

## Study Three – “This is the Teaching”

Didache Chapter 1, verses 3 – 4:

“This is the teaching about these matters:

Speak well of those who speak ill of you, and pray for your enemies; fast for those who persecute you, for what special favour do you merit if you love those who you? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? However, you are to love those who hate you, and you will not have any enemies.

Restrain yourself from natural and physical inclinations: if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other to him, and you will be complete. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two. If someone takes away your cloak, give him your tunic also. If someone takes away what is yours, do not demand it back, for you are not even able to get it back.”<sup>1</sup>

Again, much of these instructions are very familiar to those of us from a Christian background. But even then, some of these teachings may appear difficult to apply, and if we follow them to the letter, most of us would be totally poor in today's climate where almost everyone wants to take advantage of you. So, we need to take a closer look at how we need to apply these in today's world. But first, let's have a look at the heart, or spirit behind these instructions, which will help us apply them today, for our circumstances.

### ***This is the Teaching:***

Both the Epistle of Barnabas and the earlier sources of the Apostolic Constitutions did not include a similar parallel version of what is an extended explanation of the positive form to “love your fellow as yourself” in the Didache. Section 1.3b to 2.1 expound upon this positive form, but only in the Didache. The negative form, “Whatever you do not want to happen to you, do not do to one another” is expounded from chapter 2.1 onwards, mirroring what is in the Epistle of Barnabas and the Apostolic Constitutions.

Toby Janicki writes that many scholars believe that this section of the Didache was included later by the those who wanted to Christianise the document with an “evangelical section.” But he goes on to explain that it is more likely to be a Jewish concept found in the Talmud.

To understand this better, we need to have a closer look at the Talmud. The Introduction to the *Teachings of Yeshua to the Grafted-In* gives a summary of the layout of the Talmud, for each section. The Mishnah is the core of the Talmud, the heart of the Oral Torah.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Way of Life: The Rediscovered Teachings of the Twelve Jewish Apostles to the Gentiles*, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (p. 27), Toby Janicki, First Fruits of Zion, 1-800-775-4807, ffoz.org



The text of the Mishnah quotes rabbis who lived from about 100 BCE to 200 CE. These rabbis are called the "Tannaim", which means "teachers." This group of Teachers (aka Rabbis) included such greats as Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi.

These "Teachers" did not make up the material in the Mishnah. They simply redacted, wrote down the teachings that were handed down to them by their "Teachers".

The Mishnah itself is like a summary of instructions or matters, which requires additional background to understand the full meaning and context of the Mishnah. Most Jews who wrote and later studied the Mishnah had the bulk of this understanding, but when read without this background knowledge, much can be misinterpreted, misunderstood, or at least not fully appreciated.

It was a group of Rabbis called the "Amoraim", which means "explainers" or "interpreters" who did just what their title described, they gave an analysis of and expansion upon the material presented in the Mishnah.

The text of the Gemara quotes rabbis who lived from about 200 CE to about 500 CE. This group included Rav Ashi, Rav Yochanan, etc. Names of the Amoraim are not so famous, but they all begin with the title Rav. In the Gemara, the Rabbis of the Mishnah all have the title Rebbe before their first name.

*Another aside: Difference between Rabbi, Rav and Rebbe*

"In common parlance, "rabbi" is the catch-all term for anyone who has semichah, rabbinical ordination .... "Rav" on the other hand, has come to refer to someone who has had more extensive training and experience in providing guidance related to practical halachah (Jewish law). A rav also gets appointed by a community to answer halachic questions."<sup>2</sup>

We typically refer to the Apostle Paul as Rav Shaul. Rav Shaul not only had the finest Rabbinical training from the House of Hillel (Beit Hillel), under Gamliel<sup>3</sup>, but also, as he states in the letter to the Galatians, he received his teaching or revelation directly from the Messiah:

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<sup>2</sup> By Mendel Adelman, "The Difference Between a Rabbi and a Rav", [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3753331/jewish/The-Difference-Between-a-Rabbi-and-a-Rav.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3753331/jewish/The-Difference-Between-a-Rabbi-and-a-Rav.htm)

<sup>3</sup> There was Gamaliel I (the Elder), Gamaliel II, and Gamaliel III. Gamaliel the Elder is considered to be the grandson of Hillel the Elder. Rav Shaul would have studied under Gamaliel I (the Elder), who was a Tanna, one of the contributors to the redacting of the Mishnah.



