

DAY FIFTEEN

“IN WHOM DO YOU HIDE?”

PSALM 119:113-120

Once again, Biblical word studies allow us to see different aspects of our great Creator. Is it conceivable that the ability for the Word to move people **is even more dramatic than what we often see?** Could this be one of the reasons that Messiah followers are encouraged to memorize the Scriptures? Does it help when we have different mental images to remember significant messages? Certainly, the parabolic style of teaching was something the Lord Himself employed, and its effectiveness is quite apparent in the Gospels. But before commenting on these and other thoughts, consider picturing in your own mind the priests at the altar in Jerusalem, Counting the Omer, as they may have declared these Psalms:

PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

PSALM 119:113-120

Samekh. I hate those who are double-minded, but I love Your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word. Depart from me, evildoers, that I may observe the commandments of my God. Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Uphold me that I may be safe, that I may have regard for Your statutes continually. You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes, for their deceitfulness is useless. You have removed all the wicked of the earth *like* dross; therefore I love Your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of You, and I am afraid of Your judgments.

When I first looked at our selection from Psalm 119, the terminology “double-minded” immediately made an impression. In our weekly Torah study (2004: *Tazria-Metzora*, Leviticus 12:1-15:33), we have just considered the subject of *lashon ha’ra* (הַרְעָה)

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לְשׂוֹן) or the “evil tongue,” and the thought of people using their mouths or voices to slander others is fresh on my mind. As I contemplated the word “hate,” the thought that the Holy One is contrasting such a strong emotion to the love His people are to have for His Torah seemed almost hyperbolic. Thinking about this, I remembered that Yeshua Himself is very clear in His Sermon on the Mount, teaching that we are not only to love our neighbors, but also to pray for those who persecute us:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR [Leviticus 19:18] and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:43-48).

Are the words from the Psalmist a little strong?

“I hate the plotters of evil, but I love Your Torah” (ATS).

The Hebrew verb *sanei* (סָנֵי)¹ is found 148 times in the Tanakh.² The sentiment to dislike something or someone is an attribute of humans that is often seen throughout the Holy Scriptures. Initially, the first time the verb *sanei* is used in the Torah is when the relatives of Rebekah were blessing her, prior to her departure for Canaan to be married to Isaac. This blessing is often employed in the traditional Jewish liturgy of *Erev Shabbat*,³ as the Sabbath begins on Friday evening and is accompanied with a fine dinner:

“They blessed Rebekah and said to her, ‘May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate [*sanei*] them” (Genesis 24:60).

Here, the obvious reference is that certain people will hate the descendants of Rebekah. Apparently, the ability to detest people favored of God is a trait that would be shared by many after this word was spoken. This would make sense, because those without the blessings that come to the children of promise, would naturally be jealous—and the emotion to hate can certainly be generated by envy.

In another reference, we see that the ability to hate is not necessarily limited to people of different nationalities. In fact, we see that jealousy—even among brothers—can precipitate hatred:

“His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they **hated** [*sanei*] him and could not speak to him on friendly terms” (Genesis 37:4).

Even the beloved sons of Jacob/Israel, when provoked by the jealousy that Jacob loved Joseph more than them, erupted in a hatred that was so strong that they actually sold him into slavery:

“His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they **hated** [*sanei*] him and could not speak to him on friendly terms” (Genesis 37:4).

¹ In the Qal stem (simple action, active voice), the verb *sanei* can mean either “**hate**” or “**be unable** (or **unwilling**) to put up with, slight” (*CHALOT*, 353).

² This figure was determined using a lemma search of the Hebrew Tanakh (WTT) in BibleWorks 7.0.

³ Harlow, *Siddur Sim Shalom*, 311; Scherman and Zlotowitz, *Complete ArtScroll Siddur, Nusach Sefard*, pp 384-385.

These same sons then told their father that a wild animal had attacked and devoured him (Genesis 37:29-35).

In His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs. 5-7), Yeshua Himself quoted frequently from the Torah, which gives specific instruction regarding hatred and human relations:

“You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. You shall not **hate** [*sanei*] your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:16-18).

The essence of these instructions encourages personal holiness, **because the Lord is holy**. I now better understand what Yeshua communicated when He concluded His comments with, “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48), meaning that we are to strive for spiritual maturity. Almost every time I had read this command, I had often just “rolled my eyes.” After all, who can be perfect, as the Heavenly Father is perfect? Yeshua’s exhortation seemed so beyond attainment that I never dug deep enough into the text to understand what He was really saying. But, He was most probably thinking about the need for men and women to seek personal holiness in order to love one’s neighbor.

In order to have significant communion with the Holy One, **His people must seek holiness**, and one of the most significant ways to evidence holiness is by how one treats his or her fellow human beings. However, note that the problem of slander and acting against the life of one’s neighbor in Leviticus 19:16 precedes the love command of Leviticus 19:17. Is it possible that there is some connection between the two? The power of slander and false witness is such, that it can be considered tantamount to “murdering” someone, by impugning and lying against one’s character.

Did you notice that Leviticus 19:17 also says, “you may surely reprove your neighbor without incurring sin”? While not harboring animosity for one’s neighbor, a person is allowed to reprove or correct him when he is in known sin (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2-5). Perhaps it is from this passage of Scripture that the common adage, “love the sinner, but hate the sin,” is derived.

While meditating on these verses today, I had just discovered yesterday that someone who claims to be a Believer is slandering me again. *What am I to do?* In my heart I am contending with the fact that I hate lies and a false witness. And since this attack is coming from someone who I believe is double-minded, how do I focus my distaste for the actions taken? The human tendency is to focus on the person. If I did this, **I would not be following Yeshua’s command to pray for my enemies**. But honestly, sometimes it is just flat difficult to pray for people who are slandering you, because your human flesh just wants vengeance and mortal restitution.

For me today, while taking the time to Count the Omer, I was taken on an interesting tour through the Scriptures to determine more about the concept of “hate” from the perspective of God Himself. Many different references were considered, and for one who is trying to walk by the Spirit, I was reminded that even the Holy One of Israel hates different things:

“There are six things which the LORD **hates** [*sanei*], yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness *who* utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

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It was comforting to know that the Lord hates the same things that I hate. But as I looked deeper at these seven things, I realized that He hates these actions, but not necessarily the people who commit these things.

After some further study, as I considered some additional Scriptures, I became convinced that “hate” should be directed toward *the sin* of double-minded slander, and that I am required by the Law of God to pray for my enemies. The words of the Apostle Paul helped me come to this conclusion, as he relayed the very same Torah command to love one’s neighbor, contrasting the difference between the flesh and the Spirit:

“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [Leviticus 19:18].’ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.⁴ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:14-21).

In the struggle that Believers can sometimes have between their flesh and the Holy Spirit, it became quite apparent to me that I could take some of the verses that I looked at today and readily conclude that my hate for slander is totally justified. Yet on the other hand, the need to pray for one’s enemies must balance the frustration of despising the evil tongue. Thankfully, in the second verse of our Psalm 119 meditation for today, I found my answer: “You are my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Your word” (Psalm 119:114).

I was reminded that through prayer—conducted in His hiding place under His shield—I could wait for His Word. If you struggle with similar issues, the Book of Psalms certainly has valid answers:

“Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah. I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you” (Psalm 32:6-8).

⁴ Meaning, of course, that one will not be condemned by the Torah’s penalties upon Law-breakers.