

"If a person behaves unfaithfully and sins unintentionally against any of Hashem's holy things." (5:15)

Me'ilah is a sin whereby one "removes" an article from the possession of the *Mikdash* without having direct benefit therefrom - i.e., giving it as a present or selling it to someone else. The sin of *me'ilah* is committed only if the individual does the said act *b'shogeg*, inadvertently. The perplexity of the laws of *me'ilah* is emphasized by the fact that an unintentional misuse of a holy object profanes it, while its intentional misuse does not, but rather permits it to retain its character of holiness. We find another enigma in *halacha* regarding the necessity for atonement for a sin about which one is doubtful whether or not it was even committed. It seems that the punishment and expiation for such a transgression appears to be greater than that of a sin which has assuredly been committed. We find this disparity in that a *safek*, a doubtful sin, demands a *korban* of greater value than for a *vadai*, a definite sin.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l., in addressing this *halachic* paradox, makes a simple but profound differentiation between *shogeg* and *meizid* -- inadvertence and premeditation -- and *safek* and *vadai* -- doubtful and definite sin. It is not direct confrontation nor intentional sin which concerns us: it is indifference on the part of people which causes the greater spiritual offense. The *Mikdash* stands high and unpenetrable in holiness against any form of direct opposition. Indeed, the very fact that there is conscious confrontation against it is the greatest indication of its sacredness. However, indifference, impassiveness, and apathy are the greatest threats to enduring *kedushah*, holiness. The Sanctuary of Hashem reposes within and thus penetrates the lives of only those who acknowledge and retain it within their minds.

In the same manner, *Torah* observance is compromised and imperiled to a far greater degree when there is some uncertainty as to whether a transgression has in fact been committed than when it is clear that indeed a transgression actually occurred. One who is not sure is one who is not willingly repentant. We must ensure that the scrupulous attitude which should govern **all** our actions extends not only to the avoidance of actual sin, but also to everything that might lead to it.