

CHAPTER 10

INDIVIDUAL STEPS TO CURB GROUP *SINAT CHINAM*

You don't have to believe that group *sinat chinam* brings about antisemitism to agree that for our people, group *sinat chinam* has the destructive power of a nuclear weapon. And you don't have to be a skeptic to ask: "How can I make a difference?" "What can one person do against the many?" "How can I impact complex societal dynamics that bring about the destruction of a society from within?" "However, by now, you also recognize that these questions belong to the armada of advanced weapons and strategies of the *yetzer hara* whose goal is to paralyze you into inaction.¹

This chapter proposes a few steps designed for individual Torah-observant Jews who wish to rein in the dangers of group *sinat chinam* for you and for our people. The proposed Group *Sinat Chinam* Method fights the *yetzer hara* in a frontal way (*L'chatchila*) as suggested by Rav Dessler: we confront the *yetzer hara* head on, gather all our forces, dig in our heels, and refuse to listen to its arguments.² How so? Simply by saving yourself from being a chronic transgressor of the Torah prohibition against hatred.

EXAMPLE OF GROUP *SINAT CHINAM* IN THE UNITED STATES

The Conflict About Israel

American Jewry's relationship with Israel began with a 30-year period of uncritical support. That period ended in the late 1970s when an increasing number of American Jews felt "deeply conflicted between their emotional attachment to Israel and their disapproval of the actions and policies of its governments." During the 1990s, support of Israel became conditional, and

¹ Rabbeinu Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda, *Duties of the Heart* (Feldheim Publishers Jerusalem, New York, 1996) Section 5, p. 484-485.

² Rabbi Eliyahu E Dessler, *Michtav Me'Eliyahu (Strive for Truth!)* Vol II, Part 4 (Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem Israel, Nanuet, NY, 1989,1994), 56.

then morphed into critical engagement. American Jewry found itself in a “Debate about Dissent” which revolved around two issues:

(i) Are American Jews entitled to criticize Israel?

(ii) Can they do so in public?

In the last decade, that debate mutated into full-blown polarization when American Jews aligned their perspectives about Israel with their US political ideologies. That fusion turned into a poisonous cocktail, and with the availability of social media, the Debate about Dissent lost its Jewish character and became public. “As the political consensus about Israel within the American Jewish community has steadily eroded, divisions about Israel are growing among American Jews, and discussions about Israel have become increasingly antagonistic. American discourse about Israel now regularly degenerates into vitriol, hostile accusations, and ad hominem attacks. Indeed, the subject of Israel has become so highly charged and controversial among American Jews that now, some completely avoid talking about it lest the discussion degenerates into an angry argument, as it often will.”³ Outspoken Jewish critics of Israel and groups such as Jewish Voice for Peace have been called “self-hating Jews” and excluded from the “Jewish Public sphere.” Jews who support BDS have received names such as “the Jews of shame” or “Jews against Themselves,”⁴ and became *personae non gratae* in Jewish venues such as JCCs, synagogues, university Hillel clubs, and museums. According to Dov Waxman’s analysis, American Jewry became divided in four camps, Left, Center-Left, Center-Right, and Right.

The Way Forward

In early 2022, eighteen rabbis, along with over 200 rabbis of all denominations, issued a statement addressing the need for a “robust conversation about public policy and Jewish affairs—one that seeks to listen and to learn; one that rejects demonization; one that in the words of the Talmud, prompts us to build a heart with many rooms.”⁵ The Rabbis’ statement indicated that “Surveys show Americans self-censoring at record levels.Indeed, it’s crucial that we stand against *Sinat Chinam*—baseless hatred—over differences in political viewpoint, which makes it uncomfortable for many to participate in congregational and organizational life,

³ Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2016), 5.

⁴ Edward Alexander, *Jews Against Themselves* (Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 2015), 133.