"Furthermore, let me make clear to you, brothers, that the Good News as I proclaim it is not a human product; because neither did I receive it from someone else nor was I taught it—it came through a direct revelation from Yeshua the Messiah." (Galatians 1:11 – 12 - CJB<sup>4</sup>)

"Rebbe is a Yiddish-German word that connotes a spiritual leader and master of theology in the Hasidic movement."<sup>5</sup>

"A rabbi answers questions, a Rebbe answers people. A rabbi hears what you say with your mouth, a Rebbe hears what you are saying with your soul."<sup>6</sup>

We often refer to Yeshua as our Beloved Rebbe, not because He is part of the Hasidic movement, but because He is the only One that truly knows and speak to the heart of a person.

The Gemara, which means "study" in Aramaic, is then an analysis of and expansion upon the material presented in the Mishnah, to help us understand the background to what the Mishnah is saying. Together, the Mishnah and Gemara make up the Talmud.

Given this context and understanding, it is possible that the expansion on the positive form to "love your fellow as yourself" in Section 1.3b to 2.1 of the Didache is like an "analysis of and expansion upon" the previous sentence, compiling some of the teachings of Yeshua. Toby Janicki suggests it may have been added later, during the Apostolic Era, to help explain to new Gentile believers what Yeshua was saying by "... 'You are to love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other mitzvah greater than these." (Mark 12:31 - CJB<sup>7</sup>)

## ***This is the Teaching – Speak no Evil:***

The Didache now summarises some of the teachings and commandments from several sources, Yeshua, Rav Shaul, the Talmud, to give practical examples of how to "Love your fellow as yourself."

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<sup>5</sup> What is the Difference Between a Rebbe and a Rabbi?, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/rebbe-vs-rabbi>

<sup>6</sup> By Aron Moss, "What is the Difference Between a Rabbi and a Rebbe?", [https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article\\_cdo/aid/1561748/jewish/What-is-the-Difference-Between-a-Rabbi-and-a-Rebbe.htm](https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/1561748/jewish/What-is-the-Difference-Between-a-Rabbi-and-a-Rebbe.htm)

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The first instruction on "speaking well of those who speak ill of you", however, is not from anything recorded in the Brit Chadashah, while it has similarities to the following:

The first instruction in Lucas 6:28:

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Romans 12:14:

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Tractate Yoma 23a, in Talmud Bavli (excerpt can be read in Appendix 1) praises one "...who does not avenge himself and bear a grudge like a snake when insulted..." (b.Yoma 23a<sup>8</sup>) It is well worth reading the entire excerpt if one wants to be challenged about bearing grudges and granting forgiveness.

The Chofetz Chaim has a lot to say about our speech, especially when it comes to other people, and how we need to guard our tongue, and this will be covered in more depth in our studies on *Shmirat Halashon* ("Guarding the Tongue"). In his definition on Lashon Hara ("Evil Speech" or "The Evil Tongue"), the Chofetz Chaim writes:

"It is forbidden to speak demeaningly of one's friends, even if it is the absolute truth."<sup>9</sup>

### **For contemplation:**

The Didache and Chofetz Chaim refer to speaking well or not speaking ill. Yeshua in Lucas 6:28 refers to blessing, not cursing (as does Rav Shaul in Romans 12). How are these concepts related in the light of Mishlei (Proverbs) 18:21 and Sh'mot (Exodus) 20:13?

### **For contemplation:**

Read Yoma 23a, in Appendix 1. On the point of forgiveness in the last paragraph, the Gemara says forgiveness should only be granted to the guilty party if/when they ask for forgiveness. Compare this with what Yeshua taught in Mattityahu 6:14 – 15 (note the connection to fasting

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<sup>8</sup> Yoma 23a, *Babylonian Talmud*, The William Davidson Talmud (Koren - Steinsaltz)

<sup>9</sup> Chofetz Chaim Silverstone Translation, *Part One, The Prohibition Against Lashon Hara*, Principle 1, Seif 1, [https://www.sefaria.org/Chafetz\\_Chaim%2C\\_Part\\_One%2C\\_The\\_Prohibition\\_Against\\_Lashon\\_Hara%2C\\_Principle\\_1%2C\\_Opening\\_Comments.1?lang=bi&with=About&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Chafetz_Chaim%2C_Part_One%2C_The_Prohibition_Against_Lashon_Hara%2C_Principle_1%2C_Opening_Comments.1?lang=bi&with=About&lang2=en)



directly after these verses and Didache 1.3 above), Lucas 17:3 – 4, and Mattityahu 5:23 – 24. What is Yeshua's imperative on forgiveness? Does He redefine the boundaries of forgiveness as He did with the definition of "your neighbour" in the parable about the "good Samaritan"?

