

Notes: Shabbat – March 5, 2022

Start: 10 am

### **Order of Service:**

Meet and Greet  
Introduction (if new people)  
Announcements  
Open in Prayer for service  
Liturgy – Shema  
Praise and Worship Songs  
Message  
Time of Prayer  
Aaronic Blessing  
Kiddush  
Oneg

Introduction: Contrary

Today, we are inundated with so much information coming from so many sources that we are bound to be confronted by what are conflicting or contrary views.

Contrary:

- opposite in nature, direction, or meaning.
- inclined to disagree or to do the opposite of what is expected or desired.

For something to be contrary it is that which is opposite to something.

Information is growing exponentially, while the manner by which we consume this information has never been more plentiful than it is today.

Fifty years ago, your primary sources for information were newspapers, magazines and the major networks..

Forty years ago add to those the expanding presence of cable television offering more channels and thus more information than previously available.

Twenty-five years ago the internet revolution where the world wide web became a household name and the content made available was now consumable.

Fifteen years ago, the popularity of the smart phone took accessing information to a whole new level where you did not need to be in front of your computer to do so, but could do so at any moment of the day, anywhere you were.

With more means to gather information meant that there would be more information to be gathered. Consider YouTube for a moment. Each day 1 billion videos are watched each day. That is a lot of content created and a lot of content consumed. At one time you need to have a publishing contract to publish your content. Today, a simple click of an “upload” button and your content is available for millions of eyes to see and thus consume.

Me personally, I still prefer the written word and article. Over the last few weeks I was confronted by two stories that caught my attention. The first story offered the headline... “Christian Speaker Gets Canceled by Christian College for Teaching Christian Students Christian Ideas”

This is one of those “contrarian” stories where you would not expect to see such a headline nor the circumstance, yet I believe what transpired will surprise you even more...

*We’re living in transformative times. The country has moved away from Christian principles, and that migration includes institutions of faith.*

*Of course, there are differing iterations of Christianity; but the most traditional one is being fervently phased out.*

*Case in point: On Valentine’s Day, Gordon College welcomed speaker Marvin Daniels.*

*Marvin is the executive director of community development organization The Hope Center.*

*Marvin’s appearance was part of the Massachusetts Christian school’s “[Deep Faith Week](#).”*

*In his address, he called to biblical living.*

*Based in 2 Corinthians, his talk touched on an adolescent hot spot: sexual morality.*

*According to the event’s [transcript](#), Marvin took on the treacherous topic of transgenderism.*

*“We’ve got a culture in chaos,” he claimed. “And they’re trying to redefine sexuality for us. ... What was appropriate before is no longer appropriate.”*

Yet, the title of the article alludes to the college and thus its leadership being the ones who were instrumental in the decision making. The article continues...

*In an email to [The College Fix](#), Vice President of External Relations Rick Sweeney laid it out:*

*“Many students in the audience, particularly Gordon’s young women, reached out to members of the college’s leadership to complain about what they deemed a degrading and demeaning presentation.”*

Thus, what we are seeing is not new but that of the constituency influence the leadership and thus prompting the leadership to respond in a manner that appeases the most vocal. The author of the article continues...

*“While the source material was biblically grounded and very appropriate for a chapel service,” Rick wrote, “[Marvin’s] rhetorical style and illustrations — which may have been intended to connect with a younger audience — had the exact opposite effect.”*

*The Deep Faith series was set to serve three more messages by Marvin. But evidently, Gordon hadn’t wanted him to go very deep.*

*Therefore, the college canceled his remaining engagements.*

*We’re living in very brittle times. Past generations grew up on the “Gospel of Jesus Christ” — that is to say, the truth of it.*

*Contemporarily, perhaps, young people are more interested in acceptance and affirmation — of their “lived experience” and “personal truth.”*

*Students were so offended by Marvin, in fact, they’d organized a walk-out for his planned second February 14th appearance.*

<https://redstate.com/alexparkner/2022/02/28/christian-speaker-gets-canceled-by-christian-college-for-teaching-christian-students-christian-ideas-n529827>

Was it the message, the delivery of the message or the messenger?

