

You shall not hate your brother in your heart. (19:17)

The Torah alludes to one reason why one should not hate a fellow Jew: he is your brother; brothers do not hate. Clearly, this is a prohibitive *mitzvah* which, for “some reason,” people have difficulty observing. *Chazal* (*Talmud Yoma* 9:B) teach that Hashem destroyed the *Bais HaMikdash Rishon*, First Temple, because people transgressed the three cardinal sins of murder, adultery and idol worship. During the period of the Second Temple, the generation studied Torah diligently, observed *mitzvos*, and performed *gemilus chasadim*, acts of loving kindness; yet, because they fell short in their interpersonal relationships, due to *sinaas chinam*, baseless hatred, Hashem destroyed the Temple. In his commentary to *Yerushalmi Yoma* 1:1, the *Pnei Moshe* adds: *Kol middah tovah hayah lahem*, “They possessed every good character trait.” They exemplified character refinement, but they loved money, and, as a result, hated anyone who infringed upon them. This idea that *sinaas chinam* is possible, even in the best of people, is underscored by the *Maharsha* (commentary to *Yoma* 9b).

Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, zl, derives from here that even one who has achieved *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, status, possesses refined character traits and is involved in acts of *chesed* is not spared from the sin of baseless hatred. We think that one who studies Torah is protected from such a sin, that a person who devotes himself to *gemilus chasadim* could never be a victim of such egregious sin, but, we see from here, that it is not true. The only way to save oneself from falling into the abyss of hatred is awareness that no one is protected from this sin. Therefore, one must always be on guard to see to it that he does not become one of the victims of this sin.

While the above is apparently true, we still require (some form of) a rationale to make sense of this anomaly. Why do Torah and *chesed* not transform and protect a person from this scourge? I think the answer lies in the invariable response when one is questioned about why he hates: “I do not hate, and anyone whom I hate really deserves being hated.” In other words, we deny hating. It is always the other fellow who hates – for a reason which he cannot fathom. So, two people refuse to speak to one another. Why? Because the other fellow hates him. He has no problem with him. The other fellow seems to have the problem. When we ask the same question of the “antagonist,” the response will invariably be the same: “I do not hate him. He hates me.”

We justify our personal animus towards others whom we feel are deserving of this ignominious “honor.” For many, the sin of *sinaas chinam* is the “other guy’s” fault. “If you want to end *sinaas chinam* – agree with me!” has become the clarion call of all the purveyors of hate. We are quick to point out the flaws of others whom we blame for the needless, baseless, unwarranted strife, but, until we are willing to accept or share in the blame, the reason that Hashem destroyed the Second *Bais HaMikdash* will sadly prevail.

We find another form of *chinam* in *Midrashic* literature: *bechiyah shel chinam*. *Klal Yisrael* wept the night the *meraglim* returned with a slanted report concerning *Eretz Yisrael*. *Klal Yisrael* became stricken with fear and cried their hearts out. Hashem said, “You cried a *bechiyah shel chinam*,

unwarranted weeping; I will give you a *bechayah l'doros*, weeping for generations.” Hashem was alluding to *Tisha B'Av*, our national day of mourning, when we cry over the destruction of the *Batei Mikdash* and all of the grief that resulted from it. Why were their tears considered a *bechayah shel chinam*? They certainly thought they were crying for a valid reason. This was their mistake. Hashem had promised to protect them. He had “proven” Himself time and again – and now they had the temerity to cry? This is what is meant by *chinam*. Just because you think it is bad – does not mean that it is bad. Likewise, just because I think that someone deserves my hatred does not justify my actions. Hashem determines everything that occurs in our lives. If someone hurt us – it is because Hashem used him as His agent. That is all he is: Hashem’s agent. If you have an issue, take it up with Hashem. To blame a person is baseless and unwarranted.