

February 2007



Dearly Beloved in Yeshua!

The Royal Law

*"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture,
'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well."* James 2:8

Did you know that loving one's neighbor is the "royal law"? It is also the "golden rule" and the topic that God has placed on our heart this month. As we pursued the hundreds of books in our personal home library, we found many that dealt with loving God and God's love for us, but were surprised to find only a handful of books on loving one another. Love on the vertical plane (God-man) has been widely explored, but love on the horizontal plane (man-man) seems to have fallen into obscurity – at least on our bookshelves.

Although the Bible tells us in I John 4:20 *"... for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"*, it seems easier to love God than to love His children. Our God is altogether lovable (once you know Him!). He is full of grace, mercy, truth, compassion, understanding, and patience. He has a Father's heart. He has a great sense of humor. He never forgets. He always forgives. He is deeply interested in each of us as individuals. His love is constant and unconditional. People, on the other hand, fall short. They disappoint and hurt us. They misunderstand and are unkind. Their love is limited. They sin. That includes each one of us. Loving others is often very challenging. But since God loves us and has provided redemption for us through the death of His Son, we, as forgiven, accepted, loved, new creations in Messiah, have the power to love others – and to fulfill the **royal law**.

The few books on our shelves that delved into this horizontal brotherly love were traditional Jewish texts. In **You Shall be Holy, a Code of Jewish Ethics** by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, the author discusses the ethical essence of Judaism. He mentions a very famous passage in the Talmud in which a non-Jew asked the great Jewish sage Hillel to convert him to Judaism on the condition that Hillel could teach him the entire Torah while he stood on one foot. Hillel answered the man: "What is hateful unto you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah! All the rest is commentary. Now, go and study." (Shabbat 31a) Rabbi Telushkin explains the phrase "This is the whole Torah" as follows: "Thus, although belief in monotheism is at the heart of Judaism, if someone believes in God but does not practice Hillel's guidelines in his dealings with others, he cannot be regarded as a religious Jew. Indeed, we may question if the God in whom such an individual believes is the God in whom Judaism believes."

A century after Rabbi Hillel's death, Rabbi Akiva, the leading rabbi of his age, taught that the verse *"Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18)* was the "major principle of the Torah," and what mattered most to God (Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9:4).

Loving People – a Rabbinic View

According to the Talmud, compassion (which includes kindness) is the defining characteristic of being a Jew. If someone is not compassionate, he is not a spiritual descendant of Abraham. Since Judaism regards improving character as the goal of life, a person who is not more compassionate at sixty than he was at twenty has lived a failed life! Compassion, as well as other virtuous character traits, is said to be acquired through practice and repetition. To quote Rabbi Telushkin: "We become good people not by thinking good thoughts but by doing good deeds again and again, until they become part of our nature." The rabbinic view is that actions shape the heart more than the heart shapes actions. This emphasis on doing and giving explains how the traditional Jewish concept of righteousness is connected to good works. Any person, Jew, and non-Jew alike, can become a *tzadik*, a righteous person, through his giving, his charity. This is his redemption. Righteousness and charity are also expressed by the same Hebrew word, *zedakah*.

Before we are quick to judge and remind our Jewish brothers that the Tenach affirms, "*But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags...*" (Isaiah 64:6), consider one of millions of instances of a Jewish person who loved his neighbor. A pharmacist by the name of Levinsky had devoted his life to acts of kindness. He often granted loans, many of which he never collected, to people who could not pay for medications. When the neighborhood fell on hard times, he would buy ice cream for young children and counsel teenagers who didn't have the money to go to a doctor, on health issues. Once a year, on Christmas, he would go to the homes of poor non-Jewish neighborhood women to bring them flowers, doing this until he was seventy-five. [Several of the women told Levinsky's son that these flowers were the only thing of beauty they received all year.] There was more... Our point in this is that our Jewish people – who have not yet met the Messiah – often do a better job of loving their neighbor than those of us who have met Him. Israeli hospitals routinely treat Muslim casualties, and Israeli rescue teams are usually the first on the scene in an international crisis.

The concept of *gemilut hassadim* or "acts of loving kindness" is a foundational part of traditional Judaism and calls for personal involvement and a face-to-face encounter with real need. *Gemilut hassadim* is about "rolling up your sleeves, giving up an evening a week, and working for the benefit of strangers." The six traditional forms of these acts of kindness are: providing clothes for the naked, visiting the sick, comforting mourners, accompanying the dead to the grave, providing for brides, and offering hospitality to strangers. [Source: **Living a Jewish Life** by Anita Diamant with Howard Cooper]

Lord, help those of us who know You in a personal way to be known for our acts of lovingkindness as well! Empower us to love our neighbor as ourselves!

