

Love Your Neighbor: Concrete Actions or Abstract Notions

This is a continuation of the teaching of Jesus that began in Matthew 22:34-38. A lawyer asked Jesus this question:

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Torah?”

This is the answer Jesus gave him:

*“You shall love Yahweh your Elohim (God) with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind.”
This is the first and great commandment.*

And then Jesus added (Matthew 22:39):

*And the second is like it:
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

In the exploration of Matthew 22:34-38, I discussed the popular style of teaching Jesus used called “**remez**” (“**hinting**”). He hinted at Deuteronomy 6:4-6 to make his points. This time he is hinting at Leviticus 19:13-18, which I call, “**The Neighbor Code**.” We will need to watch for “**you shall love your neighbor as yourself**” in that context.

I will use a typical English translation, except when the name of God appears.

13 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. **14** You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your Elohim: I *am* Yahweh.

15 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. **16** You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* Yahweh.

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* Yahweh.”

Once again we find a list of “**concrete actions**,” not “**abstract notions**.” In order to “**do this love**,” people must do the following. This time I will translate the ancient meanings of the Hebrew words:

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1. You shall not “**defraud, oppress, be cruel, or slander**” your **neighbor**.
2. You shall not **rob him** “**the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with you all night**” until the morning.
3. You shall not “**curse, insult, speak evil of**” the deaf.
4. You shall not put a **stumbling block** before the blind.
5. You shall **fear** your Elohim.
6. You shall do no “**unfaithfulness, wrong, unjust, perversity**” in judgment.
7. You shall not **respect** the person of the **poor** in judgment.
8. You shall not **honor** the person of the “**mighty, great**” in judgment.
9. You shall in “**loyalty and faithfulness**” judge your **neighbor**.
10. You shall not go up and down as a “**talebearer, detractor, whisperer, slanderer**” among **your people**.
11. You shall not “**stand against, be a false witness**” the “**blood, life**” of your **neighbor**.
12. You shall not **hate** your brother in your heart.
13. You shall “**earnestly, openly, certainly**” “**rebuke, lecture**” your **neighbor**.
14. You shall not “**suffer, bear, incur**” sin because of him.
15. You shall not “**take vengeance, make attempts to get equal with, seek revenge,**” nor “**bear any grudge**” against the children of your people.
16. You shall “**love your neighbor as yourself.**”

In order to “**love your neighbor as yourself**” (#16), you must do the 15 things that came before it. In Hebrew they appear in the form of what we call a **parallelism**. Below is an example. #12 and #13 are written in parallel to each other.

- Line 1: *You shall not hate your brother in your heart.*
- Line 2: *You shall “earnestly, openly, certainly” “rebuke, lecture” your neighbor.*

Lesson:

*If you do not correct your neighbor when he sins,
you will hate your brother in your heart.*

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This teaching of Jesus has listed **27 things** people can “**do to love God and their neighbor.**”

But Jesus hasn't finished the lesson yet. In Matthew 22:40 he says:

“On these two commandments hang all the Torah and the Prophets.”

I will explain that in my next email.

Shalom,
Jim Myers, President
Biblical Heritage Center, Inc.

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