

בס"ד

# HATE FOR NO REASON WHAT'S THAT?



## הרב שלום יוסף דוד גוטסמן

אלעד י' אב תשע"ו

**RABBI  
SHALOM YOSEF DAVID GOTTESMAN**

Elad, 5776 (2016)

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# IN MEMORY OF

My Rebbe and teacher

הרה"ק האדמו"ר

**Rabbi Avraham Menachem Danziger**  
**of Alexander**

זצללה"ה זי"ע

In whose merit I've come this far

**17 Adar 5765**

*May his soul be bound in the bond of life*

**IN MEMORY OF**

**My father and teacher**

**הרה"צ ר'**

**Rabbi Chanoch Henich**

**זצ"ל Gottesman**

**who raised and educated me  
in the ways of Torah and fear of Heaven  
in the spiritual wasteland of Italy**

**11 Iyar 5738**

*May his soul be bound in the bond of life*

## **Approbation of the Alexander Rebbe Rabbi Avraham Menachem Danziger**

To Whom It May Concern,

Abundant peace unto you.

I've known the family of **Yosef David Gottesman** for almost fifty years now.

The father, the head of the family, **Rabbi Chanoch Henich**, of blessed memory, walked within our camp. Throughout his life, he dwelled in the tent of Torah study and sacrificed himself in meticulous fulfillment of God's mitzvot – great and small alike – in a foreign land.

The Torah repays its host, and therefore he was privileged to raise a generation of upright and blessed ones dwelling in the tent of Torah. The author numbers among them. I know him to be God-fearing, "sitting in the assembly of the wise," and with God's help he'll grow to bring glory to Israel.

In honor of the Torah and its students,

**Avraham Menachem Danziger**  
**The Rebbe of Alexander**

**Approbation of the Dean of the Mir  
Yeshivah, Jerusalem**

**Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, of blessed  
memory**

To the honorable heads of **Poniovitch Yeshivah**, *shlit"a*,  
I hereby recommend **Yosef David Gottesman**, who  
has learned in our holy yeshivah for a year, and now  
his soul desires to taste the wellsprings of pure water  
– “there’s no water other than Torah” – in the crown of  
Torah, Poniovitch Yeshivah. Therefore I will recount  
some of his praise before him: He embodies “Be diligent  
in Torah study, toiling in it constantly,” and his heart is  
understanding and open. He’s talented and pleasant, and  
his fear of Heaven precedes his wisdom. We’ve certainly  
enjoyed him here, and he’ll be a great blessing to your  
holy yeshivah.

With esteem for the Torah,

**Nosson Tzvi Finkel**  
**Dean of Mir Yeshivah, Jerusalem**

**Approbation of Rabbi Yeshaya Portnoy,  
*shlit"a*,**

**Kol Torah Yeshivah, Jerusalem  
Dean of Beit Hamedrash LeTorah**

I hereby recommend Rabbi **Yosef Gottesman, shlit"a**, whom I know well, and who studied under me in **Yeshivat Kol Torah**.

He's a God-fearing person who serves God truly and faithfully and is meticulous about Jewish law.

He has much experience in writing Torah scrolls, tefillin, and mezuzot and is very careful about their laws. In addition, his prayers can arouse and uplift a congregation. He conducts himself pleasantly and is very devoted to his Rabbis, asking and heeding their words! To conclude as I began, he's genuinely God-fearing.

In honor of the Torah,

**Yeshaya-h Portnoy**

Faculty, Yeshivat Kol Torah

Dean of Beit Hamedrash LeTorah

**RABBI E. SCHWAB**  
**12 Yabrov Street**  
**Bnei Brak 51503**  
**ISRAEL**

**9 Tevet 5772**

### **Confirmation**

I hereby make known the stature of my dear childhood friend Rabbi **Yosef David Gottesman**: He's God-fearing, upright and proper, yeshivah-trained, and Torah-oriented.

I've known him many years, since we learned together in the Torah institutions in **Gateshead**, England, and subsequently in **Ponevezh Yeshivah** in our Holy Land. And I remember his saintly father, of blessed memory.

I can attest that Rabbi Yosef David's righteousness integrates the previous generation's fear of God and genuine simplicity.

Anyone who deals with him will see and sense his genuine virtues and enjoy how he "faithfully conducts his affairs" in the most correct way.

May you succeed in everything.

