

## **It shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, then he shall acknowledge/confess (to himself) what he has sinned about. (5:5)**

We may note that the concept of *viddui*, confession of guilt, is expressed almost exclusively in the reflexive form: "vsu,vu." **Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl**, explains that Hashem does not need our confession; He has no need for us to notify Him of our guilt. Confession is for the sinner; he must acknowledge his guilt--to himself. The first step towards penance, the initial step of contrition, is *hakoras ha'cheit*, recognizing that one has sinned--and accepting in earnest the error of his deeds. One cannot begin to think about offering a sacrifice for guilt until he has personally acknowledged his guilt--to himself.

All too often, we deceive ourselves into justifying our actions in an attempt to mitigate our guilt. Obviously, the fact that an individual offers a *korban* indicates a recognition of guilt. How much of the guilt, however, does he actually concede? One must acknowledge that he has sinned, the extent of the sin, and the true amount of his guilt--without attempting to ameliorate his transgression.

Horav Hirsch adds that it is not sufficient for an individual to merely acknowledge sin--even to himself; he must also admit to "vhkg tyj rat" concede guilt to the specific circumstances that preceded the sin. In order to avoid a repeat performance of the sin, he must recognize the situation and behavior that has led up to his downfall.

How different is the *Torah's* concept of *viddui* from the generally accepted practice of confession. *Chazal* view "sharing" one's sins with another human being as something to be rejected, rather than lauded. They view revealing the sins one has committed against Hashem as offensive. The one who is truly repentant views his sins with shame and attempts to hide that shame within his heart. The sin is a matter between the sinner and Hashem! To publicize one's transgression against Hashem is immature and nothing more than an attempt to decrease one's own guilt. *Teshuvah* is a private matter which should be noticed quietly by others, not proclaimed by the penitent.