As Toby Janicki writes, in "The Way of Life":

"Disciples of our Master Yeshua are not to retaliate verbally against those who curse and slander them. Instead they are commanded to defy human nature and the selfish desire to retaliate and instead to speak well of their abusers."<sup>10</sup>

### **Love Your Enemies:**

After this slight deviation from the Brit Chadashah (but only in wording, not in spirit) the Didache then explores the way to "Love you fellow" by quoting Yeshua's teaching about retaliation and loving your enemies, taken from Mattityahu 5:38 – 48, and paralleled in Lucas 6:27 – 36.

### **For contemplation:**

Most of the instruction from Yeshua in these two passages are covered in sections 1.3b and 1.4. It is well worth refreshing ourselves on the words of Yeshua in these source verses of the Brit Chadashah.

These instructions can be quite challenging, especially in our day, when lawlessness seems to be increasing. How difficult would it have been for those who heard the teachings of Yeshua directly? While lawlessness may not have been the same as it is today, don't forget they were under Roman occupation.

Also, even though the Jews were well studied in Torah around Yeshua's time (after which the Talmud was compiled and redacted), there was an abundance of baseless hatred toward their fellow Jew, which appears contrary to both the teaching and heart of the Torah and Talmud. Does this mean that the study of Torah should be set aside and give way to only following the instructions of Yeshua?

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<sup>10</sup> *The Way of Life: The Rediscovered Teachings of the Twelve Jewish Apostles to the Gentiles*, Chapter 1 Commentary (p. 69), Toby Janicki, First Fruits of Zion, 1-800-775-4807, ffoz.org



## Practical steps to "Loving your fellow":

As we go through the practical steps, we will see (in bold) that they are all verbs, action words. They require us to do something, rather than just feel or believe. Ya'akov throws us the challenge "Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works." (Ya'akov 2:18 - CJB<sup>11</sup>)

- i. **Pray** for your enemies (Matt 5:44, Lucas 6:28)  
While the above two versions say persecute and abuse/mistreat, respectively, the Greek word is the same, and the root meaning covers to "insult, slander, use despitefully, and falsely accuse." The root word is only used three times in the Brit Chadashah, the third time in Kefa Alef (1<sup>st</sup> Peter) 3:16. Starting in verse 15, we read:

"... -yet with humility and fear, \_\_\_\_\_  
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The translation here is "abuse" or "accuse." The Talmud Bavli, in Brachot 10a, gives us the following advice:

"With regard to the statement of Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, that David did not say Halleluya until he saw the downfall of the wicked, the Gemara relates: There were these hooligans in Rabbi Meir's neighbourhood who caused him a great deal of anguish. Rabbi Meir prayed for God to have mercy on them, that they should die. Rabbi Meir's wife, Berurya, said to him: What is your thinking? On what basis do you pray for the death of these hooligans? Do you base yourself on the verse, as it is written: "Let sins cease from the land" (Psalms 104:35), which you interpret to mean that the world would be better if the wicked were destroyed? But is it written, let sinners cease?" Let sins cease, is written. One should pray for an end to their transgressions, not for the demise of the transgressors themselves." (b.Brachot 10a<sup>12</sup>)

This gives us some practical advice on how to pray for those who persecute us. By praying for our "enemies" as well as our "fellow", we

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<sup>12</sup> Brachot 10a, *Babylonian Talmud*, The William Davidson Talmud (Koren - Steinsaltz)



keep them in our mind and heart, drawing us closer to them. It helps to remove and keep bitterness, anger and other negative emotions out of our heart. It also helps us to realise that they too are created in the image of G-d. As Rav Bernstein teaches, we should be looking for the spark of G-d in every human being. Our prayers will help bring that spark back in connection with the Creator.

ii. **Fast** for your enemies

There is no direct reference to fasting for our enemies in the Brit Chadashah, however, there is the connection between prayer and fasting in Mattityahu 6:5 – 18.

