

Understanding “Love” and “Hate” in Matthew 10:37 and Luke 14:26

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This is an excursion I did to better understand “love” in Matthew 10:37 and “hate” in Luke 14:26. “He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37) “If any *man* come to me, and does not hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, indeed, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26) The Greek word for “love” in Matthew 10:37 is φιλέω (pronounced “fee-**leh**-oh”). The Greek word for “hate” in Luke 14:26 is μισέω (pronounced “mee-**seh**-oh”).

Below are verse lists from the Septuagint for φιλέω and μισέω. I’ve included every occurrence of φιλέω and the first 31 occurrences of μισέω. (There are 168 verses in the Septuagint with μισέω. I’ve decided to include all through Deuteronomy.)

As I was working these verses I saw words in the English text for which I wanted to know the Greek word underlying it. I have included these Greek words, assuming others will have the same question. They are as follows:

ἀγαπάω is pronounced “ah-gah-**pah**-oh”. φίλημα is pronounced “**fee**-lay-mah”. ἐραστής is pronounced “eh-rrrahs-**tays**”.

Except for one instance these verse are all from the Brenton translation of the Septuagint (a public domain text). I have modified the text in places to be more contemporary in its English. The one exception is from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV); there I modify the verse with a comment in brackets to make my usage of the text more inline with “fair use” (for copyright purposes).

Here are all the occurrences of φιλέω in the Septuagint. (This list—along with the μισέω list—was compiled from a search of the Rahlfs text in Logos Bible software.)

Genesis 27:4

and make me meats, as I like φιλέω them, and bring them to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you, before I die.

Genesis 27:9

And go to the cattle and take for me from there two kids, tender and good, and I will make them meats for your father, as he likes φιλέω.

Genesis 27:14

So he went and took and brought them to his mother; and his mother made meats, as his father liked φιλέω *them*.

Genesis 27:26

And Isaac his father said to him, Draw nigh to me, and kiss φιλέω me, son.

Genesis 27:27

And he drew nigh and kissed φιλέω him, and smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said, Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of an abundant field, which the Lord has blessed.

Genesis 29:11

And Jacob kissed φιλέω Rachel, and cried with a loud voice and wept.

Genesis 29:13

And it came to pass when Laban heard the name of Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced and kissed φιλέω him, and brought him into his house; and he told Laban all these sayings.

Genesis 33:4

And Esau ran on to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed φιλέω him; and they both wept.

Genesis 37:4

And his brethren having seen that his father loved φιλέω him more than all his sons, hated μισέω him, and could not speak anything peaceable to him.

Genesis 48:10

Now the eyes of Israel were dim through age, and he could not see; and he brought them near to him, and he kissed φιλέω them, and embraced them.

Genesis 50:1

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept on him, and kissed φιλέω him.

Exodus 18:7

And Moses went forth to meet his father-in-law, and did him reverence, and kissed φιλέω him, and they embraced each other, and he brought them into the tent.

1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel) 10:1

And Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured *it* on his head, and kissed φιλέω him, and said to him, Has not the Lord anointed you for a ruler over his people, over Israel? and you shall rule among the people of the Lord, and you shall save them out of the hand of their enemies; and this *shall be* the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you for a ruler over his inheritance.

Esther 4:17d

You know all things: you know, Lord, that it is not in insolence, nor haughtiness, nor love of glory, that I have done this, to refuse obeisance to the haughty Aman. For I would gladly have kissed φιλέω the soles of his feet for the safety of Israel.

Esther 10:3

And Mardocheaus was viceroy to king Artaxerxes, and was a great man in the kingdom, and honored by the Jews, and passed his life beloved **φιλέω** of all his nation.

Tobit 5:17d (NRSV)

Before he went out to start his journey, he kissed **φιλέω** his father and mother. Tobit then said to him, “Have a safe journey.”
[He paused and enjoyed the company of his father and mother.]

Tobit 6:14

And now I am the only son of my father, and I am afraid, lest, if I go in unto her, I die, as the others before: for a wicked spirit loves **φιλέω** her, which hurts no one except those which come unto her: therefore I also fear lest I die, and bring my father’s and my mother’s life because of me to the grave with sorrow: for they have no other son to bury them.

Tobit 6:17d

Now when Tobias had heard these things, he loved **φιλέω** her, and his heart was effectually joined to her. And he came to Ecbatane.

Tobit 10:13a–b

And he said to his daughter, Honor your father and your mother in law, which are now your parents, that I may hear good report of you. And he kissed **φιλέω** her.

Proverbs 7:13

Then she caught him, and kissed **φιλέω** him, and with an impudent face said to him,

Proverbs 8:17

I love **ἀγαπάω** those that love **φιλέω** me; and they that seek me shall find *me*.

Proverbs 21:17

A poor man loves **ἀγαπάω** mirth, loving **φιλέω** wine and oil in abundance;

Proverbs 24:26

and *men* will kiss **φιλέω** lips that answer well.