⁵ *Jewish Journal*, January 14-20, 2022 p.22-25.

at a time when Jewish communal organizations are already facing significant difficulty in attracting Jews. We all need space to be tentative, to be wrong and change our minds, to wonder, to explore.” That statement prompted the question: ‘Will Rabbis’ Statement Spark a Moment of Reckoning for the Jewish Community?’ We are still waiting for that moment.....

EXAMPLE OF GROUP SINAT CHINAM IN ISRAEL

Two Torah-Observant Communities: Religious Zionists and Charedim

Rabbi Aryeh Meir, a member of the Charedi community in Israel provided a very recent analysis of the current rift between two Torah-observant communities, Religious Zionists and Charedim:⁶ “Over the last few decades, very little Torah or public dialogue has taken place between the two communities. This is true not only of human discourse but also of books and other literature...The current Charedi approach to the Religious Zionist community, intentional or otherwise, is akin to the Sages’ attitude to the *tzedukim*. The attitude is disrespectful and displays no desire for serious or candid dialogue; a recurring theme in official Charedi media outlets is that fear of Heaven escapes through the holes of the knitted *kippah*. Yet, it is hard to point out to a fundamental religious disagreement between the Religious Zionist and Charedi communities. Both believe in the same Torah, observe the same *halacha*, and espouse similar patterns of authority and instruction.

The short answer to why our communities don’t speak to each other is simple: the Jewish state. Charedim considered a secular Jewish state to be a grave threat to Jewish tradition. The fear of secularization, and the resultant refusal to cooperate with the state and participate in the project of its building, in its institutions, and certainly in its culture became a central feature of Charedi Judaism. It is this feature that separated the Charedim from their Religious Zionist brothers.Religious Zionism’s accommodating attitude towards the state motivated the Charedi perception of being faced with an anti-traditional movement in traditional garb. Alongside the religious concerns, the main motivation for the split between Charedim and Religious Zionists was political rather than ideological....The homogenization of Charedi society, which was seen as essential for strengthening its political and educational institutions in the

⁶ Rabbi Aryeh Meir, For the sake of Heaven” *Hamizrachi*, vol 5 No 3, 14-18; Tisha B’Av 5782

face of tremendous threats, greatly weakened our ability to conduct serious debate on matters of ideology. What used to be grounds for disagreement now became grounds for ostracism.”

Where We Stand Today

Over the last 75 years, “the Jewish state and its religious conflicts have changed significantly...the state is no longer considered by most of us to be a threat to Judaism....The truth, however, is that serious differences remain, and the path to reconciling them is long. Military service, and the resentment of the Religious Zionist sector over Charedi non-participation, is a profound divider....

The Charedi fear that affiliation with Religious Zionism would channel some of that community’s religious liberalism into the Charedi world is understandable. However, it seems to me that the complete exclusion of the Religious Zionist *beit midrash* from the Charedi world, as though Religious Zionists were *tzedukim*, is a mistaken policy...Our differences should not be ignored, but neither should they be exaggerated. Dialogue, not cold shoulders, is the response to our decreasing but ongoing estrangement.”

Rabbi Aryeh Meir concludes with an inspiring and moving appeal:⁷

“Our primary goal in this world is to extend the sovereignty of G-d’s holiness. This ambitious aim requires the basic unity of those faithful to G-d’s Torah—a unity that needn’t flatten or blur legitimate differences but must bring us together despite our differences. Indeed, a significant part of our tradition is maintenance of differences for the sake of Heaven. But disputes for the sake of Heaven are always between respectful peers, rather than hostile opponents. This communication and conversation, in a spirit of Jewish unity, will strengthen all parties: ‘Ephraim shall not envy Yehudah, and Yehudah shall not besiege Ephraim (Yishayahu 11:13).”

METHOD TO CURB GROUP *SINAT CHINAM*

This Group *Sinat Chinam* Method tackles group *sinat chinam* one person at a time. It addresses the following individuals:

(i) American Jews who belong to one of the four camps (Left, Center-Left, Center-Right, and Right) and harbor negative feelings toward members of another camp;

⁷ Rabbi Aryeh Meir, “For the sake of Heaven” *Hamizrachi*, vol 5 No 3, 18; Tisha B’Av 5782

(ii) Israeli Jews who belong to either the Charedi or the Religious Zionist community and harbor negative feelings toward members of the other community.

