lay waste, and the newly brought population, probably together with the remnants, would produce agricultural products that would be taxed and form a buffer zone between the Assyrian empire and their enemies.

This policy made it much easier to control large, conquered areas. However, as most likely not all people were exiled, some of the survivors of the conquest must still have been in the land, and the Samaritans themselves claim to be the descendants of the few people from the ten tribes that were not exiled.

In Yeshua's days, the main conflict seems to have been over the claim that both groups were descendants of Jacob/Israel but not accepting the other as such. Both groups laid claim to the same heritage in Israel. The conflict seems to have intensified in Yeshua's days, though there are indications that there were peaceful contacts between the Jews and the Samaritans as well.

On this background of conflict, Yeshua tells the parable of the Samaritan, passing by a robbed man and offering help to him after both a Levite and a Cohen had already passed but ignored the half-dead man. The Cohen might have had a 'good' reason, as it was forbidden for him to touch a corpse; otherwise, he would have been unclean for seven days and not able to serve in the Temple. Also, the robbers were probably still around, and stopping on the road would endanger the helper. However, the clear message is that one should not turn one's head when seeing a person in need and that the true 'neighbour' is the one who helps.

But I think it is possible to take the meaning a step further. First of all, the Samaritan seemed to have understood that the little letter \aleph meant that he did not just help the man get to a safe place. He made sure he was well, he offered payment for the treatment, and he did all he could for the robbed man. That teaches us a practical way of showing love for one another.

The second, deeper meaning that might have shocked the Pharisees who were listening lies in the understanding of the phrase 'I am the LORD', in the original verse. The LORD mentions Himself in the verse. He includes Himself in the story of love between fellowmen. He commands us to love one another, and then He will also show His love to us. Only if we accept our brother as our brother can we accept Him as our

The commandment is not to love in an abstract way. The commandment is to go and show mercy, to do all that is in our power to make sure the other is well.

Father, and He can accept us as His child. This does not mean that He does not unconditionally love us, but it means that He asks us to be like Him: Be holy because I am holy'. Yeshua said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." John 15:12-14).

Generally, this is a radical statement. However, for the Jewish people in Yeshua's day, this statement was even more radical. The people understood the verse 'love your neighbour' to mean 'love all your fellow Israelites', which is not an easy task. But Yeshua's parable takes it a step further, showing that the Samaritan, the non-Jew, is also part of the story. He is a brother because the LORD is His Father. The message is inclusive of all human beings, as all were created in God's image.

As we see later in the letters of the Apostles, this concept of including the gentiles was not easy to understand for the Jewish people at the time, but it is the message that Yeshua brought to the world: inclusiveness for everyone.

The commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves is unique to the Bible. Many of the Torah commandments have similarities to rules and laws found in texts from the ancient Near East, but for this commandment, there are no

parallels.

The closest instruction is found in "counsel of wisdom", dated to sometime before the year 700 BC, where the reader is instructed to do good to his evildoer. Interestingly, this text comes from the Assyrian and Babylonian worlds, from the people who destroyed the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and exiled their people.

In the Torah, there are already examples of caring for the animal of the enemy (Ex. 23:4-5) and giving bread and water to the person who hates you if he needs it (Prov. 25:21). Doing good to one's evildoer is a commandment also taught by Yeshua in Luke 6:27, but He adds the commandment of loving the enemy.

This goes a step further than loving your neighbour. Even though it might be difficult, we as humans are able to show love to someone from our own group. But loving someone who hates us can only be done through God's love in us, through Yeshua. Excepting our enemy as our brother because God loves him as much as he loves us requires a heart changed by God's Spirit.

Though this is not the platform to discuss politics, I think that the obvious parallel that can be drawn to our times is our attitude towards the Arabs living in the land of Israel. The conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans in Yeshua's days was as much a fight between brothers

over the heritage as is the modern-day conflict. As the Torah scholar testing Yeshua needed to look into his own heart, we also need self-reflection. Do we have the heart that Yeshua had for other people, whether our friends or our enemies? Do we want them to be saved and to be part of the kingdom of God? Yeshua gave His own life for all, for the religious leaders that came to discuss the meaning of Torah laws, often with the intention to test Him, for the Samaritans that were rejected by the Jews, for the tax collectors, the Roman soldiers, the fishermen, the widows, the rich, the poor, and also for us. And we, as His followers, are asked the question: "So which of these three do you think was the neighbour to him who fell among the thieves?" And the man said, He who showed mercy on him', then Yeshua said to him, Go and do likewise". The commandment is not to love in an abstract way. The commandment is to go and show mercy, to do all that is in our power to make sure the other is well.

