

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

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Repairing Broken Relationships

The True Purpose of Matthew 18

Mashiach Yeshua understood the condition of fallen man and how he has a tendency not to walk in the light, but rather to walk in darkness. This darkness is made greater by the seeking to serve oneself rather than to serve others as Yeshua came to do and as He called us to do if we truly desire to be a part of His kingdom. One cannot be consistently putting forth self and expect to be a part of His kingdom. We must put forth Mashiach Yeshua. In doing so, then, we will do as He desires rather than doing the desires of self.

The bigger that one's family is, the more relationships that one has. And the more relationships that one has, the more potential one has for difficulties in this area. This is one of the reasons that Yeshua taught us concerning this matter on how to go about healing a relationship that is strained or broken. Strained or broken relationships happen when sin enters into a person's life. Yeshua taught us how to deal with the sin when this happens.

Matithyah (Matthew) 18:14-17

14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

15 And if your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between yourself and him alone; if he hears you, then you have gained your brother.

16 But if he does not hear you, take with you one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the assembly; and if he refuses to hear the assembly also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the publican."

Most things written today concerning the "Matthew 18 process", as it has come to be known, deal with verses 15-17 and ignore verse 14. However, may I please submit to you that those who ignore verse 14 do so at their own peril? Why?

Do you want to be guilty of causing one of His little ones to stumble and perish from His kingdom? I know I sure do not want to be guilty of this and have to answer for it on Judgment

Day! If we are going to walk carefully and fearfully before YHWH our Elohim so that we do not cause a fellow Israelite to stumble, then we need to conduct ourselves in such a manner so as to entreat rather than accuse. Making accusations at one another do nothing to foster good will and growth in His Spirit. Accusations merely drive the wedge of separation that has come into a relationship deeper and pushes those who need healing further apart. In order to keep this from happening then, we need to obey our Master's commandments in restoring relationships.

Ya'aqov (James) 5:20

Let him know, that he who converts a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

This verse does not suggest that we as followers of Mashiach Yeshua can save another person and give to him eternal life, rather it shows the awesome power and responsibility that we carry in being righteous stewards of the grace of YHWH and Blood of Mashiach.

One can only do this if the motivation is true love: love of YHWH first and love of one's neighbor second. Yeshua was asked at one point by a young Pharisee, "Who is my neighbor?" But the answer that Yeshua gave was unexpected for He did not tell the young man who his neighbor was, but rather told him to go and be a neighbor to those around him. I wonder how many of us really and truly get the point that Yeshua made that day?

The walk that Yeshua has called us to live is not about who is my neighbor, but rather who am I being a neighbor to? Yeshua also said it in another way: that He came to serve, not to be served. He has called us to do the same thing. In the story that Yeshua told to illustrate this point He told us nothing about the person who was in need. Why? He told us nothing about the person in need simply because the circumstances of the person in need are not relevant. What is relevant is this: are we helping those in need? The truth is that we cannot know with certainty who is a member of the covenant and who is not a member of the covenant by simply looking at the outward appearances of a person. Furthermore, whether a person is part of His kingdom or not is not to be the determining factor of who we help and who we do not help. The determining factor must always be His Spirit.

In dealing with others where a relationship is strained or broken, then we must have the default setting of obeying the written code of how to deal with such situations. However, His Spirit must always have the final say as to each situation. But in these interactions we must take great care that we approach each person in His Spirit and in the fruit of His Spirit lest we cause one who is young in the faith to stumble. It cannot be stressed strongly enough these words of Yeshua.

Matithyah (Matthew) 18:6-7

6 "But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it would be better for him that a great millstone should be hung about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe to the world because of occasions of stumbling! For it is necessary that the occasions

come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion for stumbling comes!"

When dealing with others and the occasion is one of a strained or broken relationship and especially where sin is present, then we must give all due diligence to make every effort to restore, rather than divide and separate. We must conduct ourselves in such a way that we never cause another one to stumble. We must approach such a one with an attitude of love and care and compassion so that they will be able to hear our words and make a decision based upon Torah and righteousness. Our words must be spiritual and not fleshly. Our words must bring to their attention the sin and wrong doing without threatening or demeaning them as a person.