Respectfully,

**Eliezer Schwab**

## About the Author

By Sandra M. Eisenberg

As a child **Yosef Gottesman** was surrounded by music. Born in **Florence**, Italy the music of Opera filled the air. As a Jewish boy his musical world also included the music of the Synagogue including the rich, melodic and moving sound of Kol Nidre sung by the cantor. Yosef was blessed with a beautiful voice. Soon he was singing the songs around him. As moving as opera can be, he knew that it is the music of the cantor that stirs the soul and draws us nearer to G-d. Gottesman nurtured his gift, and his love for G-d to become a cantor of prominence with numerous albums to his name, the first at the age of eighteen. Having traveled the world, Cantor Gottesman now performs in both Boca Raton and Delray Beach. In Delray he presides at Anshei Emuna during the High Holidays.

Critics have praised the natural attractive timbre of Gottesman's **tenor** voice, commenting on his **powerful voice which combines heartfelt sincerity with control and power**. Yosef Gottesman has received great acclaim in his concerts around the world, and – is known also as the “**Jewish Pavarotti**”, due to their similarity in the voice and having sung in the same **Piccolo Teatro** in **Milan** that has hosted great opera singers including **Luciano Pavarotti** and **Placido Domingo**.

His first recording, made at the age of eighteen, was with the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra "**Hallelu - a Song is a Prayer**," was dedicated to his late father. His beautiful voice has inspired Jews in Europe, Israel, Italy, South Africa, Canada and the United States. Since then he has recorded other CDs. In **1996** he recorded his second album **Lechu Nerannena** (light Cantorial music) with his three sons. Light Cantorial music is designed to appeal to younger listeners who heavy Cantorial music does not talk to them. In **2002** his third album was published "**Opera in the Synagogue**." This album features well known opera songs with the lyrics based on prayers. Most recently, in March **2005** he issued two more albums. One is "**Carlebach Chazanut**" which features original Carlebach ningunim with a chazonishe introduction composed by **R' Shlomo**. In the same year the Rabbi published "**Yosef Gottesman's Greatest Hits**" which included melodies from all four previous albums (all **Gal-Paz Productions**).

But Rabbi Gottesman is more than a celebrated singer. He is a religious Jew. He is not just a tenor; he is a **Cantor**, a **Rabbi** and a **Sofer**. What exactly does that mean? How does one become a cantor? Where did this role originate in Judaism? How did it develop through the centuries?

It started when the Cantor was the "Chazzan." The word doesn't have a thing to do with singing, but with seeing. The root is "hazah" which means "to see." And this is because the Chazzan is the seer – the teacher who leads students through the text their singing. Cantors have been part of Judaism since the time of the **Temple**, when they were the caretakers

of the earliest Synagogues where the Chazzan was in charge of the building and of the Torah scrolls. After the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.) the use of musical instruments was forbidden by the Rabbis, and the Chazzan became the voice of the Synagogue. During Middle Ages the Chazzan became the primary Torah reader and singer in the Bet HaKnesset although anyone capable of doing so could then and now lead the service. In common usage the term Chazzan gave way to the Latin, "Cantor." Chazzan is still the proper Hebrew title.

Rabbi Gottesman is one of a select few professional chazzanim who have gone through the rigorous training to sing in the tonal quality, voice and style which are so similar to that of **Opera**. But unlike an Opera singer the cantor is there to lead us in prayer and holiness. Rather than admiring the beauty of his voice, it should lead us to a deeper sense of holiness and awe of **G-d**. In Judaism, prayer is the obligation of each of us. The cantor leads the congregation as each one of us prays [although at times his prayers exempts those who can't pray on their own].

The story behind this remarkable voice is astonishing. His journey has taken him around the world. Born in **Florence, Italy** to a survivor of **Auschwitz**, he was sent to the **Gateshead Jewish Boarding School in England** when only twelve years old. In Florence there were no opportunity to pursue a **Jewish education**. He then moved on to the **Manchester Jewish Grammar School** to complete his basic education.

It was at the Manchester school that Yosef began the dream

of becoming a cantor. At eighteen he moved to Israel to study first at **Yeshivat Kol-Torah** and later at the **Mir Yeshiva**, both in **Jerusalem**. Founded nearly 200 years ago, Mir is one of the most famous Yeshiva's in the Jewish world. Here Rabbi Gottesman studied privately with **Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel**, the great Rosh Yeshiva (head of the school). He then progressed to the Harvard of Haredi Yeshivas, **Poniovitch**. In these years of intense Talmudic study Rabbi Gottesman immersed himself in learning **Talmud**, understanding **halacha** (Jewish law) and **mussar** (Jewish ethics).

