
A REVIEW OF VIDUI

Vidui is an essential part of the Teshuvah process. HaRav Chaim Volozhiner, Z'tl, explains why the Vidui is recited by the Aleph-Bais: Every person is a Sefer Torah. The letters in every person's Sefer Torah are comprised of his thoughts, words and actions in Avodas Hashem. If a person, *c'v*, commits a sin he has in some way ripped his Sefer Torah, with the result that some of the letters are *porchos*--fly away or come off. Through appropriate Teshuvah, a person can bring back the letters of his Sefer Torah and make it Kosher again. Our Vidui recitation requires the twenty-two letters, so that they can all be returned to our Sefer Torah. The Sefer *Dover Shalom* adds that there are two aspects to the gravity of an *aveira*--one being the sin as committed, and the other being the person who committed it. This dual aspect of sin is represented by the term *Ahl Cheit*--referring to the sin itself, and *Shechatanu Lefanecha*--the admission that a person of sense, of intelligence and of reason, has done wrong.

Each *ohs*, each letter of the Aleph Bais is represented in the *Ahl Cheit* by two categories of sin.

ALEPH:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Be'Oness U'VeRatzon--For The Sin Committed By Accident (Or By Force) and By Will

HaRav Eliyahu Dessler, Z'tl, explains that *Oness* is an *aveira* for which Vidui is required, because when a person feels that he is forced into doing something, then it is not his 'fault' and he will accordingly be lenient with himself. *U'VeRatzon*--with intent is, however, the main source of sin. *Oness* and *Ratzon* which appear diametrically opposed are placed together, and several reasons can be suggested for this: One, of course, is that *aveiros* bridge the gamut from small levels of fault to great levels of culpability. Another is to teach that sometimes *Oness* is simply no excuse (examples of this would be *aveiros b'sha'as hagezeira* or *befarhesya*--for which a person must give his life)--and could accordingly be the Halachic equivalent. There is an additional important explanation as to why they are placed together--referring to an *aveira* which may start out as an *Oness* but continues as a *Ratzon*. One example of this would be a person who finds himself with one or more people whom he realizes are not properly guarding their tongue and then *continues* to converse with them, thinking that he will simply not believe what they say. This is insufficient--for even if it started in the category of *Oness*, it moves into the category of *Ratzon*. Another example would be a person walking up the street in a business district and noticing improperly dressed people. While the first time may have been permissible (in order to know where he was, etc.--of course, if a person knows that it will be inevitable he must [perhaps with his Rav] come up with a thoughtful solution, so that it is not 'walk into the lion's den'), if he knows when he looks up again he will be faced with a similar sight, then there is an aspect of *Ratzon* in it as well. A person must take care to avoid the *Oness*--but if the *Oness* occurs, he must certainly take care to avoid a *Ratzon* resulting from it.

POSTSCRIPT: "Sometimes you feel good about yourself when hearing others speak improperly or negatively--and thinking to yourself: "It is not me--they have the problem". This is not the case at all, you may have started out as an *Oness*, but by your not properly reprimanding

them or teaching them, you are sinning as well, whether it be in willingly listening to Lashon Hara, or by your failure to reprove them. There is a second point as well. There are aveiros that involve thought alone, including *sinah*, and as we say in Shema every day “*Velo Sasuru Acharei Levavchem V’Acharei Eineichem Asher Atem Zonim Achacreihem*”--do not follow your heart and your eyes.... Chazal teach that this refers to improper thoughts regarding the fundamentals of our belief and to immoral or immodest thoughts. Even if one is not in control of the initial thought that enters his mind (let us say as a test), if he allows the sinful thought to fester and develop, then he has turned the initial *Oness* into *Ratzon*.

Hakhel Note: While this particular *Ahl Cheit* is here because *Oness* begins with an Aleph--it certainly is appropriate for it to have this prominent position in the *Ahl Cheits*!

BEIS:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Be'Imutz HaLev--Hard heartedness

HaRav Eliyahu Dessler, Z'tl, explains that the sin referred to here is stubbornness, based on one's opinion that everything that he does is right. In this way, one can justify almost any of his thoughts, words or actions. It becomes justifiable, then, for a person to withhold compassion for a poor person, and to show harshness and even 'deserved cruelty' to others. Even when one actually gives Tzedaka, but feels any heaviness of heart or reluctance in doing so, he is demonstrating a coldness and toughness which is unbefitting of a Torah Jew and his character. When one gets the urge to be tough or difficult, or not to be giving, he should think about whether he is involved in ***Imutz HaLev***...and avoid and overcome!

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Bivli Da'as--Without Thought

Hashem has blessed each of us with intelligence, and most certainly expects us to use it in accordance with our true capabilities. The starting point is for one's mind and being to realize that Hashem stands before him at all times, and that Hashem's glory fills the earth. With this essential thought kept at the forefront, it simply makes no sense at all to sin, and the urgings and temptations provided by the Yetzer Hara become insignificant and even insulting to the intelligence. There is a second point: Many of our actions during the day can be Mitzvos if performed with the right intent. If instead we fail to put our minds in the right direction, or simply speak and act out of rote, we are squandering precious time and valuable opportunities. Finally, by not adequately concentrating when learning or when davening, we do not fulfill our true potential in *Dveikus B'Hashem*--which as the *Sefer Mesilas Yesharim* describes at the outset, is the core and essence of our very existence. Hakhel Note: This *Ahl Cheit* is so essential, that perhaps one could reawaken himself from time-to-time during the day--inspiring himself to make proper use of Hashem's extraordinary gift--*Da'as*...and davening to Hashem for His help in doing so!

