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Love as found in the Bible, 1955.

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LOVE AS FOUND IN THE BIBLE

The Second in the Series, "Facets of the Bible"

February 6, 1955

In the English language and in the Hebrew there is but one word which is most commonly used for the concept of love - in English, of course, it is "love" and in Hebrew it is "ahaba." But in the Greek there are three words for love, and they help you to distinguish the various categories of love. Broadly speaking, there is the term "Eros," which means natural love, physical love between man and woman; there is the term "Agape," which means the love of man or woman for spiritual and intellectual realities and values - love of justice, truth; and there is "Philia," from which we get such terms as "philanthropic," which is the love of man for his fellow-man - for friend, for parents and children, for neighbor. The Bible has abundant material on all three types of love.

For example, take the concept of "Agape." The Bible speaks repeatedly of the love of God, of man's love for God, of God's love for man, God's love for Israel and for humanity. True faith through religion is conceived as the love of God (Veohaftoh) - and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Sometimes people make a distinction between the God of love and the God of justice. In the first place, love is no antonym for justice. The opposite of love is not justice, but hate. Love and justice are not contradictory terms.

Competitive theology has from earliest times assigned to the Old Testament, the Jewish Bible, a God of justice and to the New Testament, the Christian Bible, a God of love. Nothing can be further from the truth. In those places in the Bible where God's attributes are enumerated (as in Exodus 20 and 34), these attributes of God are fairly well apportioned between justice and love with a marked bias

toward love. (Hebrew) The Lord, the Lord God is merciful and compassionate, patient, and abundant in mercy and in love, forgiving iniquity, showing mercy unto the thousandth generation.

The prophet Jonah complains bitterly that God's love was so boundless as actually to interfere with the operation of the law of justice. Therefore, he refused to go, you will recall, to the wicked city of Nineveh to warn the people so that they might repent of their wickedness and be saved.

The attitude of the Bible to these twin complementary concepts of love and justice may be summed up in the words of both Jeremiah, the prophet, and the Psalmists. Jeremiah said, "I am the Lord who practices kindness, justice, and righteousness on the earth, and in these things do I delight." And the Psalmist sang, "Righteousness and justice are the foundations of Thy throne; love and truth go before Thee."

It is interesting to note that loving God was in a very real sense an original contribution of the people of the Bible. The ancients, pagans, all revered their Gods. They feared them and they worshipped them, but they did not love them. One misses in ancient and classical literature any outpouring of love, any deep-stirring affection for any of their Gods, even though their pantheons enshrined many Gods and goddesses of love. To love God with all one's heart and with all one's soul and with all one's might must have been a new and strange sentiment to the peoples of antiquity. It appears to be uniquely a Jewish sentiment. The God of Israel was not only revered and worshipped, but boundlessly loved. Abraham, the founder of the faith, is called in the Bible the "lover of God." All truly righteous men are called the "lovers of God." The people of Israel knew that their God in his anger could be stern and could smite with fury the wicked and the faithless, but they were nevertheless drawn to Him with bands of love. "I love Thee, O Lord, my strength," sings the Psalmist.

The people of the Bible and the Jewish people generally were confident that God loved them with an everlasting love, even when He chastened them.

"I have loved Thee with an everlasting love." So you read in one of the prophets, "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son...How can I give you up, O Ephraim, how can I hand you over, O, Israel...I will heal their faithfulness; I will love them freely...I will be as the dew to Israel; they shall flower as a garden, they shall blossom as the vine, their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon." This is from the prophet Hosea.

Israel knew itself bound by a covenant with God, an everlasting covenant, but this covenant was a covenant of love. I will betroth you unto me forever. I will betrothe you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in compassion.

