

Addendum
To
Request For Addition To The Siddur

By

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Table of Contents

Addendum	3
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Acknowledging the Source – Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

In the study of the written Torah as well as in the Jewish oral tradition, it has always been customary (even required in houses of study) to acknowledge and credit the source of original authorship. This demands great commitment and diligence in order to ensure the foundation and the stability of all resulting religious commentary and teaching, particularly those that result in enduring and common Jewish practices, customs and traditions. This is a wonderful and grand tradition in Jewish learning.

Now over the course of time various rabbis and commentators have been quoted as saying and teaching their followers:

1. Love your neighbor as yourself.
2. Love your enemies.

In the Tanakh Translation of the Torah, Nevi'im and Kethuvim comprising the entire written Hebrew Bible, there are very few direct references to the above concepts:

Leviticus 19:17-18

17 You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 19:33-34

33 When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him.

34 The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Proverbs 3:29

29 Do not devise harm against your fellow who lives trustfully with you.

Proverbs 14:21

21 He who despises his fellow is wrong; he who shows pity for the lowly is happy.

Proverbs 25:21-22

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; if he is thirsty give him water to drink. 22 You will be heaping live coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

In religious life today, the Hebrew God is generally acknowledged as a God of love for all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike. This is a far cry from a Hebrew God of War. And an 'eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth', has fallen out of fashion, as has 'loving your kin while hating your enemy'. The idea of loving your neighbor as yourself is now pervasive in Jewish religious teaching and today can be found in the Jewish prayer book (Siddur).

I posit that the first Jewish rabbi to ever purposely and whole heartedly teach these aspects of divine love (to kin and enemy alike) was in fact, Jesus Christ. Prior to the time of Jesus Christ, these statements were not prominent in the oral tradition and its various teachings. The rabbis of the day were focused on other aspects of the Hebrew law, most certainly not

on loving your enemy and turning the other cheek. So in effect, these teachings could be viewed as being novel to the oral tradition, having originated with Jesus. It was only much later after the time of Jesus that some Jewish rabbis took up and taught this view (the Jewish disciples of Jesus of course being excluded). Today in the Jewish prayer book you can commonly find these statements, quoting and crediting various Jewish rabbis and teachers that have pronounced and taught them. But with what rabbinical teacher did they first originate? How did they become so prominent? Why are they held so dear, and why do they continue to be propagated even to this very day? And why wasn't Jesus Christ ever given credit for being the first Jewish rabbi to effectively teach and demonstrate these concepts to the Jewish people?

To my knowledge, this is the only example in the grand tradition of Jewish religious study where you will find such a discrepancy. Perhaps it was unintentional, or perhaps not, but in any case, these teachings are surely the very foundation of the oral tradition as we now know it. And we are truly lost as a people if we do not practice them.

Let us give credit where credit is due and re-evaluate where we stand, both in the light of God's word and in the hearts and minds of God's people everywhere. Justice requires truth, and the teaching that we are to love one another, even our enemies, are God's own words, sanctified in the law by Moses, faithfully adopted by Jesus Christ, and pronounced by him to all humanity. Perhaps the rabbis that have subsequently focused on and taught this message are also Jesus' disciples, being totally unaware? Where would we be without these words? And what would be our hope?

As promised, it can be seen that Jesus Christ did not come to destroy the Hebrew law but to fulfill it. Jesus faithfully worshipped God, righteously and rightfully discerning the spirit behind the letter of the law, focusing on what

truly mattered, revealing God's own design for all of humanity. Even now at this late date, let us finally give credit where credit is due, both in the study of the oral tradition and in our Jewish prayer book, Amen.