



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 17 | Kedoshim* | Sichah 1

**And siyum for tractate Sanhedrin*

Don't Delay!

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A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses in this translation are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time maintaining readability. The translation, however, carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

AS IF HE WORSHIPS IDOLS

In explaining the distinction between the warning, “*lo tignovu*” {“you (pl.) shall not steal”}, in our *parshah*¹ and the warning “*lo signov*” {“you (sing.) shall not steal”}, in the Ten Commandments,² the *Gemara* says³ (quoted in Rashi’s commentary on each of these verses) that in our *parshah*, Scripture talks about stealing money, whereas “*lo tignovu*” in the Ten Commandments talks about kidnapping.

Our Rabbis said regarding stealing money, “Anyone who steals is... as if he worships idols.”⁴

Given the great precision of the wording of our Rabbis, it is clear that when they say a person who violates specific sins is “as if he worships idols”⁵ (or the like), the Rabbis do not intend only to express the severity of the sin by their comparison of it to an **especially** severe transgression (“as if he worshipped idols”). Rather, they are informing us that the sin itself resembles idolatry in some way.

[Moreover, in truth, all sins share a connection with idolatry. As the Alter Rebbe explains in *Tanya*⁶ at length, “You shall have no {other deities}” includes **all** 365 prohibitions, for **every** sin done in violation the Divine detaches a person from G-dliness at the time of the sin, similar to the detachment from G-dliness caused by the sin of idolatry.

In addition to this point (the connection between sins and idolatry), which is a common denominator of all sins, we find that our Sages portray the violation of certain sins to be “as if he worshipped idols.” This

¹ *Vayikra* 19:11.

² *Shemos* 20:13.

³ *Sanhedrin* 86a; *Mechilta*, “*Yisro*,” on *Shemos* 20:13.

⁴ *Semachos*, ch. 2, sec. 11.

⁵ For a collection of several of these Rabbinic teachings, see *Toras Shmuel*, vol. 19, “*Miluim*,” p. 301.

⁶ *Tanya*, ch. 20, et passim.

association itself demonstrates that in a certain respect, these sins have a connection to idolatry.]

We need to clarify: Stealing is a *mitzvah* between a person and a fellow human being. As such, how is it similarly to idolatry?

2.

STEALING BANNED PROPERTY

This will be clarified by explaining a teaching appearing at the end of tractate *Sanhedrin* regarding a unique stringency that applies to theft. The *Gemara* there remarks on the *Mishnah*: “No part of the banned property⁷ may remain in your possession⁸ — As long as evildoers are present in the world, {Divine} anger is present in the world; when evildoers are removed from the world, anger {*charon af*}⁹ departs from the world.”¹⁰ The *Gemara* remarks:¹¹ “Who are evildoers? Rav Yosef replied, ‘thieves.’”

We need to clarify the difficulty raised by both the *Gemara* and Rav Yosef’s resolution:

- a) It seems out of place to ask, at the **end** of tractate *Sanhedrin*, “who are evildoers?” when the term “evildoer” has appeared several times in Scripture, and is fundamental to the talmudic discussion in the previous chapters of this tractate!
- b) What does Rav Yosef mean when he says that evildoers are “thieves”? After all, anyone who violates a prohibition is called “evil” (as taught

⁷ {In the Hebrew original, “*cherem*”; property doomed to destruction because of its prior ownership by the residents of the “idolatrous city.”}

⁸ *Devarim* 13:18. {In the Hebrew original, “*yidbak be’yadchah*”; lit., “adhere to your hand.”}

⁹ {Lit., “nose anger.” Anger causes the nostrils to flare.}

¹⁰ {*Sanhedrin* 111b.}

¹¹ {*Sanhedrin* 113b.}

earlier {in *Sanhedrin*}¹² — such a person is disqualified to be a witness)!

The commentators explain:¹³ The conclusion of this *Mishnah* follows a discussion of an idolatrous city¹⁴ and the verse, “No part... may remain in your possession so that Hashem will turn back from His burning anger” is similarly said at the end of the Torah portion that discusses an idolatrous city.