Our Messiah's Mandate

Rabbi Hayim Donin in **To Be a Jew** states that "The love of God cannot be separated from the love of man." Would Yeshua agree with this? We read in Mark 12:28-34 of a scribe who questioned Yeshua concerning the most important commandment. The Messiah responded that the first of all the commandments is to love God – as commanded in the Sh'ma (Deuteronomy 6:5). "*And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.*" We believe that Yeshua put an equal sign (=) between the two great commandments, consistent with the Jewish understanding that loving God equals loving others. He also said that on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40). Love is the basis of all the instruction (Torah) of God. There is nothing greater than love.

When Yeshua knew that His hour had come to leave His talmidim and return to His Father, He expressed His deepest desires and final message – a love message. When He broke convention and washed their feet He gave them an example to follow. "*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*" (John 13:14) [Have you ever washed another

person's feet? After Satan entered Judas and he left the Passover to betray Yeshua, the Messiah spoke to them again about love, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34-35).

Why was this a "new" commandment? Yeshua deepened and expanded the second commandment. More than loving one's neighbor as oneself, He charged His followers to love each other as **Yeshua had loved them**. How had He loved them? He served them. He did not please Himself. He made Himself of no reputation. He humbled Himself – and was willing to die for His friends. Yeshua said, *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"* (John 15:12-13). Do we love others as Yeshua has loved us? This is our challenge in 2007 – A LOVE CHALLENGE. Love is a choice. Love is a decision. Love is a lifestyle. Yeshua, reduce us to LOVE. *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* (1 John 3:16)

Love – the Fulfilling of the Law

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:8-10)

The Messiah told us in Matthew 5:17 that He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill the Law. He was LOVE INCARNATE (God who is Love, come in the flesh). Love fulfilled the law, not in the sense of annulling it but rather establishing it. Yeshua came, died and rose again so that the *"righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."* (Romans 8:4) In other words, with Yeshua (love) on the inside, empowered by His *Ruach HaKodesh* (Spirit), we are able to love God and love our neighbor. Practice helps. But it is more a question of a Person, than practice – The Person of Yeshua living in and through us. It is His love reaching out to others through us. It is interesting to note that the Scripture parallels a lack of law with a lack of love. This last day phenomenon is already a reality. *"Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."* (Matthew 24:12) Loving God and loving God's law keeps the fires of brotherly love burning brightly.

Love: Being "Others-Centered"

The Royal Law, the Golden Rule, involves being others-centered rather than self-centered. Me. My. Mine. This is the way the world thinks. But the Bible tells us in Philippians 2:3-4, *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."* Are we our brother's keeper? Yes. The book of 1John is a virtual instruction manual for the second great commandment. We find it difficult to read this book without being convicted of our lack of love. Consider 1John 3:10-14:

"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death." The "apostle of love" continues his exhortation in 1John 4:7-8 with the following, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not

know God, for God is love." Our favorite verse is 1John 4:12, "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been **perfected** in us." Let us reach for this goal in 2007!

We are called to serve one another in love, (Galatians 5:13) overcoming such works of the flesh as jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions and dissensions. How do we do this? How do we walk in love? By living and walking in the Spirit. This is the need of the hour.

Yeshua's ministry on earth was all about love. He loved his own to the end (John 13:1). As we seek to follow our Messiah's example, let us ask ourselves daily, "Whom am I loving?" At the end of the day, if we have even one name as an answer to that question, we will have done the will of God.

Pursue Love!

Following the great "love chapter," 1Corinthians 13 in the Brit Hadasha, we are encouraged to make love our great quest. Pursue love (1Corinthians 14:1). Love is the only thing that the Bible says never fails. "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1Corinthians 13:4-8a)

May each member of our Jewish Jewels family put his or her name in these verses this year. Wherever it says "love" insert your name, i.e. Neil suffers long and is kind. Jamie does not envy... Let love be our confession – and possession! May we live a life of love to the glory of God our Father. We **can** love others because He first loved us. **Love lives inside of us.**

"...May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you..." (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

In Yeshua's Love,

Neil & Jamie

P.S. Join us as we go in love to Israel on our 2007 Mercy Mission in October or early November.

Jewish Jewels Television Airtime Schedule - February 2007

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FL	Miami/Ft. Laud.	WHFT TV 45	THU 11:30AM
FL	West Palm Beach	WFGC TV 61	SAT 10:30 PM
IL	Chicago	TLN (WCFC)	MON 1:30 PM
IL	Peoria	FAITHALIVE CH 20	FRI 6:00 PM
IL	Rockford	TLN TV 51	SUN 9:30PM
NJ/NY	NJ/New York	WMBC TV 63	SUN 4:00 PM
OH	Columbus	WSFJ TV 51	SUN 3:30 PM
PA	Philadelphia	WFMZ TV 69	SUN 9:30 AM
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