

# Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חיזוק (ברכות לב:) – שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

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## The Churban and Our Sins

This week was Asarah B'Teves, the day of the beginning of the Churban. The siege around Yerushalayim began on 10 Teves, and the actual Churban took place on Tishah b'Av. But it all started on Asarah B'Teves — the *gezeirah* that there would be a Destruction had already been passed, it just took time until the actual Destruction took place. The sins that caused the Churban were already present.

Chazal said (*Yoma* 9b) that there were three *aveiros* during the first Beis HaMikdash: idolatry, immorality, and murder. After suffering seventy years in *galus*, the second Beis HaMikdash was rebuilt. The reason for this is because throughout those seventy years of *galus*, Bnei Yisrael did teshuvah. Exile arouses us to teshuvah, and Bnei Yisrael rectified their sins. In this *zechus*, they were worthy of the Beis HaMikdash again. The second Beis HaMikdash stood for 420 years, ten years more than the first Beis HaMikdash (which stood for 410 years).

Then there was another *gezeirah*, another Churban. This *gezeirah* also was issued long before it actually happened. Chazal tell us (*Gittin* 56a) that Rabbi Tzadok fasted for forty years to prevent the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. This shows that the decree had been passed and people knew that the Beis HaMikdash would be destroyed. (See too *Yoma daf* 39: Forty years before the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the lottery [for Hashem] did not arise in the [Kohen Gadol's] right... The doors of the Heichal would open by themselves until Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai scolded them: "Heichal, Heichal! Why do you frighten yourselves? I know that you are destined to be destroyed.") With his fasts, Rabbi Tzadok delayed the Churban for forty years.

### Sinas Chinam — An Undetected Sin

What was the sin that caused the Churban? As we said, during the first Beis HaMikdash, it was the three cardinal sins: idolatry, immorality, and murder. During the seventy years of exile, they repented for these sins and erased them through their teshuvah. During the second Beis HaMikdash, the sin was *sinas chinam*, and this sin is still continuing. That's why the Churban is still continuing and the Beis HaMikdash has not yet been rebuilt.

The reason for this is written clearly in the Gemara (*Yoma* 9b): "The first ones, whose sin was revealed, their end was revealed. The latter ones, whose sin was not revealed, their

end was not revealed either." During the first Beis HaMikdash, it was clear what their sins were — they were transgressing the three cardinal sins: *avodah zarah*, *gilui arayos*, and *shefichus damim*. Since they knew clearly what their sins were, they were able to do teshuvah and rectify them. Thus, the second Beis HaMikdash could be built.

But since the sin during the second Beis HaMikdash was *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred, and *sinas chinam* is a hidden sin — because someone who hates another person doesn't think it's baseless; he thinks his hatred is completely justified — this is why the sin is still continuing, and the Beis HaMikdash is still in ruins. "Their sin was not revealed" — to whom wasn't it revealed? To the people themselves! They didn't feel they were sinning. The Gemara revealed to us that the sin was *sinas chinam*, but the people of that generation were not even aware of their sin. Each of them was sure that they were not responsible; even if they hated someone, their sin was justified; it wasn't *chinam*, "baseless." And that's why the Churban is continuing — it's because the sin is still present and people aren't repenting for it. People do not notice the sin of *sinas chinam*; when someone has this sin, they don't even sense that it's a sin, so they don't rectify it. And the Churban continues.

### The Continuing Churban: Also Due to Unintentional Sins

There is a *pasuk* we recite in *V'Hu Rachum* (*Daniel* 9:16), "Due to our sins and our ancestors' iniquities, Yerushalayim and Your nation have become a mockery to all those surrounding us." The Churban was the result of our "sins" (*cheit*), and our ancestors' "iniquities" (*avon*). *Cheit* denotes unintentional sins, while *avon* refers to intentional sins. The commentators explain that our ancestors who lived during the generation of the Churban sinned intentionally, and that's what caused the Destruction. If they had been unintentional sinners, the Churban wouldn't have occurred. While an unintentional sin is still a sin, it will not cause a Churban. The Churban took place solely because of the intentional sins. If so, the Jews of that generation were intentionally committing *sinas chinam*.

