This week's double portion, Acharei Mot - Kedoshim contains what is known as the "Holiness code; Chapter 19 of Leviticus, which instructs: *Kedoshim tihyu, ki Kadosh Ani: You shall be holy, for I, your God am holy.*

The rest of the Chapter is a list of legislated actions and – in verses 17 and 18, emotions: *"You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. You must surely reprove your fellow; and you shall not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countryman; you shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

In the morning service, we often open by taking a moment to accept the specific commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. We might not all have been aware that the commandment to love is preceded by the commandment *not to hate, and the positive commandment to reprove.* But these commandments, prohibiting hate, mandating love, raise questions. What does it mean to legislate sentiment?

Nachmanides, a great medieval sage, teaches that the commandment to love is not about emotion, per se, but rather, in his words, "That we should wish upon our neighbor the same benefits that we wish upon ourselves.. ." Nachmanides interprets this commandment to mean that one should understand the wellbeing of one's neighbor to be interdependent with one's own well-being. We should not believe, Nachmanides insists, that we could possibly seek our own good, without seeking the welfare of our neighbors.

A much later teacher, Naftali Hertz Wessely of Germany, focuses on the predicate of the sentence: your neighbor as yourself, "reyacha kamocha," He translates this passage instead as "Your neighbor who is like yourself - created, like you in the

image of God." Thus "neighbor" includes not just those who are physically proximate or emotionally close, but all of humanity. Wessely elegantly resolves an argument between sages of the Mishnah, described in Sifre, a midrash on this same verse in the Leviticus: Akiva says the most important principle of the Torah is the commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself. Ben Azzai claims that even more important is the principle that all humans are descended from Adam, the first human, and so none of us are superior to any others. Wessely integrates both argument, offering that it is our common ancestry as descendants of Adam, made in the image of God, that is the basis for the requirement that we love others as ourselves.

Lest we think that this definition of neighbor is too expansive, the same chapter of Leviticus, in verse 34, instructs us, "The stranger who resides with you shall be treated the same as the native-born, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The text makes explicit our obligation to love the stranger, using the same words in both verses: *v'ahavta kamocha.*

Practically, to hold this consciousness is not easy. It's not particularly easy to overcome my own concerns to be able to care about the rest of humanity with the same urgency that I pursue my own well-being. But even if I can get to that place of enlightenment, to do so is be vulnerable to a great deal of pain. If I acknowledge, for example, that my well-being is intertwined with the well-being of all other people, then how can I be grateful for my health, when the leaders of this country just voted to "save money" by pulling healthcare from 24 million of my neighbors? How can I be grateful for food, when I know that the leaders of my country seek slash benefits that will feed the hungry?

Oy vey vey, it starts to get overwhelming, because if I am supposed to love everyone, it doesn't just mean the victims of these destructive policies, does it? It also means those who are enacting them? Because I am also supposed to love the stranger, and who is more strange to me that the lobbyists and politicians pushing for policy changes that I find not just challenging but morally *wrong?*

One of my teachers, Joanna Macy, has related to me that in this time of great destruction, there are two great weapons that those who seek to do healing work must wield. And she uses the word weapons: they are loving compassion, and wisdom. Loving compassion because it fires us up, makes us unwilling to stand the pain of the world and of others, unwilling to tolerate injustice. I know many of us are feeling in that place. But Macy also teaches that loving compassion is not enough in itself; we can burn out into despair with it.

The other weapon is wisdom, because it gives us perspective for the long haul. It reminds us that we are relatively small, and the world is more complex than we can. None of us have the answer alone. But alone, that is too cool, it can lead to apathy, so we need loving compassion, as well.

So that balance between wisdom and love might be what Torah is getting at here. Because hate and love are not opposites. As Eli Wiesel, may his memory be for blessing, famously said, "The opposite of love is not hate; it is indifference." Eli Wiesel meant it as a critique of those who allow evil to happen, but I wonder about the implications of hate, as well.

I know that for myself, when I feel fatigued from the fight for justice, when I don't have the juice to hear anymore, there is something honestly satisfying about hate and rage. When I read the news about the health care bill that passed the House,

when think about the callousness towards the lives that this bill will cost, if passed, the great moral wrong that so many are actively working to achieve - well, if I can't do anything about it, at least I can hate the politicians and policy folks who are pushing this. As Eli Wiesel's observation reflects, hate feels at least more *engaged,* more *alive* - perhaps even more responsible - than shutting down. At least when I am hating, I know I am not indifferent.

So Leviticus 19:17 tells us: Nope, you don't get to hate - you get to reprove. You get to call out wrongdoing, and stay in relationship. You are supposed to love your neighbor as yourself.

And maybe the chronology of verses 17 and 18 hints at something else. We get to love only through practicing *not hating*. The heat of rage, the heat of hate, satisfying as it may be, does not lead to love. It leads, instead, to distracting ourselves from our capacity to love.

That's why Torah reminds us of the obligation of reproof. If a human were purely evil, they would be beyond reproof; there would be no point. Reproof contains a germ of hope that situations, attitudes and behaviors can shift. And in fact, the reason that health care bill passed by such a narrow margin was in large part because of the efficacy of reproof. Calling out the wrong done by our neighbor, to our neighbor, is an act of humanity. Holding others accountable, reproving them, rather than writing them off as evil, that is the bridge between the prohibition against hate, and the commandment to love.

It is a tall order. To keep demanding humanity from others, rather than to give into hate or indifference. But it is the task of our times. And Torah clearly has faith that we are up to the Task. Shabbat shalom.