



TORAH CLUB

WHERE DISCIPLES LEARN



JESUS, My Rabbi

The Life and Teachings
of the Jewish Jesus

LESSON

34

STUDENT WORKBOOK

THE EXTRA MILE

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MATTHEW 5:31-48

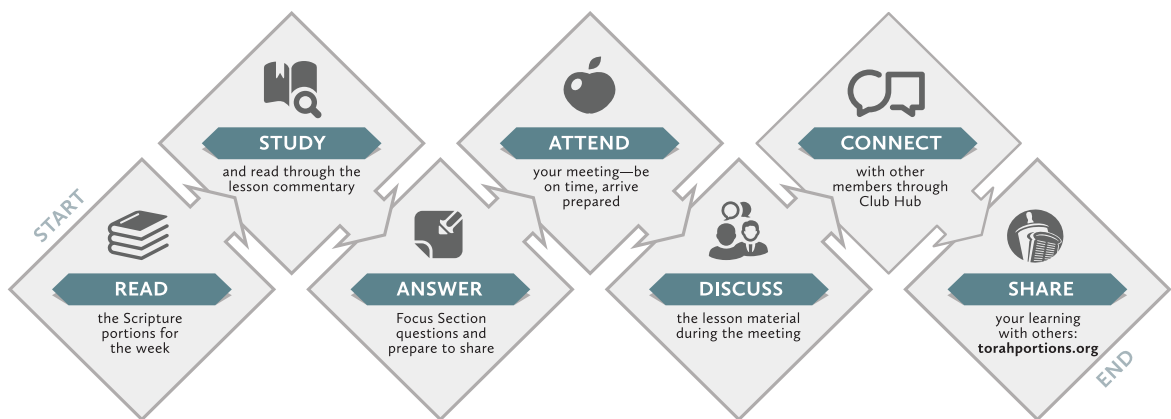
MAY 9-15, 2021



THE EXTRA MILE

ON THIS JOURNEY: Yeshua remains atop the hill by Lake Galilee, surrounded by His disciples. Continuing to bring out “treasures new and old,” He leads them deeper into an understanding of what it looks like to live as a subject of the kingdom of heaven, imitating the righteous character of God. His disciples are made to understand the high calling of a disciple and the standard to which they must hold themselves.

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LESSON 34: THE EXTRA MILE



READING: MATTHEW 5:31–48

LESSON OVERVIEW

THIS WEEK we continue with our third lesson on the Sermon on the Mount. Yeshua admonishes His disciples to hold themselves to an unimpeachable moral standard. With many examples, He paints a picture of what it means to live in peace and harmony with those around us, giving way when we need to give way, and not constantly fighting for what we feel is owed to us. He shows how to take the moral high road in multiple situations, placing others above ourselves and walking in humility. For example, He places narrow limits on the permissibility of divorce, protecting women from being frivolously tossed aside. He forbids the swearing of oaths, teaching that a person’s word should simply be completely trustworthy; one must be the type of person who would never even be suspected of lying. Yeshua instructs His disciples not to personally retaliate against those who have hurt or shamed them and even calls them to avoid going to court to litigate for damages. He calls them to go the extra mile and never turn away those in need. He exhorts His followers to show kindness to their enemies and pray for those who hate them. Finally, He commands them to be impartial in all their dealings. While some have interpreted these passages as replacements for or abrogations of Torah law, Yeshua, in fact, upholds and even strengthens the force of the Torah’s commandments, calling His followers to a new level of devout observance, going far beyond the letter of the Law.

This lesson of *Jesus, My Rabbi* corresponds to Book 2, pages 482–493 of *Chronicles of the Messiah*.

FOCUS SECTIONS

FOCUS SECTIONS combine mechanical, text derived questions ensuring familiarity with the lesson content and more in-depth group discussion topics.

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PRAYER (HAREINI MEKASHER: I HEREBY JOIN)

I HEREBY JOIN Myself to the Master, Yeshua the Messiah, the righteous one, who is the bread of life, and the true light, the source of eternal salvation for all those who hear Him.

Like a branch that remains in a vine, so may I remain in Him, just as He also remains in the Father and the Father in Him, in order that they may remain in us.

May the grace of the Master, Yeshua the Messiah, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abound to us.