Either way it was ultimately the message of Messiah that was rejected. Back in 2020 I had shared with you a series of messages during our Tuesday evening Bible studies pertaining to Progressive Christianity and its massaging of

God's Word. This was my opening statement to that series...

*A recent article entitled 'Progressive' Church: The Bible Isn't 'Infallible' or Even the 'Word of God' documents a recent sermon from a gentleman at Gracepointe Church in Nashville, TN*

I am reminded of Sha'ul's words to Timothy...

**2Ti 4:1** I solemnly charge you before God and the Messiah Yeshua, who will judge the living and the dead when he appears and establishes his Kingdom:

**2Ti 4:2** proclaim the Word! Be on hand with it whether the time seems right or not. Convict, censure and exhort with unfailing patience and with teaching.

**2Ti 4:3** For the time is coming when people will not have patience for sound teaching, but will cater to their passions and gather around themselves teachers who say whatever their ears itch to hear.

**2Ti 4:4** Yes, they will stop listening to the truth, but will turn aside to follow myths.

**2Ti 4:5** But you, remain steady in every situation, endure suffering, do the work that a proclaimer of the Good News should, and do everything your service to God requires.

There is most certainly a transformation occurring within the body of Messiah as it pertains to the very Word of God and its authority. This transformation is happening at the younger end of the age scale with the Millennial generation. Yet if this were the only place it was occurring that would be one thing, yet it isn't, hence the second article that captured my attention a few weeks ago is entitled...

*“An Orthodox Rabbi Writes That People Are Basically Good -Judaism Is in Trouble”  
The secular leftist idea that people are basically good is not only foolish: It is dangerous.*

The author is no slouch to Jewish theology in that it is written by Dennis Prager. Not only a political commentator and author but also an author of several books pertaining to the Jewish identity...

- *The Nine Questions People Ask About Judaism* (with [Joseph Telushkin](#)) (1986) [ISBN 978-0-671-62261-9](#)
- *Why the Jews? The Reason for Antisemitism* (with [Joseph Telushkin](#)) (2003) [ISBN 978-0-7432-4620-0](#)
- *The Ten Commandments: Still the Best Moral Code* (2015) [ISBN 978-1-62157-417-0](#)
- *The Ten Commandments: Still the Best Path to Follow* (2015) (for children) [ISBN 978-1-5113-1709-2](#)
- *The Rational Bible: Exodus* (2018) [ISBN 978-1-62157-772-0](#)
- *The Rational Bible: Genesis* (2019) [ISBN 978-1-62157-898-7](#)

Thus I would say he has a resume that can address that which he raised when reading an article.

*The Algemeiner, a Jewish publication I highly respect, published a column about Judaism that is not merely wrong; it actually advances a thesis that is the opposite of what Judaism teaches.*

Prager conveys that it was not the article itself that prompted his rebuttal but rather the person who wrote the article in the first place.

That fact alone would not have prompted me to write a rebuttal. What prompts me is that the column was written by an Orthodox rabbi. It is sad enough that many non-Orthodox rabbis have been influenced more

by their secular/Left educations than by the Torah. But when a rabbi

identified as “centrist Orthodox” distorts one of the most important and normative ideas in Judaism, and is published in a major Jewish journal, we might be in trouble. Of course, he might be an outlier. But I don’t think he is unique. Though certainly not yet dominant, secular values have entered parts of modern Orthodox life just as they have traditional Catholic and Protestant Christian life.

For such a perspective to enter into the Orthodox Jewish community is rather profound, yet this perspective is not foreign to the Reform and Conservative Sects of Judaism. The parallel is not lost when Prager makes the following observation...

With regard to mainstream Christianity—both Catholicism and Protestantism—and non-Orthodox Judaism, we are indeed in trouble. The secular and leftist influence on these denominations has been disastrous.

This further reiterates what I had shared with you two years ago.

What is the perspective this Orthodox Jewish Rabbi is conveying that has prompted Dennis Prager to respond?

The rabbi wrote that Judaism posits that people are basically good, that human nature is good.

This is most certainly the secular perspective, the non-religious, non-believing part of society that only has one's actions to determine if an individual is good or not. Giving to charity, volunteering, doing good deeds are the basis for the secular premise towards humanity. Yet, those good deeds do not negate the reality of our nature.