This attitude in our hearts is not only our personal responsibility but also our communal responsibility. John 13:34-35 teaches: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." When we cherish His commandments and act accordingly, many will see and glorify our Father, Who is in heaven.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pnina has been living in Israel for the past five years while also studying Biblical archaeology. She likes to explore the land of Israel, uncover its past, and enjoy the variety in nature, people, and stories that the land is blessed with.



LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

by Joseph Shulam

This is one of the most famous texts in the whole Bible for Jews of all kinds and Christians of all kinds. The text “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” is stated seven times in the Bible. It appears once in Leviticus 19:18, in the Torah portion called Kedoshim, meaning the Sanctified Ones. In the New Testament, it appears six times. In the Muslim Quran, the text does not appear at all, but the closest thing to it appears in the section called Al-Baqarah:

“Say: We believe in God that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction from any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.” (Sura Al-Baqarah, 2:136–137)

The choice of the Netivyah Staff to produce an issue of the Teaching from Zion magazine with the title, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” in Israel during these days is so amazingly timely, so amazingly controversial, so amazingly prophetic, and so amazingly crazy! In the last few months, Israel, in its totality, has been in a whirlwind of division, hate speech, political radicalization, mass demonstrations, and a total breakdown of trust across the board, from the right to the left wings of the Israeli parliament and the public in the streets. I have been living in Israel since 1947. I have seen the wars of Israel in the 1950s and 1960s of the Fadayeen incursions and attacks on Israel’s civilian population by Palestinian terrorists, and in October 1956, the Suez war inspired and encouraged by so-called Great Britain and France, who encouraged Israel, who were supposed to participate together in 1956, and after the conquest

The goal of the Lebanon War was to root out the Palestinian terrorist groups that made Lebanon their base and launched terror attacks and terror operations against Israel.

The hate, the enmity, and the murderous terrorist activity against Israel are certainly not over, and they are, as the word of God says, Israel's daily bread!

of the Sinai Desert, abandoned Israel and allowed Israel to bear the brunt of that war. During 1967, I was a student at the University of Jerusalem when the war started with seven Arab nations planning to attack Israel in concert on four fronts, but Israel preempted them and in six days took all of the Sinai Desert, all the so-called "West Bank of the Jordan River," and all the Golan Heights. After the six-day war in 1967 came the ensuing War of Attrition. After the great victory of Israel over the Arab neighbors surrounding us came the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, led by a coalition of Arab States led by Egypt and Syria. In the wake of the Yom Kippur War came a decade of Palestinian insurgency and the Lebanon War in 1981–1982. The goal of the Lebanon War was to root out the Palestinian terrorist groups that made Lebanon their base and launched terror attacks and terror operations against Israel. This Lebanon war was the first, and the second one came in South Lebanon in 1985 and lasted until 2000. I don't want to turn this article into a calendar of the wars between Israel and its Arab and Palestinian neighbors. I just wanted to give you a short overview of some of the frameworks of hate, war, and terrorism that have come against Israel in the years since I and my family immigrated to Israel in 1947. The hate, the enmity, and the murderous terrorist activity against Israel are certainly not over, and they are, as the word of God says, Israel's daily bread! But I must remember that this article is not on the topic of war and hate. This article is on the topic of "Love your neighbor as yourself!"

The text from Leviticus 19:18 appears in

the New Testament six times, and here they are:

Matt. 19:19, "Honor your father and your mother," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Matt. 22:39, "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Mark 12:31, "And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Rom. 13:9, "For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, they are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Gal. 5:14, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

James 2:8, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well."

Suddenly, I remembered that what we are writing about in this issue of Teaching from Zion magazine is only a partial quotation from Leviticus 19:18. The full picture from the Torah in Leviticus is just a little more challenging and personal. But it is seldom taken into account. Here is the full verse from Leviticus, and it is always important not to take half verses and bandy them

around like they were cookies.