The reason they were intentional sinners, even though someone who hates someone else is sure his hatred is justified, is because he should have learned, but he did not. Indeed, Chazal say (*Avos* 4:13): "An unintentional misinterpretation of one's learning is considered an intentional transgression." Even if a person doesn't know

that a specific action is a sin, he is held accountable, because he should have known! So it's considered an intentional sin. This is the meaning of "due to our ancestors' iniquities" — based on this, our ancestors were intentional sinners and that is what caused the Churban. Regarding our sins, however, the word "*cheit*" is used, which refers to unintentional sins. In the generations after the Churban, even unintentional sins are severe enough to cause the continuation of the Churban.

I once heard the following explanation: The Churban itself was caused by intentional sins — unintentional sins cannot bring about a Churban — but once the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, much greater *zechuyos* are needed to change around the reality and bring about the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, so even unintentional sins must be rectified. That's the meaning of the *pasuk* "Due to our sins (unintentional, *cheit*), and our ancestors' iniquities (intentional, *avon*), Yerushalayim and Your nation have become a mockery to all those surrounding us." Our ancestors' intentional sins caused the Churban, but the Churban's continuation is due to our unintentional sins as well. Even unintentional sins hold back the Geulah and cause the Churban to continue.

### Complete Repentance — Due to Ahavas Hashem

The way to rectify this is by doing teshuvah, but the teshuvah must be *teshuvah sheleimah*, complete teshuvah. We say this in our *tefillos* three times a day in the *Selach Lanu* prayer: "Return us in complete repentance before You." We say: *Selach lanu... ki chatanu, mechal lanu... ki pashanu*. *Chatanu* refers to unintentional sins, and *pashanu* to intentional sins (sins performed out of rebelliousness, knowing his Creator and intending on rebelling against Him). And then we ask: "Return us in complete teshuvah" — both for the intentional sins and the unintentional sins. We must see how the commentators explain the concept of "complete teshuvah."

There are two types of teshuvah: teshuvah out of fear (*mi'yirah*) and teshuvah out of love (*mi'ahavah*). Chazal tell us that teshuvah out of love transforms one's sins into *zechuyos*, merits. If a person only does teshuvah out of fear, because he's afraid of the punishment, and not out of love, it does not erase his sins, so it cannot be considered "complete" teshuvah. Repentance out of love, however, is complete teshuvah and his intentional sins turn into merits.

I believe I saw or heard the following reason for this: When one does *teshuvah mi'yirah*, his intentional sins turn into unintentional sins, because basically his repentance is forced; his fear forces him to repent. If not for his fear, he wouldn't have done teshuvah, so it's not "complete teshuvah." It's as if he doesn't have a choice; his fear forces him. He feels coerced to do teshuvah.

But one who does teshuvah out of love is not being forced to repent. His repentance is the result of his *ahavas Hashem*, his love of Hashem. He is pained; he feels so bad and thinks to himself: I can't believe I did such a thing. After all, this is HaKadosh Baruch Hu — "I loved you, said Hashem"

(*Malachi* 1:2) — and He gives me life at every single moment, with every single breath. How could I have gone against His will? How could such a thing have happened? It's simply ungratefulness! This is called "*teshuvah mi'ahavah*." His love of Hashem causes him to repent. He cannot believe that he sinned. This can be compared to someone who did something against his father, and afterwards, he cannot believe how he could have sinned. After all, he thinks, my father loves me so much; how could I have even considered going against him? His love causes him to feel bad and regret his action. This kind of teshuvah is on a different level; it turns his intentional sins into *zechuyos*.

### Why His Sins Become Zechuyos

We still must understand how teshuvah out of love can transform sins to *zechuyos*. The *Michtav Me'Eliyahu* explains (vol. II, p. 80): "One who does teshuvah out of love, his great repentance is the result of recognizing and acknowledging *Hashem Yisbarach's* kindnesses, and his sins become merits. **Since his sin caused him to reach such a level of great love**, HaKadosh Baruch Hu in His great mercy judges his sins as if they are *zechuyos*." Since his teshuvah was the result of love, it was the sin that brought him to such levels of love."

Take a person who acts out against his father and then regrets it very much. His love for his father brings him to regret his actions. In this case, the love is natural and inborn, but *ahavas Hashem* is only achieved through contemplation and acknowledging *emunah*. Once a person attains this level of *ahavah*, he will feel that it's impossible to commit sins, for "I have loved you, says Hashem." Hashem sustains man at every given moment, as Chazal state (*Bereishis Rabbah* 14:9), "'All souls (*ha-neshamah*) shall praise Hashem" — for every breath (*neshimah*) a person breathes, he must thank and laud the Creator." As such, how can anyone sin? That would be the epitome of ungratefulness!

