

CHAPTER 1

THE TORAH PROHIBITION:

DEFINITIONS AND ROLE OF THE *YETZER HARA*

I proposed that the intractability of the “*sinat chinam* problem” is caused by the confusion that exists regarding the Torah prohibition¹ and regarding the nature *sinat chinam*² which results from the unique role of the *yetzer hara* in generating and maintaining hatred.³ This chapter lays a foundation by providing definitions for hatred, hidden hatred, personal *sinat chinam* and group *sinat chinam*. It also explains the strategies of the *yetzer hara* and how to respond to them.

DEFINITION OF HATRED

To obtain a Torah-based definition of hatred, we examine two significant hatred episodes of from the book of Bereshit. Since those episodes refer to our Matriarch Leah and to Yosef *Hatzaddik*, we first review the warning of Rav Avidgor Halevi Nebenzahl: “When discussing the giants of the world, we must keep in mind that we are not judging their actual deeds. Rather, we are attempting to learn lessons that are appropriate for our own status. From the minor infractions of our great ancestors, we can extract lessons that we can apply to our much greater failings.”⁴

Matriarch Leah

The first mention of the Hebrew word “*sinah*” in the relationship between two Jews is found in the context our holy Patriarch Jacob and our holy Matriarch Leah. After Laban’s deceitful

¹ Vayikra 19:17 “*Lo Tisna Et Achicha Bilvavecha*” “Thou shall not hate your brother in your heart”

² Yoma 9b

³ There several sources, for example: Chafetz Chaim, Ahavas Yisrael Chapter 4. Based on translation by Rabbi YY Rubinstein pp.154-155; Rabbi AJ Twerski The Enemy Within (The Shaar Press, 2002), p.39; Rabbi YY Rubinstein “Building Tomorrow” (Lakewood NJ Israel Bookshop Publications, 2018), citing Rav Shlomo Wolbe on p.26 and Rav Dessler on p.27.

⁴ Rav Avidgor Halevi Nebenzahl, *Tit’haru* The Ten Days of Repentance (Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 2004), 148.

substitution of Leah for Rachel, Jacob was married to Leah and later Rachel. Immediately after that episode, the text makes an observation which illustrates the importance of Rav Nebenzahl's warning: "Hashem saw that Leah was *"senuah,"* so He opened her womb... The literal translation of the Hebrew word *"senuah"* is "hated," but many commentators rejected that translation since "it is unthinkable that Jacob would have actually hated Leah.... If he had hated her, he would not have lived with her."⁵

Ramban teaches that the word *"senuah"* has a specific meaning in the special context of a man with two wives, in which case *"senuah"* refers to the "less beloved" of the two wives.⁶ To appreciate Ramban's clarification, we need to remember that since the Torah expects brotherly love between Jews, any lack of brotherly love constitutes hatred. Consistent with this perspective, *Rabbeinu Bachya*⁷ considers that we are all brothers and friends since we have one Father who created us, and we are one people. That's why even a slight dislike between two people is not permitted by the Torah prohibition. Similarly, Rabbi Pliskin writes that "A person should not think that only a violent feeling of animosity is prohibited, and that a slight feeling of dislike is permitted. Even a slight dislike between two people is not permitted."⁸

From these teachings we learn that the Torah has a surprisingly low threshold for the type of negative feelings that fall in the category of hatred. In summary, the Torah prohibits even the mildest forms of hatred which include a decrease in brotherly love or a lack of attention where attention is due.

The validity of the above assessment is strengthened by the fact that HaShem peered inside Jacob's heart before the Torah stated that Leah was *"senuah."* Indeed, Hashem intervened immediately to help Jacob and strengthen the bond between Jacob and Leah⁹ by allowing Leah to give birth to Jacob's first four children. HaShem's intervention is consistent with the fact that He had already demonstrated that He values harmony within a couple with Abraham and Sarah.¹⁰

⁵ Meam Loez, Vayeitzei; p. 63

⁶ Ramban citing Radak as well as Rabbi S R Hirsch on Bereshit 29:31

⁷ Rabbeinu Bachya, Encyclopedia of Torah Thoughts (Shilo Publishing House, Inc New York, NY, 1980), 448.