In light of this verse, the commentators ask: What does the *Mishnah* mean by saying, “as long as **evildoers** are present in the world”? This cannot refer to the residents of an idolatrous city, for the Torah states, “no part... may remain in your possession” after {instructing}: “You shall surely smite the inhabitants of the city.”¹⁵ Meaning, the verse {“no part... may remain”} is speaking {of a scenario} *after* the inhabitants of an idolatrous city have been punished {and killed}, and are no longer **in this world**. This is what the *Gemara* means by asking, “Who are evildoers?” — who are the evildoers referred to here in connection with an idolatrous city?

In response, Rav Yosef replied — “thieves”: The *Mishnah* is referring {not to the residents of the idolatrous city, since they have been put to death, but} to those who stole from the banned property, from among the property of an idolatrous city. The verse, “No part of the banned property may remain in your possession so that Hashem will turn back from His burning anger” teaches us that as long as the evildoers who stole from the banned property are alive, “anger is present in the world.”

In light of this explanation, we need to clarify: Why did Rav Yosef use the word “thieves”? After all, the emphasis on their wickedness is not based on (**common**) theft, but rather, on them having helped themselves to the

¹² *Sanhedrin* 27a. Even someone who violates a positive *mitzvah* (or even a rabbinic *mitzvah*) is called wicked. See *Tanya*, ch. 1.

¹³ See *Yad Ramah*, loc. cit.; *Toras Chaim* (quoted in *Eitz Yosef's* commentary on *Ein Yaakov*); *Beer Sheva*, loc. cit.; *Rif's* commentary on *Ein Yaakov*; *Sheilas Yaavetz*, sec. 1, ch. 79.

¹⁴ {In the Hebrew original, “*Ir Hanidachas*”; a city destroyed in consequence of the pervasive practice of idolatry.}

¹⁵ *Devarim* 13:16.

banned property of an idolatrous city. As such, Rav Yosef should have used wording that emphasized the crux of their sin, such as, “those who took from the banned property,” or something similar to the wording that the Torah uses, “*of the banned property may remain in your possession.*”

Moreover: Regarding *stealing from banned property*, property from which one is prohibited from deriving benefit, there is much {talmudic} debate whether it is defined as stealing.¹⁶ Although the wording “**stealing** banned property” is used,¹⁷ and Scripture writes regarding Achan,¹⁸ “they have also stolen,” this just confirms that the **term** *stealing* can **also be applied** to banned property. In his reply, however, Rabbi Yosef should have emphasized (not the element of stealing, but rather) the aspect of *banned property*. As such, why does he use the word “thieves” (and make no mention at all of the banned property)?

3.

DIFFERENT WORDING

This will be clarified by explaining a difference in wording between the *Mishnah* and the *Beraisa*¹⁹ cited at the end of the tractate.²⁰

The *Beraisa* says: “Our Rabbis taught: When an evildoer comes into the world, anger {*charon*} enters the world, as it says: ‘With the arrival of an evildoer, scorn arrives; and with disgrace, there comes insult.’²¹ When an evildoer is eliminated from the world, good enters the world, as it says: ‘When evildoers perish, there is jubilation.’”²² The *Beraisa* concludes,

¹⁶ See *Kerisus* 24a (regarding *shor haniskal*); *Rashba*, “*Nedarim*,” 85a; *Ran*, loc. cit. (quoting *Rashba*). However, see Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 435, “*Kuntres Acharon*,” sub-par. 2.

¹⁷ *Semachos*, ch. 2, end of sec. 9.

¹⁸ *Yehoshua* 7:11.

¹⁹ {The *Beraisa* consists of teachings of the Sages of the *Mishnah*, that were not included in the *Mishnah*. The *Beraisos* are often parallel texts to the *Mishnah*, teaching similar laws using different wording.}

²⁰ {*Sanhedrin* 111b and 113b respectively.}

²¹ *Mishlei* 18:3.

²² *Mishlei* 11:10.

“When a righteous person comes into the world, good enters the world with him, as it says: ‘This is one who shall comfort us for our work and the toil of our hands.’”²³

The inordinate length of the *Beraisa* when compared with the *Mishnah* is understood: Rebbi²⁴ redacted the *Mishnayos* (as Rambam writes)²⁵ using “succinct wording”; it is “a short treatise encompassing many topics.” In the generation that followed publication of the *Mishnah*, however, a time of reduced intellectual lucidity, people needed this material to be organized as it was in the *Beraisos* — at greater length and in more detail, with proofs from verses, etc. As found many times in the *Talmud*, the same topics covered briefly in the *Mishnah* appear at length and in detail in the *Beraisa*.

