

Racism

by Ariel Bar Tzadok

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Racism, the expressed prejudice and hatred of another group of people simply because of some difference in them from ourselves, is inherently wrong and evil. Racism is a poison that separates and divides. Racism equally harms those who express it and those to whom it is expressed. It most certainly cannot and must not have any place in the hearts, minds or lives of anyone calling themselves religious people.



Yet, often to our great surprise we find entire segments of certain religious communities to be equally, if not more racist, than their secular counterparts.

One cannot be religious and racist, at least not by Biblical standards. The Bible precludes racists. Therefore, any one who embraces racism contradicts the Bible. The opposite is also true, those who embrace the Bible must by definition reject any and all forms of racism.

The concern in the Bible is the battle against evil. Evil exists in the heart of man and therefore can materialize in any human being across the racial divide. Evil is the enemy of both G-d and man. The religious are supposed to be the enemies of evil. When anyone religious embraces racism, in any form, they have surrendered their loyalty to G-d and the Bible and have instead pledged allegiance to the forces of evil. When someone religious becomes a racist, they are worst than their secular counterpart, because aside from being an evil racist, they are also a religious hypocrite.

It would be better for the religious racist to abandon his religion entirely so as to at least be honest, rather than to try to hide and justify his racism under the false guise of his religion. This type of disgusting behavior on the part of anyone religious disgraces their religion and offends both the Bible and G-d.

In the beginning G-d created man in His own Image. This includes all men of all races. Nowhere does the Bible suggest anything different. Therefore, those who believe the Bible must look at all our fellow human beings as equal creations of our blessed Creator. Granted, not every one lives up to the call of our sublime origins. But personal choices of behavior are the responsibility and domain of the individual. We may or may not approve of the behavior of an individual. But the behavior of one (or of many) does not justify the prejudice or dislike of an entire group.

Racism also uses the behavior of one member of a group (or many of the same group) as an excuse to condemn all of the group. This is what is wrong and evil in the Eyes of G-d. We have every right to condemn evil behavior. We have no right to condemn entire groups of people because of the evil behavior of individual members in their ranks. If only we chose to look with honesty, we

would find that the very behavior we reject and condemn in others, we find very much present amongst members of our own.

Evil exists. Evil exists amongst us. Evil exists and resides inside each and every one of us. For those who truly seek to serve G-d and live by His Word, then evil, in all its nefarious and deceptive forms must never be tolerated. Prejudice, racism and wanton hatred have no place in the heart, mind and life of any sincere religious person. Any individual feeling or expressing such prejudicial or racist views should be roundly condemned. More so, such a person should be in the forefront to condemn themselves. One possessed with racist or prejudicial thoughts or feelings is required by religious law to repent, to ask G-d's forgiveness for wrongly offending a portion of His creation.

Prejudice and racism exists everywhere. It exists amongst the religious of all kinds, who use their religions and theology to justify aggrandizing themselves and at the same time belittling others, sometimes all others. Common sense should tell us just how wrong this is, but then the veil of self righteousness descends and blinds the eyes, as the mind seeks to take refuge in theology and doctrine. This is not now nor has it ever been the way of G-d. G-d judges individuals by their behavior, deeds and actions and not by the color of their skin or their racial or religious profile.

There is no commandment that we have to like and embrace those things that make us different from one another. Sometimes distance and separation between groups can be a good and proper thing. No one should ever be forced to like or accept something that is found to be morally objectionable, whether such objections are to be found in a group of others or amongst one's own group. However, discretion to stay away from certain types of people and prejudice or racism against an entire segment of people are two very different things.

So, whenever you hear talk like, "such and such a group are all like that," this is prejudice and racism. Some people acknowledge their prejudices and actually pretend to be proud of them. Distance from such people is always a wise and good course, especially if such proud racists are members of one's own group or community.

Religious leaders especially have a strong moral obligation to speak out against prejudice and racism. Indeed, religious literature of all kinds contain numerous racist and prejudicial statements against members of other groups. Religious leaders must make it clear to their followers that the racist opinions expressed in religious literature do not emanate from G-d, but rather come forth from the minds and hearts of the individual authors who originally penned those words.

Remember, we are all equally created in the Image of G-d. We all bleed red blood. On the surface we may look different and we may act differently, but beneath the layer coating of skin, we are all human beings and we share so much more in common than we do not. We are all souls! If we were only to remember this and to treat each other accordingly, we would indeed be taking a giant step towards redeeming our society and our world.