Proverbs 29:3

When a man loves **φιλέω** wisdom, his father rejoices: but he that keeps harlots will waste wealth.

Ecclesiastes 3:8

a time to love **φιλέω**, and a time to hate **μισέω**; a time of war, and a time of peace.

[Notice here how **φιλέω** and **μισέω** are pitched together as opposites.]

Song of Solomon 1:2

Let him kiss *φιλέω* me with the kisses *φίλημα* of his mouth: for your breasts are better than wine.

Song of Solomon 8:1

I would that you, O my kinsman, were he that sucked the breasts of my mother; when I found you outside, I would kiss *φιλέω* you; indeed, they should not despise me.

Job 31:27

and if my heart was secretly deceived, and if I have laid my hand upon my mouth and kissed *φιλέω* it:

Wisdom of Solomon 8:2

I loved *φιλέω* her, and sought *her* out from my youth, I desired to make *her* my spouse, and I was a lover *ἐραστής* of her beauty.

Hosea 3:1

And the Lord said to me, Go yet, and love *ἀγαπάω* a woman that loves *ἀγαπάω* evil things, an adulteress, even as the Lord loves *ἀγαπάω* the children of Israel, and they have respect to strange gods, and love *φιλέω* cakes of dried grapes.

Isaiah 56:10

See how they are all blinded: they have not known; *they are* dumb dogs *that* will not bark; dreaming of rest, loving *φιλέω* to slumber.

Jeremiah 22:22

The wind shall tend all your shepherds, and your lovers *ἐραστής* shall go into captivity; for then you shall be ashamed and disgraced because of all your lovers *φιλέω*.

Lamentations 1:2

BETH. She weeps sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; and there is none of all her lovers *ἀγαπάω* to comfort her: all that were her friends *φιλέω* have dealt deceitfully with her, they are become her enemies.

The idea which seems to tie all these verses together is “to enjoy the company” of someone or something. They don’t “kiss”, but rather they pause and reflect on the other person enjoying their company. They’re not “lovers”, but they’re someone who enjoys the company of the person in question. I think that is how to best understand these verses.

From here we can better understand Matthew 10:37 (modified KJV):

He that loves **φιλέω** father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves

φιλέω son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

He who enjoys the company of father or mother, son or daughter, more than Christ is not worthy of Christ. This is what is meant by “love”. We are to enjoy Christ’s company more than we enjoy the company of those close to us.

Below is the first 31 occurrences in the Septuagint of **μισέω**.

Genesis 26:27

And Isaac said to them, Why have you all come to me? in view of the fact that you all hated **μισέω** me, and sent me away from you all.

Genesis 29:31

And when the Lord God saw that Lea was hated **μισέω**, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. [“Hate” sounds a little strong for this passage. Rather, I think, “Lea was disenjoyed in company”.]

Genesis 29:33

And she conceived again, and bore a second son to Jacob; and she said, Because the Lord has heard that I am hated **μισέω**, he has given to me this one also; and she called his name, Simeon. [“Because the Lord has heard that I am disenjoyed in company...”]

Genesis 37:4

And his brothers having seen that his father loved him more than all his sons, hated **μισέω** him, and could not speak anything peaceable to him.

Genesis 37:8

And his brothers said to him, Shall you indeed reign over us, or shall you indeed be lord over us? And they hated **μισέω** him still more for his dreams and for his words.

Exodus 18:21

And, you, look out for yourself out of all the people able men, fearing God, righteous men, hating **μισέω** pride, and you shall set over the people captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens.

Exodus 20:5

You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them; for I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, compensating the sins of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation to them that hate **μισέω** me,

Leviticus 19:17

You shall not hate **μισέω** your brother in your heart: you shall in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, so you shall not bear sin on his account.

Leviticus 26:17

And I will set my face against you all, and you all shall fall before you all's enemies, and they that hate **μισέω** you all shall pursue you all; and you all shall flee, no one pursuing you all.

Numbers 10:35

And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered: let all that hate **μισέω** you flee.

Deuteronomy 1:27

And you all murmured in you all's tents, and said, Because the Lord hated **μισέω** us, he has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us.

Deuteronomy 4:42

that the slayer might flee there, who should have slain his neighbor unintentionally, and should not have hated **μισέω** him in times past, and he shall flee to one of these cities and live:

Deuteronomy 5:9

You shall not bow down to them, nor shall you serve them; for I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation to them that hate **μισέω** me,

Deuteronomy 7:10

and who compensates them that hate **μισέω** him to their face, to destroy them utterly; and will not be slack with them that hate **μισέω** him: he will compensate them to their face.

Deuteronomy 7:15

And the Lord your God shall remove from you all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you have seen, and all that you have known, he will lay upon you; but he will lay them upon all that hate **μισέω** you.

