

Good Shabbos Everyone. Many people cite the statement of the Sages that "*The Second Temple was destroyed because of groundless hatred.*" (Yoma 9b) As we approach Tisha B'Av, the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, a day which marks the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, let us reflect on the meaning of the words "groundless hatred."

Usually, the term "*groundless hatred*" is understood to mean that people mistreated others in the area of materialistic needs; for example, not doing favors for others or not giving charity or taking revenge on others. However, the commentator Ya'aros Devash explains that the "groundless hatred" that destroyed the Second Temple was a different type of hatred altogether.

During the time of the Second Temple there were numerous *chesed* (kindness) organizations, which dealt with visiting the sick, feeding the poor and doing acts of kindness for others. The "*groundless hatred*" of those times was therefore not a materialistic hatred, rather it was a "*spiritual hatred.*" Namely, people did not care enough about each other to correct them when they saw that they were doing wrong. (Heard from Rav Avrohom Schorr, Shlita)

How is this so? We know from history that there were many different deviant Jewish sects at the time. These sects encouraged perverse interpretations of the Torah. (One sect became a new religion which went on to cause the death and destruction and persecution of millions of Jews and non-Jews alike.) Therefore, the "*groundless hatred*" that caused the destruction of the Second Temple was based on a lack of concern for the spiritual well-being of others.

American culture has popularized the concept of "*to each his own.*" However, this is not a Jewish concept. Because, the Rabbis teach us that every Jew is spiritually connected to one another. As the Sages tell us "*All of Yisroel is responsible for each other.*" (Midrash Eicha 3:39) Therefore, if we see another Jew violating the Torah, we generally have an obligation to correct him. As the verse states: "*You shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him.*" (Vayikra 19:17)

This week we will learn to try to reprove our fellow Jew in the kindest way possible. We can infer this concept from the verse we just quoted. Why does the Torah say "*you shall not bear a sin because of him?*" It is possible to answer our question in the following way: We must be very careful in the way we reprove others. Because, if we correct people in an improper way, we are likely to have the opposite effect; namely, we may only anger them and cause them to continue sinning. Therefore, whenever possible, we should minimize the shame of others when reproving them.

We can see support for this idea in our Parsha this week *Devorim*. Instead of directly criticizing the Bnai Yisroel, Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) instead mentioned the places where the Bnai Yisroel had violated Hashem's will. For example, in describing the journeys of the Bnai Yisroel, the Torah refers to "*di-zahav.*" Rashi explains that this is referring to the incident of the Golden Calf, because "*zahav*" means "gold." Rashi explains further that Moshe did not want to embarrass the Bnai Yisroel, so he merely referred to their sin of the Golden Calf by hinting. We can learn from this a foundation in our relationships with others: if we must correct our fellow Jew, we should do so in the kindest way possible.

The following amazing true story illustrates the importance of correcting others in the nicest way possible:

Being a Rabbi in a small town, far from any city with a large Jewish population is often a lonely and thankless job. True, there is much to accomplish, but the challenges that need to be overcome on the way to solidifying a minyan of *shomrei Shabbos* (Sabbath observers), building a day school, or convincing people to uphold and maintain standards of kashrus and family purity always seem to be uphill struggles. More often than not, a Rabbi in an area with a limited number of Jewish inhabitants gets the feeling that the Jews in the community are simply not on the same wave length as he is.

One such rab was Rav Lipa Brenner, who had been inspired to enter the rabbinate by his mentor in Yeshiva Torah V'daas, Reb Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz (1886-1948) of blessed memory. After a few years of serving as a rabbi and principal in a small town in New Jersey, Reb Lipa was becoming exasperated. The local baalei battim (laymen) were not cooperating with him in his endeavors and Reb Lipa's accomplishments seemed to dim with every passing year. Meanwhile, to add to his dilemma, business opportunities beckoned from New York. Aside from the potential financial security that was so alluring, New York offered a variety of boys' and girls' yeshivos in which Reb Lipa might finally have the opportunity to provide his children with the *chinuch* (education) that he felt was proper and essential.