Still, what needs to be clarified is why here the *Mishnah* and *Beraisa* diverge in a way that is contrary to how diverge normally: The *Mishnah* writes “*charon af*” {lit., “**nose** anger”}, but the *Beraisa* writes succinctly, “*charon*” {“anger”} (unqualified).

This is perplexing however you look at it: If this *Beraisa* was redacted as a supplement to the *Mishnah*, it should have also used the wording “*charon af*.” But if the word *charon* was used in connection with the verse quoted subsequently in the ***Beraisa***, this verse does not mention “*charon*.” Based on the content of the *Beraisa*, it should have said, “(When an evildoer comes into the world,) **evil** enters the world,” corresponding to the wording “When an evildoer is eliminated from the world, **good** enters the world.”

²³ *Bereishis* 5:29.

²⁴ {Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, compiler of the *Mishnah*, circa. 200 CE.}

²⁵ In his introduction to his *Mishnah Commentary* (s.v. “*achar ken raah kehistapek*”).

4.

DIFFERENT YET SIMILAR

The explanation: The **subject** of the *Mishnah* and the *Beraisah* is dissimilar. The *Mishnah* deals with an idolatrous city. Consequently the end of the *Mishnah*, “No part of the banned property may remain in your possession — As long as evildoers are present in the world, *charon af* is present in the world,” refers to an idolatrous city, involving the most severe sin of idolatry. Therefore, the *Mishnah* says, “*charon af* is present in the world,” for we find the expression “(*charon*) **af**” used specifically {in Scripture} with respect to idolatry (as Rambam notes).²⁶

In contrast, the *Beraisa* doesn’t deal with an “evildoer” involved in the sin of idolatry, for the sin of idolatry (and especially the occurrence of an idolatrous city) was totally uncommon (particularly because the inclination for idol worship had been removed from the world).²⁷ Rather, the *Beraisa* deals with evildoers in general. Therefore, the *Beraisa* begins, “When an evildoer comes into the world” — a commonplace evildoer who sins (but who does not engage in the sin of idolatry). As such, the *Beraisa* goes on to say, “(unqualified) *charon* {anger} enters the world,” without the additional word “*af*”, a word used in connection with idolatry, as mentioned above in explaining the *Mishnah*.

However, the *Mishnah* and the *Beraisa* still do have shared content: The *Mishnah* says that “as long as evildoers are present in the world, *charon af* is present in the world,” and so does the *Beraisa*, when it says, “When an evildoer comes into the world, *charon* enters the world.” (Meaning, “*charon*” comes and goes together with the “evildoer.”) That is, as long as an “evildoer” exists {in the world}, “*charon*” exists until such time that “an evildoer is eliminated from the world.”

According to this explanation, however, a question arises: The *Mishnah*’s reasoning that “*charon af*” is present in the world “as long as

²⁶ *Moreh Nevuchim*, part 1, ch. 26. See commentaries, loc. cit.

²⁷ *Yoma* 69b.

evildoers are present in the world” is well understood. For the *Mishnah* deals with idolatry, and as long as idolatry exists (“banned property”), “*charon af*” also exists. (As *Sifrei* puts it,²⁸ “As long as idolatry is present in the world, *charon af* is present in the world.”) But regarding other sins, when “an (ordinary) evildoer comes into the world,” why would “*charon*” (continue and) persist even after the sinful act has been concluded, at a time when the act of the sin no longer exists?

5.

WHO ARE THE EVILDOERS?

The explanation: From the nuanced wording of the *Mishnah*, “as long as **evildoers** are present in the world...” — unlike the wording of the *Sifrei*, “as long as **idolatry** is present in the world...” — it is clear that according to the *Mishnah*, *charon af* exists not (only) because (a phenomenon of) idolatry (“banned property”) exists in the world, but rather because of the evildoers who have sinned by doing an act relating to idolatry. They have violated the prohibition, “No part of the banned property may remain in your possession,”²⁹ even after the banned item was no longer in existence.