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Bevitui Sefasayim--With Our Verbal Expressions

Unlike a thief who we can run after and catch up to, once we have uttered words they cannot be caught or brought back. Among the limited instructions that the Ramban gives to his son in the famous *Igeres HaRamban*, he significantly instructs him to consider his words before he utters them. One who constantly lets his words leave his lips without adequate care will find himself hurting himself and others on a constant and consistent basis. 'Loose lips sink ships' probably has its idiomatic equivalent in each and every language and tongue. Sins of verbal expression also include making vows, being quick to promise something that which one will be sorry about later, complaining, and speaking without purpose. Man was uniquely given the power of speech in order to serve Hashem through the study and teaching of Torah, Tefillah and words of Chesed (including compliment and chizuk) to others. Even when the donkey spoke to Bilam, its words had purpose and meaning. If one has already opened his mouth and everyone recognizes that he

is about to speak--*he can still* stop himself and not continue, if he feels his words would not be constructive or pleasant. The slight embarrassment one may feel will be far overshadowed by his teaching others how important it is not to say what should not be said. Some additional examples of misuse of speech would be giving 'lip service' to something without being serious about it, not making the phrase "*Im Yirtzeh Hashem*" a part of one's everyday speech, reciting a bracha or speaking words of Torah in unclean places, speaking unnecessarily to members of the opposite gender in the workplace or the like, and stopping to engage in conversation in the middle of davening even if it is a place 'where one can stop', such as before *Baruch She'amar* or after the second *Ashrei* of Shacharis. Even if one feels that he cannot control his words all the time, he must make the effort to do so as much as he can. A good place to begin is the first time he speaks in the morning, and the last time he speaks before going to bed.

GIMEL:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BaGalui U'Vasaser--Openly or Secretly

Whether a sin is performed in public or in private, there is a common denominator of rebelliousness against Hashem. When done in public, the sinner shows no shame, and causes others to follow suit--which is a Chilul Hashem. On the other hand, when one sins privately, he demonstrates that he is more concerned with what people think than with Hashem's actual presence and direct knowledge of what he is doing. HaRav Eliyahu Dessler, Z'tl, adds that the term *galui* also refers to the sin of a person performing a Mitzvah publicly in order to gain the honor and respect of others, for a person's service of Hashem must be with modesty and truth. Why are these two very different kinds of sin--*galui* and *saser* are placed together in one Ahl Cheit--after all, they appear to truly be opposites? Based upon the Anaf Yosef commentary found in the Siddur *Otzar HaTefillos*, we suggest that the two are placed together to highlight for us that there is indeed no 'better' or 'worse' way to sin--sins in a public place or in seclusion are both awful--but for different reasons. The public sin involves *r'l* a greater Chilul Hashem and causes others to stumble, while the secluded sin *r'l* implies a personal denial of the existence of Hashem's presence at that moment. The continuum of sin between the extremes of *public display* and *innermost hiding* is not a pleasant one--with the only question being, is the particular act a greater Chilul Hashem, or greater lack of *Shevisi Hashem L'negdi Somid*? One should think about any 'public' or 'private' sins that he has performed--whether in the presence of tens of others on the street, or in the privacy of his closed office--and jot them down--for Teshuvah is very much in order, and very much required.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeGiluy Arayos--Immoral Behavior

Although certain relationships are prohibited by the *Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach* to the entire world, the Torah Jew's restrictions relating to immorality are far more pervasive. The great importance of the *arayos* restrictions, and their essential application to our way of life, is highlighted by the fact that of all the Parshios of the Torah we specially read the *Parshas Arayos* on Yom Kippur afternoon, after reading only about the Yom Kippur service in the morning Torah reading. To be sure, not only is the definition of what constitutes a forbidden relationship much more expanded for Bnei Yisrael, but the paths and directions which could *c'v* lead us there are very much guarded by the Torah and Chazal as well. It is for this reason that, unless otherwise permitted by familial relationship, it is forbidden to chat with members of the opposite gender for no particular reason, for a man to walk behind a women, to come into physical contact with a member of the opposite gender, or to otherwise look, listen, smell, think or talk in a manner which even has the theoretical or indirect potential of something that could lead to a violation of the Torah's prohibitions against any of the forbidden relationships. HaRav Eliyahu Dessler, Z'tl, notes that sin begins by allowing one's initial desire to be awakened.... Hakhel Note: In Kosher supermarkets, it is apparent that female cashiers have been trained to put change down on the counter rather than hand the change to a male--one should keep the distancing in other stores and situations as well, "Thanks very much you can just put it down", etc. One must

also make the effort to avoid to the extent possible places and circumstances which are rife with temptation--e.g., the check-out counters in non-Jewish stores (CVS, Rite Aid and the like)--
..."can't I really buy it elsewhere even if it costs a little more--it will really be worth it"!

DALED:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeDibur Peh--Sins of Speech

Iyun Tefillah explains that sins of speech go beyond what we usually refer to as Lashon Hara, and include mentioning Hashem's Name flippantly without proper regard, excessive talk, words of friction and dispute, and using coarse language or biting words, rather than speaking softly and gently. In the essential *Sefer Pathway to Prayer* (for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur), by Rabbi Mayer Birnbaum, Shlita, he relates that soon after Reb Itzele Peterburger, Z'tl, passed away, he appeared to his dear friend, HaRav Chaim Berlin, [Z'tl], who asked him how he had fared in his judgment in the Next World. HaRav Itzele answered that the judgment was very stringent--**but that there is an especially great strictness regarding forbidden words**. The Rabbeinu Yonah (Sha'arei Teshuvah 3:63) notes that one who curses a parent receives the punishment of *sekilah*, which is a more severe form of death penalty than one who hits and draws blood from a parent, in which the punishment is *chenek*. It is noteworthy that we recite Viduy not simply over *Dibur Ra'ah*--but over *Dibur Peh*--words of the mouth, which indicates that we have not properly thought through that which we have said, rather allowing words to carelessly leave our mouths, which can definitely result in hurt, havoc and destruction. As one of our readers advised us, he tries to make his brachos over food not only from his mouth--but from his heart. As much as possible, this is the place from which all of our speech should originate!

