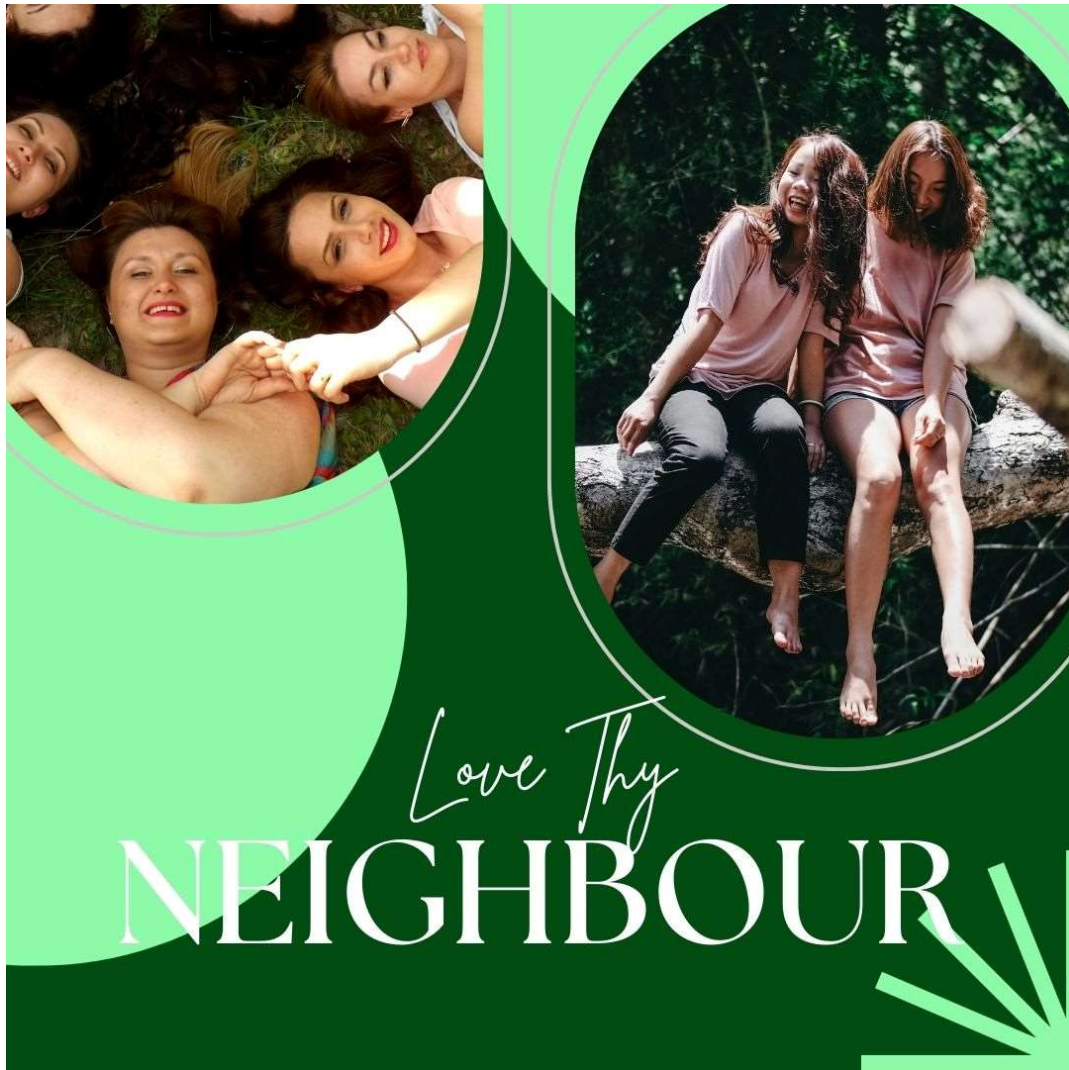


## Love Thy Neighbour



The time we are living in is devoid of love. You will see false love abounding, a love that allows sinful living and idolatry. The church will often tell us that we “shouldn’t judge” and “only love” instead. We see flashy parades with six-coloured flags all over the world proclaiming “love” for all to see. I have personally been told by many people that loving others means allowing their harmful, abusive or sinful behaviours, even if it means my family and I get hurt by their actions.