It was then that he cut his first album "**Hallelu - a Song is a Prayer**," which he dedicated to his father. While in Israel Cantor Gottesman began his Cantorial studies in the **Cantorial Academy of Tel Aviv** and at the **Cantorial Institute of Jerusalem** and the **Central school of Cantorial studies** under world famous cantors like **Mordechai Sobol**, **Naftali Herstik** (past Cantor of the Jerusalem Great Synagogue), **Yitzchak Eshel**, **Avraham Pressman**, **Eli Jaffe** a renowned cantor, conductor and composer, and **Moshe Stern** (considered by many to be the finest cantor alive today).

Before joining **Anshei Emunah in Delray, Florida**, Rabbi Gottesman was the cantor for **Israel's second largest Synagogue** (located in **Acco**) for **four years**. Here he replaced the famous Chazzan, Naftali Herstik. Rabbi, Cantor Gottesan also officiated in **Vienna, Austria** replacing **Chaim Adler**; in **Cape Town in Simcha Koussovitzky's Shull**, South Africa, and **NesZiona, Israel**. In the Americas, the Cantor officiated in **Montreal at the Young Israel of Chomedey, Quebec**, for **five years** and in **Panama City**.

Yet, his role as a world renowned cantor is only one aspect of this remarkable man.

For **fifteen years** Rabbi Gottesman was a **sofer**. A sofer is one who writes Torahs -- a complex and holy vocation. The first sofer was Moses, who wrote thirteen Torah Scrolls. One of them was given to each of the twelve tribes and one was placed in the Ark of the Covenant. Following in Moses' footsteps soferim are observant Jews who learn the **4000** Laws of writing the Torah scroll. As a sofer, Rabbi Gottesman became a human vessel for Torah, and as he worked he prayed that God save his brethren the Jewish people and the righteous gentiles from suffering in this long galut.

To be a sofer demands a more than tremendous skill, it requires vast knowledge of Torah, Judaism and the mitzvot specific to the sofer. The 4000 rules are painstaking and minuscule from how to prepare the special skins of a Torah to of how to write the letters on the parchment (from left to right!).

Rabbi Gottesman is a sofer of renown, having written **eighteen Torahs**. His first Torah resides in the **Kotel (Western Wall)** in Israel. **Sofer, Cantor and Rabbi** – but there is one more aspect to this remarkable man.

Along with his Cantorial role at **Anshei Emuna in Delray Beach and the Chabad Shul in Boca Raton** and his role as a **Sofer**, he is also **Rabbi at a Shul for frum visitors to Central Florida**. The Shul is part of “**Kosher Resorts Orlando**” (<http://www.kosherorlando.com/>) which arranges for lodging and kosher meals for visitors to Orlando. The Shul is

located at the **Lower East Side Restaurant** located at 8548 Palm Parkway, Lake Buena Vista, **Florida** (I-4 Exit 68 near Downtown Disney). Here Rabbi Gottesman leads the religious services for tourists who visit Orlando on vacations. Shabbats are truly **memorable**, and next time you plan a trip to **Orlando** be sure to become part of the family, staying at **kosher villas**, eating at a **Glatt kosher restaurant** and enjoying the **classes** and **services** held by Cantor Gottesman. Residents of Orlando attend numerous courses held by the Rabbi at the **Orlando Jewish Community Center**, and the **Synagogue and offices in Longwood, Florida**. You may also visit the Rabbi's website at **<http://www.cantorgottesman.com>**.

## Preface

I am filled with gratitude to God for graciously helping me record the novel insights in this book. “You grace man with knowledge.”

Most of these ideas are ones God has taught me through life experience, plus a few that I’ve read or heard from important Rabbis and orators in several places.

I hope these concepts will also constitute a way of life for people who find it hard to serve God in these **turbulent times** of today.

As the Messiah approaches, falsehood prevails; even among the ultra-Orthodox, truth is nowhere to be found. May God grant me the strength and wisdom to continue in His way, write books, and magnify and strengthen His Torah.

Please note that although I refer to “sins” committed by lofty, righteous people such as the biblical Adam – God’s own creation – and the Rebbe of Berditchev, these deeds weren’t actually sins. They were considered as such only because of the stature of those involved. For us, these quasi-sins would be **mitzvot!** But on their **exalted level**, these spiritual **giants** “sinned” and were punished, and we must learn from them to avoid such mistakes.

Thanks to **Rav Aharon Michael** for typing this complex material and to **Rabbi Yeshaya Portnoi**, *Shlit”a*, **Rabbi Avraham Ohana**, *shlit”a*, and **Rabbi Eliezer Schwab**, *shlit”a*, who reviewed this book and expressed their opinion.

Special thanks to my beloved wife, **Nava Vani**, for her patience while I wrote this book, which demanded my entire being.