POSTSCRIPT: The Chofetz Chaim points out that the Yetzer Hara lures us into improper communications with the thought that there is no Ma'aseh involved and it is accordingly a *davar she'ein bo mamash*--something without real substance. Strikingly, the Chofetz Chaim writes: "*Key HaKilkul Shemagiyah L'Ma'alah Ahl Yidei Diburav Hu Harbei Yoser Me'mah Shemagiya Ahl Yidei Ma'asav*--for the damage and ruin created in heaven through one's speech is **much greater** than the damage and ruin created by physical deeds(!)" In our times, the concept of blogging unfortunately straddles the kilkul of dibur (communicating) and of ma'aseh (typing) and we suggest that maybe one of the most important things to avoid participating in, unless one can be sure that the context is truly pristine.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeDa'as U'v'mirmah--With Knowledge/With Deceit

HaRav Eliyahu Dessler, Z'tl, explains that the Da'as referred to here is knowledge which exceeds the person's actual deeds. For instance, he continues, a person who studies Kabbalah before he corrects his Middos could bring true harm upon himself. The Mirmah that is referred to according to HaRav Dessler, is one who fools himself (which can be worse than fooling others). The more common explanation of this Ahl Cheit refers to sins which we committed with knowledge, allowing ourselves to be deceived by the Yetzer Hara, or deceitfully claiming that what we had done was unintentional. The Dover Shalom explains that the Yetzer Hara can work in one of two ways--either he can convince the person that even though it is wrong, he should fulfill his desire, or he convinces the person that there is nothing wrong with what he is about to do. As people of intelligence, we must recognize the Yetzer Hara's approach in both cases.

HEIH:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeHarhor HaLev--Forbidden Thoughts

Certain thoughts in and of themselves are forbidden, without the need to attach them to any further words or deeds. These thoughts include one who *c'v*: questions Hashem or has other heretical thoughts; questions the motives or veracity of his Rebbi; thinks words of Torah in unclean places; business thoughts which preoccupy a person on Shabbos or Yom Tov, during Torah studies or Tefillah; lustful thoughts; and prideful thoughts. HaRav Eliyahu Dessler, Z'tl, writes that one's thoughts are the roots from which the branches of sin grow, and accordingly, by proper focus on Teshuvah in *Harhor HaLev*, one can cut down the tree of sin at its very source. The *Iyun Tefillah* adds that even if the sinful thought does not lead to action, one is *Metameh Es Hanefesh*--sullies his soul, by impure thoughts. Indeed, Chazal (Nidah 13B) teach that one who allows himself to engage in improper thoughts is not admitted, after 120 years, into the *mehitzah* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Furthermore, the Rambam writes that one's failure to properly control his thoughts, is one of the 24 impediments to Teshuvah in its entirety. If one would instead recognize that the wasteful moments of sinful *Harhor HaLev* can be converted into precious moments of *Hirhur BaTorah* and Mitzvos--he will be taking a failed and bankrupt business and converting it into a thriving and tremendously successful one. The Alter of Kelm, for example, was known to point out that for every moment that one thinks about how he could help someone else, he fulfills the Mitzvas Asei D'Oraysa of *VeAhavta L'Reiacha Kamocha*! The key is to take the thought as it occurs out of the Yetzer Hara's wasteland--and propel it up to the heavens!

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeHona'as Rei'ah--Wronging One's Friend

The Torah describes two different ways in which one can deal improperly with his friend--either by hurting him monetarily, or by word and action. Chazal teach (Bava Metziah 58B) that hurting with words is actually worse than hurting with money--after all, the overcharge can be refunded, but the words cannot be taken back. One is especially prone to utilize harsh, biting, sarcastic or other wrongful words with close family members. However, their pain from hurtful words is no different than the pain suffered by a stranger or an acquaintance. One must take special care to ensure that inappropriate language and methods of expression do not enter his vocabulary from others--even if they may otherwise have superior standing to him at work or in the community. All the more so should one who is highly thought of be sure that his words are calm, gentle, positive and complimentary.

We present by the following link <http://tinyurl.com/nckpnp8> a listing of statements we have presented in the past constituting **Ona'as Devarim**, as culled from *The Power of Words*, by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Shlita. It would most certainly pay to review this listing from time-to-time, to keep one's mind and tongue in check.
... Let the bracha set in...and take hold!

VAV:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeViduy Peh--Confessing With The Mouth, But Without True Sincerity

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, writes that Teshuvah is something that comes from the inner heart. Turning Teshuvah into lip service is a sin in and of itself. Only if one feels sincere regret with an earnest intent to correct a particular misdeed should Viduy be recited. If one merely expresses the matter with his mouth and does not really have any idea of change, then it is almost as if one is *c'v* acting as if Hashem does not know his true thoughts.

Hakhel Note: Sometimes, it is hard for a person to imagine that he is truly a sinner. If he would try to write down things he did wrong during the day as he did them, he may note more issues than he thought existed. If in fact, one does so, then every time he recites *Selach Lanu Avinu Key Chatanu Mechal Lanu Malkeinu Key Phashanu*, he can have one or more of the recent issues he has written down on his mind--and perhaps sincerely repent for them, by expressing what they were at the end of Shemone Esrei, before taking three steps back.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As we contemplate this Ahl Cheit, and as we continue through Viduy, we must realize and recall what a tremendous opportunity Teshuvah really is. It is not *c'v*, a difficult obligation, a drudgery, a have-to-do of life--rather, it is an opportunity to start afresh, to start again, to realize one's potential--to gain true joy in this world, and for ever and ever!

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Biv'idus Zenus--Gatherings In Which Men And Women Mingle

Western society has dictated that it is socially acceptable for men and women to speak with each other as if they were not otherwise married. Conversations and gatherings in which individuals of the opposite gender interact with levity or lightheadedness, or where they mingle for the sake of mingling, is prohibited by the Torah. One cannot disclaim responsibility simply because many are gathered together doing the same thing, or because it is a common business practice, or because one 'needs to appear normal' to the outside world--instead, one should recognize that doing Hashem's will is what is normal, and is what sanctifies Hashem's name! Hakhel Note: Sometimes, it becomes necessary or may appear to be necessary to contact one's wife or close relative on 'the other side of the mechitzah' at a Simcha, and one may allow himself to walk into 'the other side' for his necessary purpose. Before doing so, one should attempt any other means possible (such as by phone, such as by designating a meeting place at a certain time, etc.), so that one does not need to breach the fence that the mechitzah is intended to serve as and represent.