⁸ Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Love your neighbor (Yeshivat Aish HaTorah, Jerusalem; 1977), 275-276.

⁹ Bereshit 29:34 Leah said: "This time my husband will be attached to me."

¹⁰ Bereshit 18:13

JOSEPH

A second reference to “hatred” in *Sefer Bereshit* pertains to the well-known hatred harbored by Joseph’s brothers toward him.¹¹ The Torah indicates that hatred was triggered when Joseph, in his youth, reported the actions of his brothers to their father Jacob.¹² The relationship between Joseph and his brothers deteriorated until they were unable carry on a friendly conversation. Joseph had two dreams that he felt should be shared with his family. Unfortunately, both dreams depicted him as leader of the family which did not decrease the tension between him and his brothers. To understand how the brothers’ feelings toward Joseph evolved to the point that they sold him, the reader should know that hatred results in empathy loss as well as a profound alteration in the hater’s ability to make judgments (see below).

It is noteworthy that Joseph’s brothers were praised by Rashi (see footnote 6) because they did not hide their hatred feelings from Joseph: they did not pretend to have a normal relationship while harboring “hidden” hatred. Rashi’s comment teaches that hatred that is kept “hidden” in the heart is deceitful and forbidden, as explained in the next section.

WHAT TYPE OF HATRED IS PROHIBITED IN THE TORAH?

Several interpretations of the Torah prohibition “*Thou shall not hate your brother in your heart*”¹³ by *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* have been analyzed by Rabbi D. Feldman,¹⁴ and are summarized here.

The Torah Prohibition Refers to “Hidden Hatred”

According to *Rambam* the Torah prohibition applies only to hatred feelings that remain hidden in the heart¹⁵ and have not been revealed to the target of hate, meaning that we are forbidden to hate someone “secretly.” The author of *Sefer Hachinuch*¹⁶ agrees and adds “But when one shows the other his hatred and it is known that he detests him, he does not transgress this

¹¹ Bereshit 37:4-11

¹² Ibid., see Rashi’s comment

¹³ Vayikra 19:17

¹⁴ Daniel Z Feldman, *The Right and the Good: Halacha and Human Relations* (Yashar Books, Inc Brooklyn, NY, 2005), 177.

¹⁵ The meaning of “heart” is discussed in detail further.

¹⁶ Mitzva 238

negative precept. However, he transgresses the negative injunction, 'You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge,' and he likewise disobeys a positive precept 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' *Sefer Hachinuch* suggests a rationale for the Torah's focus on hidden hatred: "yet in any case, the hatred of the heart is more serious than any open hatred and the Torah warned against it the more strongly." *Pele Yoetz* adds the following rationale: "Do not pretend to be someone's friend if you secretly dislike him. When antagonistic feelings are out in the open, the parties have a chance of arriving at an understanding; when they are buried, they endure forever."¹⁷ As explained below, this "endurance forever" is caused by our primitive brain which enhances our memory of the triggering incident for years and decades.

The Torah Prohibition Includes Also *Sinat Chinam*

According to several Sages, the Torah prohibition is all-inclusive and prohibits also *sinat chinam*. For *Ramban*, any type of hatred violates the Torah prohibition. For *R. Chaim Ben Attar*, any distancing of the heart violates the prohibition in Vayikra 19:17. For *Rabbeinu Bachya*,¹⁸ the Torah prohibition assumes the existence of hatred without cause (*sinat chinam*): "This verse warns man against hating his fellow without cause instead of loving him.....Causeless hatred is a grave sickness, and it is the cause of all the sins mentioned in the Torah." The rationale is that we are all brothers and friends since we have one Father who created us, and we are one people. In *Orchot Tzaddikim* (the Gate of Hatred),¹⁹ we find that "There are different types of hatred. One may hate his neighbor for causing him monetary loss, striking him, shaming him, or giving him a bad name and the like. For all these and the like, one must not hate his friend in silence," giving as an example Avshalom who hated Amnon and "did not speak to him either good or evil..." The text addresses *sinat chinam* as follows: "An extremely bad form of hatred is vain hatred, the type that destroyed the Second Temple (Yoma 9b). And even worse than this is hatred out of envy..."

