

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Understanding Torah Society

Part 9 – Brother’s Keeper

B’reshit (Genesis) 4:9

And YHWH said to Qayin, “Where is Abel thy brother?” And he said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?”

Context is always important in gaining a true understanding of any passage of Scripture. It seems particularly true when looking into the passage just above. Qayin (Cain) had become jealous and angry with his brother Abel. As a result, Qayin killed his brother. Both Qayin and YHWH knew what Qayin had done. The question which YHWH asks Qayin is based upon that knowledge. Not only is the question based upon that knowledge, but Qayin’s answer is as well.

What YHWH was confronting Qayin with was the safety and well-being of Abel. When YHWH asked where Abel was, YHWH already knew he was dead. What YHWH was actually asking Qayin was, “Is your brother safe and well?” Of course, he was not. But what is even more telling is Qayin’s answer, that he was not responsible for the safety and well-being of his brother. However, this is not what Scripture teaches. What Scripture teaches is that a person is indeed his brother’s keeper, i.e., that each person is charged with the safety and well-being of every other person in a society based upon Torah. No person is to kill his brother—not physically nor with words.

Matithyah (Matthew) 5:21-22

21 “You have heard that it was said to them of old time, ‘You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment;’

22 but I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be in danger of the hell of fire.”

The Aramaic word “raca” literally means “spit.” Thus, to either spit upon another or to say that one spits upon another incurs judgment upon oneself. This, according to Mashiach Yeshua, is equal to taking a person’s life. It is wrong to take a person’s life either physically or metaphorically in a Torah society.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 19:18

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am YHWH.”

Yeshua taught us that this commandment and principle was the second greatest commandment, second only to loving YHWH our Elohim with all one’s being. We are commanded to be our brother’s keeper. In fact, it is the doing of the second greatest commandment which proves that one is keeping the first greatest commandment to love YHWH our Elohim with all one’s being. The problems seem to arise when one does not properly understand exactly what it means to be his “brother’s keeper.”

When one understands that he is to look out for the safety and well-being of others, then he is doing well. What the above commandment does not mean is perhaps just as important as what it means. Therefore, for the sake of walking in His Spirit, let us examine what it does not mean for a moment.

One of the challenges followers of Yeshua face today is self-appointed Torah-police. Certain individuals have taken it upon themselves to go about enforcing their interpretations of Scripture as being the only viable and true interpretation and all other understandings of Scripture except their own are evil and walking in sin. This is not being kind-hearted nor loving towards one’s brother; it is not being a brother’s keeper; it is an attempt to be his master (and that is idolatry). It is not even reasonable to think such a thing.

YHWH, through His Spirit, is fully capable of revealing to each and every person exactly what it is that He wants each individual person to do and how He wants that person to live. Living in [unity](#) does not mean that every single person is doing exactly the same thing at the very same time. It seems this is what some of these Torah-police think—unity means uniformity. Rather, unity simply means that each and every person is hearing and obeying the Voice of YHWH moment-by-moment. Scripture teaches us in a variety of ways that every person fits into [the body of Mashiah](#) in his own unique way, each one doing his own unique task. Therefore, it is completely unreasonable that one should expect that all dress alike, or that all behave alike, or that there is any other similarity in the actions of the individual members, i.e., uniformity among the individual members, except that all are obeying His Voice. The individual members of Israel are not made with a cookie cutter. When one or more individuals obey the voice of another member rather than the Voice of YHWH, then those doing so cannot be walking in unity, even though looking at the outward appearance there seems to be uniformity among that small faction. Following, that is, obeying, the voice of a person to the exclusion of hearing and obeying the Voice of YHWH is idolatry, plain and simple! This is not to say that a person can never be in submission to human authority, but rather that one must always and ever be in submission to the Voice of YHWH as well as in submission to human authority which is in submission (agreement with) to His Voice as well.

To have proper order in a Torah based society, unity must prevail, i.e., each member must hear and [obey the Voice of YHWH](#). Only in this way can a person be his brother's keeper.

Because the individual members of the body of Mashiach are flawed humans, mistakes and errors in judgment are expected to happen. YHWH, through His Torah, has made provisions for the Torah based society to be self-correcting. However, for it to be self-correcting, the provisions must be followed and obeyed, both in the letter as well as the spirit of Torah.

When one member witnesses something that appears to him as being wrong or misguided in some fashion, then he is commanded to follow a certain procedure. The first step in that procedure is as follows.

Mattithyah (Matthew) 7:3-5

3 "And why do you look at the mote that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam that is in your own eye?"

4 Or how will you say to your brother, 'Let me cast the mote out of your eye; and behold, the beam is still in your own eye?'

5 You hypocrite, first cast the beam out of your own eye; and then you shall see clearly to cast the mote out of your brother's eye."

The first step in helping a brother is to get one's own house in order first. If one does not do this, then he is walking out of order and will damage the harmony present within the body of Mashiach. It does not matter how long it takes for one to get the beam out of his own eye; he must work at it until the beam has been completely removed from his own eye before he has the proper right and authority to approach his brother about the speck in his brother's eye. It is highly likely that once the beam has been removed from one's own eye and his own vision has been cleared up, one will see that there is not really a speck in his brother's eye at all, but rather he was only seeing a reflection of his own beam in his brother's eye.

The whole idea within Torah of being the keeper of one's brother is upon the foundation of love and humility. All actions done which have an effect upon one's neighbor, are to be done with the greatest of love for him as an individual YHWH loves, as well as respecting that person's right to obey the Voice of YHWH, make his own mistakes and misjudgments, and be lovingly corrected by YHWH, through the agency of other members of the Torah society.

Mattithyah (Matthew) 18:14-17

14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

15 And if your brother sin against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone; if he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he does not listen to you, take with you one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.

17 And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembly; and if he refuses to listen to the assembly also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the publican."

This process is not about forcing another person to do what you want him to do. It is not even about forcing another person to obey Torah. It is about restoring that person back to YHWH in order that the person in question is once again hearing and obeying His Voice. In this process then, order is maintained. Please take careful note of verse fourteen. Yeshua states that the whole idea behind this process is that no one should be lost. If one cannot go to his neighbor with the idea of lovingly restoring him back from where he has fallen, then he has no business going to his brother yet. He needs to go back to step one and finish getting the log out of his own eye first. Going to one's brother or neighbor for any other reason will result in utter catastrophe for all involved.

This is what it means to be my brother's keeper. It means that I am interested in keeping him in a right relationship with YHWH first, and then second, in a right relationship with me. Being in a right relationship simply means a person is hearing and obeying the Voice of YHWH. If he is doing that then all is well. Being my brother's keeper is not so much, what is my brother doing (or not doing) according to what YHWH has commanded me to do, but what has YHWH commanded him to do.

May YHWH teach us to be our brother's keeper in a manner that is pleasing to Him.

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