ZAYIN:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Bezadon U'Veshgaga--For Intentional and Unintentional Sins

Here, we pair together sins done intentionally and knowingly, together with sins done through a lack of knowledge--either of the prohibition at all or of the extent of the prohibition. This pairing teaches us that one cannot plead ignorance or 'I don't want to know', or 'better for me not to know' to any aveira, for this is simply no excuse. In the times of the Beis HaMikdash even for various sins which were done 'only' beshogeg, one would have to bring an expensive Karbon Chatas, recite Vidui, and view it as if the animal was being brought in his place and stead. A lack of preparation, care, diligence and forethought puts an element of disregard, recklessness or even constructive intent even into the 'unintentional'--and allows the two to be paired together under this heading of *Bezadon U'Veshgaga*. We add that some meforshim point out that Zidon--intentional sin is mentioned in this Ahl Cheit before Shegaga, unintentional sin, in order to teach us that the 'unintentional sins' come about because of the intentional sins which preceded them, as aveira goreres aveira --one aveira pulls another. We must remember--Hashem has given us beautiful minds--not to avoid thinking, evade learning, or circumvent our obligations--but to instead understand our role in life, study the Torah's laws, meet our challenges, and succeed at them!

Additional Note: Through the miracle of Teshuva MiYirah we are taught we can reduce the severity of a sin which was initially done intentionally to the severity of a sin performed unintentionally. Accordingly, another thought in mentioning the intentional and unintentional together here is...Hashem just as You allowed the intentional to become the unintentional, may you now forgive me for it all--and rid me of the unintentional sins as well!

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Bezilzul Horim U'Morim--Not Giving Appropriate Honor To Parents And Teachers

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, points out that if one does not give appropriate honor to one's parents, Rebbeim or teachers, he derogates their importance, and cannot learn from them. Chazal specifically teach "*Morah Rabecha KeMorah Shomayim*"--one should fear his Rebbi in the way he fears Heaven. Likewise, parents should be treated as one would treat the most esteemed and prominent people (*Chayei Odom*). The Sefer *Iyun Tefillah* writes that not showing proper esteem for parents and teachers is, amazingly, *Avi Avos Kohl Hachataim*--the ultimate source of all sin! One can always improve in showing proper honor and respect. It is said that HaRav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, Z'tl, was once asked the source for the contemporary practice of children not standing up when the parents enter the room. His response was: "You mean they don't?!"

CHES:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeChozek Yad--Acting With Undue Force

The Torah teaches us that a person should never claim that *Kochi V'Otzem Yadi Assah Li Es HaChayil Hazeh*--it is through my own might, prowess or abilities that have brought me to where I am now or will bring me to where I will be in the future. As ridiculous as this claim sounds, it nevertheless is a Middah Ra'ah that we must fight daily. HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, teaches that when a person acts with force, or tries to compel others to do as he wishes, he is making the statement that he is entitled to act in this way. The Sefer *Viduy* adds the mere lording over another human being is in and of itself a sin, for all human beings are created *B'Tzelem Elokim*. Indeed, even one whose job it is to be a community leader is prohibited from instilling unnecessary compulsion, force or fear over his constituents, and if he does so, he is punished very severely in the next world (see Rosh Hashana 17A). When one presses his own idea, pushes his own approach, or otherwise feels 'he knows better', and certainly when one acts through mental coercion he must consider the impact and effect of *B'Chozek Yad*.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeChilul Hashem--Causing Desecration to the Honor of Hashem

The Torah requires that our lives be permeated by acts of Kiddush Hashem, and adds a specific negative prohibition of "*VeLo Sechalelu Es Sheim Kodshi*--do not desecrate My Holy Name." Chazal teach that the sin of Chilul Hashem is so severe that even *after* one does Teshuvah and Yom Kippur successfully passes, one must nevertheless experience death in order for the sin to be totally expunged. [The *Sha'arei Teshuvah* (1:47) explains that the sin of Chilul Hashem can also be expunged through acts of Kiddush Hashem; see there for additional details and alternatives.] Chilul Hashem includes not sacrificing one's life in a situation of *Yeihareig VeAhl Ya'avor*, and violating a Mitzvah when one derives no personal '*hana'ah*', or benefit. Also included in Chilul Hashem is performing any inappropriate act publicly so that others learn from it, whether it is an *aveirah*, or whether even if it is technically permitted, it dishonors the Torah or the Jewish people. In this regard, a Talmid Chochom is held to a higher standard, because he is the Jewish people's representative to the world. The Chofetz Chaim would say that any Ben Torah [perhaps in our day any religious Jew] is considered a Talmid Chochom for these purposes. *Pathway to Prayer* writes that part of the sin of Chilul Hashem is 'not thinking adequately before any action about its repercussions'. Because of the severity of Chilul Hashem, one must take extra special care in his Teshuvah in this area, which should include a particular plan of action as to how to avoid past acts of clear Chilul Hashem on a going forward basis. It is important to reiterate that the actual act and degree of Chilul Hashem is commensurate with the regard and esteem in which the person is held by others. It is known, for example, that rather than come late to Minyan in Yeshiva because he was involved in a K'lal matter, the Chofetz Chaim would daven elsewhere, so that people would not think that he came late. On one occasion when he could not do so, it is reported that after davening he stood up and announced the reason he had come late. Even if one may not be the Chofetz Chaim, he can think about

whether his coming late to davening or to a Shiur, or whether his making a particular remark...will allow others to do likewise as well!

TES:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeTifshus Peh--Utilizing the Mouth Unwisely

The power of speech is uniquely granted to man to use *wisely*--and not foolishly. Talking without purpose in order to 'fill time' or 'make conversation' is foolish--for it demonstrates both that one does not properly regard his speaking ability, nor the value of his time by doing so. HaRav Dessler, Z'tl quotes his grandfather, Rebbi Yisroel Salanter, Z'tl, who teaches that the First Mitzvah is *Ahl Tehi Sachal*--do not be foolish. Ultimately, one who converses without purpose--not imparting any wisdom or knowledge, not providing a compliment, useful lesson or other necessary information, whether at home, at work or anywhere is considered by the wisest of all men, Shlomo HaMelech to be a *kesil*--as the Pasuk (Koheles 5:2) states: "*Kol Kesil Berov Devarim*--excessive talk betrays the fool." The Sefer *Pathway to Prayer* here quotes the Chofetz Chaim as follows: "...people who are not careful in their speech knowingly and willingly squander time each day...certainly, one does not gain any reward in the World to Come for these words, and not even any pleasure in this world...all that he has achieved by this, is to create a void [in the time allotted to him in this world]." Here is a practical example based on the Chofetz Chaim's teaching. Assume a person engages in non-meaningful talk one half-hour a day. Over the course of the year, this amounts to more than 175 hours, which is more than a week of the year. This is frightening. Hakhel Note: If a person realizes that he is in a situation which is prone to non-meaningful talk or chatter, he owes it to himself and to the other person or persons with him to steer the conversation towards Torah, Mitzvos, or if this is not possible, towards a discussion of mussar or ethically related topics, such as honesty, humility, ways to avoid anger, ways to help people, etc. Then instead of being guilty of *Tifshus Peh*, he can successfully demonstrate his *Chochmas Halev*!