It follows that sin caused this great love, for if man wouldn't have sinned, he wouldn't have thought about this, and he wouldn't have been aroused to such great levels of *ahavas Hashem*. The sin brought him up to a level of *ahavah*, and that's why his intentional sins become *zechuyos* — because they caused this *madreigah*.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes at the very beginning of *Shaarei Teshuvah* (1:1), "The Torah explains that Hashem will assist penitents when they can't do it naturally. He will revitalize their pure spirit to attain love of Hashem, as it states, 'And you shall return to Hashem your G-d... and Hashem will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children' — to attain *ahavas Hashem*." A *baal teshuvah* has merits and *siyatta d'Shemaya* to attain *ahavas Hashem*. Even if he did not repent out of love, his actual act of repentance makes him worthy of receiving *siyatta d'Shemaya* to love Hashem. Once again, we find that the sin is the cause of meriting *siyatta d'Shemaya* for *ahavas Hashem*.

## Rectification of the Sin Is a General Obligation

In any case, the second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed due to *sinas chinam* and it is still in ruins because the sin is still present. Even if we are sinning unintentionally, the sin is still here. *Lichorah*, during the times of the Beis HaMikdash, there were so many tzaddikim. The Tannaim lived then, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai and others. Did they have *sinas chinam*?! In the next generations that followed, there were Amoraim, many Amoraim, both in Eretz Yisrael and in Bavel. And then there were the Savora'im, and then came the Geonim: Rabbeinu Chananel, Rav Saadia Gaon, and all the other Geonim, many of them. They were followed by the period of the Rishonim: Rashi and the Baalei HaTosafos, and all the other Rishonim and Acharonim. And all the great leaders, *gedolim* and tzaddikim of all generations — could it be that they had *sinas chinam*?!

The answer is that they certainly did not have *sinas chinam*, but they were only a small part of the general community. They did make up the majority of the community. Apparently, it is not enough to just have a small number of people acting properly; more are needed. I don't know amounts, but in any case, all those who had reached perfection in *ahavas habriyos* weren't enough. Most of the *tzibbur* still hasn't reached that level, and they still have *sinas chinam*, and they don't do teshuvah because they don't feel they've sinned, as Chazal say, "Their sin was not revealed."

### How Can I Love Someone Who Hurts Me?

Therefore, if *mussar shmuessin* are being delivered to the *tzibbur*, it's a good idea to discuss *ahavas habriyos*, that there shouldn't be *sinas chinam*! But one must know how to explain it, because this trait goes against human nature. Usually, it seems like there's a reason for one's hatred. If someone harms another person and hurts him, the one who is hurt thinks: He hurt me and caused me difficulties, so how am I supposed to love him?

But, as we've already discussed here, if a person lives with *emunah*, it's not hard to understand. A person can cause me pain, and I can still love him! I can continue with "*v'avavta l'reiacha kamocha*" without any hatred! If a person lives with *emunah*, it's not a problem.

### No K'peidah — Shamayim Sent the Pain

Why not? Because after all, Chazal tell us (*Berachos* 33b), "Everything is in Heaven's hands." And they also said (*Berachos* 60b), "Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good." Anything that happens to anyone is from *Shamayim* and it's for his good — even if he can't presently see how it's good, the truth is that it's good for him. If so, if Person X hurts him, Heaven had decreed that he should experience that pain, because "Everything is in Heaven's hands." If Person X wouldn't have hurt him, the pain would have come through another medium and he would have experienced it in any case. And why was this decreed? For his own good! Because "Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good"!

If so, it's a Heavenly decree that he should have pain, and the pain is for his good. There are two concepts here. The first is: The pain is not because of Person X who caused the pain, because he would have had pain no matter what. If not for Person X, it would have been someone else. So there's no reason to hate Person X. It's true that Person X has his own problem; he has bad *middos* — but in any case, the pain would have caught up with the one who was pained, because Heaven wanted him to have pain. It was a Heavenly decree. As such, it's not *shayach* to have a *kpeidah* on the person who caused him pain; the pain would have happened even without him.

The second thing is: Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good. If so, besides for the fact that the pain is from *Shamayim*, and not because of Person X, this pain is actually good for him. It's a favor that he is in pain! It turns out that Person X (who caused the pain) actually did him a favor, so there's certainly no reason to be upset at him! *Adaraba*, he should be grateful to Person X for doing him this favor. That's *emunah*, and that's what's written explicitly in the Gemara.