The steps proposed below provide an opportunity to stop violating the Torah prohibition against hatred and build a new emotional bridge with the “other” group using a teshuva process designed for group *sinat chinam*.

TESHUVA FOR GROUP SINAT CHINAM

When we previously described the three components of Teshuva for personal *sinat chinam* (Chapter 7), we followed the order of first regretting the sin (*haratah*) and then resolving not to repeat it (*azivat hachet*). But in Chapter 2 of Hilchot Teshuvah, Rambam changes that order: “He starts by saying that teshuvah means: (1) distancing oneself from the *aveirah* he did, (2) regretting his past, and (3) accepting upon himself—with HaShem Himself as witness—that he will never return to this *aveirah* again.”

Rabbi A. Levin⁸ explains the switch in order as follows: “arousing within oneself a true sense of *haratah* is a formidable task...Therefore, the Rambam cautions a person to first distance himself as far from the *aveirah* as he can get—*azivat hachet*. When one no longer stumbles in sin, he can seriously begin to contemplate the seriousness of his deeds and reach a true level of sincere and heart-piercing regret. Only then –when a person has reached a true level of real *haratah*—is he able to contemplate accepting upon himself that he will never return to this *aveirah* again, in a manner where HaShem Himself can testify that it is said in truth.”

Following the above reasoning, I have listed the first two components of teshuvah (*haratah* and *azivat hachet*) together. Then, to help readers internalize the seriousness of group *sinat chinam*, I have assembled six consequences of group *sinat chinam* to help bring about true feelings of regret and achieve a meaningful teshuva.

REGRET (HARATAH) AND COMMITMENT NOT TO REPEAT THE SIN OF GROUP SINAT CHINAM (AZIVAT HACHET)

⁸ Rabbi A Levin, *Knocking on the Gates of Teshuvah* (Mosaica Press, 2022), 22.

The breadth of consequences of group *sinat chinam* is unique and daunting. In Chapter 7, we learned Rabbeinu Yonah's⁹ explanation of regret as "...you abandoned HaShem and sinned by violating the Torah prohibition and harboring hatred in your heart... and say to yourself: "What have I done?"

Here is how you abandoned HaShem:

1. Excessive and Unwarranted Allegiance to Your Group

You abandoned HaShem by having a blind allegiance to your group instead of allegiance to HaShem' people. This tribalism has many consequences:

- Tribalism distorts factual information, and "distorts the way we think and feel."¹⁰ As a result, like other group members, you exaggerate differences between your group and the 'other group' to justify your distancing and your negative feelings.
- Tribalism has built-in negative prejudices and discrimination against members of the "other" group even when they are truly Torah-observant Jews. For example, you may believe that they are not loyal enough to HaShem or that their children are not fit to study in your schools. Or you may believe that they wish to control your destiny.
- Tribalism makes you insular, defensive, and punitive to the point that you put your group over every other consideration.

2. In the Diaspora Group *Sinat Chinam* Damages the Honor of HaShem

Through blind loyalty to their groups, Jews in the Diaspora cause "damage to the honor of Hashem through prolonging [the current] bitter exile." Rabbi Nosson Scherman explains how it happens, based on his analysis of Maharal's interpretation of the Exile:¹¹ "The purpose of the exile is for the Jewish people to correct the underlying national flaws that caused the Temple to be destroyed and the nation to be dispersed." This principle is based on the belief that HaShem rewards and punishes "*middah keneged middah*," measure for measure: with our current exile HaShem provided us the opportunity to repair the divisiveness that caused the exile in the first place. If, instead of being disunited, we are able to show love and concern for one another

⁹ Shaarei Teshuvah Shaar 1:10

¹⁰ Amy Chua, *Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* (Penguin Press, New York, 2018), 39-41.