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeTumas Sefasayim--With Impure Lips

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, points out that there is *nothing* that brings one to licentiousness and desire more than impurity of the lips. The Sefer *Dover Shalom* explains that speaking impurely does not only include unclean language or profanity, it also includes blunt or coarse words when more pleasant expressions could have been used. Certainly, if one uses a word or phrase and before or after it says "excuse the expression" or "I am sorry" for the language, he knows that he must do Teshuvah for this aveirah. Utilizing a curse word or unclean word in another language (such as Yiddish, French, Spanish or Arabic) does not cleanse the usage. The *Dover Shalom* continues: "*She'Ikar Sheleimus HaAdam Hu BeRuach Sefasav*--for the primary ingredient of *sheleimus* for a person are the words with which he expresses himself." We may add that when one utilizes a word or expression that sounds similar to an inappropriate expression and by the use of the similar sound demonstrates the word(s) that he otherwise intended to express, there is an element of *nivul peh* in this as well--as it shows what his mind is thinking and the kind of reaction that he wants to communicate to others. Additional Note: When one uses *nivul peh* in your presence and says "excuse me", may we suggest that you not respond "It's all right" or "It's OK"--instead

letting him feel that the expression that he used was wrong, and that you disagree with it and want no part of it.

YUD:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeYetzer Hara--Hurting Ourselves with the Evil Inclination

Everything that Hashem created has a positive purpose for us. The famous *Viduy* booklet bring from HaRav Mordechai Gifter, Z'tl, that the Yetzer Hara was also given to help us--in order to test our faithfulness to Hashem, and succeed. By giving in to the Yetzer Hara, we have failed in recognizing its true purpose and used it beyond its purpose--which is in and of itself sinful. One abuses the true purpose of the Yetzer Hara by going to places he should not go, looking at things he should not look at, and listening to things that he should not be listening to. As Rav Dessler, Z'tl, succinctly writes, the Yetzer Hara for which we ask forgiveness for here is the "*Yetzer Hara She'adam Oseh LeAtzmo*--the Yetzer Hara that a person makes for himself when he creates or allows himself to be in situations which do not further Torah, Mitzvos or one's purpose in life." In fact, we recite in Kriyas Shema twice daily that we are to demonstrate our love to Hashem by serving Him "*Bechol Levavecha*", which Chazal (Brachos 54A) teach refers to serving Hashem with both the Yetzer HaTov **and the Yetzer Hara**. Finally, the Ba'alei Mussar point out that there are certain character traits which are generally negative and which could be referred to under the term Yetzer Hara, but which should be used in a constructive (rather than destructive) way--examples of these middos includes *ka'as*, *kinah*, *ga'avah* and *sinah*. For the ways in which these middos are really supposed to be used, we refer you to the Sefer *Orchos Tzaddikim* which provides wonderful guidance in this area.

Hakhel Note: The Sefer *Pathway to Prayer* brings the words of Rashi (to Kedushin 39B), that when one has the opportunity to sin but refrains from doing so because Hashem forbade it, *Ein Mitzvah Yeseirah Mezu*--there is no Mitzvah greater than this, to which the Steipeler Gaon, Z'tl, remarkably adds that in this zechus, one is zoche to an *Ohr Kedusha Norah VeAyom She'ein Lesha'er*--a light of holiness that is unimaginable!

KAF:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeYodim U'velo Yodim--Knowingly and Unknowingly

We may sin against others and not realize the ramifications of our actions and the extent of the hurt we have caused. Additionally, we have sinned against others without their realizing the injury and pain we have caused them. With this Ahl Cheit, we acknowledge that the sin against another is not only a sin Bein Adam L'Chaveiro, but also a sin which is Bein Adam LaMakom--for whether or not they know that what happened to them was because of me, and whether or not there is any ill-will between the two of us, Hashem considers the sin and the damage done to be my responsibility. HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, has a tremendous additional insight. By '*Yodim*'--of which there is knowledge, we refer to the sin committed because we cared about the opinion of others who were watching, and by *Lo Yodim*, we refer to the sin committed wantonly and alone--without being able to blame peer pressure or being accepted socially as the cause for the sin. Our most precious commodity is our mind. We have to do what we know is correct--not what we think others want us to do, nor what we know is wrong or at least that which is based upon pushing to the side what we know to be right.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Bechapas Shochad--Giving or Taking 'Bribes'

Bribes can take the form of actual money changing hands, or of flattery or favors, which compel another to act in a manner which is in favor of the donor. This is so even if the recipient may have otherwise ruled or responded in the same way without the favor, the words of flattery, or the money--for the act of distortion itself is an *aveirah* both to the maker and the recipient. Any time one thinks: "Let me do this and that will make him do that" or "I am going to do this because I have no choice, after all, didn't he....", one should reflect upon whether the action he is about to undertake is truly appropriate, or whether he is simply giving or receiving a non-judge's form of bribe.

