**TITLE OF THE BOOK: “TBD”**

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**PREFACE**

Dear Reader,

If you’re holding this book and consider yourself Torah-observant, I probably know a lot about you based on what l learned during the last eighteen years of research focused on the subject of baseless hatred, “*sinat chinam.”* My main goal was to try to understand why *sinat chinam* has remained such a uniquely intractable problem. Since the Torah prohibition “Thou shall not hate your brother in your heart” addresses our intimate self, my premise was that somehow our people hold the key to understanding the intractability of *sinat chinam.* I therefore collected data from more than two thousand Torah-observant Jews while lecturing throughout the world. Following the Q & A sessions, I met with hundreds of individuals who requested private meetings, seeking ways to resolve damaged relationships within their families, synagogues, or communities. This book addresses those needs.

I also learned that Torah-observant Jews fall into toxic behaviors because most of us harbor fundamental misconceptions about the Torah prohibition against hatred and the “true nature” of *sinat chinam.* As a result, we end up living with many unanswered questions and become unable to overcome those toxic behaviors. For example, we don’t understand why the Torah prohibition focuses on hatred “hidden” in a person’s heart while *sinat chinam* was out in the open among the generation of the Second Temple. We don’t understand how *sinat chinam* could coexist with Torah, mitzvoth, and acts of kindness. We don’t understand why we should feel guilty for harboring hatred feelings while we are convinced that the aggressor deserves our irate response, saying to ourselves “He provoked me, he brought it upon himself.” The first half of this book dedicated to personal *sinat chinam* answers those questions. It provides practical steps to deal with situations where you felt insulted or wronged and ended up wallowing in victimhood with a bruised ego. You will learn how you reframe those feelings in a way that will allow you to heal from them and lead a healthier spiritual life feeling closer to HaShem.

The need for disclosure leads me to this warning: as you start this book, you will need to take a good look in the mirror. A first principle in ethical instruction is “*Daa Et Atzmecha*” (“Know Thyself).” Here, it means please check your levels of sincerity, humility, empathy, *Yirat Haromemut* (Awe of HaShem), and try to understand your good and bad *middot* (character traits), recognizing strengths and weaknesses. This self-assessment requires special care because, as you can imagine, the “scale” we use to make self-judgments is our own mind, and that same mind is distorted by our biases and desires, of which we may not always be aware.

This book will take you on a journey requiring you to face many facts and truths. You will explore past behaviors, particularly your ability to resist subconscious triggers of hatred feelings:

- Will you continue to give in or resist to your primitive brain when it has been sparked off by the *yetzer hara* who makes you feel victimized and self-righteous in your anger?

- Or will you confront your raw emotions when you learn that by harboring hidden hatred, you violate the Torah prohibition (Vayikra 19:17) with several adverse consequences:

(i) You lose your *rachmanut* (compassionate empathy) and develop *achzaryiut* (insensitivity)*.*

(ii) You violate four additional Torah commandments.

(iii) Hatred feelings corrupt your *Limmud HaTorah*. It happens because those feelings impair your *Tikkun Hamiddot* (rectification of character traits) and prevent you from being truly engaged (“*osek”*) in Torah.

(iv) Hatred feelings preclude you from accepting the Yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom (*Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim*) during the recitation of *Kriyat Shema*.

(v) Hatred feelings defile your *Avodat HaShem* during the recitation of Shmonei Esrei because you become unable to devote your *Lev* (your heart)[[1]](#footnote-1) and your *Nefesh* (your soul/your will).[[2]](#footnote-2)

- Are you ready to question a lifetime of decisions, habits and excuses, face new truths and adapt your future choices? For example, are you ready to accept that every interpersonal incident (*ben-adam-la-chaveiro*) has an essential *ben-adam-laMakom* origin because of the principle: “the misfortunes that befall an individual should be understood as a Divine response to this own behavior.”[[3]](#footnote-3) This principle has consequences: it means that your resentment or grudge toward the perceived aggressor are misplaced since he/she was only Hashem’s agent.

You will decide whether achieving these goals requires major or minor overhaul on your part. But whatever you decide, you will for sure acquire a different perspective of your interpersonal relationships with other Jews, and you will transform your personal relationship with HaShem on multiple levels. Your efforts will be rewarded because you will become sovereign over your reactions to routine provocations, and you will remain unscathed after disagreements within your family or community. In addition, you will surprise yourself with the triumph and joy of living in line with your Maker!