**Shalom Yosef David Gottesman**

Elad 2016

## HATE FOR NO REASON WHAT'S THAT?

For two thousand years, we've been in exile, and our Temple in ruins. Why? **Baseless hatred**. As the Talmud states explicitly:

During the Second Temple period, when everyone was involved in Torah and mitzvos and acts of kindness, why was the Temple destroyed? **Because there was baseless hatred!** (*Yoma 9b*)

Here I wish to ask **four questions**.

**Question 1:** What does it mean to hate for no reason? Who hates for no reason?

The gentiles hate us, Hitler hated us, the Arabs hate us, but all have a "reason."

The gentiles hate us because of our success, our money, our achievements in every area, and our being God's chosen people.

Hitler hated us because he thought we ruled the world, because of our moral principles, and because Jews denigrated him before his rule extended throughout the world.

The Arabs hate us because they claim we took their land, because we have an incredible military strength, and because of their own inability to drive us into the sea, thanks to God's love and mercy.

**The gentiles hate us for many "reasons," so why regarding the Jews do we speak of baseless hatred? Why do we hate for no reason?**

**Question 2:** Elsewhere the Talmud cites another reason for the Temple's destruction:

Why was the land [of Israel] lost? The sages said so but didn't explain. The prophets said so but didn't explain. Finally God Himself explained, as it is written: "And God said: Because they abandoned My Torah that I'd given them." Said Rabbi Judah in the name of Rav: **Because they didn't recite a blessing before studying Torah.**

*(Bava Metzia 85b)*

**What does this have to do with baseless hatred? "Because they didn't recite a blessing before studying Torah" – what does that mean?**

**Question 3:** A third talmudic passage states that the destruction occurred because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza. The Talmud tells the story:

The destruction of Jerusalem came about through Kamtza and Bar Kamtza:

A certain man had a friend Kamtza and an enemy Bar Kamtza. This man once hosted a banquet and told his servant, "Go bring Kamtza." The servant went and brought Bar Kamtza. When the host found him sitting there, the following conversation ensued:

**Host:** You're my enemy. What are you doing here? Get out!

**Bar Kamtza:** Since I'm here, let me stay, and I'll pay for whatever I eat and drink.

**Host:** No.

**Bar Kamtza:** I'll pay for half the banquet.

**Host:** No.

**Bar Kamtza:** I'll pay for the entire banquet.

**Host:** No.

The host **threw him out.**

**Said Bar Kamtza to himself, "Since the sages were sitting there and didn't protest, they must have approved. I shall inform on them to the government." He went and told the emperor, "The Jews are rebelling against you."**

"How can I tell?" said the emperor.

"Send them an offering, and see whether they offer it."

So the emperor sent a fine calf by means of Bar Kamtza. En route, he blemished its upper lip, or some say its eye, in a place where we consider it a blemish but they don't.

**The sages were inclined to offer it rather than offend the government, but Rabbi Zechariah son of Avkulas said, "People will say that blemished animals are offered on the altar."**

**The sages then proposed to kill Bar Kamtza, so he wouldn't tell the emperor that the Jews hadn't offered his sacrifice. But Rabbi Zechariah son of Avkulas said, "People will say that one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals is put to death."**

**Rabbi Johanan thereupon remarked:**

**The overcautiousness of Rabbi Zechariah son of Avkulas destroyed our home, burned down our sanctuary, and exiled us from our land. (Gittin 55b–56a)**

From this story we see that Kamtza did what he did because he had a motive: They'd humiliated him publicly. This wasn't hatred for no reason. What he did was unconscionable and extreme; it was utter evil to cause the annihilation of millions of Jews and the destruction of the Second Temple. It's utter evil, but still it's not baseless hatred. He had a reason for committing the act he committed. So why do we always say that because of baseless hatred the Temple was destroyed? What's the connection between the two?

**Question 4** : arises from the end of the Talmudic passage we've just cited: "Rabbi Johanan thereupon remarked: The over cautiousness of Rabbi Zechariah son of Avkulas destroyed our home, burned down our sanctuary, and exiled us from our land."

So was the Temple destroyed because of Rabbi Zechariah or because of hatred for no reason?

Let us try to explain. What is baseless hatred?

Have you ever (and I bet you have, even five or six times a day) felt contempt and resentment (that's how it starts) toward someone you don't even know, just because he's wearing a long Rabbinic frock, or a shtramel, or a short jacket, or a white suit, or he's dark-skinned, or because you come to synagogue early and he's always late? Have you ever been angry at a neighbor for leaving stuff in the lobby, even though these items weren't bothering you and you needn't have gotten worked up about them? Despite all these reasons not to feel resentment and hatred, you did. **That's HATE FOR NO REASON!**

Why hate someone for what he's wearing? After all, that's how he learned to dress – from his parents, his rabbis, his environment. He has a perfectly good reason to dress as he does. What do you want from him?