This is one of the most foolish and dangerous ideas of the secular world. No Abrahamic religion—not Judaism, not Christianity, not Islam—asserts that people are basically good. This notion is a product of the secular age and a major reason for the moral confusion that characterizes our era.

Prager continues his rebuttal with Scriptural examples from Torah...

**Gen 6:5** Adonai saw that the people on earth were very wicked, that all the imaginings of their hearts were always of evil only.

And...

**Gen 8:21** Adonai smelled the sweet aroma, and Adonai said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, since the imaginings of a person's heart are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy all living things, as I have done.

A flood could not purge what we had acquired as a result of our transgression. Yet, as a non-Messianic Jew, Dennis Prager does not expand further through the New Covenant writings, yet I will...

**Rom 3:9** So are we Jews better off? Not entirely; for I have already made the charge that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, are controlled by sin.

**Rom 3:10** As the Tanakh puts it, "There is no one righteous, not even one! No one understands,

**Rom 3:11** no one seeks God,

**Rom 3:12** all have turned away and at the same time become useless; there is no one who shows kindness, not a single one!

**Rom 3:21** But now, quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear—although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well—

**Rom 3:22** and it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile,

**Rom 3:23** since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise.

Prager continues...

For a rabbi to assert that man is basically good is to assert that God was wrong. I am used to secular people saying that, not Orthodox rabbis.

This is a rather profound statement when you consider the connection between the Orthodox community and Torah. Thus what we are seeing as what I would call "secular creep" is not exclusive to the church, but is making its way through Judaism. It has already made a home in the Reform movement and is making its way through the Conservative movement, yet to see it begin to make its way into the Orthodox movement only further amplifies the subtitle of Prager's article...

*"The secular leftist idea that people are basically good is not only foolish: It is dangerous."*

Prager further observes that within the article the Orthodox Rabbi never once mentions any verses that would further undermined that which is so prominent within Torah. We have seen such practices when it comes to other aspects that are uncomfortable to fathom.

The notion of original sin being a church position only, that is we are born into sin, ignores the very words of David.

**Psa 51:3** God, in your grace, have mercy on me; in your great compassion, blot out my

crimes.

**Psa 51:4** Wash me completely from my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin.

**Psa 51:5** For I know my crimes, my sin confronts me all the time.

**Psa 51:6** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil from your perspective; so that you are right in accusing me and justified in passing sentence.

**Psa 51:7** True, I was born guilty, was a sinner from the moment my mother conceived me.

Then there is the ignoring of Isaiah 53 and the inconvenient truth of the suffering Messiah. That when you read the Gospels and thus the account of Yeshua's life, Isaiah 53 could not speak of anyone else.

**Isa 53:1** Who believes our report? To whom is the arm of Adonai revealed?

**Isa 53:2** For before him he grew up like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground. He was not well-formed or especially handsome; we saw him, but his appearance did not attract us.

**Isa 53:3** People despised and avoided him, a man of pains, well acquainted with illness. Like someone from whom people turn their faces, he was despised; we did not value him.

**Isa 53:4** In fact, it was our diseases he bore, our pains from which he suffered; yet we regarded him as punished, stricken and afflicted by God.

**Isa 53:5** But he was wounded because of our crimes, crushed because of our sins; the disciplining that makes us whole fell on him, and by his bruises [*Or: and in fellowship with him*] we are healed.

**Isa 53:6** We all, like sheep, went astray; we turned, each one, to his own way; yet Adonai laid on him the guilt of all of us.

**Isa 53:7** Though mistreated, he was submissive—he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to be slaughtered, like a sheep silent before its shearers, he did not open his mouth.

**Isa 53:8** After forcible arrest and sentencing, he was taken away; and none of his generation protested his being cut off from the land of the living for the crimes of my people, who deserved the punishment themselves.

**Isa 53:9** He was given a grave among the wicked; in his death he was with a rich man. Although he had done no violence and had said nothing deceptive,

**Isa 53:10** yet it pleased Adonai to crush him with illness, to see if he would present himself as a guilt offering. If he does, he will see his offspring; and he will prolong his days; and at his hand Adonai's desire will be accomplished.