Just like members of my audiences, you may think that baseless hatred is only a problem between two Jews, but this book will disprove that. *Sinat Chinam* is not just an individual problem because it comes in two sizes, Individual and Group sized.

As humans, we are social creatures, and as Jewish humans, we are extremely social creatures. This strength helped us survive. But it has a built-in painful and fatal pitfall: when any group feels threatened, group belonging tends to revert to a tribal mode and takes over our identity as members of the “in-group.” We shun any outsider (member of the “out-group”) who is perceived as alien or hostile. Human brains are naturally wired for comparisons, competition, and harboring negative stereotypes toward out-group members using a neuro-circuitry that classifies a person as “us” and not “them” within 170 thousandths of a second. These reactions to our perceptions are so fast that they take place without our awareness.

Unless we protect ourselves against this yetzer hara strategy, group belonging devolves easily into group hatred. Group hatred is exceptionally dangerous because it is impersonal which means that you lose your empathy at once for thousands of Jews you don’t even know! In addition, group hatred can be manufactured at will by propaganda and stories of hate, which makes it, by definition, group *sinat chinam*. While personal *sinat chinam* destroys friendships and families, group *sinat chinam* can destroy whole communities in the Diaspora and, *chas veshalom*, in Israel. This book will prove that. And it will challenge you with the seminal but counterintuitive notion that antisemitism and group *sinat chinam* are intrinsically and intimately related such that antisemitism erupts whenever and wherever group *sinat chinam* gets out of control.

You might wonder: “How can I impact such complex societal situations? How can I make a difference” or “What can one person do against many?” You will learn to recognize that those questions originate from the advanced strategies of the *yetzer hara* which are to confuse us and paralyze us into inaction. To outsmart the *yetzer hara*, the most urgent step is to exit the situation of transgressor of the Torah prohibition against hatred which makes you violate twelve additional Torah commandments! Please, remember that when you stop nurturing feelings of group *sinat chinam*, you stop contributing to antisemitism in the Diaspora and to the anti-Zionism that targets Israel. This book provides you with the steps needed to achieve that goal.

This book will explain why, even though the Jewish People does so many things well, *sinat chinam* continues to linger, preventing us from reaching our full potential and fulfilling our mission. *Sinat chinam* lingers because we don’t understand “why it is very important to HaShem that we all get along.”

Two answers are given:

- First, whether we realize it or not, Jews are the prism through which the nations of the world look at HaShem because they know intuitively that we represent and reflect His Name. - -Second, we should not forget that since HaShem is One, His Oneness is proclaimed and disseminated in the world when we display unity through peace, harmony and friendship. When we are disunited and express discord among ourselves, HaShem is perceived as fragmented as well. “The only way Klal Yisrael can promulgate the Oneness of HaShem throughout the world is by having *achdus*… If there is discord and disparity among the Jews, then the message of HaShem’s being One is lost, and *chas v’shalom*, a different message is conveyed.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

In 2023, the Israeli government’s proposal to reform the judicial system triggered an unprecedented explosion of disunity in Israel. While the last chapter provides practical steps to increase understanding and tolerance between Religious and Secular Zionists, please know that, as a Diaspora Jew, I am very optimistic about Israeli society because it has a plethora of trailblazers ready to turn over a new leaf. I was personally moved by such trailblazers during the 5780 (2019) Shemini Atzeret holiday in Jerusalem when I attended a “seudah” organized by a community of French Olim. There, at the center of a huge sukkah, stood a French speaker[[5]](#footnote-5) who delivered an awe-inspiring plea for Jews to become proactive in switching from hatred to love and contribute to bringing about the *Geulah*.[[6]](#footnote-6) As soon as I returned home, the Covid-era lockdown began which provided me an unexpected opportunity to write the book you hold.

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1. Rabbeinu Yonah: Shaarei Teshuvah, Shaar 1:39 Note 5 p.289. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rabbi Chaim Volozhin writes: “the complete service of prayer must be with the *Nefesh.* See Nefesh HaTzimtzum, Vol 1, G2:14, p. 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Rabbi Daniel Glatstein, The Concealed and the Revealed (Mesorah Publications, Ltd, Rahway, 2022), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. At the end of the speaker’s address, I presented a French copy of my book on baseless hatred (“La Haine Gratuite”) and learned that the speaker, Laurent Levy, is an eminent philanthropist who devotes himself to hastening the advent of the Messianic Age. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.laurent-levy.com/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)