Regarding this, the Sages of the *Gemara* ask: “Who are evildoers?”: What sort of evildoers are we dealing with here who can **evoke** the *charon af* unique to idolatry, even after the object of idolatry ceases to exist?

To this question Rav Yosef answers, “thieves.” The *Mishnah*’s intent is with respect to those evildoers whose connection to idolatry comes about through **stealing** (from the proscribed property of an idolatrous city). Since this sin is performed by means of thievery, “as long as evildoers are present in the world, *charon af* is present in the world.” Meaning, “*charon af*” is drawn into the world even after the banned property has been destroyed and no longer exists.

²⁸ *Sifrei*, “*Reeh*,” sec. 14, par. 18; quoted also in Rashi’s commentary on the verse.

²⁹ See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Avodah Zarah*,” ch. 4, sec. 7; Rambam’s *Sefer Hamitzvos*, prohibition 24; *Sefer HaChinuch*, *mitzvah* 466.

6.

CAN A PERSON RECTIFY THE PAST?

The explanation: The prohibition of theft (and robbery) has a unique stringency in that it is “ongoing” — every moment that a person refrains from returning the stolen (or robbed) item, he violates the prohibition “*lo tignovu*” {“you shall not steal”} (and “you shall not rob”).

On this basis, the Rogatchover Gaon³⁰ explains why the Rambam considers the prohibitions against robbery and theft to be in the category of “prohibitions that can be repaid,”³¹ and **not** in the category of “prohibitions that are commuted to a positive *mitzvah*”:³² In cases of *prohibitions that are commuted to a positive mitzvah*, a person violates a prohibition during the performance of the sinful act only. Consequently, the very fact that the Torah established a positive *mitzvah* to redress and rectify a prohibition indicates that the rectification applies retroactively to the sinful act. In contrast, when a person steals or robs, he continues to violate a prohibition for as long as he hasn’t made restitution. Meaning, he violates the negative precept every moment from the time of his theft or robbery. Since this state of violation is “ongoing,” when he returns the item he has stolen or robbed, his act, at that time, is classified as a “prohibition that can be repaid.” That is, from that time onwards, he will no longer be in violation (and the “ongoing” state of violation ends); but this does not rectify the prohibition that he had violated in the past.

³⁰ *Tzafas Paaneach*, “*Hilchos Terumos*” (*hashmatos*), p. 52c; “*hashlama*,” p. 63, quoted in *Mefaaneach Tzefunos*, ch. 5, sec. 24; ch. 13, sec. 4.

³¹ {“*Lav shenitan letashlumin*,” in the Hebrew original. When the Torah prescribes financial restitution in compensation of a prohibition, the penalty of lashes is not administered.}

³² {“*Lav shenitak leasei*,” in the Hebrew original. When the Torah prescribes a positive *mitzvah* in consequence of, and to rectify, a prohibition, the penalty of lashes is not administered.}

7.

AN ONGOING VIOLATION

In light of this, the uniqueness of our case is clear: Since thievery is an ongoing act, and a thief violates the prohibition “you shall not steal” as long as he hasn’t compensated his victim, then even when the banned property of an idolatrous city no longer exists, the wickedness of the “thieves” for their {earlier} act of theft is still ongoing, for we find no evidence that the ongoing state of violation lasts only until the banned property is destroyed.

Since this wickedness is ongoing from the time the banned property of an idolatrous city — idolatry³³ — is stolen, “As long as **evildoers** are present in the world,” meaning, as long as they haven’t yet performed *teshuvah* for stealing **idolatrous** property, “*charon af*” of idolatry also remains in the world.

8.

REFRAINING FROM *TESHUVAH*

This also clarifies the *Beraisa’s* wording, “When an evildoer comes into the world, anger enters the world,” even **after** the sin is committed:

The *Mishnah* does not deal with a case in which the **substance** of the idolatrous property exists in the world, but rather, with the ongoing prohibition in regard to the person who sinned by stealing. Consequently, this same point can also be found when examining other sins, even those sins in which the act is not ongoing. When a person sins, he immediately is

³³ {In other words, property of an idolatrous city is tantamount to actual objects of idolatry.}

commanded and obligated to do *teshuvah*;³⁴ every moment that he refrains from doing so, he violates the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*.³⁵

For this reason, the *Beraisa* says, “When an evildoer comes into the world, anger enters the world.” Meaning, as long as he is still deemed “an evildoer” (who “comes into the world”) — as long as he hasn’t done *teshuvah* — there exists “anger” (which “enters the world”). The *Beraisa* does not mention a specific sin because it refers to the wickedness inherent in all sins; as long as *teshuvah* has not been performed, “anger” is drawn into the world constantly.