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 14:8

For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war?

There are many times when we must stand in the place of a watchman. When we do this we need to be very faithful to make sure that the warning that we sound is clearly understood. If one gives an unclear warning, then is the person truly warned? Not according to Scriptural standards! We cannot afford to have another person's blood upon us at Judgment Day. We cannot even afford to have our own blood upon us, let alone another's blood. So we need to give a clear, concise and emotionally free warning so that it is heard and understood by the hearer.

But how can we do this when the other person is acting in a way that is not in accordance with Scriptural teaching? That is, when another person is living in sin, how do we approach such a person?

First, we need to understand that in this process of restoration, the person initiating the process must first go through the process himself. What do we mean by this?

Matithyah (Matthew) 7:1-5

1 "Judge not, that you be not judged.

2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure out, it shall be measured to you.

3 And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam that is in your own eye?

4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me cast out the speck out of your eye'; and behold, the beam is in your own eye?

5 You hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of your own eye; and then you shall see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother's eye."

This is actually the first step in the Matthew 18 process: getting one's own spiritual house in order first. If this is not done first, then the result of any Matthew 18 process is nearly guaranteed to be disastrous for all parties involved. If we are going to see clearly how to remove any speck out of our brother's eye, then we need to get the log or beam out of our own

eye first. But herein lies part of the difficulty.

Many are quick to jump to conclusions and make snap judgments and declare from the outset that so-and-so is not my brother. When this is done then such action and attitude derails all Scriptural mandates for us to love our neighbor as ourselves. It derails any possibility of reconciliation and restoration and repentance on anyone's part. In fact, it sets the stage for a little one to stumble. While YHWH knows the hearts of all, we do not. The heart of another can be revealed to us, but only if proper procedure and due course is followed. We only have another's actions to judge and go by, which can easily be misunderstood and misinterpreted.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:18

and the judges shall make diligent inquiry; and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and have testified falsely against his brother;

When a matter arises in which a judgment must be made, before a proper judgment can be made, then diligent inquiry must be done. And if diligent inquiry is not made, then can true justice be served? No! How would you like it if others jumped to wrong conclusions about you, but did not ever come to you personally and seek to discover your side or your point of view? Torah actually commands us that we must hear from the accused person before a righteous decision can be made.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15-19

15 "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sins; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established.

16 If an unrighteous witness rise up against any man to testify against him of wrong-doing, 17 then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before YHWH, before the priests and the judges that shall be in those days;

18 and the judges shall make diligent inquisition; and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and have testified falsely against his brother;

19 then shall you do to him, as he had thought to do to his brother; so shall you put away the evil from your midst."

YHWH wants us to be very careful about bringing accusations of wrong doing against one another. To make an accusation which turns out to be false is to bring a curse down upon one's own head. Now no one in his right mind would want to do that! Please note that part of making a diligent inquiry is to make sure that the person accused of wrong doing is allowed to answer the charges. This also allows him to repent and mend his ways. It also allows for any possible misunderstandings or misinterpretations to be rectified.

If a person brings charges and they turn out to be false charges, then the person who brought the false charges is cast out of Israel to remove the evil from our midst. Make no mistake about it, in the eyes of YHWH it is evil to knowingly bring false charges against another person.

Matithyah (Matthew) 7:12

“All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them; for this is the Torah and the prophets.”

The above has come to be known as The Golden Rule. We are called to interact with others in such a manner as we would like to be treated. The way that we want to be treated, the way that we expect to be treated, with love, dignity and respect, is the way that we are commanded to treat others. There is no place in His kingdom for interacting with others from a selfish point of view, and especially not with an air of self-righteousness.

Yes, Yeshua is our example on what our lives should look like. However, there is one major difference that we dare not forget. We are not Mashiach Yeshua. We cannot look into the hearts and minds of those around us and know with certainty what is in a person’s mind in the same manner the way that He did. Furthermore, He is the Judge of all. While we are commanded to have righteous judgment in this life, we do not have the right or authority to condemn another without due process.

While it is noble to want to emulate Mashiach, it is better to obey Him in all that He has commanded us to do, both in writing and now via His Spirit.