¹¹ Rabbi Nosson Scherman, *Ethics of the Fathers* (Mesorah Publications, Ltd, Brooklyn NY, 2018), xix-xx.

during this exile, we would “recreate spiritual unity which would inevitably lead to the ingathering of the exiles, and the Final Redemption.” According to Rabbi Scherman, there is no “more important national goal.” However, by harboring negative feelings toward members of other groups, we fail “to repair the divisiveness that caused the exile in the first place.”

3. In Israel, Group *Sinat Chinam* Blinds You to “*Achicha baTorah u’vaMitzvot*”

Rabbanit Mayer gave the example of the Zealots during the siege of Jerusalem: “the zealots were so fanatical that their leader [Abba Sikkara, nephew of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai] feared them and couldn’t reason with them [to allow a casket with a dead body out of Jerusalem]. This inability to talk with one another, to calmly consider the other’s view and come to a compromise is a malady affecting us today, as well.”¹² This type of behavior by individuals who dedicate their lives to avodat HaShem cannot be reconciled with what HaShem expects from His people.

A current example is given by Rabbi Reuven Taragin¹³ who points out that we are not able to achieve a degree of closeness even with the subgroup of Jews “who share and live by our core Torah values.”: “our community should share a unique bond with those who share and live by our core Torah values. We should identify most with Jews who believe in and appreciate HaShem’s creation of the world and of man in His image, His redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt in order to serve Him, and His giving us the Torah and mitzvot as guides of how to do so. We should feel closest to those who dedicate their lives to avodat HaShem ... (“*achicha baTorah u’vamitzvot*”). Rabbi Taragin cited Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein who pointed out that what the two communities [Religious Zionists and Charedi] share “far, far outweighs whatever divides us, ...[but] in the nature of things, the focus within the community is upon the divisive element.”

Similarly, Rabbi Aryeh Meir suggested that members of the two groups should not exaggerate their differences and use dialogue instead of “cold shoulders” to decrease the “ongoing

¹² Rabbanit Sally Mayer, *Jews With Views, Hamizrachi*, vol 5 No 3, 39; Tisha B’Av 5782.

¹³ Rabbi Reuven Taragin, *Our Closest Relatives Hamizrachi*, vol 5 No 3, 30; Tisha B’Av 5782

estrangement.” All these examples show how easily Torah-observant Jews can fall prey to the irrationality of tribalism.

4. You Abandoned HaShem with Your Loss of “Rachmanut” For His People

All the regretful behaviors described above arise because of the loss of empathy toward members of the competing group because of group *sinat chinam*. In the case of group *sinat chinam*, you abandon HaShem even more than in the case of personal *sinat chinam* because the loss of *rachmanut* and emergence of *achzrariyut* (insensitivity or cruelty) is multiplied by orders of magnitude since it can include hundreds of thousands of Jews at once.

5. You Abandon HaShem by Violating Many Commandments at Once

The damage that group *sinat chinam* yields is much broader than that of personal *sinat chinam* because the list of Torah commandments that a hater violates includes many more entries.

Since group *sinat chinam* inevitably leads to *rechilus* and/or *lashon hara* about members of the “other” group, I composed the following list of additional Torah commandments that are violated. It is based on the list of “Laveen” (Torah prohibitions) and “Aseen” (Positive commandments) found in the Introduction to Sefer Chafetz Chaim translated by Chacham Yedidia Levy.¹⁴

Laveen / Torah prohibitions

- Do not go tale-bearing about another Jew (Vayikra 19:16)
- Do not accept or issue a false report (Shemot 23:1)
- Guard yourself / Be careful not to forget HaShem your G-d (Devarim 8:11)
- Do not “follow the crowd” to do bad (Shemot 23:12)
- You shall not cut yourselves (Devarim 14:1)

Aseen / Positive commandments

- Remember what HaShem your G-d did to Miriam (Devarim 24:9)

¹⁴ Hafetz Hayim, Preface and Introduction, translated by Yedidya Levy (Mazal Elul, Yedidya Levy, Brooklyn, 2004), p.m-n.