Fasting with prayer is not a new concept in the Brit Chadashah. Melech David fasted and petitioned (a form of prayer) for his child to be saved from death (Sh'mu'el Bet – 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 12); in the Book of Esther, the Jews fasted and prayed for their deliverance.

### **A break in the Didache:**

In the middle of the list of things to do, the Didache, as if to sum up section 1.3, brings in the summary from Mattityahu 5:46 – 47, even though Section 1.4 continues with specific instructions. Matthew 5:46 – 47:

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Lucas 6:13 calls them "sinners" rather than "Gentiles". Either way, the challenge here is to not just be like those who have no covenant relationship with the G-d of Israel. Instead, we should extend ourselves to love those and show mercy to those who do not deserve it, or may never return our gesture, which is the essence of selfless love.

The Rabbis call this *Zechut* ("merit"), obtaining merit or favour with G-d. It is defined as favourable judgement or merit. Marlene Myerson writes in her blog titled "Judging Others Favourably - Middah Machrio L'Chaf Zechut":

"The Talmudic sage, Joshua ben Perahiah, said: "When you judge anyone, tip the scale in their favour. Judge the whole of a person favourably." (Pirkei Avot 1:6) Jewish tradition instructs us that when we judge another person, we are to put their misdeeds on one side of a scale and their virtues on the other side of the scale. If the scales are



balanced, then we should tip them towards merit. Therefore, when you assess another person, begin with their virtues.”<sup>13</sup>

Cornelius is probably the most well-known character in the Brit Chadashah, who was applying the concept of Zechut, even before he was aware of Yeshua, which he was simply practicing Judaism, as a G-d Fearer. We read in Acts 10:4:

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In Rabbinic literature, Zechut “came to be applied to the protecting influence of freely chosen good conduct over and above the required Law.”<sup>14</sup> An act of Zechut is an exceptionally selfless deed. This is the spirit of the Torah, which Yeshua asks us all to walk by.

- iii. Love (**do good to**) those who hate you (Matt 5:44, Lucas 6:27)  
Section 1.3 closes with the instruction to love those who hate us and adds the consequence of our actions – “and you will not have any enemies.” Yeshua was recorded as saying:

“Love your enemies! **Do good** to those who hate you,” (Lucas 6:27 - CJB<sup>15</sup>)

Again, we see an action/doing word associated with loving. While the Hebrew letter for the word “and” is “Vav” (in “and you will have no enemies”), the vav can also indicate “in order to”. This then changes the context from a direct action and response to an action for a good reason – “Love those who hate you in order to not have any enemies.”

The Apostolic Constitutions, in Book VII, Section 1, provides additional Scriptural background from the Torah:

“Matthew 5:46 – 47 “But love those that hate you, and you shall have no enemy.” For says He, “You shall not hate any man; no, not an Egyptian, nor an Edomite; [D’varim 23:8]” for they are all

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<sup>13</sup> Marlene Myerson, *Judging Others Favorably - Middah Machrio L'Chaf Zechut*, <https://reformjudaism.org/learning/sacred-texts/learn-about-middot/judging-others-favorably-middah-machrio-lchaf-zechut>

<sup>14</sup> Joan Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p.124. E.g., m.Sanhedrin 4:1, 5:4 – 5, 6:1

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the workmanship of God. Avoid not the persons, but the sentiments, of the wicked.”<sup>16</sup>

The Torah, in D'varim 23:8, tells us:

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While the Egyptians and Edomites were enemies to Israel, the Torah commands the Jewish people to love them and do them no wrong, despite what they did to Israel. This is confirmed in Mishlei (Proverbs) 24:17:

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Rav Shaul, in Romans 12:20 – 21, gives us a parallel instruction:  
“On the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by doing this, you will heap fiery coals on his head." Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.” (Romans 12:20 – 21 - CJB<sup>17</sup>)

Rav Shaul is quoting Mishlei (Proverbs) 25:21 – 22:

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**For contemplation:**

Does heaping fire coals on someone's head sound consistent with loving one's enemy? At face value this looks like a sneaky

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<sup>16</sup> Anonymous. *The Apostolic Constitutions*. Unknown. Kindle Edition.

