



ONE TORAH FOR ALL

One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
Exodus 12:49

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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The Two Greatest Commandments

The Whole Law and the Prophets

Matithyah (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 were to 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 with whom one comes into contact.

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 known as the Shema. Here is the whole passage.

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 one's heart, soul, and might. But how does a person do that? Can one even hope to do that if he does not understand the context of this commandment?

First, one needs to understand that YHWH is one. This is the beginning of love and devotion. One does not have to understand this concept in its fullness, but he does need to acknowledge it. One can believe it in the context of however YHWH means it, without understanding precisely what He means! That is where one's keeping of this commandment begins.

The keeping of this commandment continues with each person teaching his children that YHWH is one, and to love Him with their whole being, that is, heart, soul, and might. YHWH desires for each person to do this at all times. Each one is to teach his children when he is at home. He is to teach his children this as he goes from place to place. He is to teach this to his children at bedtime. He is to teach this to his children early in the morning when he first gets up. He is to carry this commandment in the forefront of his mind at all times. He is to write this commandment upon his doorposts and upon his gates, so that as he comes and goes, he is reminded to love Elohim with his whole being.

When each person teaches his children in this fashion, then what they learn from his example, is that YHWH is first in everything that he does, at all times of the day, and regardless of where he might be. This is exactly what YHWH has commanded each person to do in teaching his children to love Him. This also helps to insure that one's children will continue to walk in the true faith. However, if a person chooses to disregard this commandment and attempts to teach his children in some other fashion that He has not commanded, then how can such a person expect his children to love Elohim and to serve Him all their days? He cannot rightly expect this result by disregarding this commandment and doing things his own way.

The greatest difficulty 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. Man cannot see Him with his physical eyes. He cannot normally hear His Voice in an audible way. He cannot discern Him with any of his physical senses. So, how does one go about having a relationship with this Person that he cannot see?

The primary thing that one needs to understand is that, in order to have a relationship with YHWH, he is going to have to go about it in the manner in which YHWH has prescribed. One 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 commanded otherwise. To do such a thing is idolatry.

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

If a person disregards the things that YHWH has instructed His people, but rather listens to the words of men to do as they say, who is such a person really serving: YHWH or the man to whom he listens? 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 the 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. His people 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.

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 verify it."

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 does a person show his love for YHWH? Simply by knowing and obeying His commandments, particularly through the agency of shema, that is, hearing and obeying His Voice. That is the primary way in which one shows his love to Him. But one's keeping of the second greatest commandment is also a way in which a person keeps the first greatest commandment: by loving his neighbor as himself. And just exactly how does a person 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 a person has to love himself or else he cannot love his 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 does 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. Please consider the question in a slightly different form in which the answer will still be the same, but with greater instructional value: "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 a person has in himself, he will meet in another. Likewise, if a person sees a need in his neighbor, then in order to show his love for him, he must meet the need of his neighbor.

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 one is to meet the needs of those around him. Otherwise, what good is his faith? It is good for nothing, unless he loves his neighbor enough to meet his needs.

Loving one's neighbor as himself is about how he is 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 a person has an ox and it falls into a ditch, he will pull it out. One will do that even on Shabbat. As well he should! Likewise, if one's neighbor's ox falls into a ditch, then he is to get that animal out of the ditch as if it were his own animal. That is the commandment of Torah!

Another Torah commandment is that if one sees an animal that has fallen under its burden, YHWH commands His people to relieve it of its burden so it can get back upon its feet. One would certainly do this for his own beast of burden. And to show one's love for his neighbor, he is to do the same for his neighbor's beast of burden. Loving one's neighbor as himself is about taking care of his neighbor. It is about watching over those around him as if they are his own family, because they are 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 that the answer to that question is, "Yes, we are our brother's keeper." This is what it means to love one's neighbor as himself. When one is living and keeping Torah, then he will always be watching over others in love, care, and respect. The thing that one needs to see here is that this matter of obeying the second greatest commandment is about what he is doing to his neighbor. It is not about what one believes (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.

Please 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. One cannot truly keep one commandment without keeping the other. If a person is to have any hope of keeping and obeying the greatest commandment to love Elohim, then he must, of necessity, keep and obey the second greatest commandment. This is how a person proves to those around him, and to Elohim Himself, that he loves YHWH: by loving his neighbor.

I have 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 each one, 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 each one of us!

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