For *R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch*²⁰ the Torah prohibition includes two teachings:

¹⁷ The Essential Pele Yoetz by Rabbi Eliezer Papo Condensed and Translated by Marc D Angel, (Sepher-Hermon Press, Inc New York 1991), 209.

¹⁸ *Rabbeinu Bachya*, Encyclopedia of Torah Thoughts (Shilo Publishing House, Inc New York, NY, 1980), 448.

¹⁹ *Orchot Tzaddikim* The Gate of Hatred (Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 1995), 133.

²⁰ *R. Shimshon Raphael Hirsch*

(i) “It teaches us how to relate to those of our brothers who forgot their duty when relating to us and we might think that by misbehaving they have forfeited their right to dignity and love since their behavior is liable to provoke feelings of hatred in our heart. Such feelings are natural in a heart not sensitized by the Torah, but they must not arise in our hearts.”

(ii) *Sinat chinam* is an additional reason for this Torah prohibition: “the heart, left to its own nature emotions, knows also *sinat chinam*, unprovoked hatred. The admonition “*lo tisnah*”, in its all-embracing formulation, also relates to this kind of hatred. Unprovoked hatred is common among unrefined people.” As a remedy, Rabbi SR Hirsch (joining the idea of Rabbeinu Bachya) points out that we are brothers and sisters: “there is nothing as effective at removing hate from the heart as the idea implicit in the word ‘*achicha*.’ Every man is a brother in G-d’s house; in our Father’s house, there is no place for hate arising from jealousy!”

THE TORAH PROHIBITS MILD HATRED

It was explained above (Ramban, *Rabbeinu Bachya*, R. Pliskin) that since the Torah expects brotherly love between any two Jews, any lack of feeling brotherly love, or even a slight dislike, constitutes hatred. The Chafetz Chaim²¹ provides a practical description of hatred resulting from common trivial incidents between people: “The Talmud in Sanhedrin 27b states: ‘*Someone who refuses to speak to another for three days because he dislikes him is categorized as one who “hates” him. Because of that enmity, he cannot act as a judge in any case that involves this person.*’ It is extremely common that from some minor disagreement over a trivial matter, dislike will grow between two people. No open hostility or hatred is apparent between them; however, they endeavor to avoid each other’s company. In the vernacular, this might be expressed as ‘something is not right between them.’ From the above Gemara, it is clear that real hatred has begun. The original trivial issue morphed into something more serious that reaches the threshold of the Torah prohibition “*Do not hate your brother in your heart.*”

PERMITTED HATRED

²¹ Ahavat Yisrael: Chapter 2, p.146.

For the sake of completeness, we need to mention that the Torah describes hatred that is permitted.²² It is permitted to hate another Jew under specific circumstances: (i) when that Jew persists in committing sinful acts; (ii) if showing them hatred might induce them to stop their sinful behavior and repent (this case will be covered in Chapter 3). Permitted hatred is a complex subject, but based on several sources, Rabbi D.Z. Feldman explains that the last time it was possible to hate such a sinner was back in the desert before the sin of the golden calf. Since then, no Jew is on secure enough moral footing to hate another for his spiritual or ethical failings.

THE DUAL NATURE OF SINAT CHINAM

When Chazal devised the novel notion²³ called *sinat chinam*, this word association warned us that (i) the most dangerous human emotion can erupt and be sustained for baseless reasons; (ii) therefore, any hatred we experience must be examined through a moral filter.

To unravel the nature and types of *sinat chinam*, it is essential to know that there exist two broad types of hatred: interpersonal hatred (or personal hatred, meaning hatred involving two individuals)²⁴ and intergroup hatred (or group hatred, which refers to hatred between members of different groups).²⁵

Corresponding to these two types of hatred, there exist two types of *sinat chinam*: personal *sinat chinam* and group *sinat chinam*.

Personal *Sinat Chinam*

If you harbor hatred feelings toward anyone and leave those feelings unattended, that hatred will evolve into *sinat chinam* for several reasons:

- in time, it becomes completely disconnected from the causal incident;
- if you share the incident with relatives or friends, you manufacture additional personal *sinat chinam* since hatred can spread by simple hearsay. That type of personal hatred is *sinat chinam*

²² Shemot 23:5

²³ The notion of *sinat chinam* is not known in the non-Jewish literature on hatred.

