

"When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit... and they shall confess their sin which they have done, and he shall make restitution for his guilt in full, and the fifth part thereof he shall add unto it, and give it to whom he has been guilty." (5:6-7)

The question concerning these *pesukim* is obvious. The *Torah* begins its account of the sin in the plural form (uaguw usuu,vu) and sums it up in the singular form (chavu wi,bu)! *Horav Chaim Zaitzik Z"l* poignantly explains that the succession of events which leads up to an individual's transgressing suggests that frequently the sin is communal. The individual, who actually executes the misdeed is the product of an environment which has laid the foundation for this sin to transpire. In reality, this sin originates in the community.

He cites scenarios to support this hypothesis. For example, let us look at an individual who finds it extremely difficult to earn a livelihood through the available professions. His lack of resources combined with the inability to provide for his family may leave him with a feeling of inadequacy. The peer pressure to produce, coupled with his family's increasing demands, might slowly destroy whatever dignity and self-respect he had been able to preserve. In fact, in moments of despondency his wife may accuse him of being a useless incompetent. His children will sometimes add to his shame by comparing him to other, more successful fathers. His friends and neighbors might thoughtlessly display their own achievements and prosperity, causing him even greater humiliation and disgrace. This whole scenario can lead an individual to steal or perform other fraudulent acts in order to garner the means to support his family.

While the sinner is certainly the individual, we are all responsible partners in his transgressions. How cognizant should we be when we see our fellow Jew, who is faltering? We should look for opportunities to help him, for if we turn our eyes away from his plight, we will ultimately be held answerable for our apathy.