- And you shall love your fellow Jew as you love yourself, I am G-d (Vayikra 19:18)
- Judge your fellow Jew favorably (Vayikra 19:15)
- And your brother should live with you (Vayikra 25:36)
- And cling to HIM (Devarim 10:20)
- And you shall be in fear / awe of HaShem your G-d (Devarim 6:13)
- And you shall walk in HIS ways (Devarim 28:9)

Only three of these twelve commandments are shared with the commandments associated with personal *sinat chinam* (Chapters 4 and 7). I will comment on the verse that includes the last of the Laveen listed above “You shall not cut yourselves” (Devarim 14:1).¹⁵

“You are children to HaShem your G-d, you shall not cut yourselves...(Devarim 14:1)”

As explained by Rabbi Mordechai Y. Scher,¹⁶ “God says ‘you are *banim* to Hashem your God’.¹⁷ We are intended to be associated with God in an extraordinary way. Every human is created in the Divine image; but Israel are meant to evoke notions of Godliness with our unique society and culture. The individual Jew is meant to represent Godly ideals and behavior, everywhere he goes. This is apparent from the next verse, that points out that God chose us for a special role in humanity [*Am Segulah*, a treasured people]. This, of course, is set at Sinai when we received His Torah.”

Since we are responsible to make ourselves worthy of the title of “*banim*” through our deeds and actions, we should feel some regret when we violate HaShem’s command by harboring group *sinat chinam* since we did not behave as HaShem’s child or as brother to our brothers and sisters.

“You shall not cut yourselves”: “*Lo Titgodedu*”

¹⁵ All the other commandments have been referenced and readers are referred to their own Torah commentaries for full explanations.

¹⁶ Rabbi Mordechai Y. Scher, Thoughts for Re’eh 5770; <https://www.kolberamah.org/wp/2010/08/thoughts-for-reeh-5770/>

¹⁷ Devarim 14:1

Regarding the verse in Devarim 14:1, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch indicates that Chazal¹⁸ applied the prohibition “you shall not cut yourselves” to the national body of the Jewish people.

“Differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of the Torah or regarding the conclusions to be drawn from the Torah must not lead to schisms that would break up the community, with one faction following the exponents of one view, and another faction following the exponents of the other view...Thereby uniformity of practice shall be maintained, to the extent that it is regulated by the Torah.”

6. You Abandon HaShem By Corrupting Your Avodat HaShem

Some corruptive effects of personal *sinat chinam* on avodat HaShem (Chapters 3-5) are also applicable to group *sinat chinam*, while others are new.

1. Limmud HaTorah

A person who learns Torah but does not rectify his/her middot is not considered to be truly engaged (*Osek*) in Torah.¹⁹ This applies to anyone who harbors group *sinat chinam*.

2. Acceptance of the Yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom (*Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim*)

Any Jew with negative feelings toward thousands of innocent Jews simply because they belong to another group cannot claim that (i) he accepts HaShem as the King and absolute Ruler over him; or (ii) that he contributes to changing the world from a state of *HaShem Elokeinu* to a state of *HaShem Echad*.

3. Avodat HaShem With *Lev* and *Nefesh*

In the presence of group *sinat chinam*, several dimensions of tefillah, such as self-nullification, are also corrupted. Specifically, a Jew involved in group *sinat chinam* has serious *kavanah* issues to resolve when reciting the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th brachot of the Shmonei Esrei. These are “supplications for national needs—for [the ingathering of the exiles], the return of the Sanhedrin, the destruction of the wicked, the exalting of the righteous, the restoration

¹⁸ Based on the gemara (Yevamot 13b-14a),

¹⁹ Rabbi MD Kestenbaum Olam HaMiddos (Art Scroll Mesorah Publications, Ltd Rahway NJ, 2021), 25.

Yerushalayim, and the establishment of Mashiach's reign."²⁰ Those brachot require a sincere yearning for "the perfection that comes from the unity of all facets of Klal Yisrael throughout the generations, in all the various places that we have been."