### Hakaras HaTov for the Pain

If a person lives his life with *emunah*, there's no reason to hate people who cause him pain; instead, he should be grateful for the favor the other person did by hurting him. After all, that pain was for his good — and if someone did him a favor, why would he have a *k'peidah*? To the contrary, it's a reason for *hakaras hatov*. It's true that this way of thinking is against human nature, and it's very difficult, but this is the truth. Someone who is intelligent and can give this some thought, will understand this, especially if he views the situation through the perspective of *emunah*. It depends on his level of *emunah*, and **if he believes with *emunah sheleimah* in what the Gemara says, then he should have *hakaras hatov* for the person who harmed him.**

The *Chovos HaLevavos* (*Shaar HaKni'ah* chap. 7) writes something similar. If someone speaks lashon hara about another person, all the *zechuyos* of the one who speaks will be transferred to the one who is spoken about. He writes there that the recipient should send a gift to the person who spoke lashon hara about him; after all, he has done him a favor — he has just given him all his merits. Of course, this is against human nature, but if a person lives with *emunah*, it's different.

Normally, if someone causes another person pain, the second person tries to get back at him. With *emunah*, however, as we mentioned, there's no reason for this kind of behavior. Everything is from *Shamayim*, not from the person who pained him. There's no reason to return pain. This is not hard to do; it's just involves being passive and not causing pain back. Additionally, *hakaras hatov* is also in place here, because the pain was for his benefit. However, having *hakaras hatov* for someone who pained him is harder.

### The One Who Pained You Is Called “Your Fellow”

There’s yet another aspect to this. We have a positive mitzvah of “*v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocha*, Love your fellow as yourself.” Just because someone causes you pain, does that remove him from the category of your “fellow”?! Even if he caused you pain, you are still obligated in *ahavas habriyos*; one does not negate the other! When a person is hurt, he should think about and understand that it’s from *Shamayim*, and then he will love the person who hurt him. This is against human nature, but it is halachah. If a person leads his life according to halachah, it may be hard, but he will be *m’ushar*, fortunate and happy. It gives a person a happy life — he is not angry, nor does he have *kpeidos* against anyone. He knows that everything is from *Shamayim* and everything is for his benefit. And then he is happy with his lot; he’s even happy with his challenges and difficulties, because even the difficulties are for the good. This is how a person can lead a happy life.

As we said, getting rid of one’s *kpeidos* is the opposite of human nature. Not only shouldn’t he have *kpeidos* against a person who harmed him, he should “love his fellow as himself.” This is very difficult — but it is the *emes*, and that’s how it should be. **One can attain this perspective through hisbonenus, contemplation.**

#### Giving the Benefit of the Doubt

Additionally, one must also give others the benefit of the doubt. Even if someone causes you pain, you must judge him favorably. Perhaps he did it because that’s his nature and he’s like an *ohness*, someone is prevented from doing a

mitzvah due to circumstances beyond his control. He doesn’t have a choice, because that’s his nature and his yetzer forces him to act that way. He doesn’t have the strength to fight against his nature that forces him to cause pain to others. He is not to blame! This is how we should judge others favorably.

Of course, he is to be pitied — he has sinned by causing pain to others. And since we are obligated to “love your fellow as yourself,” we must daven for him to do teshuvah. We recite the *Hasheveinu* prayer in Shemoneh Esrei in the plural form; we are davening for all of Klal Yisrael: “Return us!” Not just me, us. We are davening for anyone who is obligated to do teshuvah, and a *tefillah* for the *ruchniyus* of others is effective. Rav Yisrael Salanter says that it’s tried-and-true that davening for *ruchniyus* helps. However, the *tefillah* must be a wholehearted, earnest prayer; this too, is a *madreigah* which is not easy to attain.

The truth is, the only *eitzah* is to learn *mussar*. *Yeshivos* have a steady learning session for *mussar*. Not everyone knows that learning *mussar* is not “*middas chassidus*” — it is essential, because we have a yetzer hara and we need the antidote against it. *Mussar sefarim* are the antidote; so writes the Mishnah Berurah in *siman aleph*. Even family men can set aside time to learn *mussar* daily. It’s well known that people who started to learn even for just a few minutes a day saw how it had a positive influence on their entire household. They experience “*ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*, you are fortunate in this world.” That’s the reality. *Yehi ratzon* that *Shamayim* should send us *siyatta d’Shemaya* to merit “*ashrecha baOlam HaZeh*”!

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The *sichos* are transcribed and translated from a weekly *va’ad* in Rav Gershon Edelstein’s home.