

JA6. Offering the Other Cheek.

We are to offer the other cheek.

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

Key New Testament Scriptures

Matthew 5:38-42

You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' 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.

Additional New Testament Scriptures

Matthew 7:12, 26:52-54

Luke 6:28-30

John 18:22-23

Romans 12:12, 13:4

1 Thessalonians 5:15

2 Timothy 2:24-26

1 Peter 3:8-10

Related New Testament Mitzvot

JA01 Blessing & Not Cursing Those Who Would Harm Us or Treat Us Wrongly: Loving Our Enemies

JA08 Giving to Our Enemies and Expecting Nothing in Return

JA10 Allowing Ourselves to Be Abused within Reason

Supportive Tanakh Scriptures

Leviticus 24:20

..break for break, eye for eye, tooth for tooth- whatever injury he has caused the other person is to be rendered to him in return.

1 Samuel 26:9-10

But David said to Avishai, "Don't destroy him! Nobody can raise his hand against ADONAI's anointed without becoming guilty!" David then added, "As ADONAI lives, ADONAI will strike him down, or the day will come for him to die, or he will go down to battle and be swept away. ADONAI forbid that I should raise my hand against ADONAI's anointed! But now, we'll take the spear by his head and the jug of water, and get out of here."

Proverbs 20:22

Don't say, "I'll pay back evil for evil"; wait for ADONAI to save you.

Proverbs 25:21

If someone who hates you is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

Isaiah 50:6

I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who plucked out my beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

Comment

Matthew 5:39 and this *Mitzvah* that require us to offer the other cheek are often misunderstood as forbidding us to protect ourselves from wrongs committed against us, and as even inviting those who hurt us to repeat their offenses. Its correct meaning is not that we should invite injury or fail to protect ourselves through escape or other non-violent means; indeed, there are Scriptures that teach that we should, such as Matthew 10:23:

“When you are persecuted in one town, run away to another. Yes indeed; I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Isra'el before the Son of Man comes.”

The true meaning of Matthew 5:39 is that we should not seek personal revenge for wrongs done to us, but rather depend on God's justice; Romans 12:19-20 (referencing Deuteronomy 32:35) says it this way:

“Never seek revenge, my friends; instead, leave that to God's anger; for in the Tanakh it is written, ADONAI says, 'Vengeance is my responsibility; I will repay.’”

I believe that one other clarification is needed. The key Scripture of this *Mitzvah* begins by referencing “eye for eye and tooth for tooth,” derived from Exodus 21:23-25. This is often misapplied as calling for personal vengeance, and causes confusion because it is clearly the opposite of the verses that follow. The principle of personal vengeance is found in Babylonian law and in *Lex Tallonis* Roman law, but its application in the Mosaic and New Covenant Law is limited to *batei din* adjudications and God's sovereign interventions.

Related Mitzvot in Volumes 1 & 2

J02 God's Law of Justice