

6-31-25 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Sh'lach L'Cha* (send for yourself)
Torah Portion: Numbers 13:1 – 15:41
Haftarah: Joshua 2:1-24
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: John 15:13

Biblical Dispute Resolution 12 – Productive Conversations 2 – Love is Another Key

Central question: How can we have conversations, and not arguments?

We are in parasha *Sh'lach L'cha*. Its name comes from the 8th through 11th word in English, and the 11th word in the original Hebrew.

Num 13:1-3

13 Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 2 "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them." 3 So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel

13:1

וַיְדַבֵּר	יְהוָה	אֶל־	מֹשֶׁה	לֵאמֹר:				
And spake	the Lord	unto	Moses,	saying,				
1696	3068	413	4872	559				

שְׁלַח־	לָךְ	אֲנָשִׁים	וַיַּחְרֹוּ	אֶת־	אֶרֶץ	כְּנָעַן	אֲשֶׁר־	2
Send	thou	men,	that they may search		the land of	Canaan,	which	
7971	3807a	582	8446	853	776	3667	834	

אֲנִי	נָתַן	לְבָנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אִישׁ	אֶחָד	אִישׁ	לְמִטָּה	
I	give	unto the children of	Israel:	every	a	man,	of	
589	5414	1121	3478	376	259	376	4294	

אֲבֹתָיו	תִּשְׁלָחוּ	כָּל־	נָשִׂיא	בֵּינֵם:				
their fathers	shall ye send	every one	a ruler	among them.				
1	7971	3605	5387	871a				

וַיִּשְׁלַח	אֹתָם	מֹשֶׁה	מִמִּדְבָּר	פָּאֲרָן	עַל־	פִּי	3
And sent	them	Moses	from the wilderness of	Paran:	by	the commandment of	
7971	853	4872	4057	6290	5921	6310	

יְהוָה	כָּלָם	אֲנָשִׁים	רָאשֵׁי	בָנֵי־	יִשְׂרָאֵל	הֵמָּה:	
the Lord	all	men	heads of	the children of	Israel.	those	
3068	3605	376	7218	1121	3478	1992	

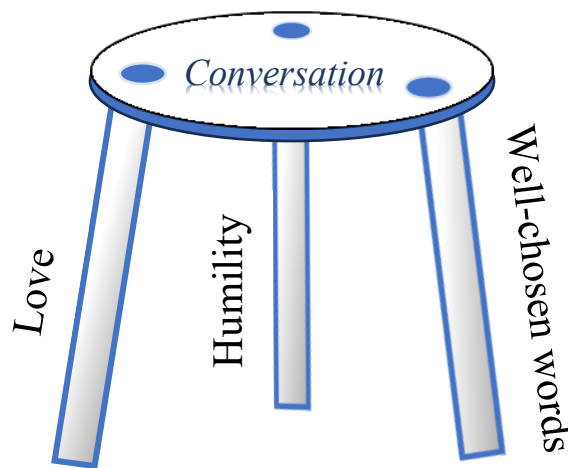
Today we are continuing in our series on Biblical Dispute Resolution, and learning how to have productive conversations with others, even those who have dramatically hostile viewpoints to ours on important matters.

Last week we discussed how personal humility is the cornerstone of productive relationships with others, and that is especially true when engaging in conversations.

There are actually three important pillars that support productive conversations with others. Humility is the starting place and an important one, but the others are also needful.

Another is love, and the final one is choosing our words wisely.

Each operates together and supports one another as we have conversations. Imagine each as a leg on a three-legged stool. All three are important. If any one of these fails, the conversation will likely also fail.



If we are humble, we are then able to put away pride and operate in love for one another. If we have love, we will naturally speak in a way that is uplifting and not unnecessarily hurtful. Our way of speaking will help

us remain humble, which will help us continue to love, which will have an effect on our speech. And so it goes.

I wish to address the two pillars of productive conversation which I have not addressed before – Love and well-chosen words.

Love.

When we talk about love, especially today, we need to begin by defining the word. The term “love” seems hard to narrow-down to a single sentence definition.

Webster’s Dictionary gives us some technical help:

- A. strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties
- B. warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion
- C. unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: such as (1) the fatherly concern of God for humankind, (2) brotherly concern for others.

Love is certainly a noun. It is a thing. But I find it is more well-defined as a verb. Love is a nice concept, but without love-in-action, it remains abstract and without true meaning.

We have seen how the godless ones in society have twisted the concept of “love” to their own benefit. They believe that if they keep telling us lies about love, then we will eventually believe those lies, and we will accept their twisted definition of the term.



During Humility month, we as followers of the true G-d should stay with what He intended love to be, and how it is to be applied to one another. We should not buy-into the agenda of those who are prideful in their sin.

G-d, very early, associated the concept of love with action based on that love.