Our dealings with one another should always exhibit the fruit of His Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 meekness, self-control; against such there is no Torah.

We should exhibit the fruit of His Spirit at all times. However, if there should be a time when it is needed more than at another, then it would be when we are going through a Matthew 18 process in order to restore another back into the fold of His sheep. This is a difficult process to be sure, but one that is actually commanded for us in Torah.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 19:17-18

17 “You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

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 YHWH.”

It is because none of us is perfect that we will from time to time fall short of the standard of love and holiness that YHWH has called us to live and walk every day. When this happens, then hopefully a loving brother will come to us and gently point out to us the error of our way. If we happen to be the one called upon to do the pointing out, then we need to be very careful that if the brother chooses to depart and not to repent, that his choice has not been influenced by us in any way. We need to do all possible in His Spirit to restore him as a brother.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 1:16-17

16 "Wash, make yourself clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil;

17 learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow."

In our walk that YHWH has called us to, He commands us to watch out for others, particularly those who cannot watch out for themselves. But above all, we are to do justice for all regardless of who they are or what station in life YHWH has placed them in.

Yirmeyah (Jeremiah) 7:5-6

5 "For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor;

6 if you oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt:"

We are commanded to "thoroughly" execute justice between one brother and another; if we are to do this, then we must make diligent inquiry of all matters. Surely, diligent inquiry must include going to an individual in private just as Yeshua commanded us to do. How can one make diligent inquiry into any matter if the individual in question is not approached and talked to? It cannot be!

Ya'aqov (James) 2:10-13

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole Torah, and yet stumble in one point, he has become guilty of all.

11 For he that said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." Now if you do not commit adultery, but kill, you have become a transgressor of the Torah.

12 So speak, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a Torah of liberty.

13 For judgment is without mercy to him that has showed no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

If we desire to have mercy on the Day of Judgment, then we had better practice mercy in our everyday living. For, if we do not hand out mercy here in this life, then we cannot rightly expect to receive mercy on that day.

Many take the passage in Matthew 18 and only look at that as a definitive answer on how to get rid of unwanted or unwelcome people. However, when we look at the whole counsel of Scripture we find that there is additional information that we rightly need to consider when approaching another person to deal with him about a sin or other such matter that is causing friction or difficulty in the body of Mashiach. When we do approach another, we need to make sure that we do not become guilty ourselves of casting out a little one of the faith. This can only be ascertained through diligent inquiry.

Let us not forget that part of the fruit of the Spirit is patience. As such this means that we do

not get in a hurry just to get rid of a problem, instead of making the proper inquiry and taking all the time necessary to make sure that justice is done for all concerned, particularly for YHWH and for His Torah.

YHWH has laid down guidelines for us to follow in dealing with one another. In dealing with one another the highest commandment is this:

Matithyah (Matthew) 22:39

***“And a second like unto it is this,
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”***

Of course, Yeshua is quoting the Torah when He is teaching this. This commandment is second only to loving YHWH with all our heart, mind and strength. It is the above commandment that should regulate every action and interaction between brothers.

Lastly, let us not forget this passage.

B’midbar (Numbers) 15:16

“One Torah and one ordinance shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourns with you.”

If there is one who comes among us and desires to dwell among us and to learn the ways of YHWH and His Torah, and such a one is willing to abide by His Torah, then he is to be treated as if he were a member of Israel. We are not to have a different set of laws for him. He is to be governed by the same Torah that governs us. Besides, we do not know whether he may in fact become a part of Israel one day or even now, but we just cannot see the fruit thereof because he is a young plant and has not borne fruit for His kingdom yet.

More than anything this whole process is about obeying our Master and doing things right, about doing things the way that He has commanded us to do them.

But what about Pinchas, who certainly did not take the time to go through any process but killed two people at the doorway of the tent of meeting? Furthermore, YHWH rewarded him and all his descendants with an eternal covenant for this action.

There may well be times when another’s sin is of such a magnitude that it calls for some immediate and drastic action on one’s part. But let us remember that in the case of Pinchas, YHWH was going through the camp with a plague and killing Israelites. The action of Pinchas stopped the plague. What this teaches us is that unless there is a plague from YHWH, hasty action is most likely not warranted and the proper process must be followed.

