

The  
**CHASSIDUS**  
**PERSPECTIVE**  
 with Reb Yoel Kahn



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## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SIN

One of the *karbanos* mentioned in Parshas Vayikra is the *asham taluy*. An *asham taluy* differs from a *karban chatas*, which is brought for a sin that was **certainly** committed, albeit unintentionally. For example, if someone mistook a piece of *treife* meat as being kosher.

An *asham taluy*, however, is brought in a case where not only was the sin committed unintentionally, it is possible that no sin was committed at all. For example, if there were two pieces of meat, one kosher and one *treif*, and someone ate one of them thinking that they were both kosher, and is unsure which one it was, he must bring an *asham taluy*.

### THE PRICE OF UNCERTAINTY

Interestingly, while a *karban chatas* must cost a minimum of a *danka* (a certain Talmudic coin), an *asham taluy* must cost two *sela'im*. A *sela* comprises 24 *dankas*, making the *asham taluy* worth 48 times as much as a *karban chatas*! Why does a *karban* brought for a sin that was **certainly** committed cost so much less than one brought by someone who may not have sinned at all?!

Rabbeinu Yonah explains that the atonement achieved by bringing a *karban* is accomplished not so much by the actual sacrifice, but by the *teshuvah* that accompanies it. So if someone certainly sinned, bringing an inexpensive *karban* is sufficient to arouse feeling of regret; but if someone surmises that he may be completely free of sin, additional action is required to inspire him to do *teshuvah*.

However, the Rebbe explains that this answer is not enough. Yes, the atonement is primarily accomplished through doing *teshuvah*; but bringing a *karban* is also important, and the *karban* must be proportionate to the severity of the sin. We

must conclude that although an obvious sin is classically more severe than a doubtful one, there is a certain aspect in which a doubtful sin is more severe, and a more costly *karban* must therefore be brought.

### AN INNER FAULT

To understand this, we must first understand why a *karban chatas* is brought only when someone performed an *aveirah* unintentionally and not if it was performed deliberately. The simple explanation is because a deliberate sin is too severe to be atoned through a *karban*. However, according to an alternative approach, there is a certain aspect in which an unintentional sin is more severe than a deliberate one.

When someone performs a deliberate sin, it does not necessarily mean that his character is faulty. After all, a person has free choice; it's possible that his *midos* are by and large the way they should be, but at that specific moment he succumbed to his desire. The sin merely reflects his state at that specific moment, and even then, it only reflects his actions, not his essence.

But a sin that was performed instinctively indicates that the person is insensitive to an *aveirah* and is subconsciously being drawn towards it. This is why a person must bring a *karban* for a sin committed unintentionally, even though seemingly it's not his fault.

As the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya, if a person would possess a virtuous character, no sin would cross his path. Sometimes, the fact that one has performed a sin unintentionally shows that he is surrounded by evil, and a transgression can take place "by itself." When viewed in this way, an unintentional sin may be more severe than a deliberate one.

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## NATURALLY DRAWN

A similar approach can be taken when comparing an obvious sin to a doubtful one. Let's analyze the reaction of the person who committed the unintentional sin. The fact that he performed the sin unintentionally shows that he's being drawn towards it.

This can be compared to someone who was lost in thought and made a wrong turn, ending up in another location. Sometimes, the reason he made his way to that specific location is because he's instinctively drawn towards it. But once he realizes what he has done, he recognizes that something's wrong and feels bad about it. This indicates that even though he is surrounded by evil on all sides, he's merely **surrounded** by it; his **essence**, however, is good, so he's bothered by the fact that he did something wrong.

But then you have someone who doesn't feel bad. He says to himself, "Maybe I didn't sin at all and everything's fine." This shows that his situation is so deplorable that he can even convince himself that nothing happened. It's as if his essence is associated with sin. And this is why an *asham taluy* is more expensive than a *karban chatas*. It's not only so that his *teshuvah* will be sincere as Rabbeinu Yonah explains, but because the sin itself is more severe.

Based on this, the Rebbe explains why example the Gemara gives for an *asham taluy* is of two pieces of **fat**, one kosher and one *treif*, and someone ate one of them and is unsure which one it was. Why does the Gemara use this example? Because this example expresses the core of the issue.

Fat represents pleasure, as evident from the fact that pleasure can bring to an increase in body weight. This is to the extent that even one's bones can expand, as illustrated by the story in Gittin

that when good tidings were conveyed to Vespasian, he was unable to put on his shoe. And this is the doubt of the *asham taluy*: It's not so much a doubt whether he actually performed the sin or not, but a doubt regarding where his **pleasure** lies. Does his essence and pleasure lie in what's permissible or in what's forbidden?

## PROTECTION FROM MISTAKE

We mentioned earlier that an *aveirah* performed unintentionally shows that his essence is not the way it should be, while this is not necessarily the case if one performed an *aveirah* deliberately, because it could be that it was a sporadic act that doesn't reflect his character.

Based on this, the Rebbe explains the statement of the Arizal that one who avoids consuming even a minute drop of *chometz* on Pesach will be protected from sin the entire year. This doesn't mean that he won't be able to **choose** to do an *aveirah*; rather, it means that he won't do an *aveirah* **unintentionally**. *Chometz*, which represents arrogance, is the source of all evil. Since he avoided *chometz* on Pesach, he has disassociated himself from evil, and

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For further learning see 'לקו"ש חלק ג'.

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