THE EXTRA MILE

FOCUS
SECTION
1

DIVORCE

It was said, “Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce”; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5:31–32)

Yeshua’s discussion of divorce hinges on His interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, which says that if a man marries a woman and “she finds no favor in his eyes” because he discovers “some indecency” in her conduct, he shall write her a certificate of divorce that permits her to remarry. Rabbi Yeshua did not contradict the Torah’s law of divorce, but He did narrow its scope. The Master forbade divorcing a woman for trivial reasons. Yeshua’s teaching on divorce contradicted the lenient view of some Pharisees (the disciples of Hillel), who maintained that a man could legitimately divorce a woman for any reason. Yeshua pointed out that the Torah sanctions divorce only when the marriage has been compromised by sexual indecency.

According to Yeshua, if the husband sends his wife away without proper grounds for divorce, and she remarries, he bears guilt in the eyes of heaven as if he had caused her to commit adultery. No guilt is accorded to the wrongfully divorced woman. The responsibility remains upon the man because he issued the divorce. Likewise, in the eyes of heaven, if a man marries an illegitimately divorced woman, he marries another man’s wife and enters an adulterous relationship. Again, the heavenly court does not accord guilt to the woman he marries, but only to him and her previous husband.

STUDY QUESTIONS

FOCUS
SECTION
1

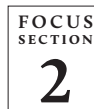
1. According to the position espoused by the lenient Pharisees, for what reasons could a man issue his wife a certificate of divorce?

2. Does Yeshua's teaching on divorce contradict the Torah? Explain your answer.

3. Who bears the guilt in the case of an improper divorce?

GROUP DISCUSSION: What might we learn about the weight and importance of marriage from Yeshua's teaching on divorce?

OATHS AND VOWS



You have heard that the ancients were told, “You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the LORD.” But I say to you, make no oath at all. (Matthew 5:33–34)

The Torah allows for people to take oaths and vows, even as it strictly warns against falsely swearing in God's name. Leviticus 19:12 says, “You shall not swear falsely by My name,” and Numbers 30:3[2] says, “If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” Yeshua, on the other hand, instructed His disciples not to swear at all. Is this an example of the New Testament overturning the Torah?

At first glance, this teaching looks like a statement of antithesis—as if Yeshua forbids something that the Torah requires. On closer examination, there is no conflict between Yeshua's words and the Torah's instructions regarding oaths and vows. The Torah warns against making false vows or breaking vows and oaths, but it does not require a man to make a vow or an oath in the first place. Therefore, one who follows Yeshua's instruction to avoid oaths altogether does not violate the laws of the Torah.

Like Yeshua, many Jewish sages looked askance on taking vows and making oaths. Regarding the practice of vowing to abstain from something otherwise permissible, the sages said, “Are not the prohibitions laid down in the Torah sufficient for you, that you should seek to impose upon yourselves

still other prohibitions?” They regarded taking any vow or oath as a risky enterprise best avoided. They, therefore, sought to dissuade people from the practice of taking vows:

It was taught, “Never make a practice of vowing, for ultimately you will trespass in the matter of oaths.” (Talmud)

Whoever vows is as though he built a high place. (Talmud)

The sages also warned against taking an oath in God’s name for purposes of verification—for example, when one swears before a court that he did not abscond with another’s property that had been entrusted to him (Exodus 22:10–11). Though the Torah sanctioned the practice and law courts sometimes required it, the rabbis discouraged it. A man might be so certain of the truth that he swears in God’s name; at the same time, he might be mistaken or misled. It is better not to swear at all.

In the late first century, the Jewish historian Josephus recorded that the Essene community swore off swearing altogether. They insisted on such a high level of integrity that their simple word could be regarded as binding as an oath or vow:

Any word of theirs has more force than an oath; swearing they avoid, regarding it as worse than perjury, for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already. (Josephus, *Jewish War*)

Since Judaism attempts to sanctify the holy name of God by leaving it unpronounced and even avoids circumlocutions like “Adonai” outside of a liturgical context, people taking oaths and vows sought ways around swearing directly in God’s name. In Matthew 5:33, the Master quoted two passages of Torah (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:3[2]) that dishonest people apparently used in tandem to imply that only vows made in the name of the LORD were absolutely inviolable.

According to some opinions of the time, a man is bound by an oath only when it contains either the word “oath” or God’s name. An oath by any other holy object does not bind the man. The same issue was at work behind the Master’s rebuke in Matthew 23:16–22. In that passage, those who had sworn by the altar or by the Temple felt that they were not bound to their vow because they had avoided directly using God’s name.

