

Ask the Rabbi: Are There Differences Between the Mitzvot of Yahweh in the Torah?

Rabbi Nydle's Answer: Shalom and thank you for the question. On the surface it seems that we cannot weigh the *mitzvot* of Yahweh. But I think if we rightly divide the Torah then we will see that there are Torah based differences called the weightier matters of the Torah. The *Mishnah* uses the words –“minor-*kaloh*” and “major-*chamurah*” concerning the *mitzvot*. These terms are used in rabbinic circles to categorize the *mitzvot* in the various writings of the Torah. Even the Torah itself differentiates between the commandments.

A major indicator of the importance of a command is the penalty attached to it if it is transgressed. Some are punishable by death, *karet*- or a cutting off, lashes, fines, and bringing a sin offering to the *Mishkan* or *Beit HaMikdash*. Since these punishments were rarely carried out by the rabbinical court (*Bet Din*), we come to a better understanding that their PURPOSE is to set the apparent value of the different *mitzvot*. In simpler laymen terms- a death penalty sin was of greater value than one that required a “cutting off” from the people. The various penalties attached to the commands serve a practical application in deciding an issue of Torah law. Therefore, when the *Mishnah* speaks of “major” or “minor” *mitzvot* it does not mean that certain commands are greater or lesser than another but it is referring to their true Torah defined status.

Our Rebbe, Yahshua HaMoshiach, said the following:

- “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you tithe the mint and the anise and the cumin, and have neglected the *weightier matters* of the Torah: right ruling and the compassion and the belief. These NEED to have been done, without NEGLECTING the others.” **Mattithyahu 23:23**
- **Mat 23:23** “How horrible it will be to you*, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you tithe [*i.e. give a tenth as an offering*] of the mint and the dill and the cumin [*i.e., various seasonings*] and neglected the weightier [*fig., more important*] [*matters*] of the Law: the judgment [*or, justice*] and the mercy and the faith; these it was necessary to do, and those not to be neglecting. **ALT Translation**
- ²³Oy to you, Sofrim and Perushim, tzevu'im, for you give ma'aser (tithe) of mint and dill and cumin, and you have neglected the matters of the Torah of greater consequence: mishpat, chesed, and emunah. These things it was necessary to do and those [others] not to neglect. **OJBC**

Rebbe Yahshua is referring to **Mikah 6:8**: “What does Yahweh require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your Elohim.” The Master is teaching us not to neglect the weightier matters of Torah (the heart condition and motives) but also that we should not leave the minutia of the law undone. He was teaching that ALL the Torah is important but some matters are weightier [*BARUS*- grave, a load, abundance, authority, burden] than others. Rebbe Yahshua tells us that one should be equally diligent of all the Torah because we cannot know the rewards of each *mitzvot* we observe. This means we cannot by human reason or wisdom know their intrinsic value, since in essence; they are all of equal significance.

Our sages tell us that all the Torah shares of a singular essence. This is why it is said, “One who is preoccupied with a *mitzvah* is absolved from the obligation of another *mitzvah*.” EXAMPLE: Caring for the sick during *Sukkot* means one does not have to eat in the *sukkah* during that time of caring for the sick relative. Since he is already preoccupied with a *mitzvah*, he need not stop doing the *mitzvah*, even for a few minutes, in order to do the other *mitzvah*. This applies to two different *mitzvot* regardless of the apparent greatness or smallness-any *mitzvah* may take the place of another. This is because they are all but the various expressions of one singular essence. Ya'akov ben Yosef said, “For whoever shall guard all the Torah, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” **Ya'akov 2:10**.

The word *mitzvah* means connection. In telling us to observe a command, Yahweh has made certain that a certain good deed should constitute the fulfillment of His Divine Will. He want to extend Himself to us, as Yisrael, to enable us as His creation and people to relate to Him- something no human being can do on his own-only through the Torah, which is His revealed will. The Torah is His desire and will for man. The *mitzvot* are the vehicle He designed in order for us to connect with Him and His desire and will. “The Torah of Yahweh is perfect.” **Tehillim 19:7**. The Torah was given to help perfect the refine and help perfect the man of Yah.

The *mitzvot* have two dimensions. On the basic level they are commanded by Yahweh, and bind us to our Creator. In this aspect then all the *mitzvot* are equal. The major or minors are all the same in this aspect. But, Yahweh also made His Torah a path or way of life (*Halakah*) which improves and perfects those who walk in it.” All its paths are *SHALOM!*”

This is the second dimension of the *mitzvot*. By Torah observance we develop in ourselves sensitivity to others and to Yahweh. We are renewing our minds (**Romans 12:1-2**) to Yahweh's will and purpose for our lives. His perfect Divine Will is expressed through the Torah and the *mitzvot*. When we walk in His will then we are slowly being conformed to the image of His dear Son. On this dimension there is a difference in the *mitzvot*. There is a difference between a weightier matter of the Torah that refines and perfects the major aspects of the character of the person and the one that deals with a minor area of Torah observance. There will be subjective differences, for each person responds to the Torah in his own unique way; some of the *mitzvot* have a profound effect upon them while others that relate to an area that needs less perfecting may not effect them as deeply. Since the *mitzvot* refine and perfect the whole person and his own personal experiences and needs, they will reflect the diversity of the human experience.

According to our Rebbe Yahshua, we should not neglect any of the *mitzvot*, nor lose sight of each ones importance in our lives. The *mitzvot* are to be used to build a Dwelling Place for Yahweh in this world-corporately and personally. Each *mitzvah* then is important and needs to be an influence upon your life, since they all share a deeper unified truth and oneness in essence. Be equally careful of them all, for their rewards in your life will be beyond all human understanding.

I hope this answers your question. Rabbi Edward Levi Nydle / B'nai Avraham