Here is the full verse of Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD." We all must notice the narrow context of this command. The narrow context is not a general statement of truth. The context is very specific, describing a state of having been damaged or hurt, whether emotionally, physically, financially, or in any situation where the natural reaction would be vengeance. The secondary reaction would be to bear a grudge. Bearing a grudge is a natural reaction in a state of affairs where you were hurt, damaged, or mistreated and you couldn't return the favor to those who hurt and damaged you. Your only possible response is to hold a grievance, hate, dislike, or desire to damage or hurt back those who have mistreated you and taken advantage of you or yours. When you look into the broad context of this command, it changes the picture and the meaning of this very famous and widely quoted half-verse from Leviticus. What makes this verse even more powerful is that it is in the context of Parashat Kedoshim, meaning Saints or Sanctified. A context of someone who has been hurt, damaged, or offended, not in a context of "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

Now, to understand this verse that is repeated seven times in the Bible, six of them in the New Testament, we must look at the full context of chapter 19 of the book of Leviticus. God's command: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: "You

shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”” (Leviticus 19:1–2 NKJV).

There is no doubt that these words of God to Moses, words that Moses must say and command the children of Israel, are obligatory, commanded, and required, with no place for change, interpretation, or mitigation. The strength of this command is God’s nature itself: “You shall be holy!” The reason you shall or must be holy is because I, the LORD your God, am holy!” This verse indicates that we are obligated to be holy because God is holy. The upshot of this command is that if we are not holy, we are casting a dark shadow on our God and compromising His holiness! So, it is a very important

own free will. It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted. Therefore, everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed offering of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people. “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God. “You shall not steal, nor deal

stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you. Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this there shall be scourging; but they shall not be put to death, because

From your family, you go out to the less fortunate in your society, the deaf and the blind, and you realize that they are God’s children, equal to you, and they are there to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your humanity, your spark of divinity.

and serious issue. This is the reason that the rest of chapter 19 is an encyclopedic commentary of practical instructions on how to be holy like God. It is a list of ways to achieve that state of being holy like God.

Okay, Dear God, what shall we do to be holy like you?

“Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father and keep My Sabbaths; I am the LORD your God. Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods; I am the LORD your God. And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your

falsely, nor lie to one another. And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the LORD. You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

“You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a

she was not free.

“And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, a ram as a trespass offering. The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he has committed. And the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him. When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be as uncircumcised to you. It shall not be eaten. But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD.”

“And in the fifth year you may eat its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase: I am the LORD your God. You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying. You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD. Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness. You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD. Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God. You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD. And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. “You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” (Leviticus 19:3–37 NKJV)

I realize that it is not common to quote a whole chapter from the Bible in an article, but in this case, I feel that I must bring to you this whole chapter 19 of the book of Leviticus because it is actually a classic example of giving the rule, the paradigm, and then sorting it out point by point, command by command, to the last detail of how to achieve that state of “being holy!” The details of this chapter are truly monumental! I am not going to go through this article point by point; you can and ought to read the whole chapter with great care and reflection

on your own path to enlightenment and holiness. I just want to touch on a few of the things that, at first sight, might not make any sense to you.

Please let me start with the simplest and most important thing that the Word of God to Moses is again stressing so clearly. In western civilization, there is a Proverb that states, “Charity starts at home!” It is true, and the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation holds this truth to be self-evident. Moses parses out the details and starts with the family. If a person can’t love his own family—his father and mother and his home—respect them, observe the simplest and most beneficial aspects of our human nature, like the command of honoring and keeping a day of rest like God himself did already in the story of creation in the first chapters of the book of Genesis, that person could never be holy or sanctified. The simple reason is that a person who does not honor his father and mother can’t grasp the need and importance of honoring our Heavenly Father of all creation.

The next big issue that concerns loving your fellow man and your neighbors as yourself is idolatry. If you make an idol, physically or even in your imagination, or you just worship the forces of nature, the Sun, Moon, and stars, you are setting an affront on the One and Only who created our universe. You can’t love your neighbor, your friend, or your own self if you don’t accept and believe that you were designed, planned, and created by an intelligent engineer who wanted you and loves you just the way you are, and that you have a purpose under heaven that you should appreciate and live out to the end. If a person believes and thinks that he is the result of a cosmic accident without a proposition or a purpose, there could be no moral constraint for such a person, and therefore there could be no true love or

satisfaction in such a person’s existence. The next requirement for being holy is your relationship to God, your father. That requires a relationship of honor, respect, and love for God, and the way that relationship always plays out is by giving. Love is always a relationship of giving. The way you give to your creator and show your gratitude is through sacrifices, and they too need to be done from a sincere heart and a willing mind.

