

"This is the law of the sin-offering, where the burnt offering is slaughtered shall the sin-offering be slaughtered." (6:18)

A Jew was required to bring a sin-offering when he transgressed unknowingly. It might seem strange, perhaps even unjust, that if one sinned through sheer forgetfulness, he was required to bring an animal offering as penance. *Chazal* maintain, however, that if someone is truly separated from evil, even that sin would not have occurred. A sin is able to penetrate an individual's defenses because it has found an opening. An inadvertent sin does not just happen, it grows from a tiny spark of evil to which one has not attended. The *Medrash* states that one who does not bring a sin offering will eventually sin deliberately. Moreover, as *Reb Yitzchak Bunim Z"l* explains, neglecting to bring the sin-offering might leave guilt feelings which could lead to a lifelong complex. Thus the possible development of a bad habit could be halted by responding to the initial unpremeditated transgression by bringing a sin-offering.

Rabbi Bunim poignantly cites the laws of the sin offering as an example of the *Torah's* concern for maintaining a Jew's self-esteem. The *Yerushalmi* (*Yevamos* 8:3) states "*At the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, the sin offering shall also be slain, so as not to publicize the sinners.*" A burnt offering was brought not for any specific wrong doing, but rather as a voluntary gift to Hashem, especially if one had experienced sinful thoughts that left him feeling guilty. Since no one escapes cognitive sin, it was not considered disgraceful to bring a burnt offering.

Thus, observers who noticed someone offering a *korban* that was ritually slaughtered north of the Altar would not know what type of *korban* it was. This thought is echoed by many of the commentaries. The *Torah's* concern for the sinners' feelings knows no limits. This should serve as model for us to demonstrate our sensitivity towards our fellow man. We often forget that character assassination is a form of murder for which one can lose his portion in the world to come. Let the *Torah's* attitude towards the sinner serve as the paradigm for our relationship with our fellow man.