



The Sermon on The Mount
Bible Study Session 10
Matthew 5:38-42



Study By
Lorin L Cranford

Greek NT

5.38 Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, Ὁφθαλμὸν ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ καὶ ὀδόντα ἀντὶ ὀδόντος. 5.39 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ ποιηρῷ· ἀλλ’ ὅστις σε ῥαπίζει εἰς τὴν δεξιὰν σιαγόνα σου, στρέψον αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἄλλην· 5.40 καὶ τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι καὶ τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν, ἄφες αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον· 5.41 καὶ ὅστις σε ἀγγαρεύσει μίλιον ἕν, ὕπαγε μετ’ αὐτοῦ δύο. 5.42 τῷ αἰτοῦντί σε δός, καὶ τὸν θέλοντα ἀπὸ σοῦ δανίσασθαι μὴ ἀποστραφῆς.

La Biblia de las Américas

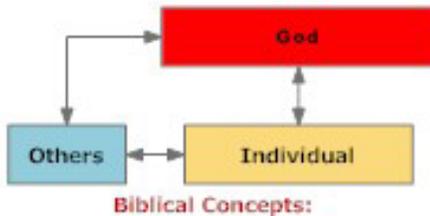
38 Habéis oído que se dijo: “OJO POR OJO Y DIENTE POR DIENTE.” 39 Pero yo os digo: no resistáis al que es malo; antes, a cualquiera que te abofetee en la mejilla derecha, vuélvele también la otra. 40 Y al que quiera ponerte pleito y quitarte la túnica, déjale también la capa. 41 Y cualquiera que te obligue a ir una milla, ve con él dos. 42 Al que te pida, dale; y al que desee pedirte prestado no le vuelvas la espalda.

NRSV

38 You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” 39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

NLT

38 You have heard that the law of Moses says, ‘If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it.’ 39 But I say, don’t resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too. 40 If you are ordered to court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.



Retaliation: 1. to repay (as an injury) in kind; 2. to return like for like; especially: to get revenge

Retribution: 1. the dispensing or receiving of reward or punishment especially in the hereafter; 2. something given or exacted in recompense; especially: punishment

Vengeance: punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense: retribution

Revenge: 1. to avenge (as oneself) usually by retaliating in kind or degree; 2. to inflict injury in return for <revenge an insult>.

Personal negative actions of the above toward others are forbidden by scripture. God alone has the sole right of blessing or cursing. In society, a judicial process is possible so that society can extract justice in behalf of the individual.

The Outline of the Text:

I. Thesis: Lex talionis, v. 38

Retaliation, Vengeance, and Revenge:
The Law of Retaliation in the ancient world
 Limit blood revenge
 Babylonian Code of Hammurabi ¹

Jewish practices
OT Texts:²

Exodus 21:22-27: (NRSV): 22 When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no further harm follows, the one responsible shall be fined what the woman’s husband demands, paying as much as the judges determine. 23 If any harm follows, then you shall give **life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.** 26 When a slave-owner strikes the eye of a male or female slave, destroying it, the owner shall let the slave go, a free person, to compensate for the eye. 27 If the owner knocks out a tooth of a male or female slave, the slave shall be let go, a free person, to compensate for the tooth.

Leviticus 24:18-20 (NRSV): 18 Anyone who kills an animal shall make restitution for it, **life for life.** 19 Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: **20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth;** the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered.

Jewish Interpretation of these texts: Neziqin (Laws of Damage, נזיקין ; *Seder Nezikin* (דס נזיקין, The Order of Damages) Talmud, Bava Kamma 83b-84a



¹For a listing of Ancient Legal Codes see “List of Ancient Legal Codes,” Wikipedia online.
²Additional OT Texts include: Deut. 19:16-21; 25:1-3, 11-12; Numbers 35:9-30; Prov. 20:22; 24:29.

II. Antithesis: Non-Retaliation, vv. 39-42³

Compare Rom. 12:17-21, (NRSV): 17 **Do not repay anyone evil for evil**, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Luke 6:29-30 (NRSV): 27 "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.** 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Core Response, v. 39a: μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ

Application expansion elements, vv. 39b-42

- 1) Right cheek; left cheek, v. 39b: ἀλλ' ὅστις σε ραπίζει εἰς τὴν δεξιὰν σιαγόνα⁴ σου, στρέψον αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἄλλην.
- 2) Law suits, v. 40: καὶ τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι καὶ τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν, ἄφες αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον
- 3) Compulsive labor, v. 41: καὶ ὅστις σε ἀγγαρεύσει μίλιον ἓν, ὕπαγε μετ' αὐτοῦ δύο.
- 4) Generosity to beggars,⁴ v. 42a: τῷ αἰτοῦντί σε δός,
- 5) Generosity to requests for loans, v. 42b: καὶ τὸν θέλοντα ἀπὸ σου δανίσασθαι μὴ ἀποστραφῆς.

Diagram of Matthew 5:38-42

52	^{5:38} You have heard	that it was said,	
			an eye for an eye
			and
			a tooth for a tooth.
	^{5:39} But		
53	I say to you,	Do not resist the evil one;	1) Contrast
		instead,	
		whoever may strike you	
		on your right cheek,	2) Insult
		turn to him also the other cheek;	
	^{5:40} and	to the one wanting to sue you	
		and	
		to take your coat,	
		give to him also your cloak;	3) Court
	^{5:41} and	whoever would force you to go one mile	
		go with him two miles.	4) Roman
54	^{5:42} to the one asking you give,		5) Borrowing
	and		
55	the one wishing to borrow from you do not refuse.		

The arrangement of ideas is reasonably clear. The premise declaration is set forth in statement 52 and comes directly from the Septuagint text of the Old Testament. Jesus' response is found in statements 53- 55 and fall into two segments. First comes the contrastive declaration, 1). Then follows several illustrations, #s 2) - 5). These apply the contrastive declaration to specific situations where the *lex talionis* principle would have been invoked under Jewish law. This is particularly true for the first three illustrations. The grammatical difference in the sentence in verse 42 simply highlights emphasis upon this application / these two applications above that on the preceding ones.

³Compare also 1 Peter 2:18-25 where Peter uses Christ's example of non-retaliation to encourage slaves.

⁴Verse 42 may very well allude *only* to borrowing and lending as a single reference, rather than being a two fold reference to begging and lending.