Additional Note: HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, adds that also included in this Ahl Cheit is one's allowing himself to take the bribe of the Yetzer Hara, which stilt one's decisions and lead to further sin.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha Bechachash U'Vechazav--Denying What Was and Breaking a Commitment

Chazal (Sotah 42A) teach that one of the only four groups that do not greet the Shechinah are the Kas Shakranim--those who speak falsely. The Sefer *Mesilas Yesharim* (Chapter 11) explains that Chazal are not referring to people who maliciously or even wantonly lie. Rather, they are referring to those who will mix false items into stories as they feel appropriate. Because of their disregard for the truth, knowingly 'peppering' falsity into the truth, they lack the trait of honesty and veracity. Indeed, continues the *Mesilas Yesharim*, even those who do not add the 'spice' as a matter of course but only from time-to-time are also considered to be *Dovrei Sheker*. In the end of days, the Navi teaches (Tzefanya 3:13) that one of the traits the *She'eiris Yisrael* will be

marked by is “*Lo Yidabru Chazav*--they will not speak falsehood.” The Torah (Shemos 23:7) especially teaches us “*Midvar Sheker Tirchak*--stay far away from falsehood.” Accordingly, we must be careful not to deny or lie about something that took place, and just as careful to keep our pledges, promises and commitments so that we are truthful not only about the past--but also about what we had committed to in the future. No part of Sheker is good--Hashem’s seal is Emes--as we must try our hardest to make it ours as well!

LAMED:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeLashon Hara--Negative Speech

Chazal (Erchin 15B) teach that one who speaks Lashon Hara *Ke'ilu Kofer Balkar*--it is as if *r'l* he denies Hashem. The sin of relating Lashon Hara includes relating something derogatory about another person or his property which could result in harm or distress to another. Even if it does not result in actual harm, by speaking negatively one nevertheless violates the Mitzvos related to Lashon Hara, on a Bein Adam LaMakom level. It makes no difference whether the negative information related is true or false, or whether it is spoken in the presence of that person or behind his back (unless specific circumstances are met in which case one can suspect, or in certain circumstances even believe, the Lashon Hara). Just as one is not permitted to speak Lashon Hara, one is not permitted to listen to it, and certainly not to believe it--with Chazal describing one who accepts Lashon Hara as 'being fit to be thrown to the dogs'--a consequence which Chazal do not ascribe to other sins. One of the four groups of people who do not merit to greet the Shechina are those who speak Lashon Hara (Sotah 42A). The *Sha'arei Teshuvah* (3:201) explains why one who speaks Lashon Hara is like a *Kofer Balkar*--it is because he feels that which he utters is *up to him*, and he is not bound by Hashem's rules in this regard, as Dovid HaMelech (Tehillim 12:5) describes: [They exclaim] "*Sefaseinu Itanu Me Adon Lanu*--our lips are with us--who is master over us?" Chazal list Lashon Hara as one of the 24 items which block Teshuvah in general, and teach that a person is especially punished both in this world and in the next world for his improper speech. The great rule of the Chofetz Chaim is that if one is unsure whether or not he should say something, it is always better to remain silent!

Hakhel Note: In our generation, we have been blessed with the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation. May we suggest that, as a zechus in this extremely essential area, and as an aid to help overcome previous aveiros, one pass on the following information to as many people as you can, and keep it on hand to continuously pass on: To order Shemiras Halashon tapes, books, learning programs and the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's free catalog call [866-593-8399](tel:866-593-8399). For free Shiurim in the Sefer Chofetz Chaim call the Chazal Hotline call [718-258-2008](tel:718-258-2008) (press 5). For the Shemiras HaLashon Shailah Hotline (expert Poskim in Shemiras HaLashon to anonymously answer your real-life Shailah before saying the right or wrong thing), please call [718-951-3696](tel:718-951-3696), between the hours of 9:00PM until 10:30PM (EST).

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeLatzon--Acting with Frivolity

Just as the *Kas Shakranim* and *Ba'alei Lashon Hara*, the *Kas Leitzanim* are not afforded the opportunity to greet the Shechina. The *Mesilas Yesharim* teaches that one act or word of *Leitzanus* can undermine much good that a person has done--needlessly setting one back many steps. *Leitzanus* includes mocking, ridiculing or scoffing anything that is undeserving of ridicule and wasting time when Torah could be studied. HaRav Dessler, *Z'tl*, adds that *Leitzanus* does not allow one to accept rebuke or criticism--for it serves as a shield upon which oil has been smeared. Dovid HaMelech taught that a person is fortunate when (Tehillim 1:1) "*BeMoshav Leitzim Lo Yashav*"--when he does not sit among those who act this way. The *Sefer Dover*

Shalom writes that the study of Torah protects against the scoffers, the mockers, the ridiculers, and those that act with frivolity---as the Pasuk teaches (119:51): “*Zeidim Helitzuni Ahd Me’od MeTorasecha Lo Natisi*--sinners taunted me exceedingly, but I did not swerve from your Torah.”

MEM:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeMasah U'Vematan--Acting Improperly In Financial Matters

Perhaps one of the most famous teachings of Chazal (Shabbos 31A) is that the first question that a person is asked by the Bais Din Shel Ma'alah is "Did you act honestly in your financial affairs?" The language of the question is actually "*Nasa'asah V'Nasatah B'Emunah?*" The key word here is *B'Emunah*--for if one acts even a bit deceitfully, if one underpays, overcharges, negotiates through mistruths, withholds payments, pays or charges ribbis, or fails to clarify what the Halacha is regarding a purchase, a sale or a payment that needs to be made--then he is not acting with Emunah, *which is the belief that Hashem and Hashem only determines exactly what one needs and is supposed to have from Rosh Hashanah until the next Rosh Hashanah*. The *Pri Megadim* (to Shulchan Aruch 156) writes that the second question a person is asked after 120 years is "*Kavata Itim LaTorah--did you establish times for Torah study?*" However, this is the **second** question, for if the person does not pass the first, he does not really get to the second. The *Iyun Tefillah* adds that although one may not be guilty of highway robbery, outright fraud or blatant cheating, each and every person must act with introspection relating to the financial '*heterim*' that he has applied to himself. If a person could look back at the end of each day and say (really, exclaim)--"*My Masah and Matan was with Emunah!*"--then he has accomplished a great deal in this world, and after 120 years, in the next!

Additional Note: Chazal actually teach that "Someone who takes from his friend even something worth only a *peruta*, is viewed as if he took his life and the life of his descendants." The Pele Yoetz succinctly states, "and someone who has his friend's possessions in his hands will not have his Tefillos heard...and if his Tefilos are not heard on the Yomim Noraim--does he have any hope?!"