Bottom line: I hope that readers involved with group *sinat chinam* will consider all the ways of abandoning HaShem described above, feel a desire to repair them, and engage in teshuva with a mindset of regret and humility as well as an urge to distance themselves from the sin of group *sinat chinam*.

VIDDUY (CONFESSION) FOR GROUP SINAT CHINAM

The framework of vidduy for group *sinat chinam* is the same as that described in Chapter 7 for personal *sinat chinam* since vidduy is an essential component of teshuva and a Biblical mitzvah-obligation ("*mitzvat assei d'Oraita*").²¹ There is no atonement without vidduy!

According to Rabbi H Kleinman, "one must view himself as if he is actually standing before HaShem acknowledging that by sinning he has rebelled against the King and that he is asking forgiveness...Vidduy is the act of conversing before a loving God in which one acknowledges that he has sinned thereby creating a divide between himself and God. The result of the Vidduy is to remove the sin so that he can come close to the Almighty."²²

Regarding vidduy's content, "he needs to say the following words: "Hattati" (referring to *aveiros* done by mistake), "Aviti" (referring to sins done intentionally), and "Pashati" (referring to rebellion against HaShem)²³....The opinion of the Rosh, Tur, and Shulchan Aruch is that when one says vidduy, he does not need to specify which *aveirah* he did...Even so, it is nevertheless proper (even according to this opinion) to quietly specify which *aveirah* one did."²⁴ ²⁵

²⁰ A detailed discussion of these supplications can be found in Rabbi Zev Leff, *Shemonei Esrei* (Tarrgum Press, 2008), 199 onward.

²¹ We learned in Chapter 7 that Rambam bases this mitzvah on verse Bamidbar 5:6-7: "A man or a woman who commits any of man's sins...they shall confess their sin that they committed;" Rabbeinu Yonah uses the verse Vayikra 5:5: "He shall confess what he had sinned."

²² Rabbi H Kleinman, *The Power of Teshuvah* (Mesorah Publications Ltd, 2016), 222-223.

²³ Rabbi A Levin, *Knocking on the Gates of Teshuvah* (Mosaica Press, 2022), 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁵ As mentioned before, readers should consult a Halachic authority when it comes to any halachic issue.

Rabbeinu Yonah points out that in order to obtain a higher level of atonement, one should combine Viddui with Tefillah,²⁶ which is a fervent prayer to obtain forgiveness of our sins and to have our previous good deeds accepted.²⁷ Regarding Tefillah, we cited (Chapter 5) Rabbi Shimshon D Pincus' teaching²⁸ that "The foundation of our success and the pillar of our *avodat* HaShem is the knowledge that everything depends on tefillah....This is a universal principle: nothing comes without tefillah."

CONCLUSION

My conclusion on teshuva for personal *sinat chinam* at the end of Chapter 6 (Forgiveness-Teshuva Method) is even more relevant here, in the case of teshuva for group *sinat chinam*. Taking responsibility for your group *sinat chinam* vis-à-vis HaShem and His people by engaging earnestly in teshuva is a huge accomplishment because "even one individual who does sincere teshuvah has the power to bring the Geulah closer through his teshuvah."²⁹ You "mutate" from being a "*sinat chinam* bystander" to being sovereign over your reactions to any disagreements within your family or community.

Your next Tisha B'Av and Shabbat Nachamu will feel like never before, especially when you will recite the words of the prophet "*Nachamu, Nachamu, Ami ..*" Your teshuva will provide you a true "*nechama*," which means "a new perspective" and the ability to "discern the hidden hand of Providence,to move forward creatively."³⁰

²⁶ Shaarei Teshuvah, Shaar 1:40-43. This is according to the prophet Hoshea: "Take words with you and return to Hashem" Hoshea,14:2.

²⁷ In addition, Rambam in Hilchot Teshuva 7:7, states that our prayers are now heard, citing Isaiah: "he cries out and his prayer is answered immediately".