This feeling that the covenant which bound Israel to its God was one of love was common to the prophet, the sage, the mystic, and even to the legalist in Israel. Thus the great teacher of the Talmud, Akiba, perhaps the foremost legalist of the Talmud, when the question came up whether the Song of Songs - the great rhapsody of love - should be included in the Bible, in the canon of the Bible, Akiba said, "If all the books are holy, the Song of Songs is the holy of holies," because he saw in that love between man and woman so exaltingly and beautifully, poetically sung, he saw in it a parable describing the relationship of God and the community of Israel. And it is this same legalist Akiba, people speak very often of this cold, dialectic legalist of the Talmud who made such an ado about every minutiae of the law, so punctilious about little things and unimportant things in religion - it is this same Akiba who died a martyr for his faith because when the edict was issued by Emperor Hadrian prohibiting the teaching of the Torah, demonstratively Akiba gathered a group of pupils around him and taught the Torah so that the Torah may not perish in Israel. When he was let out to torture and execution his disciples said to him, "Akiba, our master, this is the Torah and this is the reward?"

He said to them, "I've always wondered all through my life as I taught my pupils when I came upon the passage 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might,' I knew that I had been serving God with all my heart and with all my might, but I was wondering when I would have the privilege of serving him with all my life, and now that the moment has come when I can sacrifice my life out of love of God, will I be sorrowful because of it? It is this love of God and the love of the Torah and the love of Judaism, this proud and grateful love, this love which expected no rewards, which is, in a profound sense, responsible for the survival of Israel. A people that in the depths of its misfortunes and the manifold tragedies which overtook it could still say, "How blessed are we. How good is our fortune. How beautiful is our lot. How glorious is our heritage.

And so you have in the Bible very much about this Agape, this love of man for great spiritual truths. There is much in the Bible also about the two other types of love - Eros and Philia. The Bible knows the power of Eros and its baffling mystery.

"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;
For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most violent flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it -
If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house it would be utterly scorned."

There is a love which is as strong as death. There is a love which turns into a jealousy which is as cruel as the grave. True love cannot be purchased by all the wealth that man can offer. That pretty well sums it up, doesn't it? And how baffling and incomprehensible is this love and how unpredictable. In the Book of Proverbs we read: "Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand:

The way of an eagle in the sky -
The way of a serpent on a rock -
The way of a ship on the high seas -
The way of a man with a maiden.

This Book of Books, this amazing and immortal document of all that transpires in the soul of man, the Bible knows the tragedies which love as passion and as lust can cause in men and women. It knows of the enticing and destroying love of a Samson and the woman in the valley of Sorek - Delilah. "He told her all his heart and she betrayed him." Great dramas and great operas and great songs and poems have been written about this theme of Samson and Delilah, the theme of an enticing love, a bewitching love, and a destroying love. The Bible tells that story and mankind has treasured that lesson ever since.

The Bible tells of a temporary maddening and sinful love of an otherwise good and noble king which led to crime and to disaster. It tells of David and of the beautiful Bath-Sheba, whom he loved. But Bath-Sheba was already the wife of another man, of Uriah, the Hittite, a valiant and loyal soldier of King David. "So David sent messengers and took her." To hide Bath-Sheba's shame, for she was soon with child, David had Uriah sent to the front ranks of the hardest fighting to make sure that he was killed, and he was killed, and then the king married Bath-Sheba. The prophet of the Lord, Nathan, came to King David and said to him, "There was a poor man, King David, who had one little ewe lamb. There was a rich man in the same village who had flocks and herds and much cattle. And a visitor came to the rich man. The rich man wanted to entertain his guest, so he took the one single ewe lamb of the poor man and offered it to his guest." King David called out, "Who is this base and sinful man who would dare to do such an infamous deed?" And the prophet Nathan said to him, "Thou art the man." And King David fell upon his knees, and beating his breast, acknowledged the sin and said, "I have sinned against God."

The Bible knows of a great and pure love of a man for a woman and described it in great detail and great tenderness - the love of Jacob for Rachel. Jacob was a refugee from his home in a distant land, in the home of Laban, a kinsman, and as he came to his house he chanced to behold the daughter of Laban, Rachel, coming out,

and Rachel, says the Bible, was beautiful and lovely, and Jacob loved her at first sight. And he came to Laban and said, "I will serve you seven years for your daughter Rachel," "and they seemed to him," says the Bible, "but a few days because of the love he had for her." And when the time of service was completed and the seven years were ended, Jacob was deceived by his kinsman Laban. He was not given Rachel for a wife, Rachel whom he loved, but he was given Leah, her sister, whom he did not love, and so Jacob served another seven years for Rachel. And as the Bible says, "By day the heat consumed him, and the cold by night, and his sleep fled from his eyes." Fourteen years of servitude for a woman one loved. And when he married Rachel, they left the home of Laban and returned to Canaan, the home of Jacob. Rachel did not live long. Shortly after they left Laban, Rachel died on giving birth to Benjamin. Jacob mourned deeply, heart-broken, irate, unconsolable, and, says the Bible, "Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave which is the pillar of Rachel's tomb" which is there to this day. This is another type of love, quite different from David's, Samson's. The Bible