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeMa'achal U'VeMishteh--Through Food and Drink

Because food and drink play such an important part in our lives, there are many Mitzvos that one can accomplish with food and drink, and accordingly it is no secret that the Yetzer Hara works overtime to ensnare us in this area. Included in this Ahl Cheit are the actions of overindulging, eating for the sake of eating, eating merely to appear social, drinking alcohol and then driving because 'I know myself', not safeguarding one's health, not eating with Derech Eretz (if one would not eat that way in public, he should not eat that way in private either), eating fruits or vegetables that may have *tolaim* (insects)--without having ensured that they have been checked properly, eating foods of questionable Kashrus (including if one is simply uncertain as to the Hashgacha, and saying that "others eat it" or "it must be good, after all it says Beis Din of...on it!" Also included are failing to share food with others, taking food from others who are not in a position to share their food but are embarrassed to say otherwise, being careless with the proper brachos over food, forgetting to make a Bracha Achrona, and not reciting brachos with at least a minimal level of Kavannah and HaKaras HaTov to Hashem.

Here, we recall the words of the Sefer *The Mashgiach of Kaminetz* (p. 383), which writes how HaRav Moshe Aharon Stern, Z'tl, (a human being in our times) conducted himself: “The preparatory steps he took before eating were a true divine worship. He said a supplication not to stumble by eating forbidden foods, that his eating be kosher, that his Creator would consider it like a Mincha offering and a sacrifice. He would then meditate intensely on the exalted purpose of eating to strengthen one’s body to serve the Creator.” Each and every one of us can one turn the mundane into the spiritual!

NUN:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeNeshech U'VeMarbis--Usury and Interest

The laws of Ribbis are not brought in Choshen Mishpat, containing the laws of Bein Adam L'Chaveiro--but instead are brought in *Yoreh De'ah*--which is *Issur V'Heter*, where the Halachos of Kashrus, Avodah Zara, and many other Halachos of Bein Adam LaMakom are recorded. Ribbis is not forbidden because there is a 'victim' on the other side. It is forbidden even if the borrower willingly and with a full heart wants to pay interest and 'do business' with the Jewish bank, banker, private lender, relative or next-door neighbor. It is, then, Hashem who does not want us to take or to pay interest, and states this more than once in the Torah. Chazal teach that the sin is so pervasive that the lender, borrower, guarantors, and witnesses are all guilty in a ribbis transaction. Because of the use and sharing of credit cards, and because banks, private lenders and funding institutions may be owned or controlled by Jewish people, the laws of ribbis have now become applicable in many new, contemporary situations. The contemporary applications are not *chumros*, but involve *issurei Ribbis D'Oraysa*. Ribbis can even apply when paying a late charge on a rental payment to a landlord or other lessor. We note that the *issur* is so grave that we are taught that one who is guilty of it will not arise at *Techiyas HaMeisim*. The key work on this essential topic in English is *The Laws of Ribbis*, by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, Shlita (Artscroll). One cannot hide his head in the sand with the awareness that there is even a possibility that he is involving himself in such a stringent aveirah. In addition to *ribbis* involving money, there is also *ribbis devarim*--which means that one cannot extend special favors or even additional pleasant words to one who has extended credit to him. If one believes he may have been involved or is possibly involved in a transaction involving ribbis, he must consult with his Rav or Posek. The confidential hotline of the Business Halacha institute is 877-845-8455. By email, one may send the Shailah to ask@businesshalacha.com

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeNetiyas Garon--Through Haughtiness

Literally, *Netiyas Garon* means 'an outstretched throat'. Perhaps Ga'avah is described in this way so that we appreciate how strange and unacceptable it should be to us. The *Eitz Yosef* explains that from Ga'avah comes many aveiros. Indeed, the Pasuk (Devarim 8:14) shockingly states: "*VeRom Levavecha V'Shochachta Es Hashem Elokecha*--your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem." Indeed, not many sins are called a *To'avas Hashem*--but Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men, teaches (Mishlei 16:5): "*To'avas Hashem Kol Gevah Lev*--one with an arrogant heart is an abomination to Hashem." It is important to realize that arrogance is not only a sin of action, but is also a sin of the heart (as demonstrated by the previous Pasuk). The Sefer *Reishis Chochma* writes that it is *beli safek*, without doubt, that Ga'avah is the source for all *Middos Ra'os*.

SAMACH:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeSikur Ayin--Misuse of the Eyes

For those blessed with the ability to see, they have a *chiyuv gadol*--a great obligation to ensure that they properly utilize the great gift to fulfill their role in this world. The Sefer *Dover Shalom* presents a significant list of possible misuses and abuses of one's vision, which include improperly staring at others or at their possessions, looking at immodestly dressed women, surveying the room while one is davening, seeing a poor man in need and not coming to his aid until asked, glancing at other people's mail (or emails), seeing a Talmid Chochom or elderly person and not standing up for him, seeing Seforim or food on the ground without picking them up, not looking at the writing in a Sefer Torah when it has been lifted up after reading from it [as is brought in Halacha one should endeavor to look at the letters of the Sefer at that time], not looking at one's Tzitzis--at least at some point(s) when reciting the Parasha of Tzitzis. Other examples include watching a person sin and not doing anything about it, improperly winking at the expense of another or for an improper purpose, staring at the face of a Rasha--or not studying the face of one's Rebbi or of a Tzaddik. Hakhel Note: Proper Teshuvah here can certainly bring great merit to a person, for it can apply in many different situations during the day for those who are blessed with the ability to see.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeSiach Sifsaseinu--Lip Service

The Torah in this week's Parsha (Devorim 30:14) requires that Torah be "*Beficha U'Vilevavecha La'asoso*". Our mouths must work in synch with our minds. If, however, we learn or we daven or say brachos without proper concentration, then we fail to serve Hashem in the manner that he expects of us. Our words do not have meaning if we put no meaning into them--and serve no purpose towards reaching our potential or attaining our goals in life. *Pathway to Prayer* importantly notes that the same teaching applies to reciting Amen without the feeling of testimony to one's belief in his Creator. HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, adds that the term *Siach Sifsaseinu* also includes *sicha be'teilah*, or non-constructive talk which serves no purpose and **'leads to many sins'**. It is well-known that HaRav Pam, Z'tl, had the trait of not responding immediately to a question--but instead waited a moment or so--at the very least, the listener would understand the thoughtfulness that must be included in the spoken word!