Because people commonly used circumlocutions for God’s name, such as vowing by heaven, vowing by earth, or even vowing by Jerusalem, they felt less bound to their vows and oaths. Rabbi Yeshua warned His disciples that swearing by heaven or by earth is the same as swearing in the name

of God because “Heaven is God’s throne and the earth is His footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). He warned them that swearing by Jerusalem is the same as swearing in God’s name because Jerusalem is “the city of the great King” (Psalm 48:3[2]). According to some opinions, an oath taken on one’s own life could be retracted. Yeshua said, “Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black” (Matthew 5:36).

James, the brother of the Master, recapitulates, “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment” (James 5:12).

Obviously, some vows are necessary—for example, marriage vows or a nazirite vow. The Master’s prohibition should not be regarded as an absolute ban on vows, contracts, and promises. Instead, His disciples are to be people of such immense integrity that our simple “yes” is equivalent to an oath taken in the name of God. No further verification should ever be needed from us other than a “yes” or a “no.” The sages agree with the Master’s teaching. According to rabbinic standards of the Master’s day, an emphatic “yes” or an emphatic “no” should be regarded as binding as an oath.

“No” is an oath and “Yes” is an oath. (Talmud)

The “Yes” of the righteous is a yes, and the “No” of the righteous is no.”
(*Midrash Rabbah*)

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. Why might it be risky to swear an oath?
2. What loophole did some people use to create non-binding oaths? Did Yeshua approve of this practice?

3. If we are not supposed to swear oaths, what is the best way to ensure others feel we are trustworthy?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Swearing solemn oaths is not a common practice in Western culture today. What basic, practical principles can we take away from Yeshua's teaching in this passage?

FOCUS
SECTION
3

EYE FOR EYE

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (Matthew 5:38–39)

It's commonly believed that Yeshua's teachings about love, forgiveness, and turning the other cheek contradict the harsh Old Testament standard of justice. The Torah says, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” (Exodus 21:24–25). Yeshua seemed to contradict the rule of repaying measure-for-measure when He said, “I say to you, do not resist an evil person.”

Did Torah really encourage people to take personal revenge? No. In the context of Jewish interpretation, the Torah's eye-for-eye laws created axiomatic limits for restitution and damages imposed by formal courts of law. Eye-for-eye is a biblical expression for fair and equitable punishment. Jewish law courts did not actually poke out eyes and knock out teeth. Instead, the court of law ascribed a penalty or punishment considered to be of equal value (usually monetary) to the offense committed. “Eye-for-eye” means “let the punishment fit the crime.” The Torah imposes the eye-for-eye rule as a standard for liability in a court of law.

Nevertheless, people often invoke the standard of eye-for-eye as a justification for taking personal vengeance, and they did so in the days of the Master, too. Yeshua corrected that error. He urged His disciples to be an entirely different breed of people. His message to them was, “Do not press charges. Do not litigate. Do not demand your rights. Do not demand your fair measure or pound of flesh.” In the same regard, He told His disciples to turn the other cheek, settle out of court, and go the extra mile. These are

a few of the practical out-workings of His teaching regarding forgiveness: “If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matthew 6:14).

These instructions sound like impossible demands until we remember that there is a judge in a higher court of law who will one day settle all accounts. The Talmud offers corroboration:

Regarding those who are insulted but do not return an insult, those who are rebuked without replying, those who do good merely out of love for God and who rejoice in their sufferings, the scripture says [in Judges 5:31]: “Let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might.” Indeed, such a man keeps a matter in his heart and does not retaliate... He who passes over an opportunity to retaliate has all his transgressions passed over. (Talmud)

How does the principle of “turn the other cheek” work in a world threatened with violence, terrorism, and war?

Yeshua instructed His disciples to forgive injury and insult and forgo retaliation. He asked them to set aside their personal right to demand “an eye for an eye” and to turn the other cheek. He said, “I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matthew 5:39).

The Master’s censure on retaliation does not extend to an institutional level. He did not ask law courts to set aside justice for the sake of mercy, nor did He ask governments to adopt policies of pacifism and appeasement toward tyrants and adversaries. In no way does Yeshua imply that the Torah’s measure-for-measure principle of justice should be abandoned.

Imagine what would happen if a court of law decided to apply Yeshua’s instructions to the courtroom. Imagine a case involving an assailant and his victim. Suppose the judge decided to be merciful and pardon the guilty criminal based on Matthew 5:38–39, then told the victim that she must turn the other cheek and forgive the assailant. Such a court would be guilty of committing a serious injustice. God is a God of justice and truth, not injustice.

