

The land will not have atonement for the blood that was spilled in it, except through the blood of the one who spilled it. (35:33)

Why does the land require atonement? Did it sin in any way concerning the murder? Is it guilty of some form of murder? *Horav Zaidel Epstein, zl*, explains that the strictures of the complaint against the land is in its passive response to the murder. It acted with indifference, with cool detachment, as if the murder were nothing at all. The land should have cried out and made demands. Who ever heard of the land expressing its emotion with regard to a wanton act of murder? The *Mashgiach* refers us to Hashem's curse of Kayin's act of murdering his brother. The Torah writes, "Therefore, you are cursed more than the ground which opened wide its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand" (*Bereishis* 4:11). *Rashi* comments: "The earth, from which man was formed, had already been cursed for the sin of Kayin, just as parents are accountable (if they were responsible) for the miscreant actions of their children. When it swallows the blood of a murder victim, it will be punished even more." It opened up its mouth to receive Hevel's blood..." We see that Hashem expected all of Creation to cry out against this outrage. Whoever complacently accepts evil with calm and indifference is filled with disdain, and even animus, towards the victim. One who cares about someone cannot tolerate his pain; he must at least cry out. If he does not, then it is an indication that he scorns him. The beginning of hatred starts where love ends. Nothing is in between. One does not necessarily have to hate actively. If one has no love, if he manifests indifference, it is tantamount to hate. Even the *horeg b'shogeg*, one who kills unintentionally, must go to the City of Refuge. He is different than the overt enemy. He was not careful and someone was killed. Why was he not careful? He simply did not care. Not caring is a manifestation of hatred.

We now understand, says the *Mashgiach*, why the Second *Bais HaMikdash* was destroyed, despite the peoples' involvement in acts of *gemilus chassadim*, lovingkindness. Hashem punished them for *sinaas chinam*, unwarranted hatred, among brothers. How could they hate when, in fact, they were so kind to one another? We see from here that one can carry out acts of *chesed* and still harbor hatred for his brother. This hatred is not overt. In fact, superficially, it could be viewed as love. However, love exists only when it is active. If one is indifferent, he is demonstrating *sinaah*.

Indifference is a choice. One decides to turn his head away, either because he does not care, or he does not want to get involved. He is too busy. A story is told about *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, who was a public figure and the individual who introduced the concept of Torah *lishmah*, Torah study for its own sake, to these shores. He was also involved in *Vaad Hatzalah*, Chinuch Atzmai and Torah U'Mesorah. All of this was in addition to his being a *gaon*, brilliant scholar, whose lectures captivated and guided the minds of thousands. One evening, the *Rosh Yeshivah* entered a *shul* and passed by a poor man sitting by the door with his *pushke*, asking for alms. *Rav Aharon* immediately dropped money into the *pushke*. On his way out of *shul*, he stopped and once again placed money in the *pushke*. When he was later questioned why he twice gave the person money,

he replied that he feared someone might see him passing the poor man and conclude that the man was unworthy of being helped. The *Rosh Yeshivah* modeled sensitivity and empathy at its apex. He had every reason to pass by the man. After all, he had already given *tzedakah*. He was concerned, however, that perhaps someone might err in judgement, and, as a result, the poor man would suffer. So, he made certain to stop once again and give *tzedakah*. It would have been so easy to turn away, but that might cause harm to the dignity of that man. That would be indifference. One does not become a *gadol b'Yisrael* unless the dignity of his fellow Jew is paramount in his eyes.