The next issue that the Torah raises is loving yourself and your body. You really can’t love others and respect them as equal to yourself if you don’t love yourself, and loving yourself according to the Torah means loving your body as it is.

The Command of God in Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” is universal and does follow through to teach us all that we are made of one flesh, we are all children of God, and that religion ought not to make us enemies but teach us to be brothers.

After a few theocentric [1] commands dealing with the appreciation of God’s provision from the Land, like the harvest and the fertility of the land, the commandments change from theocentric to anthropocentric. [2]

The next issue that the Torah raises is loving yourself and your body. You really can’t love others and respect them as equal to yourself if you don’t love yourself, and loving yourself according to the Torah means loving your body as it is, because the designer or creator knows what He is doing, and if He chose to give you black and beautiful skin, don’t try to bleach it. Don’t mutilate your body by cutting yourself or tattooing yourself. From yourself, you go to your family again, and you don’t use your family members as merchandise for your own profit and pleasure. From your family, you go out to the less fortunate in your society, the deaf and the blind, and you realize that they are God’s children, equal to you, and they are there to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your humanity, your spark of divinity, and the God nature that is in you; therefore, you don’t curse a deaf person even though he doesn’t hear you, or put a stumbling block in front of a blind person. Although the blind can’t see you, the Almighty God sees you. From there, the Torah takes us back to ourselves. The verse commands us to love ourselves so that we can also love our fellow man. If you don’t love yourself, and again, love yourself unconditionally, you can’t really love anyone else. However, if you love yourself, you must also love your neighbor in the same way, as an equal and worthy of life, joy, and all the elements that the Creator put in our human hands.

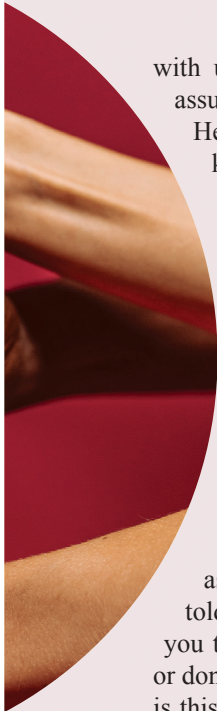
I would like to share a sad story that happened to me and to a family of dear friends from America that came to visit us in Israel. The family came from



Murfreesboro, Tennessee, to visit us, and we took them to visit the tomb of the prophet Samuel on top of the hill Rama. Rama was the home of Samuel the prophet, and it is also where he was buried. Rama was a town on the highest hill, overlooking Jerusalem from the west-northwest. There are rich archaeological remains in Rama, including the tomb of Samuel the prophet, and a beautiful view of Jerusalem from the West. We looked at the Archaeology and went into the building that houses Samuel’s tomb. As we entered the building, there was a young American Orthodox Jewish Rabbi looking at us and listening to my explanations. After a short while, this young Rabbi approaches me in English and says to me, “I see that you know much! You ought to come and join us in the Yeshiva (Rabbinical College) and learn Torah

[1] Theocentricity is where our relationship with God is at the center of our interests and our existence. The pagan religions are all theocentric: the human being is like a disposable element, and everything that is important is God.

[2] Anthropocentric means that our relationship with our fellow man and our brothers is at the center of our relationship with God. God doesn’t need our services; our service to God is by serving our fellowman. We don’t really have direct access to the Creator Himself, whom we didn’t see and who is above all of creation. The way we have a relationship with the Creator is through our relationship with our fellow man. This is true from Genesis to Revelation. Here is the teaching of Yeshua that demonstrates this so clearly: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:41–46 NKJV)



with us!" I asked him, "Why do you assume that I don't know the Torah?" He said to me, "You don't wear a kippa!" (A kippa is the little round hat that they wear on their heads

who is your neighbor?" I asked the Rabbi. He quickly replied without a bit of hesitation, "My neighbor is only the one that is exactly like me!" I asked him again, "These soldiers who protect you

as only their own God! The Command of God in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," is universal and does follow through to teach us all that we are made of one flesh, we are