The Bible knows of the overly-fond and indulgent love of parents for children which destroys the character of the child and brings grief and sorrow to the parent. And so it tells in great length the love of Jacob for Joseph, that beautiful boy, the child of his old age whom he loved more than any of his other sons. He gave him a coat of many colors to show his special affection for him, thereby creating terrible envy and jealousy among the other brothers who sought then to kill Joseph.

They wanted to kill him, and finally they sold him into slavery to a group of Ismaelites who were on their way to Egypt. And so Jacob mourned many years for his lost son, upon whom he had lavished so much unnecessary and indulgent affection which was not good for Joseph who came to think of himself as superior to his brothers, and it was not good for the other children, who came to hate.

The Bible also tells of the love of David for his handsome son Absalom, whom

he spoiled to the point where Absalom, when he grew up, rebelled against his father and drove David for a time from his throne in Jerusalem. Absalom was finally killed in battle and that left his own father broken hearted, stricken with grief, weeping over his son Absalom.

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There is also in the Bible very much about a third kind of love, the Philia. There is the magnificent story of the friendship, that superb and magnificent deathless friendship between David and Jonathan which has served as a model, the exemplar of true friendship since that time throughout the world. The friendship between a prince and a shepherd lad, a friendship which led them to pledge an eternal vow - "The Lord shall be between you and me and between my descendants and your descendants forever." And when Saul became envious of young David, fearing for his own throne, he sought to kill David because Saul's own son Jonathan warned him to save his life. When Jonathan was slain in battle with his father, the battle with the Philistines, David ascended the throne. It was David who showed mercy and kindness to the descendants of Jonathan's friend. When news of the death of Jonathan was brought to David, he uttered the famous lament which has run down the ages, "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon the high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan. Very pleasant have you been to me. Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen!"

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But in all these forms of love in which the Bible abounds, whether it is Eros or Agape or Philia, the Bible admonishes men and women to abide by wise discipline. Our religion has always been suspicious of what is florid and baroque, what is overstrained and exaggerated in all human sentiments and affections. Even love, the purest kind of love, requires, as do all virtues and human sentiments and affections, guidance, control, restraint, wisdom, else it runs to riot, chaos, self-destruction. ...a love which destroys the balance, the symmetry of life, which is too much, and what is too much is no good. Even in virtue, in the supreme virtues and the supreme relationships of human life, there must be this wise discipline which religion gives, this guidance, this ~~strength~~ restraint, this judgment. One should study the pages of the Bible for many things. One can study very profitably the pages of the Bible to understand the sentiment of love which is on everyone's lips which our literature today is so full of, which is many instances lacks that wholesomeness, the fine quality of discipline and restraint which Judaism teaches mankind.

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1) Heb. & Eng. language have but one word for love - The Greek 863 (1) ^{sermon} had three. ① Eros - Agape - Philia - Broadly speaking -
① Eros - was natural ^{physical} love ~~what~~ man ~~for~~ woman.
② Agape - was ~~not~~ ^{not} love, man for ~~God~~ sp. & intell. ^{relationships} - ~~one's~~ ^{values} faith - ~~justice~~ ^{justice} - ~~God~~
③ Philia - was love for his fellow-men - in friend -
for parents, children - ~~neighbor~~ ^{neighbor} - ~~friend~~ ^{friend} -
The Bible has abundant material on all 3 types, Love

2) Agape - Bible speaks repeatedly of the love of God, of man's
love, God's love for man & for Israel.
① True faith is concerned, the love of God - (x 20/1/1)
② God's love - justice? In the first place Love is no
antagonism for justice. The opposite of love is not justice,
but hatred - Love & justice are not contradictory terms.
(2) Compensation theory has assigned to God a role for love
and to man - a role for justice. Nothing could be further from the
truth. - The places in Bible where God's attributes are
enumerated (as in Exodus 20 and 34) - they are fairly
well appportioned bet. justice & love - with a marked bias
towards love. - pl 10/10 3 3 - (10/10)
(a) Explicit Jewish - complained bitterly that God's love was
so boundless as actually to interfere with the provision, the
law of justice -
(e) Sermon "I am the Lord who practices kindness,
justice and righteousness on the earth, and as there they do

of delight.

