

JA1. Blessing & Not Cursing Those Who Would Harm Us or Treat Us Wrongfully: Loving Our Enemies.

We are to bless and not curse those who would harm us or treat us wrongly: Loving our enemies.

This precept is derived from His Word (blessed is He):

Key New Testament Scriptures

Matthew 5:39-44

But I tell you not to stand up against someone who does you wrong. On the contrary, if someone hits you on the right cheek, let him hit you on the left cheek too! If someone wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well! And if a soldier forces you to carry his pack for one mile, carry it for two! When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something from you, lend it to him. You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Love your neighbor- and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!

Romans 12:14

Bless those who persecute you- bless them, don't curse them!

Additional New Testament Scriptures

Luke 6:27-29, 35

Romans 12:17, 20

1 Corinthians 4:12

1 Peter 3:9

Related New Testament Mitzvot

DA39 Not Being Vengeful

JA06 Offering the Other Cheek

JA08 Giving to Our Enemies and Expecting Nothing in Return

Supportive Tanakh Scriptures

Exodus 23:4-5

If you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey straying, you must return it to him. If you see the donkey which belongs to someone who hates you lying down helpless under its load, you are not to pass him by but to go and help him free it.

Leviticus 19:18

Don't take vengeance on or bear a grudge against any of your people; rather, love your neighbor as yourself; I am ADONAI.

Comment

“Blessing & not cursing those who would harm us or treat us wrongly” is another way of saying “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44). This can be challenging, for how can we love someone who is trying to hurt us? The key is knowing that God’s kind of love is doing what is best for the other person which is not necessarily what the other person wants done for him. For example, if a person is trying to harm us, protecting ourselves and stopping him from doing so is good for him because it keeps him from committing sin. But protecting ourself is not he wants because committing sin is not his concern.

The other verses in Mathew 5:39-44 are interesting in relation to this because they seem to enable an assailant rather than stop him. In understanding these seeming contradictions and in choosing our actions, we must consider whether our adversary is a true enemy, and the level of harm he is likely to inflict if he is left unchecked. An opponent in a sport or a competitor for a job may seem like an enemy because, if he succeeds, we lose. His mindset may even be to try to make us lose but, if he is fair in the way he goes about it, he is not an enemy. Even when a person intends to harm us, when his intention is short-lived and he repents of his attitude or action, he is not our enemy and, enemy or not, God’s Law (Mark 11:25) requires that we forgive him.

Sometimes allowing or overlooking an offense, even a physical blow, is the best and most loving course of action (Proverbs 19:11). In Matthew 5:39, Yeshua exhorts us to offer the other cheek if someone hits us on our cheek. Keep in mind that the example is a slap on our cheek and not a knife in our arm. A slap on the cheek is typically delivered in anger and is meant to humiliate rather than cause harm, so remaining vulnerable to the person who has slapped us may be the best way to help him cool down, repent, and be reconciled. I am certain that Yeshua would not give us the same instruction if our attacker assaulted us with a knife.

In verse 40, Yeshua exhorts us that if someone wants to sue us for our shirt, we should give it to him and our coat as well; why is this? We can probably get along without our shirt and coat, and perhaps our litigious neighbor is suing us for our shirt because he needs it to stay warm. By giving him our shirt, we can avoid the law suit and bless him with warmth at the same time. Then, if we notice his need and give him our coat as well, our godly concern for his wellbeing may reach him, and he may be drawn to God and even be reconciled to us as a friend. All this at the mere cost of a shirt and coat.

The example of carrying a soldier’s pack for a longer time than he requests it is for the same reason as the shirt and coat example, but the Scripture’s exhortation to give or lend to someone who asks is different because it is open-ended in not specifying what is asked, how much is asked, and whether giving or lending what is asked is unreasonable or will harm us or our family. There are other considerations as well such as whether giving to a person what he asks is even good for him. For example, it would not be good to give money to a person who is capable of working and refuses to work out of sheer laziness because to do so would enable him in his sin. Also, our needs and our family’s needs must be considered, and so asking the Holy Spirit for direction is key in doing what is right. One more thing. If what is asked of us is a loan and

the asker is a brother Jew or Messianic believer, we must not charge him interest (Exodus 22:24(25); Deuteronomy 23:21(20)) and not refuse the loan out of fear that we will not be paid back (Deuteronomy 15:3).

Related Mitzvot in Volumes 1 & 2

N01 *Loving Our Neighbor, the Stranger, and Even Our Enemy*