Why should it bug you that his skin is darker than yours? That's how God made him in order for him to complete his mission in the world. What right have you to look down on him?

Why judge him when he's late to synagogue? Maybe he has a good reason. Who made you the arbiter of right and wrong? You're not his Rabbi or his Father!

**CATCH YOURSELF !** the next time you start hating, or feeling resentment, by a fellow Jew or his actions.

**So why do we do it?**

This brings us back to **question 2:**

Said Rabbi Judah in the name of Rav: Because they didn't recite a blessing before studying Torah.

What does that mean? And how is it related to baseless hatred?

When someone eats without reciting a blessing, he doesn't think about his obligation to do God's will, or about His command that we say a blessing over food; he thinks only about his stomach.

The same goes for Torah study. If you learn without reciting a blessing first, **apparently you're learning only for your own ego, not for the sake of doing God's will.**

So too, we perform other mitzvos not for the sake of Heaven, but rather to get married, to impress our fathers-in-law, to get our kids into cheder, to present a certain image, etc.

All these things give us a feeling of superiority and inflate our ego, causing us to look down on our fellow Jew, who behaves differently from us because that how his parents educated him, or that's what his rabbis taught him; because he's "Lithuanian" or Sephardic or Hasidic, secular or just turned religious. That's

precisely what leads to baseless hatred. As it is written:

Said Rabbi Yehoshua son of Levi: What is the meaning of “And this is the Torah that Moses *placed* [*sam* in Hebrew]”? If one merits, it becomes a life-giving *sam* (elixir) for him. If one doesn’t merit, it becomes a deadly *one*. (*Yoma* 72b)

If we do mitzvos for the sake of Heaven, great, but if we do them with ulterior motives, as stated, it leads to an inflated ego, pretentiousness, thinking less of fellow Jews, and baseless hatred.

And lest someone think, does not the Talmud also says the following:

Said Rabbi Judah in the name of Rav: One should always engage in Torah and mitzvos even if not for the sake of Heaven, for by doing so, one will eventually engage in them for the sake of Heaven. (*Pesachim* 50b)

This statement applies only if you hope to eventually perform mitzvos for the sake of Heaven, and you understand that you’re not there yet. But if you’re satisfied with this, you’ll never do mitzvos for the sake of Heaven, and you’re just inflating your ego, leading to baseless hatred toward those who differ from you.

As the following commentary explains:

“Don’t make them a crown of self-aggrandizement” – when studying or doing mitzvos, don’t do so in order to be honored. As the Talmud says regarding the commandment “to love the Lord, your God” – don’t occupy yourself with Torah in order to be called a sage or a rabbi; just act out of love, and the honor will come in the end (*Nedarim* 62a).

And even though we've said, "One should always engage in Torah and mitzvos even if not for the sake of Heaven, for by doing so, one will eventually engage in them for the sake of Heaven," this refers only to his initial study. But if one is already immersed in the Torah, of him it is said: **"One who engages in Torah not for God's sake is better off having never been created"** (*Berachos 17a*). (*Tiferes*

*Yisrael, Yachin, Avos 4:5*)

So too regarding one who prays at the crack of dawn, learns Torah all day, or davens three times a day with a minyan. It's not **what** you do, but **why**.

And here I want to share a story:

There was once a yeshiva student named Zalman Aaron. He really wanted people to look up to him, so he began fasting every Monday and Thursday, and he told everyone so.

Yet everyone mocked him, unimpressed. So he began fasting all week, drinking water only at night. He told everyone that too. Then people started talking about him, marveling that he fasted all week. He was hungry, but it was worth it. And every Shabbos he consumed three huge meals in order to be able to fast all week.

After two weeks of this, Zalman Aaron told his wife one Shabbos during the third meal: "I think I'll go to the town priest and convert." The following week he said so again. "What's gotten into you?" cried his wife. "Are you crazy? How can you talk like that?!"

The third week, during the third meal, he ran to the priest. His wife ran after him, begging every Jew she saw to stop him.

Several Jews managed to catch him before he'd knocked on the

priest's door. They brought him home and tied him to a post so he wouldn't escape.

Then they went to the town Rav, the Rebbe of Apta, and asked him what to do with this Jew. The Rebbe told them not to give him any food or drink all day. Only on Sunday night, when he was very weak, were they permitted to feed him.

