

## The Greatest Mitzvah

*“<sup>37</sup>And He said to him, “You shall love יהוה Elochecha with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind’...<sup>5</sup>Love יהוה Elochecha with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Matt. 22, Deut. 6).*

The question asked of *Yeshua* in Matthew 22 was *“<sup>36</sup>Teacher (Rabbi), which is the greatest commandment (Mitzvah) in the Torah?”* As Believers we should not be surprised by THE Rabbi’s answer: the greatest is love (*Cp. 1 Corinthians 13:13b*). Our two greatest Rabbis (*Yeshua* and Paul) fully agree and give the same answer: to love. Did you know that *love* appears more times in this book of *the Torah* than in any other book in the *Tanakh* (x17)?

The key verbs in Deuteronomy are to *hear, listen, and obey* which are all summarized in one-word: *sh’ma. Obedience to Adonai* – or the lack thereof – is the backbone of the book. *Serving God* is the key in dozens of verses. An important aspect of Hebrew verbs is their emphasis on actual, *concrete action*, not just philosophical thought. Another key verb is to *fear Adonai* (18 times), which is to have respectful awe and reverence for Him. This will lead us to love Him, and if we love Him, we will be happy to serve him. Israel is called *the possession of Adonai* 57 times in Deuteronomy. *Adonai* is presented as a warrior: He is present in battle, fights on behalf of his people, and cuts off their enemies (this is such an important fact to consider as we ponder Israel’s battles).

We will also have an emphasis on *remember to remember*. To forget someone or something in Biblical terms does *not* mean that someone did not jog your memory or that your memory failed, as in *Wow, I could have had a V-8!* To forget means *to fail to act for, to abandon, or to forsake*. Conversely, to remember means to act on behalf of someone; for example, *God remembered Hannah*, and acted for good on her behalf by sending Samuel. Remembrance and its inverse concept, to forget, are invoked almost 30 times in Deuteronomy.

It is true that without love, our obedience becomes powerless – religious works rooted in an attempt be good enough for God. The fact is we are good enough. He sent His one and only son just for me, and just for you. Even in *Torah*, God the Father was way more interested in the hearts of His children, than He was in their rote obedience. This week’s *Torah* portion speaks directly to the heart of the matter, and the interestingly most of the Body of Messiah thinks this a New Testament concept. However, in Deuteronomy we read: *“<sup>16</sup>Circumcise the foreskin of your heart therefore, and do not be stiff-necked anymore” (Deut. 10:16)*. Our heart condition matters so much to *Adonai!* It’s the difference between a pleasing/acceptable sacrifice and strange fire. The idea of heart circumcision is throughout the TNK and is continued throughout the *New(er) Covenant*. But *circumcision of the heart* started in *Torah*. Paul eloquently adds: *“<sup>25</sup>Circumcision is indeed worthwhile if you keep the Torah; but if you break the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. <sup>26</sup>Therefore, if the uncircumcised keeps the righteous decrees of the Torah, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? <sup>27</sup>Indeed, the one not circumcised physically who fulfills the Torah will judge you who—even with the written code and circumcision—break the Torah. <sup>28</sup>For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh. <sup>29</sup>Rather, the Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—in Spirit not in letter. His praise is not from men, but from God” (Romans 2:25-29)*.

No wonder the Prophet Joel stated: *“<sup>13</sup>Rend your heart, not your garments, and turn to Adonai, your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in mercy, and relenting about the calamity due” (Joel 2:13)*. Surely need the foreskin of our hearts removed. Circumcision of our heart opens the door to greater relationship, revelation, power, impact, abundance, and joy. Our effectiveness for God and others is directly tied to the depth of love we walk in with our Father God. I want more, do you?

Without love we are useless, useless to God and most certainly to others. That’s not what we were created for. We are created to experience the fullness of God’s love daily and to share His love with one another. The world is starving for love, sometimes all we can show is disgust and religious indignation.

The fact is that if we cannot love God, we cannot love others. It's that simple. God is love. Therefore, loving Him and receiving His love, increases our ability to love, period. Ever wonder why there is so much hate/anger/bitterness in this world? It's the lack of love. If we aren't walking with God in love, then we cannot walk with people and love them when they fail. God doesn't stop loving us when we fail (remember the prodigal son). He gave us a definition on what really is to love...

*<sup>1</sup>If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all that I own and if I hand over my body so I might boast but have not love, I gain nothing...<sup>13</sup>these three remain – faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13)*

So now 🎵 *This is the time I must Sing* 🎵

*🎵 “<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. <sup>8</sup>He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love – 1 John 4:7 and 8” 🎵*