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Believer's Behavior in Relation to Others 13: 1-3

Believer's behavior in relation to others DIG: Many people claim they are not interested in a relationship with the Lord because of the hypocritical behavior of believers. In your opinion, to what extent is this a valid excuse or simply a smoke screen?[389] **How is hospitality still important in the congregations of God today as it was in the early Messianic community?**

REFLECT: What hospitality can you offer? Are you part of a "holy huddle?" Or do you reach out to others, even to people who are very different from you? Describe how your sharing with others affects your evangelism?

As the letter to the **Hebrews** comes to a close, the author can't help providing some snippets of practical advice. While the intensive teaching sections of the letter confirm that the writer was a master of the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah, at heart he is a Messianic rabbi, concerned with the well-being of everyone in the Messianic community. We might hear similar words of advice given by a mother to her son going off to college. As she hugs him good-bye she just can't help saying things like, "Now remember . . . ," "Don't forget . . . ," We can almost see her son smiling and reassuring her, "Don't worry, mom, I'll be all right."

The warning sections of **Hebrews** are long past (**to see link click Ag – The Audience of the book Hebrews**). The stern demeanor has ended, and now nothing but tenderness shines through. These are words of a **loving** parent who wants nothing less than what is best for her child. Surely the writer wants nothing but the best for his first-century readers and for us.[390]

The author encourages his readers to **keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters (13:1). Loving each other** reveals to the world that we belong to **Messiah**, it assures our true identity to ourselves, and it delights **ADONAI**. **Jesus** said: **By this all mankind will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).** In a sense **YHVH** has given the world the right to evaluate us on the basis of our **love** for **each other**. Also **loving** fellow believers assures us of our true identity: **We know that we have passed from death to life because we love each other (First John 3:15a).** Lastly, our **loving one another** delights **God**. **How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Tziyon. For there ADONAI bestows this blessing, even eternal life (Psalm 133:1-3).**

Our first responsibility is to our brothers and sisters in **Messiah, "As we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the household of God" (Galatians 6:10).** But our responsibility doesn't end there. **Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers.** The danger of "being taken advantage of" is no excuse for not helping someone in need. Yes, sometimes it's easy to be deceived by strangers, but we should use our common sense and our discernment in deciding how to help someone. Our primary motivation should be for helping, not for being taken advantage of. If we help in good faith, **ADONAI** will honor our effort and be held blameless.

For by doing so some have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it (13:2). This is not the basis for being **hospitable**. We are not to help people because we might find ourselves ministering to **angels**. We are to minister out of the love for other people and for **God's** glory. The simple point made here is that we can never know how important and far-reaching a simple act of **hospitality** may be. **Abraham** went out of **his** way to help **three men** who were passing by

his tent. **He** did not wait to be asked for help but volunteered. For **him**, it was an opportunity more than a duty. In fact, **he** considered the greater service to **himself**, saying: **My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, please don't leave your servant (Genesis 18:3).** At the time, **he** had no idea that two of **the men** were **angles** and the third was **the Angel of ADONAI Himself (Genesis 18:1** and **19:1).**

In a sense, we always minister to our **Lord** when we are hospitable, especially to fellow believers. **"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40).** To feed the hungry, help a stranger, clothe the naked, and visit those **in prison** in **Yeshua's** name is to serve **Him**. To turn our backs on those in need of such things is to turn our backs on **God**. **"Truly I tell you, whatever you did *not* do for one of the least of these, you did *not* do for Me" (Matthew 25:45).**[391]

The author's writing to these first-century **Hebrews,** who were being persecuted by non-believing Jews who had not left the Temple, encourages the believers to remember the other members of the Messianic community.[392] **Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering (13:3).** We should do our best to identify with those who are in need and try to put ourselves in their place. It is the principle of the golden rule: **Treat others how you want them to treat you, for this is the meaning of the Torah and the teaching of the Prophets (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31 NCV).**

We can show sympathy and identify with others in a least three different ways. First, we can simply "be there" when others are in trouble. Sometimes the mere presence of a friend is the best encouragement and strength. Secondly, we can give direct help. Paul thanked the Philippians for sharing with him his affliction by giving him money to carry on his ministry in other places **(Philippians 4:14-16)**. By supporting him financially, they also encouraged him spiritually. A third way is to show sympathy through prayer. Again, Paul's ministry gives us an example. His closing words to the Colossians, **"Remember my imprisonment" (Colossians 4:18 NASB)**, were an appeal for prayer. They could not visit him, and money would have been no help at that time. But by remembering him in prayer they could still support him powerfully.

Bearing one other's burdens fulfills the Torah's true meaning, which the Messiah upholds (Galatians 6:2 CJB). Since **we do not have a *Cohen Rosh***

Gadol who is **unable to empathize with our weaknesses (4:15a CJB),** how much more should we sympathize with others, especially fellow believers, who are in need? Following **Yeshua's** example, who did not come to be ministered to but to minister, we should lose ourselves in the sustained, sympathetic, and **loving** care of others.