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."
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In a quandary as to whether or not to leave the rabbinate, he decided to travel to Eretz Yisrael and seek the advice of the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Mayer Hager, of blessed memory. (1888-1972). Reb Lipa obtained his tickets and a passport, and made the trip. However, upon his arrival he was informed that the Rebbe was preparing to leave for Lugano, Switzerland, and would receive no more visitors before his departure. So Reb Lipa followed him to Switzerland.

In Lugano, Reb Lipa made his way to where the Rebbe was staying. He waited his turn to see the Rebbe and, when he was finally ushered in, the Rebbe asked Reb Lipa to sit beside him at his table. Seated across the table was another rav from Tel Aviv. After a few moments the rebbetzin (Rebbe's wife) came in with a glass of hot tea for her husband. Before she could even put the tea on the table, the Rebbe gently admonished her and said, *"Please bring two more glasses of tea. We are three rabbanim (rabbis) here about to have a discussion."*

Reb Lipa was astounded. The Rebbe had referred to him as a rav, and talked of him as though he were a peer. Reb Lipa trembled as he realized the significance of the title the Vizhnitzer Rebbe had inadvertently bestowed on him. But perhaps it wasn't inadvertent? Did the Rebbe know that he was thinking of leaving the rabbinate? Reb Lipa never bothered to find out. Then and there he resolved his own conflict. He would retain his position as rav.

Reb Lipa went on to teach and influence hundreds of under-affiliated Jews. For example, more than two decades later, Reb Lipa was visiting in the Mattersdorf section of Jerusalem. It was Shabbos afternoon and dozens of children were playing in the streets, which are cordoned off until nightfall. Suddenly a bearded young man came over to Reb Lipa, yelling, *"Rebbe!"* Reb Lipa turned around, but he did not recognize anyone. *"Rebbe,"* the young man said, smiling, *"you are Reb Brenner, aren't you? You probably don't recognize me anymore. I went to your school back in New Jersey more than twenty years ago. Come with me,"* the young man said warmly. *"I want to introduce you to your grandchildren."*

The young man took Reb Lipa by the hand and brought him to where his wife was watching their children play. The Sages tell us *"Anyone who teaches Torah to a child of his friend, is as though he gave birth to [the child,]"* said the young man, citing the Talmud (Sanhedrin 19b). *"Thus, if I am your child, these are your grandchildren."*

The young man was indeed one of the five from a foster home in New Jersey whom Reb Lipa had dedicated himself to teach Torah so many years previous. Reb Lipa had seen to it that he attend the Mirrer Yeshiva in New York, and from there, the young man went on to become an outstanding *talmid chacham* (Torah Scholar). Reb Lipa had all but forgotten him, but the young man had remembered. The face of his mentor had been etched in the child's memory forever. (Around the Maggid's Table R. Paysach Krohn, p.98)

We see the power of correcting others in a kind way. The Torah and mitzvahs of the young man and his family were only possible because Reb Lipa decided to stay a Rabbi. Thus, the kind words of the Vizhnitzer Rebbe had a tremendous effect on several generations. In our story, the Vizhnitzer Rebbe merely treated Reb Lipa with respect, by referring to him with the title of "Rav." There are plenty of businessmen but precious few talented Rabbis who can teach authentic Torah to the masses. Thus, Reb Lipa was much more needed in the rabbinate than in business. The Vizhnitzer Rebbe, who was endowed with enhanced spiritual powers of perception was able to see into Reb Lipa's soul and know what issue was on his mind. Therefore, when it came time to give Reb Lipa his opinion, the Rebbe did so in the sweetest way possible.

We should remember this story when we seek to correct others. If we correct others kindly, then we will have the best effect on others, and we will increase *"groundless love."* Then we will have a part in rebuilding the Third Temple speedily in our days, Amen. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**