**Isa 53:11** After this ordeal, he will see satisfaction. "By his knowing [*pain and sacrifice*], my righteous servant makes many righteous; it is for their sins that he suffers.

**Isa 53:12** Therefore I will assign him a share with the great, he will divide the spoil with the mighty, for having exposed himself to death and being counted among the sinners, while actually bearing the sin of many and interceding for the offenders."

Prager concludes his rebuttal...

He also conflates "in God's image" with "good." He writes: "the Torah stating that human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) (is) a statement that underscored humanity's inherent goodness."

Not so. Created “in God’s image” has never meant man is basically good. Rather, it means that human beings, like God (and unlike animals), know good from evil and have moral free will. In Genesis 1:27, Rashi, author of the most influential Jewish Bible commentary ever written, explains “in God’s image” as “the power to comprehend and to discern.” Second, it means that human life (again, unlike animal life) is infinitely precious.

**Concluding as any good Jewish theologian would, poses questions...**

Finally, if people are basically good, what is the Torah for? What are all

the commandments for? If people are basically good, why would God need to command us not to murder? Don’t basically good creatures know

It is very troubling that an Orthodox rabbi would teach the opposite of what the Torah and Judaism teach concerning one of the most fundamental issues of life. As more and more modern Orthodox Jews attend college and graduate school, it is imperative that Jewish schools teach the distinctiveness of Jewish values.

There is a significant secular move to infiltrate the body of Messiah with views, perspectives, beliefs that run contrary to Scripture. The entry point is that of our youth. Thus, as Prager conveys, we need to be about our business to teach our children. I have seen several young people leave for college only to be transformed, yet not through the renewing of their minds as Sha'ul conveys in Romans...

**Rom 12:1** I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical "Temple worship" for you.

**Rom 12:2** In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the `olam hazeh. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.

But through the secular influences of the learning institution.

Even for the non-young people, there is so much information out there that seems Kosher, yet upon further investigation is not. Weigh it diligently with your witnesses the Word of God and Ruach ha Kodesh. And thus remember our Congregational verses for this year...

**Pro 3:1** My son, don't forget my teaching, keep my commands in your heart;

**Pro 3:2** for they will add to you many days, years of life and peace.

**Pro 3:3** Do not let grace and truth leave you—bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

**Pro 3:4** Then you will win favor and esteem in the sight of God and of people.

**Pro 3:5** Trust in Adonai with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding.

**Pro 3:6** In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths.

**Pro 3:7** Don't be conceited about your own wisdom; but fear Adonai, and turn from evil.

**Pro 3:8** This will bring health to your body and give strength to your bones.



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FIRST PRINCIPLES

# An Orthodox Rabbi Writes That People Are Basically Good - Judaism Is in Trouble

The secular leftist idea that people are basically good is not only foolish: It is dangerous.

By Dennis Prager



January 13, 2022

*he Algemeiner*, a Jewish publication I highly respect, published a column about Judaism that is not merely wrong; it actually advances a thesis that is the opposite of what Judaism teaches.

That fact alone would not have prompted me to write a rebuttal. What prompts me is that the column was written by an Orthodox rabbi. It is sad enough that many non-Orthodox rabbis have been influenced more

by their secular/Left educations than by the Torah. But when a rabbi identified as “centrist Orthodox” distorts one of the most important and normative ideas in Judaism, and is published in a major Jewish journal, we might be in trouble. Of course, he might be an outlier. But I don’t think he is unique. Though certainly not yet dominant, secular values have entered parts of modern Orthodox life just as they have traditional Catholic and Protestant Christian life.

With regard to mainstream Christianity—both Catholicism and Protestantism—and non-Orthodox Judaism, we are indeed in trouble. The secular and leftist influence on these denominations has been disastrous.

I should note that I am not mentioning the rabbi's name as I have no desire to make this issue personal, let alone engage in an ad hominem attack. I know that the curious can identify the rabbi by searching the internet, but I cannot control that. I can only control what I write. And since I assume that this rabbi is a sincere individual, I want to restrict my response to what he wrote.

The rabbi wrote that Judaism posits that people are basically good, that human nature is good.

This is one of the most foolish and dangerous ideas of the secular world. No Abrahamic religion—not Judaism, not Christianity, not Islam—asserts that people are basically good. This notion is a product of the secular age and a major reason for the moral confusion that characterizes our era.

