

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

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The Two Greatest Commandments

The Whole Law and the Prophets

Matityah [Matthew] 22:37-40

37 And He said to him,

***“You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind.***

38 This is the great and first commandment.

39 And a second like it is this,

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

40 On these two commandments the whole law hangs, and the prophets.”

If one would categorize all the commandments found in the Torah, he could place them under one or the other of these two commandments. This simply means that every commandment, ordinance, or judgment in Torah, is dealing either with one's relationship with YHWH or one's relationship with his fellow man. His commandments are about being at peace with Him first of all, and then with those one comes into contact with.

Let us discuss these two commandments briefly in order to have a good handle on what they actually mean.

The Greatest Commandment

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 6:5

“And you shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Yeshua quotes this verse. However, this verse is part of a sentence. In fact, it is part of a section of Scripture that is known as the Shema. Let us place this whole passage before us.

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 6:4-9

4 "Hear, Yisrael, YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one;

5 and you shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

6 And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart;

7 and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.

8 And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.

9 And you shall write them upon the door-posts of your house, and upon your gates."

The greatest commandment does indeed consist of loving YHWH our Elohim with all our heart, soul, and might. But how do we do that? Can we even hope to do that if we do not understand the context of this commandment?

First, we need to understand that YHWH is one. The beginning of our love and devotion begins here. We do not have to understand this concept in its fullness, but we do need to acknowledge it. We can believe it in the context of however YHWH means it, without understanding precisely what He means! That is where our keeping of this commandment begins.

The keeping of this commandment continues, with us teaching our children that YHWH is one, and to love Him with our whole being; i.e., heart, soul, and might. We are to do this at all times. We are to teach our children when we are at home. We are to teach our children this as we go from place to place. We are to teach this to our children at bedtime. We are to teach this to our children early in the morning when we first get up. We are to carry this commandment in the forefront of our minds at all times. We are to write this commandment upon our doorposts and upon our gates, so that as we come and go, we are reminded to love Elohim with our whole being.

When we teach our children in this fashion, then what they learn from our example, is that YHWH is first in everything that we do, at all times of the day, and regardless of where we might be. This is exactly what YHWH has commanded us to do in teaching our children to love Him. This also helps to insure that our children continue walking in the true faith. However, if we choose to disregard this commandment and attempt to teach our children in some other fashion that He has not commanded us, then how can we expect our children to love Elohim and to serve Him all their days? We cannot rightly expect this result by disregarding this commandment and doing things our own way.

The greatest difficulty that one finds in loving YHWH our Elohim, is that He is not in the physical realm in the same way and sense that you and I are physical beings. We cannot see Him. We cannot normally

hear His Voice in an audible way. We cannot discern Him with any of our physical senses. So, how does one go about having a relationship with a person that he cannot see?

The primary thing that we need to understand, is that in order to have a relationship with YHWH, then we are going to have to go about it in the manner in which He has prescribed. We cannot imagine something to be true about YHWH which is not true, and then go about acting as if it is true, when He has told us otherwise. To do such a thing is idolatry.

In our relationship with Him He has told us to do certain things. He has told us to remember the Shabbat. He has told us to keep and observe the festivals. He has told us to wear tzitzit upon the four corners of our clothing. He has told us that we can eat the meat of clean animals, and we are not to eat the meat of unclean animals. He has told us that we are not to make images of other deities or to have their names in our mouths. All these things and many others, He has told us so that we may be His people and worship and serve Him.

If we disregard the things that He has told us, but rather listen to the words of men to do as they say, who are we really serving: YHWH or man? In Christianity today, many of the things that are done in the way of worship have been passed down from generation to generation, and many do not even know what or where the origins of what they are doing came from. Many things in Christianity are simply the traditions of man.

Marqa [Mark] 7:6-9

6 And He said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

'This people honors Me with their lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

7 But in vain do they worship Me,

Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.'

8 You leave the commandment of Elohim, and hold fast the tradition of men."

9 And He said to them, "Full well do you reject the commandment of Elohim, that you may keep your tradition."

If Messiah was to come today and walk into any of our churches, synagogues, assemblies, or small groups, would He be welcomed? In almost every case He could, and probably would, say the above words. The response today from the religious, most likely would be as it was nearly two thousand years ago; I fear they would crucify Him all over again today. We must remove from our midst those things that He does not find pleasing. Among those things that are in our midst that are not pleasing to Him are the traditions of man that we follow rather than obeying His commandments to us.

And what excuse is given? The Law has been done away with. But who did away with the Law?

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:17

“Think not that I came to do away with the law or the prophets; I came not to do away with, but to bring it into its fullness.”

If anyone would try to tell you that it was Messiah who did away with the Law, please know that simply is not true! Yeshua Himself taught that He did not come to do away with the Law (Torah).