[Note "from you all sickness" is "from you [singular] all sickness".]

Deuteronomy 9:28

Lest the inhabitants of the land from where you brought us out speak, saying, Because the Lord could not bring them into the land of which he spoke to them, and because he hated **μισέω** them, he has brought them forth to slay them in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 12:31

You shall not do so to your God; for they have sacrificed to their gods the abominations of the Lord which he hates **μισέω**, for they burn their sons and their daughters in fire to their gods.

Deuteronomy 16:22

You shall not set up for yourself a pillar, which the Lord your God hates **μισέω**.

Deuteronomy 19:4

And this shall be the ordinance of the manslayer, who shall flee there, and shall live, whoever shall have smitten his neighbor ignorantly, in view of the fact that he did not hate **μισέω** him in times past.

Deuteronomy 19:6

Lest the avenger of blood pursue after the slayer, because his heart is hot, and overtake him, if the way be too long, and slay him, though there is to this man no sentence of death, because he did not hate **μισέω** him in time past.

Deuteronomy 19:11

But if there should be in you a man hating **μισέω** his neighbor, and he should lay wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him, that he die, and he should flee to one of these cities,

Deuteronomy 21:15–17 (x3)

15 And if a man have two wives, the one loved and the other hated **μισέω**, and both the loved and the hated **μισέω** should have born him *children*, and the son of the hated **μισέω** should be first-born; 16 then it shall be that whenever he shall divide by inheritance his goods to his sons, he shall not be able to give the right of the first-born to the son of the loved one, having overlooked the son of the hated **μισέω**, which is the first-born.

17 But he shall acknowledge the first-born of the hated one **μισέω** to give to him double of all things which shall be found by him, because he is the first of his children, and to him belongs the birthright.

Deuteronomy 22:13–14

13 And if anyone should take a wife, and dwell with her, and hate **μισέω** her, 14 and attach to her reproachful words, and bring against her an evil name, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her I did not find her tokens of virginity:

Deuteronomy 22:16–17

16 And the father of the damsel shall say to the elders, I gave this my daughter to this man for a wife; 17 and now he has hated **μισέω** her, and attaches reproachful words to her, saying, I have not found tokens of virginity with your daughter; and these *are* the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall unfold the garment before the elders of the city.

Deuteronomy 24:2–3

2 And *if* she should go away and be married to another man; 3 and the last husband should hate **μισέω** her, and write for her a bill of divorcement; and should give it into her hands, and send her away out of his house, and the last husband should die, who took her to himself for a wife;

Deuteronomy 30:7

And the Lord your God will put these curses upon your enemies, and upon those that hate **μισέω** you, who have persecuted you.

Deuteronomy 32:41

For I will sharpen my sword like lightning, and my hand shall take hold of judgment; and I will render judgment to my enemies, and will compensate them that hate **μισέω** me.

Deuteronomy 32:43

Rejoice, you all heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him; rejoice you all Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him; for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and he will render vengeance, and compensate justice to his enemies, and will reward them that hate **μισέω** him; and the Lord shall purge the land of his people.

Deuteronomy 33:11

Bless, Lord, his strength, and accept the works of his hands; break the loins of his enemies that have risen up against him, and do not let them that hate **μισέω** him rise up.

Note also Ecclesiastes 3:8:

a time to love **φιλέω**, and a time to hate **μισέω**; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Here **φιλέω** and **μισέω** are pitched together as opposites. Note **φιλέω** means “to enjoy the company of someone or something”. Why not try on for size “to disenjoy the company of someone or something” as the definition of **μισέω**? This I think is what the word means. “Hate” is too strong of a word. (Note the verses about Lea in Genesis 29:31 and 33.) Rather it is to “disenjoy”.

From here let’s look at Luke 14:26 (modified KJV):

If any *man* come to me, and does not hate **μισέω** his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, indeed, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. “If any man come to me, and does not *disenjoy the company of* his father etc.” The going interpretation of this seems to be that Jesus is speaking in hyperbole. When we look at Matthew 10:37 (“He that loves **φιλέω** father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves **φιλέω** son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”) we see that we should enjoy the company of Christ more than we enjoy the company of those around us. Connecting Matthew 10:37 and Luke 14:26, we should enjoy the company of Christ so much so that it should seem as if we disenjoy the company of those around us. It should be able to be said of us in hyperbole that we disenjoy the company of those around us. This is what it takes to be a disciple.

One point of help I’ll give is this: if you are truly willing to follow Christ anywhere—anywhere *away from* those around you—then I think you can assume that you enjoy Christ’s company so much so that—to speak in hyperbole—you disenjoy the company of those around you. If you are willing to follow Christ into prison, then you enjoy his company more than you enjoy the company of those around you. Given this, for many people it really isn’t that hard to follow Christ’s radical teaching here. Just enjoy Christ’s company and be willing to follow him anywhere. You meet what the text says with that disposition.