This false love is everywhere. It is a deception, a corruption of the true love that Yahuah has for us, and a corruption of the love He means for us to have towards Him and towards each other.

So I thought for my next article we could explore what the Scriptures say about love, especially love for each other, in order to truly love each other in the way the Father intends rather than in the way the world wants us to love.

We all know what the Messiah told us about loving the Father and loving those around us!

*And he answering, said, “You shall love Yahuah your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbour as yourself.” Luke 10:27*

*And Yahusha said to him, “You shall love Yahuah your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great command. And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commands hang all the Torah and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-39*

Repetitions in two gospels, and here Mark gives us some beautiful insight:

*And Yahusha answered him, “The first of all the commands is, ‘Hear, O Yashar’el, Yahuah our Elohim, Yahuah is one. And you shall love Yahuah your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first command. And the second, like it, is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other command greater than these.” And the scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one Elohim, and there is no other besides Him. And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the being, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself, is more than all the ascending offerings and offerings.” And when Yahusha saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the reign of Elohim.” And after that no one was bold enough to question him. Mark 12:29-34*

The scribe speaking to Yahusha knew the passage well, He was quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The scribe understood that the greatest commands of the Father were always love, from the very beginning, and that all of the Torah points to loving the Father and loving one another.

The church tells a different story, that “Jesus” came to give us these two commands alone, and in so doing eliminate the need to keep the Law of Elohim. The scribe in the passage understood what most modern churchgoers do not, that keeping Torah is in itself a great act of love towards Yahuah and those around us! The Torah is an instruction manual on exactly *how* to express that love.

Yahusha “saw that he answered wisely”, He approved of the scribe’s words, knowing that he grasped the concept well, when the other scribes and

Pharisees were focused on their precious traditions and had lost sight of the very heart of Yahuah within the Torah that was there from the beginning, as we will see in the next passage:

*Because this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... 1 John 3:11*

*“You heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those insulting you and persecuting you, so that you become sons of your Father in the heavens. Because He makes His sun rise on the wicked and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those loving you, what reward have you? Are the tax collectors not doing the same too? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Are the tax collectors not doing so too? Therefore, be perfect, as your Father in the heavens is perfect.” Matt 5:43-44*

*“But I say to you who are hearing: Love your enemies, do good to those hating you. Bless those cursing you, and pray for those insulting you.” Luke 6:27-28*

*“And if you love those loving you, what favour have you? For sinners, too, love those loving them. And if you do good to those doing good to you, what favour have you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive back, what favour have you? For even sinners lend sinners to receive as much back. Rather, love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting none in return. And your reward shall be great, and you shall be sons of the Most High. Because He is kind to the thankless and wicked ones.” Luke 6:32-35*

*If you truly accomplish the sovereign law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself,” you do well, but if you show partiality, you commit sin, being found guilty by the Torah as transgressors. James 2:8*

Yahusha drives the idea of love home! It is easy to love our family and friends, and those who are kind to us – so easy that anyone can do it! The real challenge is that we are to ALSO love those that harm us, those who insult us or steal from us or curse us. That’s difficult, anyone would admit. Living through abuse and seeing my family harmed has shown me that Yahusha’s instructions here are no walk in the park. Not loving everyone, regardless of their actions, is to commit a sin!

However, showing Yahuah’s love to “our neighbours” includes everyone: liars, murderers, abusers, thieves, the neighbour that slandered you as well as the guy that swerved in front of you on the highway without using indicators. It is easy to get angry, hold a grudge and hate, but Yahusha never called us to do the easy thing!

By loving those who do us wrong, we are truly being children of the Most High, and showing His love to a broken world! But that does not, at all, mean that we should witness the harm people do, or their sins, and say nothing! Let's have a look at another passage with clear instructions on this point:

*And the Word of Yahuah came to me, saying, "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and you shall say to them, 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land shall take a man from their borders and shall make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming upon the land, and shall blow the shofar and shall warn the people, then whoever shall hear the voice of the shofar and not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood is on his own head. He heard the voice of the shofar, but he did not take warning, his blood is on himself. But he who takes warning shall deliver his being. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and shall not blow the shofar, and the people shall not be warned, and the sword comes and takes any being from among them, he is taken away in his crookedness, and his blood I require at the watchman's hand.' And you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Yashar'el. And you shall hear a word from My mouth and you shall warn them for Me. When I say to the wrong, 'O wrong one, you shall certainly die!' and you have not spoken to warn the wrong from his way, that wrong one shall die in his crookedness, and his blood I require at your hand. But when you have warned the wrong to turn from his way, and he has not turned from his way, he shall die in his crookedness, but you have delivered your being." Ezekiel 33:1-9*

