



**RABBI SHALOM**

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# Why Offer A Sacrifice for An Inadvertent Transgression?

Parshat Vayikra introduces us to the world of *Korbanot* (sacrifices). One of the *korbanot* that is offered is a *קרבן חטאת* (Chatat), that is brought by an individual who violates a command בְּשׁוּגָג - inadvertently. If the individual did not purposely commit a sin, why are they obligated to bring any sacrifice? If the transgression was accidental – what כַּפָּרָה – what type of forgiveness is required?

The Torah tells us that when one commits a sin בְּשׁוּגָג:

וְאִם נָפֵשׁ כִּי תִחַטָּא וְעָשְׂתָה אֶחָת מִכָּל מִצְוֹת ה' אֲשֶׁר לֹא תַעֲשִׂינָהּ וְלֹא יָדַע וְאִשָּׁם וְנִשְׂא עֲוֹנוֹ... כִּי אִשָּׁם אִשָּׁם לֵה" (ויקרא ה: יז-יט)

In *Michtav M'Elياهو*, Rav Dessler offers a fascinating insight into the concept of a transgression *b'shogeg*. A person does not forget to eat. When something is important to an individual, they internalize it and it becomes second nature. If one violates a command, apparently

its significance was not internalized in that individual. The word אִשָּׁם perhaps reminds us of the word שָׁם – there. The transgressor acted without fully being there. He or she may have been physically present, but if they consciously contemplate their actions, they would not have violated any prohibition. They acted because the mitzvah was external – its significance not adequately internalized.

## BE THERE

There is an idea expressed by the Kotzker Rav, that extends this idea to our daily lives. At the end of Parshat Mishpatim it is stated: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵל מֹשֶׁה עֲלֵה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וְהִיא שָׁם וְאֶתְנֶה לְךָ אֶת לַחַת הָאֲבֵן וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי לְהוֹרֹתָם. (שמות כד:יב)

And Hashem said to Moshe, “Ascend to Me on the mountain and *remain there*, and I will give you the stone tablets, the law and the commandments, which I have written to instruct them.” (*Shemot* 24:12)

Hashem commanded Moshe to ascend the mountain and receive the *luchot*. Why did Hashem first request that Moshe “ascend the mountain” and then demand *heyeh sham* – “be there.” Isn’t that redundant? Obviously if Moshe went up the mountain, he’d be there. Where else would he be?

The Kotzker Rebbe, Rav Mendel MiKotz, sharply answers that often we can “ascend a

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mountain,” but not really be there. For example, we might attend a *shiu*r and be physically present, but not truly *there*. We may be at a wedding or other *simcha*, but we feel somewhat spaced out. We may be physically located somewhere but our mind is elsewhere. The Kotzker Rebbe teaches: Don't just go up the mountain. Rather, experience the situation you're in, whatever it is. BE THERE!

Our generation suffers from multitasking overload. We are often involved in so many activities that we aren't focusing on any of them. The Torah is teaching us an important lesson. Don't go somewhere physically but leave your head or heart out of it. One needs to internalize and be fully cognizant of their actions and surroundings at all times. In that way we will avoid inadvertent transgressions and make the most of every experience. ■

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