Love is always a relationship of giving. The way you give to your creator and show your gratitude is through sacrifices, and they too need to be done from a sincere heart and a willing mind.

as a sign that they are religious.) I told this young Rabbi, "Why don't you test me to see if I know the Torah or don't know it?" He said, "Okay. What is this next Shabbat's Torah reading?" I said to him, "Kedoshim. Can I now ask you a question?" He said, "Yes, you can ask me!" "Well," I said to him, "There is one verse in Parashat Kedoshim that is universally known and used by Jews and Christians; what is that verse?" He looked at me and without hesitation said, "You shall be holy because I, the LORD, am holy." I said to him, "This is a good verse, but it is not a verse that almost every intelligent Jew and Christian knows!" "So," he said, "Okay, I see that you know something about the Torah." So, the young American Rabbi turns to me and says, "Okay, what is the verse that is so famous for both Jews and Christians?" I said, "It is verse 18 of chapter 19 of Leviticus that says, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself!'" "Yes, the Rabbi said you are right! But who is your neighbor?" "Every human being is my neighbor!" I replied. "And

and guard you day and night, are they not your neighbors? Do you not have to love them too?" I asked the Rabbi. "No!" said the Rabbi, "I don't have to love them at all because they don't eat Kosher!" "How about Orthodox Jews from other Hassidic groups like Chabad/Lubavitch? Do you not love them?" The Rabbi replied loud and clear, "No, I don't love them, and I don't have to love them; they are not just like me! I only have to love those who are from my group and no one else!" A very sad and sorry mood overtook me! What a sad and bad attitude religion can take, and how dark is a religious group of people who close themselves under a dome of hate and alienation from the rest of humanity and even put God, the creator of all and all flesh, into a religious box of sadness and darkness that doesn't now allow them to see the Sun and the wonderful creation that the Father of all has created? How dark a religious group is that alienates God and makes Him so small that only a small group of Hassidic Jews from New York who think that they know God own Him

all children of God, and that religion ought not to make us enemies but teach us to be brothers. Let us all make a simple and important commitment, the same commitment as that of the Good Samaritan who took that Jew who was violently attacked and vandalized on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, placed him in the inn, and offered to pay for him until he got back on his feet and was able to travel again. A few years ago, when all of the Jewish synagogues around the world were reading this Torah portion of Kedoshim in a Friday afternoon Torah portion, the son of the ex-Chief Rabbi and the brother of the present Chief Rabbi, Rabbi B. Lauw, was asked who is Kadosh (Holy) today. He answered, "Only one who is like the Good Samaritan!" We must all learn and relearn to do two things in order to be able to love our neighbor as ourselves. 1) Learn to love ourselves, remembering that God made us and that He loves us! 2) Realize who our neighbor is! Every human being, because all of us are children of God!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Shulam was born in Sofia, Bulgaria on March 24, 1946 to a Sephardic Jewish Family. In 1948, his family immigrated to Israel just before the establishment of the State. While in high school, he was introduced to the New Testament and immediately identified with the person of Yeshua. In 1981, Joseph and the small fellowship that was started in his house established one of the first official non-profit organizations of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in Israel – Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry. Joseph has lectured extensively and has assisted in encouraging disciples around the world. He and his wife Marcia have two children and two grandchildren.

“Love Your Enemies”

EASIER SAID THAN DONE

By Elhanan ben-Avraham



Art by Elhanan ben-Avraham

ואהבת לרעך כמוך

Leviticus 19:18

These words spoken in Hebrew by Yeshua (aka Jesus) make for a fine and heartwarming Bible study, but may in fact be more challenging to realize when faced with the realities of life. First, it might be asked if we are commanded to love our “neighbor” (the actual Hebrew word used there is reah, which is friend or companion, rather than ‘neighbor’) as we love ourselves. Can one truly love another if one does not have a healthy love for oneself? Whereas if one is filled with self-disdain, might that love for another be instead rather an unhealthy co-dependency stained by the toxicity of that self-hatred?

To love our enemies also makes for a fine Bible study—until one actually has a real enemy. If one in reality despises a declared enemy who is out to destroy you, acting as if you

“There is no greater love than laying one’s life down for another,” which may be the case in taking up arms to defend one’s family or nation. In the Ten Commandments, it is not written, ‘You shall not kill,’ but ‘You shall not murder’, a clear distinction in Hebrew.