²⁴ I use the terminology interpersonal hatred rather than personal hatred to avoid confusion with hatred between two individuals who are members of different groups which experience intergroup hatred.

²⁵ R J Sternberg and K Sternberg *The Nature of Hate* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008), 12.

since the relatives and friends you spoke to had no interaction whatsoever with your perceived aggressor.

- since it was avoidable through dialogue with the perceived aggressor, it is by definition baseless.

Group *Sinat Chinam*

People are inherently social beings and have a natural need to belong to groups. For Torah-observant group belonging is practically unavoidable since we value community life (synagogues). When we form groups, we can't suspect that groups compete for abstract notions such as ideology and religious beliefs, and that when they feel threatened, they retreat in tribalism which evolves in group hatred. Except in the case of a justified war, group hatred is automatically group *sinat chinam* since group hatred can be manufactured at will with propaganda and stories of hate. Chapters 2 through 6 cover personal *sinat chinam* while chapters 7 through 11 focus on group *sinat chinam*.

ROLE OF THE *YETZER HARA* IN HATRED

Based on Chazal's teachings about the strategies of the *yetzer hara*, the high degree of confusion that exists among Torah-observant Jews regarding the Torah prohibition and *sinat chinam* is due to the unique role of the *yetzer hara* in the eruption of hatred and its evolution.²⁶ Chazal teach that the *yetzer hara* is "cunning, baffling, and powerful."²⁷ "Rav Eliyahu Dessler says that in order to triumph in the battle with the *yetzer hara* we must understand the strategies it employs."²⁸ One of its advanced weapons is to confuse us and paralyze us into inaction, as explained by Rabbeinu Bachya who warned that the most powerful weapon of the *yetzer hara* is "to sow doubt in your mind about true notions, confound you in what had been clear to you, and confuse your soul with mistaken notions and false arguments."²⁹

²⁶ For example: Chafetz Chaim, Ahavas Yisrael Chapter 4. Based on translation by Rabbi YY Rubinstein pp.154-155. Rabbi AJ Twerski The Enemy Within (The Shaar Press, 2002), p.39; Rabbi YY Rubinstein "Building Tomorrow" (Lakewood NJ Israel Bookshop Publications, 2018), citing Rav Shlomo Wolbe on p.26 and Rav Dessler on p.27.

²⁷ Rabbi Abraham J Twerski The Enemy Within (The Shaar Press, 2002), 192

²⁸ Rabbi AJ Twerski The Enemy Within (The Shaar Press, 2002) citing Rav Dessler (Michtav M'Eliahuv vol.3 p.38), p.??;

²⁹ Rabbeinu Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda, Duties of the Heart (Feldheim Publishers Jerusalem, New York, 1996) Section 5, p. 484-485.

The Two Components of the *Yetzer Hara*³⁰

Our *yetzer hara* has two components, the internal *yetzer hara* and the external *yetzer hara*:

(i) The internal *yetzer hara* is made of two systems of drives:

- those that are animal-like such as hunger, rage, and lust. They are self-centered and seek gratification.

- those that are only human and made of ego drives that also need to be satisfied.

(ii) The external *yetzer hara* is Satan, an angel created by Hashem to offset the forces of *kedushah* (holiness) and deter Jews from doing Hashem's will. *Kedushah* exists when we manage to fulfill the purpose for which we are created.

The internal and external *yetzer hara* can work separately and in concert to render us unable to fulfill our mission. Our Sages have warned that the *yetzer hara* is cunning and powerful and never stops trying to trip us and make us fail, using newer weapons and tactics including convincing us with logical arguments to discourage us from even trying to reach our goals.

The *yetzer hatov* has a different modus operandi. "The *yetzer hatov* has a permanent place in the heart, but the *yetzer hara* switches places continually, settling wherever it can best persuade one to follow it at any given moment."³¹ Whereas the *yetzer hara* works spontaneously and continuously, the *yetzer hatov* requires activation by us to become functional.