²⁸ Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus Shearim B'Tefillah Gates of Prayer (Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem Israel, 2013), 14-20.

²⁹ Rabbi A Levin, Knocking on the Gates of Teshuvah (Mosaica Press, 2022),160

³⁰ Rabbi Yossi Goldin, OU Israel Center, July/Av 5781 citing Rav Elchanan Adler YU Torah-To-Go Tisha B'av 5773 Tisha B'Av: Hope in the Face of Sorrow.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE FOR CHAPTER 10

Dear Reader,

The last three chapters (7, 8 and 9) documented the significance and dangers associated with group *sinat chinam*. This chapter ventures into new territory by addressing the question: What can one Jew/ess do to curb group *sinat chinam* in the Diaspora and/or Israel?

It began with two examples of group *sinat chinam*, one in the United States, and one in Israel.

United States

In the US, American Jews are divided regarding their support of the State of Israel.

In the youth of the State, American Jews showed largely unconditional support toward Israel aiding it on the path to international success. Beginning in the 1990s, supporting the State of Israel became steeped in controversy. The initial issues were: (i) Are American Jews entitled to criticize Israel? And (ii) Can they do so in public? Then American Jewry became polarized. The subject of Israel has become so highly charged and controversial among American Jews that now, some completely avoid talking about it, lest the discussion degenerates into an angry argument, as it often will.

Israel

Rabbi Aryeh Meir, a member of the Charedi community in Israel provided a very recent analysis of the current rift between two Torah-observant communities, Religious Zionists and Charedim. Although both groups believe in the same Torah, observe the same *halacha*, and espouse similar patterns of authority and instruction, the current Charedi approach to the Religious Zionist community, intentional or otherwise, is akin to the Sages' attitude to the *tzedukim*. The attitude is disrespectful and displays no desire for serious or candid dialogue. The reason is that Charedim consider a secular Jewish state to be a grave threat to Jewish tradition. Rabbi Meir provides wise and hopeful advice: "*Our differences should not be ignored, but neither should*

they be exaggerated. Dialogue, not cold shoulders, is the response to our decreasing but ongoing estrangement.”

Method To Curb Group Sinat Chinam

It applies to American Jews who harbor negative feelings toward members of another camp (Left, Center-Left, Center-Right, and Right) and to Israeli Jews who belong to either the Charedi or the Religious Zionist community and harbor negative feelings toward members of the other community.

Introspection shows that the breadth of consequences of group *sinat chinam* is unique and daunting. You abandoned HaShem by having a blind allegiance to your group instead of allegiance to HaShem’ people. Through blind loyalty to their groups, Jews in the Diaspora cause “damage to the honor of Hashem through prolonging [the current] bitter exile. In Israel, group *sinat chinam* blinds Jews to “*Achicha baTorah u’vaMitzvot.*” Rabbi Reuven Taragin points out that we are not able to achieve a degree of closeness even with Jews “who share and live by our core Torah values.” In the case of group *sinat chinam*, the loss of *rachmanut* and emergence of *achzrariyut* (insensitivity or cruelty) is multiplied by orders of magnitude since it can include hundreds of thousands of Jews at once. The list of additional commandments that are violated with group *sinat chinam* includes five Laveen / Torah prohibitions and seven Aseen / Positive commandments.

In addition, the corruptive effects of personal *sinat chinam* on avodat HaShem (see Chapter 3-5) are also applicable to group *sinat chinam*. The other steps include Haratah and Vidduy. It is recommended that Vidduy be combined with tefillah.

Rabbi A Levin reminds us that “even one individual who does sincere teshuvah has the power to bring the *Geulah* closer through his teshuvah.”

Only when we, as God-fearing Jews, admit the part we play in perpetuating group *sinat chinam* and commit to fixing it can true change happen. As many of our actions show, we are a good people, with good intentions and a profound love for HaShem. To take pride in our membership in the Chosen People, let’s take it one step further and become a pioneer in curbing group *sinat chinam*!
