

1. Matthew 22: 34-40

- Question – which commandment is greatest in the law (Torah)?
- Jesus’ answer contains *two* commandments: **Deuteronomy 6:4-5** and **Leviticus 19:18**.
- What is going on here?
 - **Greatest Commandment** – a lens through which all other commands should be read.
 - Jesus connects Lev. 19:18 to Deut. 6:4-5 and says, “they are the same thing.”

2. Traditional Rabbinic view is that the Torah has **613 Commandments**

- 248 positive – “You shall...”
- 365 negative – “You shall not...”
- There was/is a significant ongoing debate over what to do when commandments conflict

3. Greatest Commandment – a lens through which all other commands should be understood.

- Leviticus 19:18 – becomes a meta-command for understanding how you should interpret and obey **all other commandments**.
- Example: How do you implement the commandments of Justice?
 - Through the lens of “love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - Justice must be tempered with mercy and love toward your neighbor.
- **Judge** – must judge a case how they would want to be judged. (Deut. 16:19-20)
- **Witness** – must be a witness as you would want someone to be a witness for you.
 - Do not pervert Justice by being a malicious witness (Ex. 23:1-9; Lev. 19:15)
 - Must be two witnesses to convict (Deut. 19:15)
- **Death Penalty** –
 - Must be two witnesses to convict the death penalty (Deut. 17:6).
- If God says there is a **death penalty** (Exodus 21:12) – then we make sure the manner of death is based on how we would want it.
 - Don’t disfigure
 - Don’t torture
 - Don’t allow others to take out frustrations
 - As quickly and painlessly as possible while still adhering to God’s command

4. “Similar Laws, Similar Verdicts” - Hebrew: *Gezerah Shava* (גזרה שוה)

- A rule of Rabbinic biblical interpretation in which you can connect commandments or bible verses when they share a particular word or phrase that is rarely used in the bible.

5. **Deuteronomy 6:5** and **Leviticus 19:18** can be connected through one Hebrew word:

- The commandment “and you shall love” – the Hebrew word *V’ahavta* (ואהבת) only shows up **four times** in the entire Old Testament:

“**You shall love** [*V’ahavta*] the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
Deuteronomy 6:5

“**but you shall love** [*V’ahavta*] your neighbor as yourself Leviticus 19:18

- Because these verses share the same Hebrew word – *V’ahavta* – connecting them and their meaning is appropriate.

- “**Similar Laws, Similar Verdicts**” -

- The commandment to “love your neighbor” is the same as the commandment to “love God.”
- How do you love God?

Love the one made in the image of God – your neighbor

6. “you shall love” – **four** times in the Old Testament

Love God	
Deut. 6:5	“and you shall love (<i>v’ahavta</i>) the LORD your God”
Deut. 11:1	“you shall love (<i>v’ahavta</i>) the LORD

Love the One made in the Image of God	
Lev. 19:18	“but you shall love (<i>v’ahavta</i>) your neighbor”
Lev. 19:34	“and you shall love (<i>v’ahavta</i>)” the foreigner among you.