

# ALSHICH

## INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר ויקרא

פרשת ויקרא

SERIES 2: ISSUE 24

### ONE SIN LEADS TO ANOTHER

#### Chapter 5

1) *And if a person sins and accepted a demand for an oath [regarding a monetary crime], and he is a witness – either he saw [something] or he knew [something] – if he does not testify and he shall bear his sin.*

א) וּנְפֹשׁ כִּי־תִחַטָּא וְשָׁמְעָה קוֹל אֲלֹהִים הוּא עֵד אוֹ רָאָה אוֹ יָדַע אִם־לוֹא יִגִּיד וְנִשְׁאָ עוֹנוֹ.

15) *If a person betrays a betrayal (תִּמְעַל מֵעַל) and sins unintentionally with Hashem's sacred property, he shall bring his asham (guilt-offering) to Hashem – an unblemished ram from the flock, with a value of [at least two] silver shekels of the holy [type of] shekels for an asham (guilt-offering).*

טו) נָפֵשׁ כִּי־תִמְעַל מֵעַל וְחִטָּאָהּ בְּשִׁגְגָה מִקְדָּשֵׁי ה' וְהִבִּיא אֶת־אֲשָׁמוֹ לַה' אֵיל תְּמִים מִן־הַצֹּאן בְּעֶרְכָּךְ כֶּסֶף־שְׁקָלִים בְּשִׁקְל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְאֲשָׁם.

17) *And if a person when he sins (וְאִם נָפֵשׁ כִּי תִחַטָּא) by doing one of Hashem's commandments that may not be done, but he does not know, he will [nevertheless] incur guilt and bear his sin (עוֹנוֹ).*

יז) וְאִם־נָפֵשׁ כִּי תִחַטָּא וְעָשְׂתָהּ אַחַת מִכָּל־מִצְוֹת ה' אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִעֲשֶׂינָהּ וְלֹא־יָדַע וְאֲשָׁם וְנִשְׁאָ עוֹנוֹ.

18) *He shall bring to the Kohen an unblemished ram from the flock, of the prescribed value of an asham; the Kohen shall make an atonement for him for the inadvertent sin he may have committed but is uncertain [thereof], and he will be forgiven.*

יח) וְהִבִּיא אֵיל תְּמִים מִן־הַצֹּאן בְּעֶרְכָּךְ לְאֲשָׁם אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן וַיְכַפֵּר עָלָיו הַכֹּהֵן עַל שִׁגְגָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁגָג וְהוּא לֹא־יָדַע וְנִסְלַח לוֹ.

### Consider the following questions:

1. Why does the first part of verse 1 refer to the person's sin as a חַטָּא (as it says כִּי תִחַטָּא), which usually refers to an unintentional sin, while the end of the verse refers to it as an עוֹן (as it says וְנִשְׁאָ עוֹנוֹ), which usually refers to a sin committed deliberately?
2. Why does the Torah use the double expression "betrays a betrayal" (תִּמְעַל מֵעַל) in verse 15?
3. In verse 17, why does it say, *And if a person when he sins...* (וְאִם נָפֵשׁ כִּי תִחַטָּא)? It should either have said "if a person sins" (וְאִם נָפֵשׁ תִּחַטָּא) or "when a person sins" (נָפֵשׁ כִּי תִחַטָּא).
4. Why does the end of verse 17 use the word עוֹנוֹ to refer to the sin the person will bear when committed unknowingly, even though עוֹן connotes a sin committed on purpose?

Both parts of verse 1 are referring to the sin of suppressing testimony. The witness' initial sin is less severe for it is committed through inaction – through not giving testimony he should. But as a result of this, he will eventually commit the more serious sin of actually swearing falsely that he has no testimony to offer – as the verse says, he *accepted a demand for an oath*. His original חַטָּא has now turned into the more serious עוֹן. The verse would therefore read as follows: *And a person who sins (תִּחַטָּא) by suppressing his testimony and accepted a demand for an oath (i.e., swears falsely) ... he shall bear his sin (עוֹנוֹ).* [This answers Question 1.]

This betrayal of a fellow Jew by withholding testimony, thereby allowing someone to steal what belongs to another, will lead to another betrayal: Verses 14–15 talk about a person who betrays Hashem by accidentally making personal use of sacred property (*hekdesh*). This is described by the double expression “*betrays a betrayal*” because this betrayal is the result of the betrayal of verse 1. We can thus understand the verse as saying: *If a person betrays his fellow Jew, he will end up with a betrayal of Hashem, and sin unintentionally with Hashem’s sacred property, using it for himself. Then he will have to bring his guilt-offering to Hashem – an unblemished ram.* **[This answers Question 2.]**

According to our Sages (*Keraisos* 25a), verses 17–18 speak about someone who had two pieces of fat in front of him, both of which he thought were permitted. He ate one, only to discover that one of them was in fact forbidden – but he does not know if that was the one he ate. In this case, he must bring *an unblemished ram from the flock ... for an asham*. But if he subsequently discovers that he definitely ate the forbidden fat, he has to bring another offering, the standard *korban* for an unintentional sin – a female sheep or goat, as a *chatas*.

However, when there is only one piece of forbidden fat before him which he mistakenly ate (thinking that it was permitted), when he discovers that what he ate was forbidden, he only has to bring the *chatas*, which is relatively inexpensive.

This seems very strange. Why is the atonement less demanding when he **knows** he sinned (the second case) than when he is unsure if he did anything wrong (the first case)?

We may answer as follows: The difficulty only exists when we focus on what happens after he is informed about the prohibited fats. But if we look at the moment of eating, the person who ate one of the two pieces of fat thinking both were permitted is more to blame than the person who ate the single piece while thinking that it was permitted. Why is that? Because the person who had only one piece has nothing to compare it with. In contrast, the person who had one of each type should have been able to see the difference between them, if he had only paid attention. This is because although they are similar in appearance, when they are side by side their difference is recognizable. It is thus considered as if he almost sinned on purpose, although he may not have even eaten anything forbidden, and therefore must bring the more expensive ram as an offering.

Since the preceding verses spoke of the person who misappropriates *hekdesh*, verse 17 therefore states: *If a person, when he sins inadvertently (אֶתְּחַטֵּא) by transgressing a “regular” (non-hekdesh-related) sin ... but he does not know whether he ate the forbidden fat, he will nevertheless incur guilt and bear his more serious sin (עֲוֹנוֹ) for not being more attentive to his food.* **[This answers Questions 3 and 4.]**

### THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508 - 1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKodosh” (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich’s true greatness.

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