So how are we going to show our love for YHWH? By knowing and obeying His commandments. That is the primary way in which we show our love to Him. But our keeping of the second greatest commandment, is also a way in which we keep the first greatest commandment: by loving our neighbor as ourselves. And just exactly how do we do that?

The Second Greatest Commandment

Matithyah [Matthew] 22:39

39 “And a second like it is this,

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

There is a lot of nonsense in religious circles today about how this means that you have to love yourself or else you cannot love your neighbor. This has spawned a whole generation which has grown up with this false teaching of having one focused upon loving oneself. This is not Scriptural in the least! But what did it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

Yeshua fairly well answered that question when He was asked, “Who is my neighbor?” The answer that Yeshua gave that day, was the story about the man who fell among thieves and was beaten and robbed and left for dead. Then a priest passed by and did nothing to help this man. After that a Levite passed by and did nothing to help this man. Then, finally, a Samaritan man passed by and he stopped and helped the man. Then he loaded him up and took him to the nearest inn. There he arranged for care of this man until he was well enough to leave.

So who was the neighbor, Yeshua asks? The answer, of course: the man who helped him. So let us put the question in a slightly different form, and the answer still will be the same, but with greater instructional value for us. “Which of these men loved his neighbor as himself?” The answer is, once again, that the Samaritan man showed true self-sacrificing love towards the man in need. He loved this man as himself.

Simply put, to love one’s neighbor as oneself means to meet the needs as they become known. For instance, if you are hungry what do you do? You get something to eat. So if your neighbor is hungry what are you going to do to show your love for him? Feed him! If you are cold what are you going to do? You are going to put a coat on. If your neighbor is cold but has no coat, what are you going to do to

show your love for your neighbor? You will get a coat for him and put it on him so he will not be cold. Whatever the need that we have in ourselves, we will meet that need. Likewise, if we see a need in our neighbor, then in order to show our love for him, we must meet his need.

Ya'aqov [James] 2:15-16

15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food,

16 and one of you say to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled'; and yet you give them not the things needful to the body; what good does that do?

Notice that Ya'aqov teaches this exact thing in his epistle; i.e., that we are to meet the needs of those around us. Otherwise, what good is our faith? It is good for nothing, unless we love our neighbor enough to meet his needs.

Loving our neighbor as ourselves is about how we are treating others! It is not about loving oneself as some teach. When one examines the Torah Moshe, he will find such commandments as pulling a neighbor's ox out of the ditch, even on Shabbat. See, here is the thing: if we have an ox and it falls into a ditch, we will pull it out. We will do that even on Shabbat. As well we should! Likewise, if our neighbor's ox falls into a ditch, then we are to get that animal out of the ditch as if it were our own animal. That is the commandment of Torah!

Another Torah commandment, is that if we see an animal that has fallen under its burden, we are commanded to relieve it of its burden so it can get back upon its feet. We would certainly do this for our own beast of burden. And to show our love for our neighbor, we are to do the same for his beast of burden. Loving our neighbors as ourselves is about taking care of our neighbors. It is about watching over those around us as if they are our own family, because they are our family!

B'reshit [Genesis] 4:9

YHWH said to Ka'yin, "Where is Hevel your brother?" And he replied, "I don't know; am I my brother's keeper?"

Torah teaches us that the answer to that question is, "Yes, we are our brother's keeper." This is what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves. When we are living and keeping Torah, then we will always be watching over one another in love, care, and respect. The thing that we need to see here, is that this matter of obeying the second greatest commandment is about what we are doing to our neighbor. It is not about what we believe (doctrine). There are many who wrongly teach that these types of commandments only apply between believers. And, some go so far as to teach that these commandments can only rightly be applied to those of the same doctrine. Furthermore, if one is not a part of the same group, then these commandments do not apply to others outside their group. These types of teaching are clearly against Torah and all of Scripture.

Let us consider this passage.

Shemot [Exodus] 12:49

One law shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourns among you.

Unless the Torah specifically states otherwise, all Torah commandments are for the entire nation of Israel and those who live among them, regardless of what they believe.

Don't you think that it is about time that we started acting like His people and behaving in a way that is pleasing to Him? Should we not begin by loving our neighbor whom we can see?

Yochanan Aleph [1st John] 4:20

If a man says, "I love Elohim", and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, cannot love Elohim whom he has not seen.

Yeshua tied the two greatest commandments together for a very good reason. We cannot truly keep one without keeping the other. If we are to have any hope of keeping and obeying the greatest commandment to love Elohim, then we must, of necessity, keep and obey the second greatest commandment. This is how we prove to those around us, and to Elohim Himself, that we love Him, by loving our neighbor.

I have been used, and experienced more abuse and mistreatment at the hands of so-called "believers", than I have ever experienced at the hands of those who make no such claim. Brethren, this ought not to be so! Let us all, with one heart, determine, that as far as is possible for each of us, to treat all men with the kindness and compassion which He has bestowed upon us!

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