How the *Yetzer Hara* Achieves Success in Hatred

Several factors explain the unique success of the *yetzer hara* in the domain of hatred. It capitalizes on the fact that we live simultaneously in two worlds, that of the Advanced Neural System (ANS" and that of the Primitive Neural System (PNS, also called primitive mind). The two are in constant competition for the control of our thoughts, emotions, and behavior. The ANS' potential for detail and complex meaning is very high, while the PNS maintains an obsessive focus with little mental flexibility. Under normal circumstances, the ANS can shape, inhibit, or suppress the impulses of the primitive mind, except when the latter has been triggered by a perception of threat. The primitive mind takes over our whole brain, and hatred erupts. It

³⁰ This section is based on the book of Rabbi Abraham J Twerski *The Enemy Within* (The Shaar Press, 2002)

³¹ Rav Dovid Hofstedter, Dorash Dovid (Israel Bookshop Publications, Lakewood NJ, 2011), 149.

begins with a flash of negative feelings such as, resentment, aversion, or estrangement toward the perceived aggressor. This initial phase which produces nascent hatred is “subconscious” because those events happen at speeds that evade our awareness.³² This response of the primitive mind has all the characteristics of the *yetzer hara*: it is self-centered, instinctual, and called “reptilian” (consistent with the original “*nachash*”). As suggested by Rabbi Twerski, the external *yetzer hara* exploits the internal *yetzer hara* by pushing the primitive mind into overdrive to produce not only hatred as a self-defense mechanism, but to achieve the following goals:

(a) We feel no guilt about harboring hatred because the *yetzer hara* turns us into victims of a “injustice” committed by the perceived aggressor.

(b) We lose our empathy for the perceived aggressor which results in loss of *rachmanut* and turns us into an *achzar* (cruel person). By creating a deep psychological distance between two Jews, the external *yetzer hara* (Satan) achieves its mission of deterring the hater from doing Hashem’s will and destroying the potential for unity and peace among Jewish brothers and sisters.

(c) We keep a grudge and seek retaliation because our primitive brain keeps the memory of the original “insult” intact at all times.

(d) These feelings take over our thoughts and emotions to alter our ability to make judgements by several known characteristics of the primitive mind:

(i) One characteristic is called “categorical” or “generalized” thinking which means thinking without nuances. The primitive mind uses a simplistic good/bad, friend/enemy, framework which ignores the unique individuality of the perceived aggressor. (ii) Another characteristic of the primitive mind is called “misplaced causality.” The primitive brain links independent events or independent characteristics of the aggressor to create causal connections. It sees causality where there is only an association.

(iii) An important characteristic of the primitive mind is that it is fixated on the past. The primitive mind “turns up our memory mechanism so every detail of the threatening situation is

³² In “brain time,” a neuron fires in 5 milliseconds, perception of a pattern takes 200 milliseconds, and processing a concept takes 700 to 800 milliseconds. See A Damasio Self Comes to Mind (Pantheon Books, New York, 2010), 122.

etched deeply in our mind.”³³ As a result, a hater always remembers the triggering incident with all its details, including every misspoken word. The result is that we become obsessed with the aggressor and convinced that we are in a pure one-on-one *bein adam la-chaveiro* conflict with the perceived aggressor.

These behavioral changes are designed by the *yetzer hara* to blind us to the essential truth that HaShem is in charge of all our interpersonal relationships because of the general principle that “the misfortunes that befall an individual should be understood as a Divine response to this own behavior.”³⁴ A major confusion strategy of the *yetzer hara* is to erase the essential “*ben adam la-Makom*”³⁵ dimension of the Torah prohibition and keep Torah-observant Jews focused on the “*ben adam la-chaveiro*” dimension by feeling victimized of an injustice committed by the aggressor.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF “HIDDEN” HATRED

The Gemara quotes Hashem as saying: “I created *the yetzer hara*, and I created Torah as its antidote.”³⁶ The Torah prohibition’s focus on hidden hatred is itself an antidote to the confusion induced by the *yetzer hara* in hatred. How so? Because hatred evolves for the worse with passing time and becomes difficult to uproot. As will be explained in detail, our most effective weapon against hatred is blocking its evolution from nascent hatred to *sinat chinam*. Thus, the Torah prohibition’s emphasis on stopping hatred “in the heart” teaches that we must be alert to the initial eruption of hatred.