Likewise, some followers of Yeshua use the “do not resist an evil person” passage to justify an ideology of pacifism and non-violence. When we understand the words “do not resist an evil person” from a Semitic and Jewish perspective and compare those words with similar passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, Yeshua’s words carry the more direct meaning of “do not compete with an evil person in doing evil,” “do not retaliate.” That is to say, “Do not repay evil with evil.” Paul paraphrases the Master’s teaching when he says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

The Proverbs contain the same wisdom: “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; wait for the LORD, and He will save you” (Proverbs 20:22). Similarly, “Do not say, ‘Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me!’” (Proverbs 24:29).

Forgiveness is the prerogative and privilege of the injured. No one else can forgive on his or her behalf. Yeshua’s teachings against retaliation, personal vengeance, and demanding one’s “pound of flesh” apply to the individual, not to a court of law, not to a community, and not to a government. A court that sets aside the principles of punishment and fair compensation would be an unjust court. An administration that refuses to protect its citizens from aggression based on a principle of non-retaliation would be an unfit government. But praiseworthy and pious is the man or woman who willingly chooses to forgive an offender and forgo his or her right to exact a measure of retaliation.

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. How did the sages interpret the Torah’s commandment that one must take “an eye for an eye”?
2. What types of retaliation are covered by Yeshua’s instructions in this passage?
3. What does Yeshua warn may happen if His followers ignore His instructions here?
4. How might governments and courts of law be affected by Yeshua’s prohibition of retaliation?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Read Isaiah 1:21–23. What can happen to a nation when its government and courts refuse to enforce justice?

TURNING THE CHEEK

But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (Matthew 5:39)

Sometimes people think of the Law as a harsh standard that promoted eye-for-eye vendettas. According to this view, Yeshua came to replace the Torah's spirit of retaliation and harsh judgment with a new rule of pacifism and non-violence.

When Yeshua told His disciples, "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also" (Luke 6:29), He directed them to refrain from personal revenge and acts of retaliation; He did not prohibit them from acting in self-defense or the defense of others. He called His disciples to be merciful, forgiving, and long-suffering, but He did not call them to abandon protecting others or to submit willingly to brutality. Nor did He ask His disciples to receive blows without objecting. When the court officers in the house of Caiaphas smote Yeshua on the cheek, He protested the mistreatment, as did Paul when the high priest Ananias ordered him struck.

The blow to the cheek represents any insult, taunt, or public humiliation. According to the rabbis, striking a man on the cheek constituted a public shaming for which the rabbis imposed fines: two hundred *zuz* if a man struck another with his palm, four hundred *zuz* if he struck him with the back of his hand.

Yeshua did not contradict the Torah. Instead, He upheld the Torah principle that says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people" (Leviticus 19:18). Similarly, the Talmud says, "If your associate calls you a donkey, put a saddle on your back." This saying is not to be taken literally; rather, it means to accept the insult in love and forgive your fellow his blows. If you are struck, you must forgive the offender even if he does not ask for your forgiveness.

The *Didache* transmits Yeshua's teaching as, "If one gives you a blow upon your right cheek, turn to him the other also; and then you shall be perfect" (*Didache* 1.4). Yeshua lived out His teaching, suffering many a blow and violent wounding, as the Prophet Isaiah predicted, "I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Yeshua called His disciples to resist the urge to retaliate against insult and blow; instead, we are to leave the matter in the hands of God. As Paul wrote, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath

of God, for it is written [in Deuteronomy 32:35], ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).

FOCUS
SECTION

4

THE EXTRA MILE

If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.
(Matthew 5:40–41)

A devoted disciple of Yeshua will give you “the shirt off his back,” and he will always “go the extra mile” for you. Both sayings appear in the context of Yeshua’s sermon about entering the kingdom of heaven. Those seeking to enter the kingdom are willing to go beyond the minimum required of them, to go beyond the letter of the law in showing deference for others, even setting aside their own legal rights and prerogatives for the sake of the kingdom.

In a Roman court of law, a creditor could literally demand the shirt off of a debtor’s back. Rather than resist the litigation, Yeshua advised His disciples to go further and give the creditor his cloak as well. Furthermore, while the Torah forbids creditors from seizing a man’s cloak in a Torah court (Exodus 22:27; Deuteronomy 24:13), Yeshua advised His disciples to demonstrate their good faith by voluntarily setting aside their rights. Likewise, the Talmud says, “The Holy One, blessed be He, loves the one who does not insist on his full rights.” The disciple who leaves justice in the hands of the Almighty will not be disappointed.