With regard to Judaism, the Torah completely rejects the notion that man is basically good. God Himself states that “the will of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21) and that “every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5).

For a rabbi to assert that man is basically good is to assert that God was wrong. I am used to secular people saying that, not Orthodox rabbis.

In addition, the Torah—and the rest of the Bible—repeatedly warns us not to follow our hearts. In fact, Orthodox Jews cite this admonition from the Torah three times every day: “Do not follow your hearts and your eyes after which you prostitute yourselves” (Numbers 15:39). If the human heart is basically good, why does the Bible repeatedly warn us not to follow it?

The rabbi never cites any of these verses. For good reason: They would simply invalidate his argument. This secular belief in the inherent goodness of man is not only not Jewish; as noted, it is foolish and dangerous.

How foolish? It is not possible to be aware of human history and to rationally maintain that people are basically good. For a Jew to believe such nonsense after the Holocaust is simply breathtaking. Apparently, basically good people murdered six million Jews.

But we don't need references to the Holocaust to make our case.

In the 20th century alone, more than a hundred million people—civilians, not soldiers—were murdered by vile regimes and their vile followers. These include the approximately 20 million killed in the Gulag Archipelago; the slaughter of the Tutsis in Rwanda; the genocidal murder of Armenians; the deliberate starvation of about 60 million Chinese; the Japanese mass rape of Korean “comfort women” and hideous medical experiments on Chinese civilians; and the torture and murder of approximately one out of four Cambodians.

And that is only a partial list.

Virtually every serious thinker in history knew people were not basically good. They knew about the universality of slavery and the tortures and rapes that accompanied slavery. They knew how men behaved in

Were all the people who engaged in these evils aberrations? In fact, most were quite normal. The aberrations in history have been the truly good individuals. To cite the Holocaust, the Germans, French, Poles, Hungarians, Lithuanians and others who aided the Holocaust, let alone those who did nothing, were normal people. The handful who aided Jews were the aberrations.

And what about childhood bullying? Are fat, or slow, or unattractive boys and girls generally treated with kindness and empathy? The question is rhetorical.

million boys and 150 million girls under the age of 18 years had experienced various forms of sexual violence. Quite remarkable for a world of basically good people. And what about child sexual abuse? The WHO in 2002 estimated that 73

So much for the foolishness of the belief that people are basically good. Now let's deal with why it is dangerous.

One reason is that the most important, and most difficult, task of parents and of society is to raise good human beings. Yet, those who believe we are born good will not concentrate on making good people. Why bother if we're already good?

A second reason the belief is dangerous is that those who believe it blame the evil that people do on outside forces, not on the individual who committed the evil. Belief in the basic goodness of human nature is the major reason people claim that poverty, or guns, or racism causes crime. Anything except the perpetrator.

The rabbi cites a Yale study that purports to show that babies are not only moral agents but are actually moral beings. Such studies are one reason so many Americans have come to hold universities in increasing contempt. The idea that babies know right and wrong is preposterous. The idea that babies are moral is even more preposterous. Babies are neither moral nor immoral since they have no more free will than your family dog.

Babies are selfish—as they have to be to survive. And babies are innocent. But innocent is not the same as good. The rabbi conflates “innocent” with “good.”

He also conflates “in God’s image” with “good.” He writes: “the Torah stating that human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) (is) a statement that underscored humanity’s inherent goodness.”

Not so. Created “in God’s image” has never meant man is basically good. Rather, it means that human beings, like God (and unlike animals), know good from evil and have moral free will. In Genesis 1:27, Rashi, author of the most influential Jewish Bible commentary ever written, explains “in God’s image” as “the power to comprehend and to discern.” Second, it means that human life (again, unlike animal life) is infinitely precious.

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Increasingly, they do not.

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## About Dennis Prager

Dennis Prager is a nationally syndicated radio talk-show host and columnist. His latest book, published by Regnery in May 2019, is *The Rational Bible*, a commentary on the book of Genesis. His film, "No Safe Spaces," is now available on DVD and BluRay. He is the founder of Prager University and may be contacted at [dennisprager.com](http://dennisprager.com).



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