Following is an example of how this would be applied in a practical manner.

There are two main passages that I would like to place before us as being absolutely crucial to knowing how to conduct ourselves in a manner that will both please YHWH and bring glory and

honor to Him.

Matithyah (Matthew) 18:14-17

14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

15 And if your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between yourself and him alone; if he hears you, then you have gained your brother.

16 But if he does not hear you, take with you one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the assembly; and if he refuses to hear the assembly also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the publican."

The things pertinent from the above passage are as follows:

1. If a person witnesses a brother sinning, then he should go to that brother in private to see if he can be turned from his wrong doing.
2. If he does not turn from his wrong doing, then the first brother is to take two more with him so that the one engaged in wrong doing can see the seriousness of his actions. Please note that these two or three are not just any two or three people, but are witnesses as well to that which is in question. This too is in private.
3. If he still does not turn from his wrong doing then it is brought before the assembly. Exactly what that means will be seen below in the next passage.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15-19

15 "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sins; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established.

16 If an unrighteous witness rise up against any man to testify against him of wrong-doing, 17 then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before YHWH, before the priests and the judges that shall be in those days;

18 and the judges shall make diligent inquisition; and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and have testified falsely against his brother;

19 then shall you do to him, as he had thought to do to his brother; so shall you put away the evil from your midst."

Here is what is pertinent from this passage:

1. One witness is not enough to bring charges against another.
2. Two or three witnesses are necessary to properly determine any matter.
3. The man accused must be heard from by the judges.
4. The judges must take adequate time to make diligent inquiry before rendering a decision in any given matter.
5. If the charges turn out to be false, then what was going to happen to the one accused, then happens to the accuser.

When we blend these two passages into a working model it might look something like this:

1. Wrong doing is observed by another and then that person approaches the person engaged in wrong doing to see if he will repent and turn from his sin back to YHWH.
2. If this person does not repent, then at least two others who are also witnesses go with the person who originally observed the wrong doing to impress upon said person the error of his ways.
3. If this person still does not repent, then it is brought before the judges. Please note this very important point, the witnesses are NOT the judges! The judges must not be witnesses. In order for this to work properly and in an orderly fashion, then those bringing the charges cannot be involved in the rendering of a judgment, nor in the carrying out of the verdict if that verdict is restitution or punishment.

It is at this very point that I have been troubled in the past as I have witnessed the accuser of a brother also become his judge in what he was being accused of doing. I did not understand why until I understood that one person is not to be the prosecutor, judge, and executioner in a society based upon Torah.

The men who are to judge a matter are selected by the Spirit of YHWH, men of good reputation and in whom the Spirit of YHWH dwells. If a matter then comes to the point that it needs to be presented for a judgment, then the witnesses are only that, just witnesses.

In this way Torah is being followed and the teachings of Mashiach are being lived in our everyday lives. We are doing our very best to watch out for all of His people, the good, the not so good and those still young in the faith.

But what happens in the process if a person is gone to in private and does not repent. Then, two others are taken and he is approached again in private and still does not repent, but then refuses to come before the judges? We find that Scripture records an incident dealing with this exact matter.

B'midbar (Numbers) 16:12

And Moshe sent to call Dathan and Aviram, the sons of Eliav; and they said, "We will not come up!"

Moshe had sent a request, in effect a summons, but these two men refused to heed the summons. Notice how Moshe handled this situation.

B'midbar (Numbers) 16:25

And Moshe rose up and went to Dathan and Aviram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

If a person who is being taken through the process of restoration and has been gone to in private by an individual and then by that same individual along with two other witnesses, and

then refuses to come before the assembly, then the assembly goes to him. In this way the process will come to its conclusion and is not left unfinished.

May this also be for our instruction that when a person refuses to humble himself and repent and then chooses to make it worse by not coming before the assembly, that YHWH will deal in an appropriate manner with such persons and it will not be a pleasant thing. Brothers and sisters in Mashiach, think well before refusing to come before a judge that YHWH has lifted up! For doing so may well be one's downfall in which there will be no place for repentance.

ABBA YHWH, give each one of us Your wisdom and understanding that we may do justice in Your eyes; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

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