Yeshua told His disciples, “Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matthew 5:41). A disciple of Yeshua does more than is required of him. Under the tyranny of Roman occupation, Roman soldiers could force a man without Roman citizenship to carry a load for them. Few things could have been more hateful for the Jewish people than to be forced to serve the Romans like pack animals. Even so, Yeshua instructed His disciples to disarm their opponents by going an extra mile.

One ancient writer, Epictetus, concurred with the Master’s advice in dealing with Roman impressments: “If there is a requisition and a soldier seizes your donkey, let it go. Do not resist or complain; otherwise you will be beaten first, and lose your donkey besides” (*Dissertationes*).

This policy for dealing with Roman requisitions and seizures sounds similar to the words the apostles used in transmitting Yeshua’s teaching to the Gentile disciples: “If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. If someone takes away what is yours, do not demand it back, for you are not even able to get it back” (*Didache* 1.4).

In this current age, the disciple can expect to experience injustices at the hands of others, but he should not let the loss of material things perturb him, for he lives not for this current world but rather for the kingdom that is coming.

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. From this section, identify two ways in which Roman occupation made life harsher for the Jewish people.
2. How did the advice of other ancient writers, both Jewish and Gentile, compare with the teaching of Yeshua in this passage?
3. If we are so often forbidden to resist or retaliate, what consolation do we have when treated unjustly?

GROUP DISCUSSION: How does Paul's instruction in Romans 13:1–7 compare with Yeshua's teaching in this passage?

GIVING TO THOSE WHO ASK

Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. (Matthew 5:42)



As Yeshua instructed His disciples on how to seek first to enter the kingdom, He told them to give freely to those in need: “Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back” (Luke 6:30). A disciple of Yeshua should never feel at liberty to neglect someone asking for help. Even if we can give only a few coins, we should give nonetheless.

Yeshua's instruction about giving freely and openhandedly was not a new commandment. In telling His disciples to give freely to those who asked of them and to lend to those who wanted to borrow from them, Rabbi Yeshua merely paraphrased the Torah's commandment of giving charity and loans to support the poor:

If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. (Deuteronomy 15:7–8)

Yeshua told His disciples, “If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive [repayment], what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. Do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great” (Luke 6:34–35). This free-handed manner of lending is a form of charity that was not foreign to the sages of Judaism. According to the Talmud, “It is permitted to deceive a poor man who out of pride refuses to accept charity, and to allow him to think that it is a loan you are giving him.”

The *Didache* transmits the teaching of Yeshua, saying, “Give to whoever asks, and do not demand it back, for the Father wants to give of his own gifts to everyone. Contentment awaits one who gives according to the commandment, for he is blameless” (*Didache* 1.5). Nevertheless, the *Didache* offers some important caveats. Alms should not be squandered on an unworthy person: “Let your donation sweat in your hands until you know to whom to give it” (*Didache* 1.6). A person without legitimate need who takes charity “will give an account as to why he took it and for what purpose. And when he is put into prison, he will be questioned thoroughly about what he has done, and he will not get out from there until he has paid the last penny” (*Didache* 1.5).

STUDY QUESTIONS

FOCUS
SECTION
5

1. How is a disciple of Yeshua commanded to respond when they see someone in need?

2. How are we to react if someone cannot pay back a loan we have given them?

3. Must we automatically give to every person who says they are in need?

GROUP DISCUSSION: The Talmud allows one to deceive another into receiving charity under the guise of a loan. What are some other ways one might give charitably while maintaining the dignity of the recipient?

LOVE FOR ENEMIES

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43–45)



Does the Torah command us to hate our enemies? Yeshua said, “You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” This makes it sound as if Yeshua was replacing the Torah’s law “to hate our enemies” with a new law of love for our enemies: “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” This interpretation plays well into the hands of those who believe that Yeshua came to replace the Torah with a new law.

While it certainly is true that the Torah says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), it contains no commandment to hate your enemy. Instead, Yeshua contradicted what must have been a popular adage among the Zealots: “Love your neighbor, but hate your enemy.” That is to say, “Love your fellow Jew [i.e., your neighbor], but hate the Romans.” The Dead Sea community in Qumran went even further. They taught their followers to “love all the sons of light ... and hate all the sons of darkness,” understanding the sons of light as members of their own sect and sons of darkness to be other Jews outside of their sect (*Dead Sea Scrolls*).