*Acting as if you love him
may be flavored with
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love him may be flavored with insincerity and may be felt by your adversary as nothing but hypocrisy. On the other hand, in an interpersonal intracommunal relationship of conflict or heated debate, even acting that out may quiet the negative feelings for both parties and thus create a new reality that can lead to a peaceful resolution and restored friendship.

In a war or criminal situation, rather than an interpersonal relationship, when enemies have set forth to kill and destroy, then the words of Yeshua become even more difficult to apply. Then it may become one's job as a soldier or officer of the law to risk one's life in taking another's in order to protect one's family or nation.

Many sincere Christians, including the famed Sergeant York in World War 1, were obliged to face an enemy and kill, or be killed, in combat. It was also true for those who stormed the Normandy beaches in order to defeat the evil of Nazism. That has often been the fulfillment of another of Yeshua's sayings, "There is no greater love than laying one's life down for another," which may be the case in taking up arms to defend one's family or nation. In the Ten Commandments, it is not written, 'You shall not kill,' but 'You shall not murder', a clear distinction in Hebrew.

The Torah, which is also endorsed by Yeshua (Matthew 5:17–19), directs us to first attempt to make peace with our adversaries before engaging in war (Deuteronomy 20:10). There are other admonitions and examples of doing good to enemies in the books of the Torah, including Exodus 23:4–5, 32:35, Romans 12:19, and Proverbs 25:21–22: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you." As an example,



this is what Elisha practiced with the captured Assyrians (2 Kings 6:21–23). Rather than being entirely revolutionary, Yeshua's words were built upon these Torah passages.

Yeshua referred several times to actual war and weapons thereof, once in the parable of the king that goes out to war, first considering if he has enough forces to win, and another time telling his disciples to sell their cloaks and purchase swords (presumably not for peeling oranges). He also said that there would continue to be wars and rumors of wars, which we continue to witness to this day. Therefore, God's people must carefully weigh the words of the Messiah and consider how they might apply to current situations until that day comes when swords are beaten into plowshares, and nations learn war no more (Isaiah 2).

Meanwhile, loving one's own friends and family (even fellow believers with whom one may be disappointed), forgiving them, and attempting to reconcile with them when feelings are hurt, is often a challenge enough to tax our spiritual resources and faith.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elhanan ben-Avraham, born in 1945, is a professional artist, poet, writer, father of two, and grandfather of four, and he has been living in Israel since 1979. He has served in the IDF, taught the Bible internationally, published five illustrated books of poetry, painted two large Biblical murals in public buildings in Jerusalem, and most recently produced THE JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATED BIBLE, among many other works. He and his wife live in a quiet village in the Mountains of Judah.



THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT:

Love Your Neighbor


as

Yourself

By Keijo Lindeman

“Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?” Jesus declared, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”

(Matthew 22:36–40).



*Our love is manifested in the words
and deeds that we say and do to
our neighbor.*

A Pharisee and expert in the law who was putting Yeshua to the test asked Him which was the greatest commandment in the Torah. Yeshua's answer was very clear and simple: the greatest of the commandments is to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. How can we do that? The Apostle John tells us how:

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves those born of Him. By this, we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of

God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:1-3).

We manifest our love for God by keeping His commandments. As Christians, we should obey all of God's commandments that relate to us. These commandments (of the Torah) are written in the hearts of New Covenant believers (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-12). It would not be possible for us to keep them in our own strength or willpower, but praise God who provides us with His Holy Spirit in order for us to be able to do His will and walk according to His commandments (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Whenever we stumble, we have

the possibility to repent and ask Him to forgive us our transgressions and, as the need arises, ask our neighbor to forgive us, too. The precious blood of our Messiah will then cleanse us from our sin and from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

And the second commandment is like the first: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This commandment is not only given to New Covenant people; Yeshua quoted the Torah. If we turn to the Torah, we will see that loving one's neighbor meant and still means many practical things we can and must do to show our love to our neighbors.

Loving one's neighbor means we must help the needy and the foreigners; we must not steal, lie, or deceive; we must not be unjust or biased, but we must judge right.

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you are not to reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You must not strip your vineyard bare or gather its fallen grapes. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God. You must not steal. You must not lie or deceive one another. You must not swear falsely by My name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. You must not defraud your neighbor or rob him.