9.

THEFT AND IDOLATRY

In light of this explanation, it is clear why theft is more similar to idolatry than other sins: We have seen that even after performing an idolatrous act, there is still “anger in the world.” As *Sifrei* says, “As long as idolatry is present in the world, *charon af* {anger} is present in the world.” Meaning, as long as idolatry exists in the world, anger is constantly drawn into the world. Similarly, regarding the sin of theft, being an ongoing sin, as long as a thief has not done *teshuvah* for his theft, he draws Hashem’s anger **constantly** into the world.

In contrast, regarding other sins, even though they also draw anger into the world (as they also are connected, and similar, to idolatry), it is not the sin itself that draws Hashem’s anger, but rather, it is the *person* refraining from fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*, whereas concerning theft, the *sin* itself is ongoing, as mentioned above.

³⁴ As explained above (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 38, p. 18ff; *Chidushim Ubeurim BaShas*, ch. 18, publ. Also in *Likkutei Biurim LaTanya*, sec. 2, p. 40ff), Rambam and the Alter Rebbe maintain that *teshuvah* is a positive *mitzvah*, in contrast to the explanation of the Rambam’s position by *Minchas Chinuch* (*mitzvah* 364).

³⁵ See *Minchas Chinuch*, ad. cit., who maintains that if *teshuvah* is an obligatory *mitzvah*, as long as a person does not do *teshuvah*, he violates the positive *mitzvah* of *teshuvah* each and every moment.

10.

THE EYE THAT SEES

However, the following is still unclear:

- a) Why does Rav Yosef say “thieves” rather than “robbers,” or, “thieves and robbers”? For both theft and robbery are “ongoing” violations!
- b) Why does the *Beraisa* say, “**charon** {anger} enters the world,” rather than “**evil**” enters the world,” as this would be the opposite of “*good* enters the world,” which was said in reference to “when a righteous person enters the world”?
- c) “*Charon*” is more severe than ordinary “anger.” Why do these sins cause not only “evil,” but, more acutely, “anger”?

This will be understood based upon a teaching of the *Gemara*:³⁶

His students asked Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai: For what reason was the Torah stricter with a thief than with a robber? {Only a thief is required to pay a double, fourfold, or fivefold payment, not a robber.} Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai replied: This one {the robber} equated the honor of a servant to the honor of his Master, and that one {the thief} did not equate the honor of a servant to the honor of his Master.³⁷ As it were, the thief establishes the Eye below {i.e., Hashem’s Eye} as though it does not see, and the Ear below {i.e., Hashem’s Ear} as though it does not hear. As it says..., “Hashem has forsaken the land.”³⁸

This explanation provides adds to our appreciation of Rav Yosef’s rationale when he replied that *the “evildoers” who cause “anger”* referred

³⁶ *Bava Kamma*, 79b; see *Chiddushei Aggados* of the Maharal, ad. cit.

³⁷ {A robber fears neither Hashem nor people, as he is not afraid to rob in public. A thief does not fear Hashem, but he does fear other people, which demonstrates that he is more concerned about facing the consequences of human justice rather than Divine justice.}

³⁸ {*Yechezkel* 9:9.} See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 16, p. 265ff.

to in the *Mishnah* are “thieves” (without mentioning that the theft involves “banned property”). For the essence of the sin of theft is akin to idolatry: A thief feels as if “Hashem has forsaken the land, and Hashem does not see.” Therefore, by their presence, “thieves” also causes (something akin to the) “*charon af*” of idolatry to come into the world.