These sentiments do not derive from the Torah. Regarding one's fellow Jew, the Torah explicitly says, "You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart" (Leviticus 19:17). The Torah requires a man to love even the stranger: "You shall love him as yourself" (Leviticus 19:34). Instead of instructing people to hate their enemies, the Torah requires us to show kindness to enemies and assist them when they fall into difficulty (Exodus 23:5; Deuteronomy 23:7). The Proverbs say, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Proverbs 24:17).

The Master brought a correction to those who tried to justify hatred for their enemies. He told His disciples that if they want to enter the kingdom, they must love their enemies, bless them instead of cursing them, and do good to them instead of evil. He told His disciples to pray for their persecutors: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27-28).

Rabbi Yeshua told His disciples that if they show love to their enemies, they prove themselves to be sons of their Father in heaven. His disciples are to show impartiality, just as God sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous and causes the sun to rise on both the wicked and the good. As the Talmud says, “The day of rainfall comes for both the righteous and for the wicked.” So too, Yeshua’s disciples must demonstrate kindness and civility to both friend and foe.

STUDY QUESTIONS

**FOCUS
SECTION**

6

1. Where might people in Yeshua's time have gotten the idea that they should hate their enemies?
2. How does the Torah instruct us to treat our enemies?
3. In what way are we imitating God when we treat our enemies equitably?

GROUP DISCUSSION: The Torah commands us to love the stranger as we love ourselves. Who qualifies as a “stranger” in your local community? What can you do to show them love?

PRAYING FOR ENEMIES

It’s already a lot to ask that we should love our enemies, but do we need to pray for them and bless them too?

Yeshua told His disciples to “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27–28).

A fragmentary saying of the Master discovered on papyrus in the deserts of Egypt puts it this way: “Pray for your enemies, for he who is not against you is for you. He that stands far off today will tomorrow be near you.”

The *Didache* takes the matter a step further and instructs the believer to go so far as fasting on behalf of one’s enemy:

Pray for your enemies; fast for those who persecute you, for what special favor do you merit if you love those who love you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? However, you are to love those who hate you, and you will not have any enemies. (*Didache* 1.3)

Do not hate any human being; but some you are to rebuke, and some you are to pray for, yet some you are to love even more than your own life. (*Didache* 2.7)

The disciples took Yeshua’s words literally and prayed for their persecutors. Thanks to those prayers, their fiercest pursuer, Paul of Tarsus, later became a believer and a strong advocate for their faith. Years later, Paul instructed the believers in Rome to show love for their enemies: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse ... If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head (Romans 12:14, 20).

The Talmud also relates a story that illustrates the power of prayer for those who persecute you and vex you:

Once there were some bandits living near Reb Meir who were very troublesome to him. Reb Meir prayed that they should die. His wife Beruria said to him, “What makes you think a prayer like that is

permissible? ... Instead you should pray for them that they will repent, and then there will be no more wicked.” Meir prayed for them, and they repented. (Talmud)

FOCUS
SECTION

7

IMPARTIALITY TO ALL

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:46–48)

Yeshua expounded upon the principle of loving one’s enemies by saying, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same... But love your enemies, and do good ... expecting nothing in return” (Luke 6:32–35).

With these words, Yeshua broadened the concept of loving one’s neighbor to people outside of one’s social circle. Sinners, tax collectors, and even the hated Romans love those who love them and greet those who greet them. The Master called His disciples to a higher standard—to be equitable in all their dealings with all kinds of people. Other rabbis advocated similar treatment toward outsiders and strangers:

Likewise, Rabbi Shammai used to say, “Greet all men with a cheerful face.” Moreover, “it was related of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai that no man ever gave him greeting first, even a Gentile in the street.” Likewise, Rabbi Chisda made it a point to greet the heathens and encourage them in their work. (Talmud)

Yeshua concluded the discussion on loving enemies and showing kindness to strangers with the words, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). How can He command us to be perfect like God is perfect? Is that not asking the impossible?

In this context, perfection does not imply inerrancy or infallibility. Instead, it should be understood in the sense of “impartiality.” Yeshua told His disciples to be impartial, just as our Father in heaven is impartial, “for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45).

Rabbi Yeshua urged His disciples to emulate God, who does good for both the righteous and the wicked. He told His disciples to treat both friend and stranger, brother and enemy with the same goodwill and common

dignity. In other words, we are to be equitable as God is equitable. We are to be impartial in our courtesy, integrity, and generosity. This interpretation of Matthew 5:48 accords with the parallel version in Luke: “You will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:35–36). The sages of Judaism concur:

The Holy One, blessed be He, says, “Be like me! As I repay evil with good, so you should also repay evil with good, as it says [in Micah 7:18], ‘Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act?’” (*Midrash Rabbah*)

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. How should we act toward someone who has wronged us?
2. What does it mean to be equitable?
3. How should the word “perfect” be understood in Matthew 5:48?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Consider the idea of “emulating God.” In what other ways can the disciples of Yeshua emulate the character of God?