Zalman Aaron began complaining that he was hungry and wanted to eat and drink. He started threatening his family, accusing them of trying to kill him. His wife begged the members of her household to give him food, but they refused, following the Rebbe of Apta's ruling.

By the time three stars came out Sunday night, Zalman Aaron was lying on the floor, completely drained. They then placed a bit of food and water in his mouth. Slowly he recovered, and within weeks he'd returned to himself.

When he felt better, he was terribly ashamed of his behavior, and he couldn't understand why he'd done such a thing. He too consulted Rabbe MiApta, who explained:

"When a person eats, he energizes both body and soul. When he doesn't eat, both body and soul are depleted. If he fasts for the sake of Heaven, however, the soul is energized, even if the body isn't. But if he doesn't fast for the sake of Heaven, neither body nor soul is energized. That's why you ran away to the priest."

And so it is with us. Because we don't do mitzvos for the sake of Heaven, neither body nor soul is nourished by them. We simply become arrogant and despise other Jews, and our service of God becomes heavy and burdensome.

That's what the Talmud means! "They didn't recite a blessing

before studying Torah" means that **all their service of God wasn't for the sake of heaven!!** So it led to swelled egos and baseless hatred.

And now we come to **question 3:**

Why does it say Bar Kamtza hated without reason? He *had* a reason, they shamed him in public. So why do we say the Temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred?

The answer is: Bar Kamtza wasn't guilty of baseless hatred. **His host was**, and so were the Rabbis who didn't rebuke him for humiliating a fellow Jew in public !

As for **question 4:**

Said Rabbi Johanan: The over cautiousness of Rabbi Zechariah son of Avkulas destroyed our home, burned down our sanctuary, and exiled us from our land.

So is the reason baseless hatred or Rabbi Zechariah son of Avkulas' overcautiousness?

I heard a keen insight from Rabbi Avraham Ohana, *shlit"a*, about the final exile, that of Edom, and about Esau (progenitor of Edom), who "hunted with his mouth" (Bereishis 25:28), speaking as if he were pious.

Today, even among Jews, everything revolves around "**How does it look?**" and "**What will people say?**" This comes from Edom, and the way the world works today, if we can justify it, in a nice way in the news, than it is o.k., even if it means murdering women and children without pity. This is our service of God: **If it looks okay, it is okay.**

Rabbi Avraham Ohana *shlita* also said that just before the Messiah

comes, the Jews will be outwardly beautiful but rotten inside – the opposite of what led to the destruction of the First Temple, when they were rotten outside but beautiful inside.

All this accords with what we've said, that all our mitzvos are insincere, and therefore they inflate our egos, leading us to hate for no reason.

Rabbi Aaron Levi, *shlit"a*, in his *Bein HaMetzarim* lecture, lists various sources elucidating the points we've made here. In brief:

Rabbi **Judah HaLevi Ashlag**, of blessed memory – author of the *Sulam* – articulates a fascinating fundamental principle:

People feel for each other, become sensitive to one another, when they feel they have something in common.

For example, when we meet people on the street in Israel, we don't feel for each other. But if we meet a Jew, an Israeli, a Jew, in some airport halfway around the world, we'll ask how he's doing and take an interest in him.

So when we see people in Israel, why don't we inquire about their welfare?

What causes people to feel for each other, to experience closeness, is the equality between them – in other words, **their common denominator**.

A couple can live under the same roof in extremely close quarters yet be worlds apart – even hating each other – because they have nothing in common (except that roof). In contrast, when a couple love each other, then even if physically they're very distant from one another, they're "close."

**A common denominator transforms us into people who are**

sensitive to one another. When there's no common denominator in the first place, or it ceases, we lack this sensitivity.

**Building a common denominator**, fosters sensitivity toward one another.

**Though a common denominator unites all Jews, it's not enough that it exists only in our consciousness, we must also experience it deeply. Our common denominator must be central, meaningful, and significant in our lives.**

It can't be said that a married couple lacks a common denominator. After all, they're husband and wife. They share children. But the husband's sensitivity to the wife, and vice versa, depends on **how important the common denominator is to each one**. If their children are important to them, if their relationship is important to them, then they're very sensitive to each other. Otherwise, even if they have a common denominator, it's insignificant and unexperienced, so they have no feeling (love) for each other, though they live together.

**In other words, people can do mitzvos, perform acts of kindness, occupy themselves with Torah, and still hate each other! Why? Because this common denominator means nothing to them!**

So writes the **Netziv of Volozhin** in his introduction to Bereishis, in precisely the same context as ours: "The Rock (God) is perfect in His actions; righteous and upright is He," and we praise God as "upright" regarding His judgment in destroying the Second Temple.