On this basis, the wording of the *Beraisa* that every sin causes “anger” to enter the world (and not only “evil”) can be clarified. For every sin is similar to theft as it reflects a person’s disregard of “the honor of his Master”: A person being so brazen as to sin demonstrates that from his perspective, “the Eye below... does not see.” A similar sentiment is expressed in the verse, “Can a man hide in secret places that I should not see him?”³⁹ Likewise, *Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai* blessed his students:⁴⁰

“May it be His will that the fear of Heaven shall be upon you like the fear of flesh and blood.” His students were puzzled and said: “To that point and not beyond?” {Shouldn’t one fear Hashem more?} He said to them: “Would that a person achieve that level of fear. Know that when a person commits a sin, he says to himself: I hope that no one sees me.”

Consequently, the reason the *Beraisa* says that the consequence for an evildoer coming into the world is “anger,” for this punishment is measure for measure. As the verse quoted in the *Beraisa* says, “With the arrival of an evildoer, **scorn** arrives, and with **disgrace** there comes **insult**.” By sinning, the evildoer scorns the “Eye below,” resulting in “scorn,” etc., entering the world — leading to “anger.”

Even after the sinful act has concluded, as long as an “evildoer” is present {in the world, Divine} anger is present. For as long as he does not engage in *teshuvah*, the cause of the “anger” still exists: He still feels as if “the Eye below does not see.”

³⁹ *Yeshayahu* 23:24.

⁴⁰ *Berachos* 28b.

11.

THE GREAT SANHEDRIN

As known,⁴¹ the end of each {talmudic} tractate is connected with, and related to, the beginning of that tractate (and even the overall name of that tractate). Thus, it is customary to connect — in the course of a *hadran*⁴² — the conclusion of a tractate to its beginning.

This applies in our case as well. In the first *Mishnah* {of *Sanhedrin*} (according to the order of the *Mishnayos*, as they appear in the *Gemara*),⁴³ the laws of the Jewish Court and the *Sanhedrin* are discussed in detail, beginning with: “Cases concerning monetary law are adjudicated by three judges,” and continuing until, “The Great *Sanhedrin* was composed of seventy-one judges.” Although every Jewish court (consisting of three, etc., twenty-three, or seventy judges) adjudicates the types of cases assigned to it uniquely, nonetheless, they share a common characteristic: The function and purpose of all of the courts is not only to judge sinners and punish them in order to fulfill the {Torah’s} dicta, “You shall abolish evil from among you”⁴⁴ (to expunge the existence of evil and sin), and “in order that they hear... and fear.”⁴⁵ Rather, the courts are also enjoined to ensure from the outset that there is no place for evil and sin.

As *Tana DeVei Eliyahu Rabbah* says,⁴⁶ the role of the 71-member *Sanhedrin* was:

To tie iron belts around their waists and raise their garments above their knees; to visit all Jewish cities... wherever Jews were found, and to teach the Jewish people....

⁴¹ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 135, marginal note on fn. 31; vol. 16, pp. 311-312.

⁴² {A public lecture given at a *siyum*, upon concluding studying a tractate of the *Talmud*.}

⁴³ Whereas the first *Mishnah* in the *Gemara* is divided into six *Mishnayos* as published in the *Mishnayos*,

⁴⁴ {*Devarim* 17:7.}

⁴⁵ {*Devarim* 31:12.}

⁴⁶ *Tanya DeVei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 11.

This seems perplexing: The members of the *Sanhedrin* were “of unique distinction in their Torah wisdom and broad knowledge.”⁴⁷ They held court in the Chamber of Hewn Stone;⁴⁸ when they were not in that location, they did not have the status of the *Great Sanhedrin*.⁴⁹ As such, how could they have been required to tie “iron belts around their waists... and raise their garments above their knees”? How is this sort of conduct appropriate for those “of unique distinction in their Torah wisdom and broad knowledge”?⁵⁰ This point is especially relevant since this undertaking entailed their departure from the Chamber of Hewn Stone — all for the sake of educating, and safeguarding from sin a Jew found in far-off “Jewish cities”?

The reason for this {seeming radical conduct} is clarified at the end of the tractate: The presence of “an evildoer in the world” arouses Hashem’s “anger” **in the world**, not only at the time the sinful act is performed; rather, Hashem’s anger is “ongoing.” —

This anger not only extends in time; it extends even in space! The “anger” “enters the **world**.” It does not only affect the sinner; it affects the entire world.⁵¹ This blemishes all Jews, including the 71 members of the *Great Sanhedrin*.