KEY WORDS AND TERMS



VOCABULARY

zuz

An ancient Jewish silver coin struck during the Bar Kochba revolt.



PEOPLE AND PLACES

Epictetus

(c. 50 – c. 135 CE) A Greek Stoic philosopher.

Josephus

(Yosef ben Matityahu) First-century Jewish Roman historian who recorded Jewish history with a special emphasis on the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE).



PRIMARY SOURCES

Dead Sea Scrolls

Ancient Jewish religious manuscripts that were found in the Qumran Caves in the Judean Desert on the northern shore of the Dead Sea.

Didache

Also known as *The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles*, it is a brief anonymous treatise written in Koine Greek, dated by modern scholars to the first century.

Midrash Rabbah

Composition of commentary on the Torah and five Megillot finalized in the eleventh century.

Talmud

Foundational collection of Jewish law arranged in sixty-three tractates. The Talmud contains two elements: the Mishnah and Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah). The Talmud was compiled in the early sixth century from long-remembered oral tradition.



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TORAHPORTIONS

"Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

READ THE BIBLE JESUS READ. Torah Club Members should study the weekly Torah portion (parashah) in addition to the weekly gospel lesson. The lessons in *Jesus, My Rabbi* depict Jesus as a teacher of the Torah, so it's important to study the five books of Moses. TorahPortions.org provides the scriptures that are read every Sabbath in the synagogue (and a suggested gospel selection for Messianic Jewish synagogues). Accompanying online devotionals bring the Torah portion to life and connect you more closely with Jesus, your Rabbi.

#	PARASHAH	DATE	TORAH	HAFTARAH
GENESIS / B'REISHEET				
1	B'reisheet	17 Oct. 2020	Gen. 1:1-6:8	1 Sam. 20:18-42
2	Noach	24 Oct. 2020	Gen. 6:9-11:32	Isa. 54:1-55:5
3	Lech Lecha	31 Oct. 2020	Gen. 12:1-17:27	Isa. 40:27-41:16
4	Vayera	7 Nov. 2020	Gen. 18:1-22:24	2 Kgs. 4:1-37
5	Chayei Sarah	14 Nov. 2020	Gen. 23:1-25:18	1 Kgs. 1:1-31
6	Toldot	21 Nov. 2020	Gen. 25:19-28:9	Mal. 1:1-2:7
7	Vayetze	28 Nov. 2020	Gen. 28:10-32:3(2)*	Hos. 12:13(12)-14:10(9)*
8	Vayishlach	5 Dec. 2020	Gen. 32:4(3)-36:43*	Oba. 1-21
9	Vayeshev	12 Dec. 2020	Gen. 37:1-40:23	Zec. 2:14-4:7
10	Miketz	19 Dec. 2020	Gen. 41:1-44:17	1 Kgs. 3:15-4:1
11	Vayigash	26 Dec. 2020	Gen. 44:18-47:27	Eze. 37:15-28
12	Vayechi	2 Jan. 2021	Gen. 47:28-50:26	1 Kgs. 2:1-12
EXODUS / SHEMOT				
13	Shemot	9 Jan. 2021	Exo. 1:1-6:1	Isa. 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23
14	Va'era	16 Jan. 2021	Exo. 6:2-9:35	Eze. 28:25-29:21
15	Bo	23 Jan. 2021	Exo. 10:1-13:16	Jer. 46:13-28
16	Beshalach	30 Jan. 2021	Exo. 13:17-17:16	Jdg. 4:4-5:31
17	Yitro	6 Feb. 2021	Exo. 18:1-20:23	Isa. 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6(6-7)*
18	Mishpatim	13 Feb. 2021	Exo. 21:1-24:18	2 Kgs. 12:1(11:21)-17(16)*
19	Terumah	20 Feb. 2021	Exo. 25:1-27:19	1 Sam. 15:2-15:34
20	Tetzaveh	27 Feb. 2021	Exo. 27:20-30:10	Eze. 43:10-43:27
21	Ki Tisa	6 Mar. 2021	Exo. 30:11-34:35	Eze. 36:16-38
22/ 23	Vayak'hel / Pekudei	13 Mar. 2021	Exo. 35:1-40:38	Eze. 45:16-46:18
LEVITICUS / VAYIKRA				
24	Vayikra	20 Mar. 2021	Lev. 1:1-5:26(6:7)*	Isa. 43:21-44:23
25	Tzav	27 Mar. 2021	Lev. 6:1(8)-8:36*	Mal. 3:4-3:24
	Pesach i	28 Mar. 2021*	Exo. 12:21-51; Num. 28:16-25	Josh. 5:2-6:1
	Pesach vii	3 Apr. 2021*	Exo. 13:17-15:26; Num. 28:19-25	2 Sam. 22:1-51
26	Sh'mini	10 Apr. 2021	Lev. 9:1-11:47	2 Sam. 6:1-7:17
27/ 28	Tazria / Metzora	17 Apr. 2021	Lev. 12:1-15:33	2 Kgs. 7:3-20
29/ 30	Acharei Mot / Kedoshim	24 Apr. 2021	Lev. 16:1-20:27	Amos 9:7-15
31	Emor	1 May 2021	Lev. 21:1-24:23	Eze. 44:15-31
32/ 33	Behar / Bechukotai	8 May 2021	Lev. 25:1-27:34	Jer. 16:19-17:14