Now we may not all have received clear instructions from Yahuah in the way that Ezekiel did, but we are all called to be Messiah's disciples, and love one another. This calling of Watchman is an obvious way to show love to our neighbour, to lovingly call out the sins we see, in order to save them. If we don't do so, their "blood" is on our hands. We are guilty if we do not point out the sins of others, no matter how awkward it may seem, or how people may feel about it.

This is very much the opposite of today's church culture. I often say that if Messiah, Peter or John were to walk up to the pulpit in most of the churches today, and preach the way they did when they walked this earth, they would get booed off stage and be accused of "not loving enough", and yet preaching repentance and turning from sins is the pure love of the Father!

The Old Testament also speaks directly about loving those around us:

*'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Reprove your neighbour, for certain, and bear no sin because of him, do not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the children of your people. And you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Yahuah.'* Leviticus 19:17-18

Once again we are told to “reprove” or show righteous judgement towards the sins of those around us, as a way of loving them; and in the next passage we see that we should include all people in our love, regardless of nationality or culture. Though they are different, they are human just as we are.

*‘Let the stranger who dwells among you be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself. For you were strangers in the land of Mitsrayim. I am Yahuah your Elohim.’* Leviticus 19:34, repeated in Deuteronomy 10:19.

Let’s take a look at a few more of the Biblical perspectives of what love is and how to love those around us.

*“This is My command, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: that one should lay down his life for his friends.”* John 15:12-13

*And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”* Mark 9:35

Love is sacrificial and selfless. This is a lesson I’ve learned in a rather hard and yet very practical way as a homeschooling mom and wife. There are many times that I want to just relax, or have time to myself to read or craft or even spend time in the Word! But my family has a way of demanding the majority of my time and then leaving me so tired at the end of the day that I fall into a deep sleep instead of getting some time to myself.

This has often left me feeling frustrated and irritated, and in this Yahuah has taught me that, while it is important to grow as a person and take care of my physical, mental and spiritual self, He has called me to this role and He requires me to stretch myself, and to be patient, loving and kind – selfless – and in doing so He will grow me and stretch me into who He needs me to be. This doesn’t mean I’m perfect, far from it! I’m human and fall prey to frustration rather more than I care to admit, but I have learnt the valuable lesson of self-sacrifice for my family, and I am grateful for the lesson, as I can see what a difference it makes!

I hope my personal example on these passages helps!

*Let not loving-commitment and truth forsake you – bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, thus finding favour and good insight in the eyes of Elohim and man.* Proverbs 3:3-4

*Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.* Proverbs 10:12

*He who pursues righteousness and loving-commitment finds life, righteousness and esteem.* Proverbs 21:21

Proverbs, as always, has some wise words to share. We should always remember to walk in love!

*And above all have fervent love for one another, because love covers a great multitude of sins.* 1 Peter 4:8

Here Peter echoes Proverbs 10:12. My take on this is that if we truly love someone, we can love them over and above the things they may do to annoy or hurt us. Love will pave the way to forgiveness.

*Beloved ones, let us love one another, because love is of Elohim, and everyone who loves has been born of Elohim, and knows Elohim. The one who does not love does not know Elohim, for Elohim is love. By this the love of Elohim was manifested in us, that Elohim has sent His only brought-forth Son into the world in order that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved Elohim, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be an atoning offering for our sins. Beloved ones, if Elohim so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen Elohim at any time. If we love one another, Elohim does stay in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we stay in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.* 1 John 4:7-13

*And we have known and believed the love that Elohim has for us. Elohim is love, and he who stays in love stays in Elohim, and Elohim in him. By this love has been perfected with us, in order that we might have boldness in the day of judgement, because as He is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear holds punishment, and he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love Elohim," and hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one not loving his brother whom he has seen, how is he able to love Elohim whom he has not seen? And we have this command from Him, that the one loving Elohim should love his brother too.* 1 John 4:16-2

John obviously has a good grasp on the idea of love, (and I would expect nothing less from the disciple that Yahusha loved hehe – John 13:23.) Yahuah is love, and those of us who worship Yahuah and believe in Messiah have a duty to be as They are! We are commanded to love others as Yahuah and Messiah love us, and anything outside of that means we are not of Them. What a weighty example to follow, and what a heavy task! As sinful humans, loving unconditionally is tremendously difficult at times – Yahuah knows this and yet still expects us to do so. Wow! This means that He believes that, with time and His guidance, we will be able to! That is truly amazing.