Psalmist: "Righteousness and justice are the foundations, they know; loving-kindness and truth go before thee"

Loving God seen the destruction with Edom

③ The ancients revered their gods, feared them & worshiped them they did not love them!

One misses in ancient & classical literature any articulation of love, any deep-stirring affection for any person - even tho' these pantheons envisioned many gods & goddesses, love. To love God with all one's heart... must have been a new and strange sentiment to the people, antiquity.

It appears to be uniquely Jewish -

The God of Israel was not only revered and worshiped - but loved by Israel.

Abraham - the father of the faith - is called the Lord, God

All the family righteous he called

The people of Israel knew that their God in His anger could be stern and swift with punish the wicked and the faithless.

but they were nevertheless drawn to him with love, kindness.

"I love thee, O Lord, my strength, the Psalmist!"

They were confident that God loved them with an everlasting love, even when He chastised them.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him; and out of Egypt I called my son... How can I pick you up, O Ephraim, how can I hand you over, O Israel... I will

13
[hear their faithfulness; I will love them freely.. I will
be as the dew to Israel: they shall flourish as a garden.
they shall blossom as the vine their fragrance shall be
like the wine of Lebanon.] (Hosea)

Israel has entered a covenant of love with (YHWH) "I will
behold you to the end, I will behold you to the
in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in
compassion.

This feeling that the covenant was an ever-
lasting, says, mystery and even beauty in Israel.

Alibi - 2000 or less but for Israel

Same Alibi - martyr - with a friend
with a friend

4. Israel must be it was for Judaism - with a friend
So that is misfortune it could say: with a friend

5. There is much in the Bible about the other 2 types, but
eros and phileas

① It knows the power of Eros - and its baffling mystery.

"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your
arm;

For love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most violent flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.
If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house

1) it would be utterly scorned

14

And how baffling and incomprehensibly & unproductively.

Prueh. - "These things are too wonderful for me; how I do not understand!"

The way of an eagle in the sky -

The way of a serpent on a rock -

The way of a ship on the high sea -

And the way of a man with a master -

6. It knows the tragedies which love or passion and lust can cause -

The enticing and destroying love of Samson and the nurse in the valley of Jericho - Delilah. It told her all her heart and she betrayed him.

The ~~lawless~~ ^{lawless} and sinful love - I am of the ^{high} ^{way} ^{rise} ^{road} ^{beautiful} Bath - and noble King - David and ~~the~~ ^{his wife} ^{beautiful} Bath -

Shabs: But she was across the wife / Uncle, the

Hith R - a valiant soldier, then David. - ~~David~~

To ~~hide Bath Shabs~~ - "So David sent messengers and took her". To hide Bath Shabs from - for she was

now with child - David had Goliath sent to the front ranks of the hardest fighting - and he was killed -

And then they married Bath - Shabs - - one better and

(Ava then) "I have married Goliath's son"

laugh.

And when news -

"How are the mighty fallen - in the midst, the battle!"

Jonathan lies slain upon thy high place

"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan -

Very pleasant have you been to me;

Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love

of women.

How are the mighty fallen!"

9. No literature in the world is so rich in sentiments
& grandeur as the Bible -

To love our neighbors - is the first, Bibl. com, other

To love the stranger -

To forgive an enemy and not to harbor any grudge.

nor seek vengeance

10. But in all power, love - to abide by wise disciplines

of wisdom, all that was florid and baroque,
overstrained and exaggerated in all human sentiments
and affections.

Even love - Eros, Gape a phib - requires, as do all virtues
guidance and instruction. Else it runs to riot,
chaos and self-destruction.

There is also the phib -

4. is a wholesome love - when it embraces the life and
humor, the love and the beloved.