You must not withhold until morning the wages due a hired hand. You must not curse the deaf or place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall

fear your God. I am the LORD.

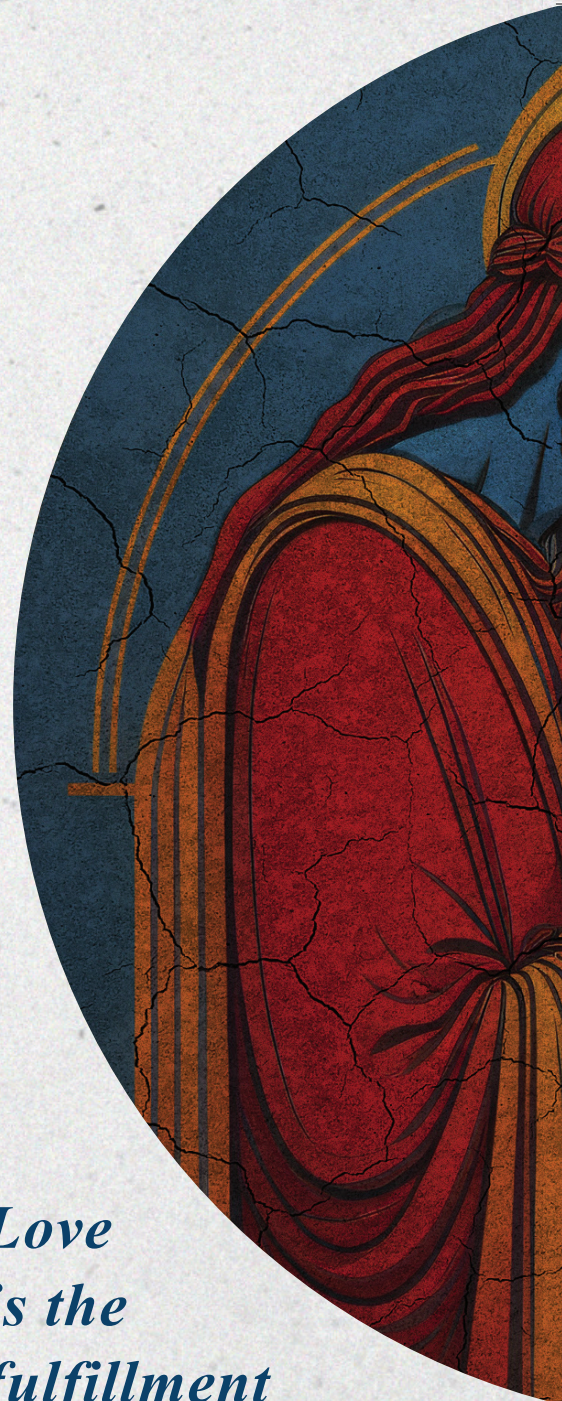
You must not pervert justice; you must not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the rich; you are to judge your neighbor fairly. You must not go about spreading slander among your people.

You must not endanger the life of your neighbor. I am the LORD. You must not harbor hatred against your brother in your heart. Directly rebuke your neighbor, so that you will not incur guilt on account of him. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against any of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:9–18).