#	PARASHAH	DATE	TORAH	HAFTARAH
NUMBERS / BAMIDBAR				
34	Bamidbar	15 May 2021	Num. 1:1-4:20	Hos. 2:1-2:22
	Shavu'ot	17 May 2021*	Exo. 19:1-20:23; Num. 28:26-31	Eze. 1:1-28, 3:12
35	Nasso	22 May 2021	Num. 4:21-7:89	Jdg. 13:2-25
36	Beha'alotcha	29 May 2021	Num. 8:1-12:16	Zec. 2:14(10)-4:7*
37	Shelach	5 Jun. 2021	Num. 13:1-15:41	Josh. 2:1-24
38	Korach	12 Jun. 2021	Num. 16:1-18:32	1 Sam. 11:14-12:22
39	Chukat	19 Jun. 2021	Num. 19:1-22:1	Jdg. 11:1-11:33
40	Balak	26 Jun. 2021	Num. 22:2-25:9	Mic. 5:6(7)-6:8*
41	Pinchas	3 Jul. 2021	Num. 25:10-30:1(29:40)*	Jer. 1:1-2:3
42/ 43	Mattot / Massei	10 Jul. 2021	Num. 30:2(1)-36:13*	Isa. 66:1-66:24
DEUTERONOMY / DEVARIM				
44	Devarim	17 Jul. 2021	Deut. 1:1-3:22	Isa. 1:1-2:7
45	Va'etchanan	24 Jul. 2021	Deut. 3:23-7:11	Isa. 40:1-26
46	Ekev	31 Jul. 2021	Deut. 7:12-11:25	Isa. 49:14-51:3
47	Re'eh	7 Aug. 2021	Deut. 11:26-16:17	1 Sam. 20:18-20:42
48	Shoftim	14 Aug. 2021	Deut. 16:18-21:9	Isa. 51:12-52:12
49	Ki Tetze	21 Aug. 2021	Deut. 21:10-25:19	Isa. 54:1-10
50	Ki Tavo	28 Aug. 2021	Deut. 26:1-29:8(9)*	Isa. 60:1-22
51	Nitzavim	4 Sep. 2021	Deut. 29:9(10)-30:20*	Isa. 61:10-63:9
	Rosh HaShanah	7 Sep. 2021*	Gen. 21:1-34; Num. 29:1-6	1 Sam. 1:1-2:10
52	Vayelech	11 Sep. 2021	Deut. 34:1-30	Hos. 14:2(1)-10(9)*; Mic. 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27
	Yom Kippur	16 Sep. 2021	Lev. 16:1-34; Num. 29:7-11	Isa. 57:14-58:14
53	Ha'azinu	18 Sep. 2021	Deut. 32:1-52	2 Sam. 22:1-22:51
	Sukkot i	21 Sep. 2021	Lev. 22:26-23:44; Num. 29:12-16	Zec. 14:1-21
	Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah*	28 Sep. 2021 (29 Sep. 2021)*	Deut. 14:22-16:17; Num. 29:35-30:1(29:40)*	1 Kgs. 8:54-66
54	Vezot ha'Bracha	29 Sep. 2021	Deut. 33:1-34:12	Josh. 1:1-18

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