

What It Really Means to Burn With Zealous Love for God

Almost every day, I hear someone proclaim, “I love G-d.” When I hear these words, my first reaction and response is to smile and be happy. After all, what nicer phrase is there to hear from another person? As a believer in Yeshua, part of my purpose in life is to introduce people to the G-D of the Bible and explain that the first and greatest commandment is to “Love the L-RD your G-D with all your heart, soul and strength.”

As a small child growing up in a Jewish home, one of the very first liturgical prayers I learned was the Shema and V’ahavta, which is Deuteronomy 6:4-5:

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God. The Lord is one! And you shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:4-5).

These very words are foundational to our faith as Jews. There is one G-D, and we are instructed to love Him.

Yet, while I am always excited to hear someone profess his or her love of G-D, I am equally curious and often ask them the following question: “How do you know you love G-D?” In other words, how does one quantify or qualify what they have as love for G-D? Is love simply a feeling we have, like hunger or fear? Or is it an emotional response or reaction to a feeling? Is there a way we can know that we love G-D? Is there a way others around us can know we love G-D?

Many people will answer my question by quoting 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

“Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not; love flaunts not itself and is not puffed up, does not behave itself

improperly, seeks not its own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil; rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.”

Others will begin their answer with Matthew 7:17-20:

“Even so, every good tree bears good fruit. But a corrupt tree bears evil fruit. A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a corrupt tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruit you will know them.”

In Matthew 22:37-40, we read the following spoken by the lawyer to Yeshua:

One of them, who was a lawyer, tested Him by asking Him, ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?’

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets”

Of course, most believers know Yeshua was quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. What many may not know is that these two verses were a teaching and not just an answer. By quoting these two verses in response to the lawyer in Matthew, Yeshua was answering a much deeper question.

This is not the only time Yeshua is asked a question like this. In Matthew 19:16, we read: “Now one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good deed shall I do to have eternal life?’”

Notice Yeshua’s answer refers to Deuteronomy 6:5 again and then continues by saying to keep the commandments. Both times, Yeshua is asked about eternal life, and both times, He refers

the questioner to Deuteronomy 6 for the answer. In one case, He says "Keep the commandments." In the other, He says, "Love G-D and love your neighbor." It may seem as if Yeshua provided two different answers to the same question from two different people. The truth is Yeshua provided the same answer to the question; He just referenced the answer differently.

When Yeshua said, "Keep the commandments," He was referring to the commandments spoken from Mount Sinai, known as the 10 Commandments. When He said, "Love G-D and love your neighbor," He was referring to the same 10 Commandments. The first four commandments tell us how to love G-D. The following six tell us how to love our neighbor.

Another way to look at it is that we have one commandment: "Love G-D with all our heart, soul and strength." We have two commandments that tell us how to do that: Love G-D and love our neighbor. You cannot love G-D whom you don't see if you cannot love your neighbor whom you do see (1 John 4:20). We have 10 commandments to teach us how to keep the two so that we can keep the one. We then have 603 additional commandments in Torah that teach us how to keep the 10, which teach us how to keep the two, which tell us how to keep the one. In the New Testament, we have 1150 more commandments that teach us how to keep the 603, which tell us how to keep the 10, which instruct us how to keep the two, which tell us how to keep the one.

In other words, by keeping the commandments, we demonstrate our love for G-D and our neighbors. For this same reason, Yeshua said in John 14:15,

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." {eo}

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