*And for this reason do your utmost to add to your belief uprightness, to uprightness knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control endurance, to endurance reverence, to reverence brotherly affection, and to brotherly affection*

*love. For if these are in you and increase, they cause you to be neither inactive nor without fruit in the knowledge of our Master Yahusha Messiah. 2 Peter 1:5-7*

Yahuah knows that we are only human, and that loving unconditionally is a difficult goal. He doesn't expect miracles from us, but has given us guidelines to build ourselves up to the ideal and command of loving others perfectly, as He loves us! This passage shows us what we can do to build up our "love muscles"! Yahuah is good! He never expects something from us without guidance, patience and instruction, whether in His Word or from His Ruach.

### **To forgive someone is to love them.**

This is a difficult topic, one that I am currently revisiting because of a family situation. And it has everything to do with loving our neighbour!

Forgiveness is a loaded word. When we hear "forgiveness", especially if we have been really hurt badly by someone, we can often feel a loss of control and even anger. Does the Father truly expect us to let them "get away with" whatever they have done or the harm they have caused? And yet this is not at all what He means when He expects us to forgive them and love them instead.

To forgive someone only means that we release them from our lives, to break ties with the hurt, in order for us to heal and grow more fully as a person – to grow closer to Yahuah. A heart full of bitterness and resentment can't truly grow closer to Yahuah, and in extension, will be incapable of truly loving.

Forgiveness does not release them from their own actions, as each person has to face their sins with the Father, either by their repentance in life or at the Judgement. Yahuah knows the heart and deeds of every person, and they will always be held accountable.

We are told to love and pray for those who hurt and curse us, and the only way to truly be able to do this is to forgive them! (Matthew 5:44)

Something I must add is that forgiveness does not mean that we should forget. The world, and often the church, likes to throw around a saying: "Forgive and forget." This is very dangerous! While we should definitely find forgiveness for everyone who hurts us, we should not forget, in order to be wise and protect ourselves and those around us from further hurt! In extension, not forgetting the hurt is a way of loving those who hurt us, as we will limit them from committing the same sins against us again, as far as it is in our power to do so.

Let's see what Scripture says about forgiveness:

*"If, then, you bring your gift to the slaughter place, and there remember that your brother holds whatever against you, leave your gift there before the slaughter*

*place, and go, first make peace with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23-24*

Messiah instructs us that forgiveness and restoration must come before service to the Father, which shows us how important it is to forgive!

*“And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us.”*  
Matthew 6:12

When Yahusha is instructing his disciples on how to pray, He includes that fact that we are to forgive those who have hurt us in any way, in order for the Father to forgive us in turn. The next couple of verses explains why this is important:

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father shall also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither shall your Father forgive your trespasses.”* Matthew 6:14-15

*Then Kepha (Peter) came to Him and said, “Master, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Yahusha said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”* Matthew 18:21-22

*“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day comes back to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”* Luke 17:3

Messiah uses figures of speech to demonstrate that we should endlessly forgive others, even if they do the same thing over and over and over again. We do that to Yahuah after all, in our humanity we make the same mistakes, repeat the same sins, make the same errors in judgement, and yet if we earnestly repent He forgives us every time! In this way we imitate Him, by unconditionally loving and repetitively forgiving those around us.

*“And do not judge, and you shall not be judged at all. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned at all. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.”* Luke 6:37

Passages like this are often quoted in church, with emphasis on “And do not judge.” Yet that misses the point. We are told elsewhere in Scripture to rebuke others for their sins – that is not judging the person, but the action, the deed, the fruit. So here we are instructed not to judge the person, not to condemn them as it is not our choice that they be condemned. But we should forgive them regardless of what they have done, and leave the personal judgement and condemnation, if necessary, up to Yahuah.