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way of actually getting back at your enemy, since burning coals on someone's head do not sound very pleasant.

There are two ways of interpreting the burning coals. One is that the burning coals represent shame. Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on Mishlei 25:22 write:

"Burning pain, as commonly observed, is the figure of burning shame, on account of undeserved kindness shown by an enemy (Fleischer).

The burning of coals laid on the head must be a painful but wholesome consequence; it is a figure of self-accusing repentance (Augustine, Zöckler), for the producing of which the showing of good to an enemy is a noble motive."<sup>18</sup>

An alternative interpretation lies in the context of helping a neighbour out in the days when there were no matches or lighters to light one's fire. If your neighbour's fire had gone out, in order to help your neighbour relight their fire, you could give them some embers from your fire, which they would carry in a fire pan on their heads and relight their fire. This interpretation lines up with the Hebrew word for "burning coal", which is "gechel", from an unused root meaning to glow or kindle; an ember.

Another Rabbinic writing, Avot DeRabbi Natan, sums up the whole purpose of what we are doing by loving our enemy, by giving them some embers to light their fire:

"The true warriors are warriors in Torah, .... some say: One who can turn an enemy into his friend."

Rav Shaul wrote to his Talmid (Disciple) Timothy, saying:

"Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called ...." (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:12 – CJB<sup>16</sup>)

Our beloved Rebbe Yeshua calls us as well, to fight the good fight, and not just take hold of eternal life for ourselves, but turn our enemies into friends, so they too can take hold of the life for which Yeshua died on the Execution Stake.

## Next Study: "Restrain Yourself"

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<sup>18</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament*, Proverbs 25:21 – 22



## Appendix 1: Excerpt from Talmud Bavli, Tractate Yoma 23a (starting last verse of 22b)<sup>19</sup>

“And Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: Any Torah scholar who does not avenge himself and bear a grudge like a snake when insulted is not considered a Torah scholar at all, as it is important to uphold the honour of Torah and its students by reacting harshly to insults. The Gemara asks: But isn't it written explicitly in the Torah: “You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people” (Leviticus 19:18)? The Gemara responds: That prohibition is written with regard to monetary matters and not personal insults, as it was taught in a baraita<sup>20</sup>: What is revenge and what is bearing a grudge? Revenge is illustrated by the following example: One said to his fellow: Lend me your sickle, and he said: No. The next day he, the one who had refused to lend the sickle, said to the other person: Lend me your ax. If he said to him: I will not lend to you, just as you did not lend to me, that is revenge.

And what is bearing a grudge? If one said to his fellow: Lend me your ax, and he said: No, and the next day he, the one who had refused to lend the ax, said to the other man: Lend me your robe; if the first one said to him: Here it is, as I am not like you, who would not lend to me, that is bearing a grudge. Although he does not respond to his friend's inconsiderate behaviour in kind, he still makes it known to his friend that he resents his inconsiderate behaviour. This baraita shows that the prohibition relates only to monetary matters, such as borrowing and lending.

The Gemara asks: But does the prohibition against vengeance really not relate also to matters of personal anguish suffered by someone? Wasn't it taught in a baraita: Those who are insulted but do not insult others, who hear themselves being shamed but do not respond, who act out of love for God, and who remain happy in their suffering, about them the verse states: “They that love Him be as the sun when it goes forth in its might” (Judges 5:31). This baraita shows that one should forgive personal insults as well as wrongs in monetary matters.

The Gemara responds that the prohibition against taking vengeance and bearing a grudge indeed applies to cases of personal anguish; however, actually, the scholar may keep resentment in his heart, though he should not act on it or remind the other person of his insulting behaviour. The Gemara asks: But didn't Rava say: With regard to whoever forgoes his reckonings with others for injustices done to him, the heavenly court in turn forgoes punishment for all his sins? The Gemara answers: Indeed, even a scholar who is insulted must forgive insults, but that is only in cases

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<sup>19</sup> Yoma 23a, Babylonian Talmud, The William Davidson Talmud (Koren - Steinsaltz)

<sup>20</sup> Refer to the Introduction to the Teachings of Yeshua to the Grafted-In for explanation of the Baraita





where his antagonist has sought to appease him, in which case he should allow himself to be appeased toward him. However, if no apology has been offered, the scholar should not forgive him, in order to uphold the honour of the Torah."