Why must we justify God's destruction of the Second Temple?

Any student of Second Temple history can't understand why the land was lost. **The Jews were righteous and pious and striving**

**in Torah.** So why was the Temple destroyed? Such an observer needs to find some justification for that, some reason to declare God “righteous and upright.”

Says the **Netziv**: Although they were righteous and pious and striving in Torah, they weren’t upright in their conduct. Therefore, **because of the baseless hatred in their hearts, they suspected that anyone who didn’t adopt their approach to fear of God was a Sadducee and a heretic. This outlook led to “bloodshed”** (this is hyperbole, of course), to every evil in the world, until the Temple was destroyed. **This verdict was just, because God can’t stand such “righteousness”!!** Even though it’s for the sake of Heaven, it destroys the world and prevents us from settling the land.

The **Netziv** explains that the hatred in the hearts of those righteous and pious Torah Jews, the hatred that precluded upright conduct, was **hatred for the sake of Heaven**. In their view, **“If you don’t serve God the same way I do, it’s a mitzva to hate you.”** This hatred wasn’t interpersonal, but **ideological**, based on the belief that **“I’m fighting God’s battle.”** Therefore the Temple was destroyed.

From here we learn, continues the **Netziv**, that God is “upright”; He can’t stand such righteousness. God desires righteous people who are upright also in how they conduct themselves in the world.

So what made our ancestors in the Second Temple era think that anyone who didn’t serve God the way they did was a Sadducee and a heretic, and that it was a mitzva to hate him?

Evidently the Torah has several layers. There’s the practical layer of doing mitzvos, but there’s **another dimension**, somewhat forgotten – not by everyone, God forbid, but it doesn’t always

take center stage; it's not always where it should be. This layer is **service of God**. A person can learn Torah and do mitzvos, but his service of God isn't genuine; he doesn't actually worship God – **he worships himself**. His "worship of God" is only a byproduct of his self-worship. His worship of himself takes precedence over his worship of God and is the higher goal. Consequently, despite his involvement in Torah and mitzvos, he can suspect anyone who doesn't serve God the way he does of being a Sadducee and a heretic. **Serving God his way is more important than serving God altogether**

How can we serve God without descending to this base mentality?

In *Guide to the Perplexed*, Maimonides explains how **a person can be engaged in Torah yet serve God out of self-interest and self adulation**.

In such a situation, my fellow Jew and I can both serve God, but that service doesn't create a real, meaningful common denominator, because **each one of us is acting out of his own self-interest**. Therefore neither is sensitive to the other, and we can come to baseless hatred.

To overcome this obstacle, we must make service of God the focus, setting the "Self" aside. **We must serve God genuinely, not superficially. Then we'll love any fellow servant of God as our equal, we'll have a common denominator, and baseless hatred will automatically disappear.**

Till hear Rabbi Aaron Levi *shlita*.

In conclusion I'd like to cite a Midrashic explanation of why the rectification of baseless hatred is so important for the ultimate redemption:

Said God to Jeremiah: Today I'm like a man who has an only child and makes him a wedding canopy, but he dies beneath it, yet you feel no pain for Me or My children. Go summon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses from their graves, for they know how to weep....

At this moment God made use of the ministering angels. He said to them: Why are you composing line after line of eulogy?

They said to him: Master of the Universe, Your beloved Abraham has come to Your home and eulogized and cried. Why are You ignoring him?

God said to them: Ever since my beloved passed away and went to his eternal home, he hasn't come to My Home, and now, "What is My beloved doing in My Home?" (Yirmeyahu 11:15).

Said Abraham before God: Master of the Universe, why have You exiled my children and delivered them into the hands of the nations, who've subjected them to bizarre deaths? And why have You destroyed the Temple, where I offered up my son Isaac as a sacrifice before you?

Said God to Abraham: Your children sinned, transgressing the entire Torah and its twenty-two Hebrew letters. As it is written, "And all of Israel has transgressed Your Torah" (Daniel 9:11).

Said Abraham before God: Master of the Universe, who testifies that Israel has transgressed Your Torah?

Said God: Let the Torah come and testify against Israel etc....

Immediately Abraham spoke up: After one hundred years You gave me a son, and when he matured into a young man of thirty-seven years, You told me, "Offer him up as a sacrifice before Me." So I acted cruelly toward him and showed no mercy. I even bound him myself. And You won't remember that on my behalf and have mercy on my children?

