

Psalms 119:113

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Analysis

I hate vain thoughts (סְעָפִים שְׁנָאָתִי, se'afim saneti)—the word se'afim appears only here, meaning divided opinions, doubts, half-hearted loyalties. The LXX translates it paronomous (lawless ones). The psalmist hates (sane, strong aversion) mental double-mindedness. James warns: **A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways** (James 1:8).

The contrast: **but thy law do I love** (וְתוֹכַתְךָ אֶפְבָּתִי, vetroatkhah ahavti). Hate and love are not mere emotions but covenant terms of rejection and election. Elijah challenged Israel: **How long halt ye between two opinions?** (1 Kings 18:21). Jesus demanded: **No man can serve two masters** (Matt 6:24). This verse calls for radical singularity of devotion—expelling divided loyalties and loving God's word exclusively. The Shema declares this: **Love the LORD thy God with all thine heart** (Deut 6:5)—no room for vain thoughts.

Historical Context

Israel constantly struggled with syncretism—mixing Yahweh worship with Canaanite practices. The prophets repeatedly condemned this double-mindedness. For the psalmist, intellectual and emotional purity required hating divided loyalties and loving Torah exclusively.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What 'vain thoughts' or divided loyalties compete with your wholehearted love for God's word?
2. How do you cultivate hatred (strong aversion) toward spiritual double-mindedness in your thought life?
3. In what ways does loving God's law require rejecting attractive alternatives that would divide your heart?

Interlinear Text

אַבְתָּי | וְתַחַתְּךָ | שְׁנָא אֶתִּי | סָעֵפֶת יְמִם
do I love | but thy law | I hate | vain thoughts
H157 H8451 H8130 **vain thoughts** **SAMECH** **I hate** **but thy law** **do I love**

Additional Cross-References

James 1:8 (Parallel theme): A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Jeremiah 4:14 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

Isaiah 55:7 (Parallel theme): Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.