

# Surmounting Sinat Chinam

During *Bayit Rishon*, the Jews' hearts were connected to G-d while their outer actions were lacking.

In contrast, during *Bayit Sheini*, their Torah and mitzvot were in place while their inner relationship with G-d was lacking.

Rav Yisrael Salanter explains that there are two forces that try to trip up a person. The first is an internal force which is the negative middot of a person. The second is an external force that tries to trap a person by challenging his faith. During the first *Beit HaMikdash*, the Jews were connected inside.

It was essentially an external struggle. When they worshipped idols, it wasn't something they wanted to do. It was something they got caught up in. And because they sinned on an external level it was easier for them to repent. But during the second *Beit HaMikdash*, although on the outside everything looked great, deep inside their relationship with G-d was lacking.

Today too, we're living in a world of plenty, but there is such emptiness because we're busy filling ourselves with materialism while our inner world remains dormant. The Nine Days and Tisha B'Av is a time to do a *cheshbon hanefesh*, literally an accounting of our soul. How much are we living in the external world and how much are we ignoring our *pnimiyut* (internal self)? Obviously, the physical world helps us reach spirituality, but what is our end goal?

How did *chesed* and *sinat chinam* coexist during *Bayit Sheini*? The *Matnat Chaim* explains that true *chesed* entails having a good eye and looking to see what the other person really needs. It's not just assuaging one's guilt, but seeing the inner reality of the situation. However, if one's *chesed* is just external, *sinat chinam* can set in.

The *Sifte Chaim* suggests one way we can rectify the sin of divisiveness. The greatest gift you can give a person is your heart. Make a concerted effort to greet every

person with genuine warmth and caring. Today, more than ever, we live in a world of externality. It is very strange and ironic how technology bridges gaps and creates connections between people across oceans while creating miles and miles of distance between those only a couple of feet away. Let's work to give the people close to us the attention they need.



When a convert asked Hillel to tell him the whole Torah on one foot, Hillel said, "What is hateful to you do not do unto others." How can the whole Torah be predicated on relationships? Rav Dessler explains the concept of *netila* (taking) and *netina* (giving). One who constantly takes is really driven by his ego and desires. His central question is always, what can I gain? In contrast, a giver looks objectively. How can I best give? Our challenge in life is to become a giver. A person can take in order to give or give in order to take. For example, one can have

lots of guests over for Shabbat because he wants compliments and honor. That's really giving in order to take. On the other hand, taking in order to allow someone to give is really giving.

When a person focuses entirely on himself, while G-d is missing or at best somewhere on the periphery, there's something internally lacking. It's not really serving G-d, but oneself. This impacts all the *mitzvot* a person does. We can now understand what Hillel meant. Giving is the entire Torah and the rest is commentary. Tisha B'Av is a time for inner reflection. Do we do *mitzvot* in order to create a greater sanctification of G-d's name or because we want more checks in the next world? Are we raising our kids in the hope that one day they will pay us back or are we doing it out of altruistic love? Are we so externally based that we're driven just for what we can get out of things?

When we sit alone on Tisha B'Av, we have to ask ourselves, how have we reached this level? Perhaps it was because we pushed G-d out of the circle and made ourselves the center. The *sefarim* say that on Tisha B'Av one can reach unbelievable heights, greater than *Neilah*. It's a time of deep recognition, a time to rediscover our passion and yearning for G-d, a time to surrender to the One Above and to make Him the center of our world once again.

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