Mussar teaches that self-awareness and other-awareness are two essential skills which allow us to be responsible for our individual spiritual station at each and every moment of our lives. Those skills are needed here since the Torah prohibits an emotion. Unfortunately, the ability to be introspective and self-aware disappears when the *yetzer hara* pushes our primitive brain in overdrive and makes it take over our reasoning capacity and turn us into victims. If we don’t act

³³ Rush W Dozier Jr Why we hate (Contemporary Books, 2002), 234.

³⁴ Daniel Z Feldman The Right and the Good (Yashar Books, Brooklyn NY, 2005), p.104 citing Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah 241.

³⁵ As soon as nascent hatred erupts, a hater is still in the category of *ben adam la-Makom* since only Hashem and the hater are aware of the hatred feelings.

³⁶ Kiddushin 30b

as soon as possible after the initial negative feelings toward the perceived aggressor, those feelings remain hidden “in our heart,” and we enter a state of chronic violation of the Torah prohibition. For this reason, our Chachamim³⁷ emphasized the urgency of taking responsibility for nascent hatred: “Do not pretend to be someone’s friend if you secretly dislike him. When antagonistic feelings are out in the open, the parties have a chance of arriving at an understanding; when they are buried, they endure forever.” Taking responsibility means initiating a dialogue with the perceived aggressor since the *pasuk* that includes the prohibition against hatred continues with “*hochea tochia et amitecha*” “you shall reprove your fellow,” which refers to a sensitive and meaningful dialogue. If we fail to do so, we suffer through the enormous consequences of violating the Torah prohibition explained in the next four chapters.

ADDENDUM

IS HATRED HIDDEN IN THE HEART OR IN THE BRAIN?

In the Torah prohibition “*Lo Tisna Et Achicha Bilvavecha*” “Thou shall not hate your brother in your heart,” many audience members found the translation of the word “*lev*” as “heart” confusing because they consider the brain the seat of human emotions. This issue has been examined by Rav Avinoam Fraenkel in his translation of Rabbi Chaim Volozhin’s *Nefesh Hachaim*:³⁸

“The translation of the word *Lev* is heart and is normally understood to relate to emotion and the seat of desire. It is clear that the word *Lev* is used across Scriptures and by Chazal to not only relate to pure emotion but also to relate to the heart as significantly influencing thought. In modern-day language, this meaning can be considered to be a person’s intuition or even a part of the mind. We see verses associating the word *Lev* with thought, e.g., ‘the thoughts of

³⁷ The Essential Pele Yoetz by Rabbi Eliezer Papo Condensed and Translated by Marc D Angel, (Sepher-Hermon Press, Inc New York 1991), 209.

³⁸ Nefesh HaTzimtum, Vol 1, G2:01, p. 304

one's lev' (Tehillim 33:11, *Mishlei* 19:21). R. Chaim himself states outright: "For the Lev is the level of thought as is known. We see other verses associating Lev with knowledge, e.g., 'God gave him a Lev to know and eyes to see' (*Devarim* 29:3). The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Hilchot Tefillin* 25:5) states that the soul is in the brain and the heart is the main source of desires and thoughts. In *Emet LeYaakov*, VaEtchanan, fn,21, R. Yaakov Kamenetsky observes that, in contrast to the Mishna, there is no word for *brain* in the Scriptures and considers that the Scriptural use of the word 'Lev' means the "brain."

...it is particularly instructive to view the use of the word "heart" throughout the Second and Third Gateways as mind and to think of prayer as not being *Service of the Heart* but instead as really being *Service of the Mind*, i.e., an intellectual meditation. So the love, discussed in this chapter is to be understood as being intellectually inspired."

Rav Avinoam Fraenkel's thorough analysis settles the issue. The Torah prohibition "You shall not hate your brother in your heart" could also be understood as "You shall not hate your brother in your emotional brain." The emotional brain³⁹ is that part of the human brain responsible for our behavioral and emotional responses.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE FOR CHAPTER 1

Dear Reader,

The Yetzer Hara is a real thing.

Hatred is the most destructive human emotion and is known as "the nuclear weapon of the mind."