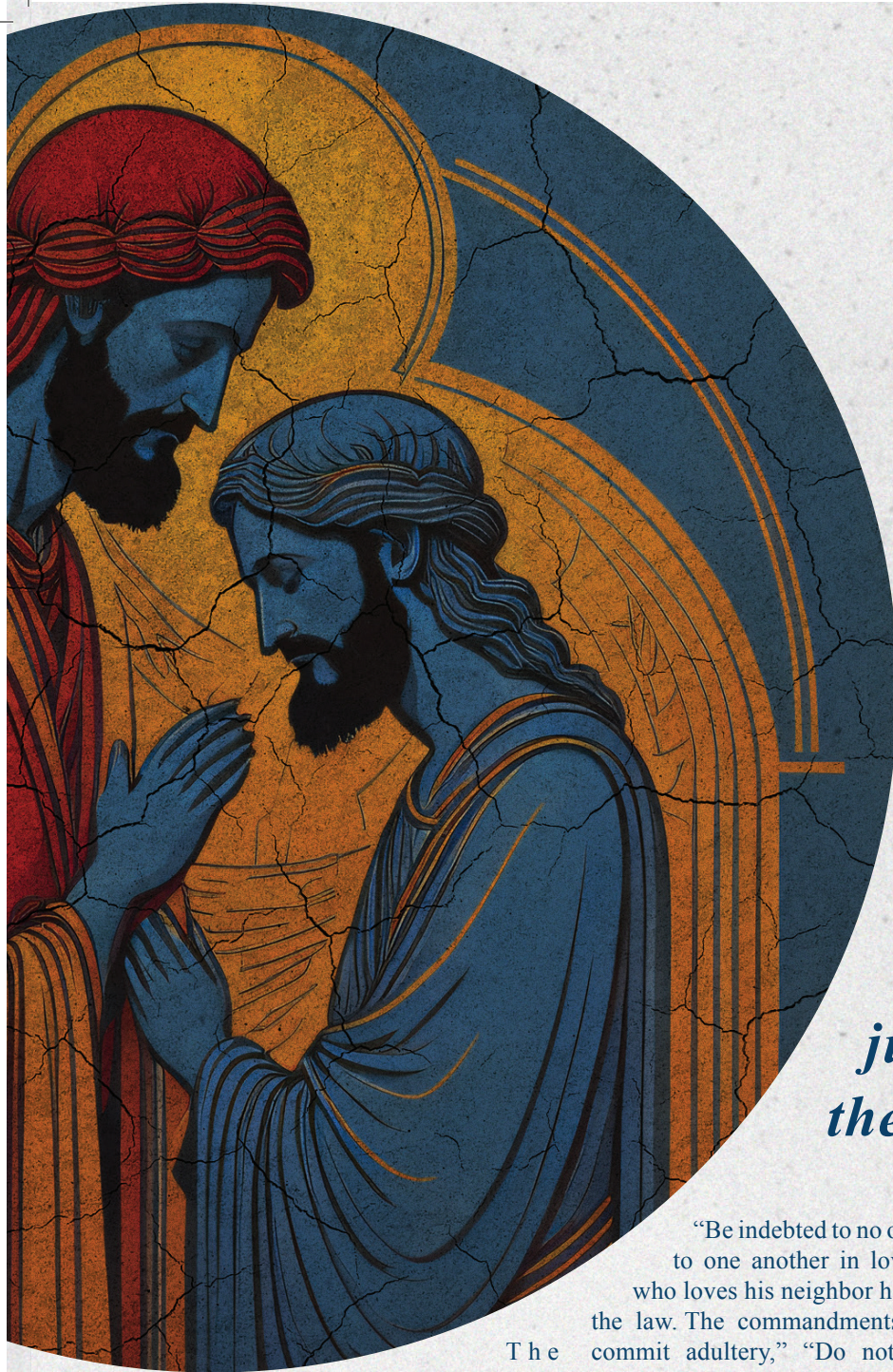
Loving one's neighbor means we must help the needy and the foreigners; we must not steal, lie, or deceive; we must not be unjust or biased, but we must judge right, etc. Our love is manifested in the words and deeds that we say and do to our neighbor. To illustrate this, Yeshua told the parable of the Good Samaritan to another expert of the law (Luke 10:25–37). Loving one's neighbor means that in our dealings, we are fair and reliable and address and treat everyone we meet kindly.

“If you really fulfill the royal law stated in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

Whoever keeps the whole law but stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom” (James 2:8–12).



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The Apostle Paul concludes that to love one's neighbor is to refuse to do anything that could harm them. Love is the fulfillment of the law because all the commandments of God's law (the Torah) are summed up in it.

"Be indebted to no one, except to one another in love. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and any other commandments, are summed up in this one decree: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8–10).

May the Good God give us the grace and the strength to love ourselves so that we will be able to love our neighbors, treat them justly, and work for their well-being, as the Word of God and the Lord's commandments teach us. If we honor His words, we will inherit eternal life and become citizens of God's Kingdom, which has been prepared for the followers of Yeshua the Messiah, the people of God, since the creation of the world (Matthew 25:31–46).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Keijo Lindeman is a retired Finnish electrical engineer and writer. He has been a believer and Bible teacher for more than 50 years, focusing especially on Israel, restoration, and prophecy. His organization, Israel-Apu Ry, has supported Netivyah for more than 30 years, and it has regularly hosted its founder, Joseph Shulam, to teach in Finland for its Israel-seminars and meetings.

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