Isaac spoke up: Master of the Universe, when Father told me, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (Bereishis 22:8), I didn't delay regarding Your words, and I wholeheartedly let him bound me on the altar and exposed my neck beneath the knife. And You won't remember that and have mercy on my children?

Jacob spoke up: Master of the Universe, did I not withstand twenty years in Lavan's house? And when I left, the wicked Esau confronted me and sought to kill my children, and I was willing to die for them. Yet now they've been delivered into the hand of their enemies, like sheep to the slaughter, after I lovingly raised them like tender chicks and suffered the pain of childrearing over them. For most of my days I've been in great pain over them. And now You won't remember that on my behalf and have mercy on my children?

Moses spoke up: Master of the Universe, have I not been a faithful shepherd of Israel for forty years? I ran before them like a horse in the wilderness, yet when the time came for them to enter the land, You decreed that my bones would fall in the desert. And now that they've been exiled, You've summoned me to eulogize and weep over them? Etc...

At that moment, our matriach **Rachel lept before God** and said: Master of the Universe, as You well know, Your servant Jacob loved me so much, and spent seven years working for my Father in order to marry me. But when those seven years were over, and the time came for me to marry my husband, my father schemed to substitute my sister for me. And this was so hard for me, for I learned of the scheme and informed my husband, and I gave him a sign by which to distinguish between my sister and me, so my father wouldn't be able to make the switch. But then I reconsidered, and I contained my desire and had mercy on my sister, that she shouldn't be ashamed. And that evening they exchanged me with my sister, and I gave her all the signs I'd given my husband, so he'd think she was I. Not only that, but I crouched under the bed where he lay with my sister, and when he spoke to her, she'd be silent, and I'd reply word by word, lest he recognize my sister's voice.

**I performed this act of kindness toward her without jealousy, sparing her shame.** If I, flesh and blood, dust and ashes, wasn't jealous of my rival and didn't shame her, why are You, O living King, Merciful One, jealous of idolatry, which has no substance? Why have You exiled my children to be killed by the sword, allowing their enemies to do with them as they pleased?

**Immediately God's mercy was aroused, and He said: For you, Rachel, I'll bring Israel home. As it is written, "So said God: A voice is heard on high, lamentation, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted over her children, for they are not" (Yirmeyahu 31:14). And it is written: "So says the Lord:**

**Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your work..." (ibid. 31:15). And it is written: "And there is hope for your future, says the Lord, and the children shall return to their border"**

(ibid. 31:16). (Eicha Rabba, introduction 24)

### End of Medrash

In this Midrash, God doesn't respond to the holy patriarchs, but to our matriarch Rachel He does. Why?

The First Temple was built in the merit of the three patriarchs, by virtue of Abraham's kindness, Isaac's self-control, and Jacob's truth. But the Jewish people nullified this merit by committing three grave sins: sexual immorality, negating Abraham's kindness; bloodshed, negating Isaac's self-control; and idolatry, negating Jacob's truth. These crimes brought about the destruction.

The Second Temple, as we see in the Midrash, was built in the merit of our matriarch Rachel, who spared her sister humiliation. **This unconditional love was offset by the baseless hatred of the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, in which a Jew was humiliated and the rabbis didn't protest. Therefore, to merit the Third Temple, we must rectify baseless hatred, and get involved in unconditional love.**

May God grant us the strength and will, to repent of baseless hatred, replacing it with unconditional love for every Jew, and righteous Gentiles until the arrival of the righteous redeemer speedily in our days, Amen.

Finished and Completed  
with God's Help

10 Av 2016 (5776)

## Glossary

AV – eleventh month of the Hebrew calendar, roughly corresponding to August

BAVA METZIA – talmudic tractate dealing with damages

BEIN HAMETZARIM – lit. “between the straits”; the period between the two summertime fasts commemorating the destruction of the Temple

BERACHOS – talmudic tractate dealing with blessings

BEREISHIS – Genesis

EICHA RABBA – Midrashic commentary on the biblical book of Lamentations

GITTIN – talmudic tractate dealing with divorce

MIDRASH – rabbinic commentary on the Bible

MINYAN – quorum of ten men required for prayer

MITZVA, MITZVOS – commandment(s)

NEDARIM – talmudic tractate dealing with vows

PESACHIM – talmudic tractate dealing with Passover

SHABBOS – Sabbath

SHLIT”A – Hebrew acronym meaning “may he live a good, long life”

SULAM – classic kabbalistic work

TIFERES YISRAEL, YACHIN, AVOS – commentary on *Ethics of the Fathers*, a section of the Mishna

YIRMEYAHU – book of Jeremiah

YOMA – talmudic tractate dealing with Yom Kippur