Deut 6:5-6

5 "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart

Ex 20:4-6

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

G-d gave us an assurance of how He would treat us, when we love Him and do what He has said. But he also instructed us to love those in our people.

Lev 19:17-18

17 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. 18 '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.

But our love is not to be limited to only our own people, or the people in our congregation. We are to love the strangers who live among us, because G-d first loved us.

Deut 10:12-20

12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? 14 "Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. 15 Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. 16 Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more. 17 For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. 18 He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. 19 So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Yeshua solidified the concept of extending it beyond love of G-d, and love of those aliens who dwell among us. He once again told us to love those who are not all that lovable.

Matt 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you 45 in order 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. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? 47 "And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Luke 6:27-35

27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for

those who mistreat you. 29 "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. 30 "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. 31 "And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way. 32 "And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 "And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount. 35 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men

Yeshua also predicted that as hard times overtake the body of faith, and as preachers of falsehood arise among us, they will teach that Torah is not applicable to our lives today, and as a result, love will disappear.

Matt 24:3-15

3 And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" 4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,'¹ and will mislead many. 6 "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. 10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. 11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. 12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. 14 "And this

¹ Today, few are saying "I am the Christ" but many are portraying a completely different Jesus than the Messiah of Israel, and the Savior of the world. I believe these false teachers are worthy of the same condemnation as those who claim to be the Messiah, and are not.

gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

We are all familiar with the classic passage on love which was penned by R. Shaul in his letter to the congregation in Corinth.

1 Cor 13

13 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And 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 do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will

be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13 But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

So, now that we have explored a few of the Scripture passages that show us what love is, the trick is how to live it out.

When beginning this discussion, I told you that the abstract concept of love might be interesting, but it has no impact upon anyone unless it becomes a verb – it is put into action.

In generations not so long ago, among the Jewish people, marriages were arranged. The Papas in the family would make an agreement, and the children would be “matched.” Still, the young lady always had the right to decline the marriage. We don’t have forced marriages in Jewish culture, as opposed to some other cultures.

Two scenes in the movie Fiddler on the Roof illustrate the tradition, as well as a departure from it.

Can there be love before marriage? Apparently so. But love can also develop during marriage, it seems.

These links will lead you to those clips on YouTube.

<https://youtu.be/AUGCpL8Qixw>

https://youtu.be/oSF8l_Yh_gY

I have heard it said that “Love is a choice, not a feeling.” I must disagree. It is *both* a feeling, and a lifetime of many, many choices.

Those choices demonstrate love. Choosing to put away things that you might like or enjoy, in order to provide the best life for another person, is the essence of love.

When some believers from the normative church challenge me regarding all those pesky commandments found in the “Old Testament,” I occasionally draw from the example of love in my response.

- Do you have someone in your life whom you love?
- Have you changed anything about your life choices to please that person, only because it pleased that person?
- G-d spent thousands of years telling mankind what pleases Him.
- If you love G-d, why would you not want to change your life choices to please Him, since you can know them by simply reading your Bible?

Love calls us to consider putting aside our personal preferences which may be hurtful to others, for the benefit of the ones we love. How much should one sacrifice in the name of love? There are varying degrees of what people are willing to set aside, and that depends on the person and the circumstances.

But Yeshua told us what the ultimate top level of love looks like.

John 15:13

13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Yeshua was speaking of His impending death, to be sure, and He described those who love Him so as to keep his Commandments as His friends. But I believe He was also illustrating for us how deeply we should love one another.

And that love will be a sign to the world that we follow Yeshua.

John 13:34-35

34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Having love for “one another” in our community of faith is somewhat easier than having love for those who are not in our community. But we recall that we are still commanded to love them as well.²

Let me give you some illustrations of how G-d taught me to expand the circle of love to encompass others, and how He caused me to be confronted with the limits of my love for others.

² The command to love is not the same as a command to trust. Trust is earned, and once someone has proved themselves trustworthy, we can extend trust. But love is unconditional, and requires us to look at others through the eyes of G-d.

The Inquisition

Many decades ago, I was a member of Centennial Community church in Denver, Colorado. The leadership of that church had recognized my knowledge of Scripture and my zeal for teaching. They put me in charge of a class of youngsters of age 9-10. They gave me some teaching materials which I considered to be at disappointingly low quality. To me, these materials were well in the center of that church's theology, but were uninspiring and sometimes taught theological error. I fashioned my own curriculum, using their weekly teaching materials as a launching pad, but my materials went far deeper. When the Levitical holy days fell during the year, I would also offer a supplemental lesson on those days, and their meaning to believers in Yeshua. For Rosh Hashana, I would bring a shofar and sound it for them in the class. I would allow the kids to also try to sound the shofar themselves.³ During Chanukkah, I would bring a Channukiah⁴ and would discuss the meaning of the lights, and the deeper meaning of this holiday. I focused on scripture memory, too and rewarded the children with "good bucks"⁵ for being able to recite last week's memory verse, and the verse for the

³ Yes, it was well sanitized before and after each child.