If the Yetzer Hara sounds to you like an abstract or intangible concept, please be assured that in the case of hatred, the Yetzer Hara is all too real because it is deeply involved in the eruption of hatred and in its permanent character.

³⁹ Some refer to it as the limbic system which includes several interconnected structures (such as the hypothalamus, the hippocampus, the amygdala, and the limbic cortex) that are located deep within the brain. For more information, consult "The Emotional Brain" by Joseph Ledoux (Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 1996).

As you know, the Torah prohibits us from harboring “Hatred in our Heart,” and this prohibition is a *Lo Taasse Mideoraita*. With this prohibition, the Torah puts each one of us in charge of our monitoring any hatred feelings.

We have seen that, for our *chachamim*, the term “Hatred” has a low threshold: any level of dislike is included in this prohibition. You need not hate *everything* about a person to violate the Torah prohibition.

“In your heart” means hating someone secretly; and even if you have gotten that dislike out in the open, you may still bear a grudge or dream about revenge.

Secret hatred is far more potent than open hatred for a few reasons. Firstly, open hatred has the potential of being reconciled. Secondly, our brains are wired to hold on to hidden hatred and keep it alive for years and decades. The Yetzer Hara exploits our “primitive brain” to trigger hatred and is, of course, more than happy to fuel the flames of that initial incident, increasing the intensity of hatred with time.

This chapter analyzed the strategies that the Yetzer Hara employs to confound us. We encountered the internal and external versions of this subversive influencer, who alternately works each angle separately, or both together. It is deceptive and basks in our demise.

The first thing the Yetzer Hara tries to do is paralyze you with doubt regarding what is true or false, good or bad, intentional or accidental. He defiles your thoughts and actions, derails your progress toward fulfilling your Holy potential. He excludes Hashem out of interpersonal situations to make everything personal, and to turn a trivial incident into an imminent and vital threat. He makes you feel justified in your rage emphasizing the injustice of your bruised ego. The Yetzer Hara will discourage any reconciliation because it destroys your compassionate empathy (*rachmanut*). The science behind empathy has helped us understand how our minds can be so profoundly influenced with indifference, negativity, and cruelty (*achzariyut*) toward anyone, including close family members.

There are many triggers for hatred. Some may feel real and justified (we feel shamed, embarrassed, taken advantage of, mentally or materially damaged) and some may be only sensed or perceived (envy or vanity). We generally feel that the aggressor deserves our irate response, saying to ourselves “He provoked me, he brought it upon himself.” But we have

shown that this is flawed thinking, unbecoming of a Jewish mind. We are commanded to judge another Jews favorably. Anyone with integrity recognizes that, more of the time, we judge others based on perceptions and a lack of knowledge about their intentions. That's why we often misjudge them. It is only our place to treat each other as brothers and sisters since we are commanded to love them with profound affection. Even "mild" hatred left unchecked is prohibited because of its grave potential to undergo fermentation and increase in intensity. It is essential to recognize that Baseless Hatred comes in two sizes- Individual and Group sized. As humans, we are social creatures. As Jewish humans, we are *extremely* social creatures. This is part of our strength and of our survival. However, because groups compete with each other, when any group feels threatened, they tend to revert to tribal mode and shun outsiders who are perceived as aliens or hostile. This reaction easily devolves into baseless group hatred (see chapter 7).

Fortunately, HaShem gave us the Torah as a guidebook for resisting the self-centered and empty life the Yetzer Hara promotes, unbeknown to us.

HaShem also created a balancing force, the Yetzer Hatov. In contrast to the Yetzer Hara, the Yetzer Hatov dwells in our heart, ready and willing to function, *but it requires dynamic activation*.

The heart is so much more than four chambers that generate life-giving pulses. If you've ever sensed that the expression "the heart knows" is accurate, then you will embrace the rabbinic explanation that your heart is also synonymous with your mind (emotional mind). It heavily influences your behavior and thought, connecting emotion with understanding to bring us ever closer to HaShem.

As shown in Chapter 6, there are two major approaches to tackle individual hatred and overcome the Yetzer Hara: one limits the impact of hatred and the other blocks the emergence of hatred feelings. Both require introspection and work but when you garner your heart and mind to help in your struggle, that work reaps unexpected emotional and spiritual benefits.