**And lastly, let’s take a look a few famous quotes from Shaul about love.**



*If I speak with the tongues of men and of messengers (angels), but do not have love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophecy, and know all secrets and all knowledge, and if I have all belief, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am none at all. And if I give out all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, I am not profited at all. Love is patient, is kind, love does not envy, love does not boast, is not puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not seek its own, is not provoked, reckons not the evil, does not rejoice over the unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth, it covers all, believes all, expects all, endures all. Love never fails... 1 Corinthians 13:1-8*

*And now belief, expectations, and love remain – these three. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13*

These passages sum the characteristics of love up nicely. Something I like to do when assessing my own walk in loving others is to replace the word “love” with my name or “I”; e.g.: ‘Am I patient, kind? Do I envy, boast? Am I puffed up and proud? Do I behave indecently, seek my own? Am I easily provoked? Do I bear grudges? Do I enjoy seeing evil and unrighteousness or do I rejoice over truth and good? Do I forgive, believe, expect the best and endure with patience?’ This little exercise quickly points out the areas in my life I need to work on, with Yahuah’s help and guidance. Give it a try! It may be a bit of a blow at first, but it truly does help!

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustworthiness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no Torah. Galatians 5:22-23*

And to build on Shaul’s words, let’s have a look at what Yahusha said on the subject of the fruits, or works, of man:

*“By their fruits you shall know them. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? So every good tree yields good fruit, but a rotten tree yields wicked fruit. A good tree is unable to yield wicked fruit, and a rotten tree to yield good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, by their fruits you shall know them.” Matthew 7:16-20*

The “fruits” we show are our works, deeds and actions, not just words. It’s easy to say “I love you”, “I love the Father” or “I love others”, but do our actions prove us liars?

Shaul gave us a list of the good fruits we can cultivate as we grow in the Ruach’s guidance, the first of which is love, and all the others relate to love in some way as well. Messiah told us that we will be known, basically judged, according to our fruits, or works. If we are truly in Him, we will bear good fruits, and He will prune away anything unfruitful in us.

Something else to consider here is judging those around us by their fruit. While loving others, we should keep their fruit in mind!

I have found many instances of those who say they keep Torah, yet bicker and argue at the slightest encouragement over ambiguous issues such as which calendar to keep or how to pronounce the Father's Name! They can get downright nasty if you so much as give a different opinion. Sometimes, Torah observers will put down other believers for not being as "advanced" in their walk (I'm guilty of this, I was so excited to learn about Torah that I bashed my friends and family over the heads with it – oops! I've learned the error of my ways in that regard.) These are not good fruits, not representative of the Messiah or the Father. Acting like this is most certainly not showing others love!

Contrary to this, I have met many Christians and even non-believers who truly show love and beautiful fruits. They are loving, helpful, kind, good and generous. It is important to keep in mind, as it is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13, that knowledge without love means nothing at all, and therefore we should remember to always show love to others, ESPECIALLY in our knowledge!

No one will consider following Yahuah if his so-called representatives are being "Torah terrorists" everywhere they go. We need to work on our fruits so that others can see that the love of Messiah truly is in us!

In conclusion, loving others is difficult. Loving can be painful in the worst ways. Loving can feel impossible. Despite all of these challenges, the Most High expects us to love our neighbour, those close to us, those who are easy to love, those who are more prickly, those who hurt us, the sinners, those different from us, those we don't know or understand – in short, everyone! He has given us clear commands, in His Law and through His Son, to do so, and to fall short of His expectation is to sin.

He knows that His expectations are high, so therefore He has given us clear instructions in His Torah and the rest of Scripture on how to love others. He doesn't expect us to do so blindly or without His help, so we should always remember to lean on Him for help, and on the Ruach for wisdom and guidance. He does not want us to stumble, but He will always help us when we ask Him. Loving others is His will for each of us, and He will not make us do it alone!

Let us practice loving each other, leaning on our heavenly Father to help us do it. Let us not love in the way the world wants us to love, but let us rather love by following the example of Yahusha, the way Yahuah want us to love, by calling out the sins of others in love, forgiving those who hurt us, and doing our best to love all others unconditionally.

I pray He grants you the wisdom to love your neighbour!

