

Religions tend to talk a lot about love. Although “God loves you” might have a Christian ring to Jewish ears, it really shouldn’t. Every morning, right before the Shema, we say the blessing אהבה רבה אהבתנו, *with a great love You have loved us*, and before the Shema in the evening we say אהבת עולם בית ישראל עמך אהבת, *You have loved the House of Israel Your people with an everlasting love*. We follow both of these blessings with the Shema, the second sentence of which tells us *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might*. There is no shortage of love talk in Judaism, both our love for God and God’s love for us.

But love is not all Judaism teaches. We are also taught the mitzvah of hatred. Hatred is a powerful force. Our ancient sages were acutely aware of this. They went so far as to say that the Second Temple was destroyed as punishment for חנָם—senseless hatred within the Jewish community. But being fully aware of how dangerous and

destructive hatred can be, our Bible tells us directly to hate. One passage is part of our *Kabbalat Shabbat* service. It's in Psalm 97: *Those who love God must hate evil.*<sup>1</sup> The prophet Amos tells us, *Hate evil and love good...*<sup>2</sup>, and Proverbs says *Awe of God is to hate evil.*<sup>3</sup> And in case you have heard the old saw that the God of the Hebrew Bible is a God of vengeance but the God of the New Testament is a God of love, you should know that Christianity also embraces this demand to hate evil in their Bible: *Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*<sup>4</sup>

Many religious people may feel uncomfortable with this truth. They believe that hatred is a poison which should be purged from our souls. On his radio show, Dennis Prager asked the following question of those people: What do you suggest is an appropriate way to feel about rape, murder,

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 97:10

<sup>2</sup> Amos 5:15

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 8:13

<sup>4</sup> Romans 12:9

and torture? Should we not be moved by acts of evil? Should we merely say we dislike it, or disapprove of it?

The interesting thing is that if you want to live a life with as little hatred as possible, you should hate evil. If you truly hate evil, you'll find that evil is the only thing you really hate. It's true: we can reduce the amount of hatred in the world by hating. Hatred of evil results in less hate in our souls and in the world, not more.

Think about it. If you hate evil, you cannot hate others because of their race. You cannot hate others because they have a different religion. You cannot hate others who have different political views. Hating people for these superficial reasons is a form of evil—if you truly hate evil, you cannot be a bigot or a xenophobe. You become a far better person by hating evil. God Himself hates evil<sup>5</sup>—we live in a more Godly way when our reaction to evil is to hate it. Just as we have profound reactions to incredible

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<sup>5</sup> Malachi 1:2-3

acts of goodness, we must react with equal but opposite intensity. We love goodness, therefore we must hate evil.

I would argue that it is even more important to hate evil than to love goodness. Why? Because evil has an inherent advantage over goodness. Dennis makes this point with an interesting analogy—as a former New Yorker, he referred to the Long Island Expressway. He points out that it takes only one person driving badly to cause problems for thousands of drivers on their daily commutes, whereas it takes thousands driving well to keep traffic flowing smoothly. So it is with good and evil—only one evil person can cause profound harm, but it takes a great many good people to make the world a little better.

My friends, God forbid that we should fail to recognize that there is evil in this world. God forbid that we sure become inured to evil to the point that we fail to react to it, or that our reactions are minimal. On the contrary, just as we love

goodness, let us do the mitzvah of hating evil, and only evil, with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our mights.