Consequently, it is clear that the members of the *Sanhedrin* had an obligation and responsibility to ensure that at the outset,⁵² the situation would not deteriorate to the extent that “anger enters the world.”

⁴⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sanhedrin*,” ch. 2, sec. 1.

⁴⁸ *Midos*, ch. 5, *mishnah* 4; *Sanhedrin* 86b (in the *Mishnah*); *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sanhedrin*,” ch. 14, sec. 12.

⁴⁹ For they were unable to adjudicate capital cases (*Avodah Zarah* 8b). According to Ramban (in his *Hasagos on Sefer HaMitzvos*, pos. *mitzvah* 153), “**All** laws (not only capital laws) that depended on the Jewish High Court were nullified.

⁵⁰ To note a teaching of our Rabbis regarding “The garment... the cloak of a Torah scholar {is to be worn so that} a handbreadth of the garment worn under his clothes is not visible from beneath it. (*Bava Basra* 57b)

⁵¹ Note *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 3, sec. 4: “a person should always look at himself... and the entire world... {as equally balanced between merit and sin. If he performs one sin} he tips his balance and that of the entire world...”

⁵² See Rashi’s commentary on *Devarim* 1:13 (quoting *Sifrei*, loc. cit.).

12.

DON'T DELAY!

In light of the above, another issue can be clarified: All Torah ideas serve as a lesson for all Jews.⁵³ Consequently, a question can be raised based on our discussion: What sort of lesson can we learn from the teaching, “When an evildoer comes into the world, anger enters the world... when a righteous person comes into the world, good enters the world”?

It would be hard to say that this was taught to inform us only of the severity of sin — that sinning provokes Hashem’s anger, and conversely, that good deeds result in goodness and reward. For the Written Torah has already taught us this {explicitly} in its commands and mitzvos. It has explained and underscored the tremendous reward for *mitzvah* performance and the punishment for sin, etc., including the general proclamation: “If you will follow My decrees... I will provide your rains in their time... peace **in the land**....”⁵⁴

However, in light of our above explanation, we find a wondrous and innovative lesson that can be extracted from **this** teaching:

A Jew who succumbs to sin, G-d forbid, is liable to think: “I certainly must do *teshuvah*, and I will, in fact, do *teshuvah* — but why rush it?” If he has this attitude, he may postpone *teshuvah* for a later time, thinking that he will engage in other matters in the interim. (If he involves himself in **good** things in the meantime, he is especially liable {to rationalize his procrastination.})

The same applies on the positive side: A person decides to do something good, such as a *mitzvah*, but he does not rush to perform it. In the interim, he engages in permissible matters, etc.

In scenarios such as these, the *Gemara* warns a Jew and instructs him that this sort of conduct is forbidden, because as long as he does not do

⁵³ See *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 53b.

⁵⁴ *Vayikra* 26:3-6.

teshuvah, {Hashem's} "anger" is **ongoing** in the world, and not just at the time the sinful act is committed. Moreover, his delay doesn't affect him alone; it affects the **entire** world: As long as **he** doesn't do *teshuvah*, {Hashem's} anger prevails over the entire world.

The same applies when a person does good. [For the term "righteous person" mentioned here is not used in the sense of the true definition of "*tzaddik*,"⁵⁵ but even includes its {broader}, appropriated connotation.]⁵⁶ By doing good, a person not only brings good upon himself, but to the entire world, continually.

When a person contemplates that such a great and wondrous accomplishment depends on him — by doing *teshuvah*, he can both eliminate {Hashem's} "anger" from the world and bring Hashem's good into the world a moment earlier — he will certainly be awakened and stirred {to do *teshuvah* without delay}. This will help him accelerate, as much as he is able, to bring his positive resolutions into concrete action, thereby bringing goodness into the world immediately.

-Based on talks delivered on Yud Shevat and Shabbos *parshas Beshalach*, 5735 (1975)

⁵⁵ {A person who (has overcome, and thus) has no evil inclination.}

⁵⁶ {In this sense, every Jew is a *tzaddik*, for by performing even one *mitzvah*, he has done an act of righteousness.} See *Tanya*, ch. 1.