⁴ A nine-branched version of the temple menorah, used in the celebration of Chanukkah, the Festival of Light.

⁵ Specially marked play money which each child kept in an envelope which remained in the class each week.

week before. For each good thing that the students did in class, they would earn more “good bucks.” I distributed a one-page lesson summary for the children to give to their parents, which had some questions for the parents to ask their children on the way home from church, to reinforce the lesson a bit. Once a month, I would purchase things that I knew the children would like, and would auction them off, and they would use their “good bucks” to purchase. They were rewarded for good behavior, and for learning about G-d. The class was learning a lot, and both the children and parents were excited about the class. But not all. One parent complained behind my back about all the “Jewish” stuff in the class. The church leadership took action to investigate. They confirmed that there was some “Jewish” stuff being taught, and they decided to hold what I call “an inquisition.” I was called to several meetings of pastors and elders, who grilled me regarding my teachings and my theology. In the midst of this, I was sitting in services, and was crying out to G-d in my pain. He used that opportunity to give me a lesson in love. He asked me, “Can you love the hand that strikes your face?” Immediately, my world changed. I knew that Yeshua had done precisely that, and I should do no less.⁶ Yes, I can love those who treat me with scorn and derision – because He loves them too. Eventually, they kicked me out of their church. I departed in

⁶ John 19:1-3

peace.⁷ I had learned a valuable lesson in how to love others in the church who are engaged in unscriptural, mean actions toward me.

The Traffic Circle

Many decades ago, as I drove the streets of my home town, I was “less than gracious” to other drivers who did what I call a “traffic stupid.” I would often rebuke them openly from behind the wheel of my car as we continued to go our separate ways. I would not hesitate to hold them to the highest standard of driving etiquette and skill. And, of course, my level of driving was established as the standard to which all others should adhere. Can you see that I was prideful and quick to offer condemnation? G-d wanted to teach me a lesson that day. As I was rounding a traffic circle, I encountered another driver – who very unskillfully navigated that circle. His poor driving caused me to apply my brakes to avoid hitting him, and I immediately began berating his poor driving. Then G-d asked me, “If that driver were your best friend, would you give him grace, and forgiveness?” I began to answer that it would, but G-d wasn’t finished with His questioning. He continued, “How do you know that he is not *my* best friend?” That final question hit me like a brick to the head. From that day forward, I have been less critical of other drivers. When I see a person committing a “traffic

⁷ I wrote a journal detailing the events of this inquisition called “One Story.” I intend to use that as the basis for a workbook to help others learn to better resolve disputes among themselves in a more G-dly manner.

stupid” that affects what I am trying to do, I immediately come up with a plausible explanation of his actions which are completely innocent, and apply more love. Am I perfect at this technique? No. But I continue to work on getting better.

The Cripple and the Bully

One of the members of my congregation in Denver was a precious soul who was born with many problems. His legs never were fully developed, and as a child he even caught Polio and was trapped for a time in what we then called an “iron lung.” Miraculously, he did recover, although his legs were never going to be workable for him. Doctors tried for years to fit him with braces so he might at least walk with crutches, but that proved unsuccessful. The doctors finally amputated both his legs above the knees, and he was confined to a wheelchair for the remainder of his life. As I looked at him, my heart broke. He would never run, climb a tree, swim, jump over a gutter full of water, ride a bike, play soccer, or hundreds of other things that boys all over the world do every day. I had done so many things with my fully-functional legs, and my heart was touched deeply. I reached out to G-d for an answer. He answered. He said, “Your heart goes out to him, because his body is broken?” “Yes.” I replied. “Look at that man over there,” He directed. “The man who has been so mean to you and to others.” “I

see him.” I thought. “Your friend’s body is damaged and broken, but his spirit is soaring with Mine. But that man over there, whose body is whole and healthy, his soul is so broken and twisted that it is in far worse condition than your friend’s body.” On that day I learned to stop looking at people’s outward appearances, and to look at them through the eyes of G-d. I haven’t perfected that discipline yet, but I am still working on it. When I am successful, I don’t judge by what my eyes see, nor what my ears hear. When I am successful in this discipline, I walk closer with G-d, as my Messiah did.⁸

G-d has been disciplining me and discipling me. I am on a path toward being a better ambassador of His kingdom. No question He will do the same with you.

These lessons for me have helped me learn to speak to others in greater love. I hope you will learn from my stories of failure and growth.

Next, we will consider the third leg of the conversation stool, and discuss how to choose better words when we are speaking with others.

⁸ Isaiah 11:3