AYIN:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeEinayim Ramos--Lofty Eyes

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, explains that lofty eyes refers to inner ga'avah, in which a person puts down or disregards others in his heart, feeling greater than them, and that this leads to many other sins *Bein Adam L'Chaveiro*. Hashem says about someone who has this attitude: “*Osah Lo Uchal*--him I cannot bear.” (Tehillim 101:6) The *Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah* brings from the *Sha'arei Teshuvah* that the tikun for lofty eyes is for a person to actually lower his eyes. We may suggest that this is so because one's outward actions affect one's inner nature. Additionally, when a person senses that he is feeling an air of superiority about him, or looks down at another--he must also 'look down' at himself--to understand who he really is.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeAzus Metzach--Demonstrating Brazenness

It is said over in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that the one and only basis for sending a student away from Yeshiva is an attitude of brazenness. The middah of Azus is reserved for us only to be strong in the performance of Mitzvos when faced with challenges, and for no other purpose. *Pathway to Prayer* writes that for one to use it by responding to his Rebbi or Rav or anyone with an undeserved level of disrespect is severe enough for Chazal to term such a person a Rasha. Moreover, it is about such a person to whom Chazal referred when they stated “*Az Panim LeGehenom*” (Avos 520). Finally, *Pathway to Prayer* concludes: “A brazen person is also lacking **one of the primary characteristics of a Jew**, as the Gemara (Yevamos 79A) teaches, these are the signs of a Jew, they are merciful, shamefaced [the opposite of this characteristic] and benevolent.

PEI:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BiPhrikas Ohl--Casting Off Responsibility

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, learns that this refers not just to insubordination, but to not approaching one's responsibilities with the proper seriousness, sometimes acting with negligence, sometimes in a non-chalant manner, and sometimes with laziness. Our responsibilities include accepting *Ohl Malchus Shomayim*, *Ohl Yiras Shomayim*, as well as the *Ohl Torah* and **Ohl Mitzvos**. This becomes compounded when, in the course of shirking one of our responsibilities, someone else is forced to step in when he should not nor need not do so. *Pathway to Prayer* brings the Rabbeinu Yonah (*Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3:169), who describes one lacking in *Ohl Yiras Shomayim* as 'one who fulfills Mitzvos by rote, and when they succumb to sin they do not sigh or worry about it'. Included in one who shirks his responsibilities to Torah is one who does not use the limited time he has to learn wisely, considering it as part of his 'recreation' or 'free time', and not with his special time with Hashem's treasure to us.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BiPhlilus--Improperly Judging

HaRav Dessler, explains that this Aveirah includes questioning a Torah law, or the teachings of Rabbanim. It also includes questioning the *Hanhaga HaElyona*, such as why Rishaim seems to be successful in this world. When one judges another unfavorably, which can literally come up on a daily basis, he must do Teshuvah here for the act of *Phlilus*--improperly passing judgment on another. If one can think of instances where he has not given someone (including a close family member) the benefit of the doubt then after asking him for forgiveness, here is where we should sigh and ask forgiveness from Hashem as well.

Hakhel Note: [we provide by clicking here a Tefillah](#) to Hashem that you judge others L'Chaf Zechus.

TZADDI:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BiTzediyas Reiah-- Secretly Hurting Others

This Ahl Cheit includes going behind other people's backs in ways which causes their dignity or respect to be lowered, and in ways which can cause them financial harm. The term *Tzediyas* includes the 'lying in wait' or stalking--**even if no harm is actually caused**. HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, writes that this Ahl Chait includes attempting to trap a friend's heart, which will allow his judgment to be improperly tainted. The *Dover Shalom* writes that this Ahl Cheit also includes causing one to err in judgment, pretending to be one's friend for personal purposes, and preventing others from doing Mitzvos.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeTzaros Ayin--Small Mindedness

The Sefer *Viduy* writes that small mindedness goes beyond miserliness--and includes envy over the possessions of others, feeling bad about someone else's success, and not dealing with people in a friendly manner or with a cheerful countenance. *Pathway to Prayer* adds that it also refers to one who does not want to do good for others. The *Dover Shalom* writes that it also includes complaining about the cost of Shabbos, Yom Tov and other Mitzvos.

KUF:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeKalus Rosh--Acting In a Lightheaded Manner

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, writes that when one adapts a lightheaded attitude, he makes it difficult for himself to focus and strengthen himself in Mitzvah performance. It is difficult to act with sincerity and earnestness when one treats matters somewhat lackadaisically. *Pathway to Prayer* writes that the cheit of Kalus Rosh refers to acting without the appropriate fear of heaven when doing Mitzvos, or in a holy place (such as a Shul or Beis Midrash) and notes that specifically included in the prohibition of *Kalus Rosh* in a Beis Haknesses is joking, laughter and idle talk (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 151:1). Furthermore, when one jokes or acts in a frivolous manner, it can lead to more serious aveiros, as Chazal teach (Avos 3:13): “*Sechok V’Kalus Rosh Margilin Le’ervah*--laughter and lightheadedness lead to licentiousness.” Finally, concludes *Pathway to Prayer*, the *Mesilas Yesharim* (Chapter 5) writes that laughter and lightheadedness remove one’s heart from straight thoughts and gradually remove the fear of Hashem from him. Hakhel Note: The *Mesilas Yesharim* also writes that one *leitzanus* or one *tzechok katan* can destroy the many gains made by a person [as one missile can destroy a building], and that accordingly a person must act with great discretion and care, even if he is tired or the Yetzer Hara is convincing him that a ‘good joke’ is appropriate under the circumstances, in order to ensure that the many gains one has made in the Teshuvah area are not lost by even a single inappropriate behavior.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeKashyus Oref--Being Stubborn

When one finds himself thinking ‘*this is the way I do things*’; ‘*this is just who I am*’; ‘*I can’t do better*’--he is using his stubbornness to not accept constructive criticism or words of rebuke or improvement. Additionally, when one looks at events that are happening to him as ‘coincidence’ or ‘part of life’, then he is also guilty of *Kashyus Oref* because he is refusing to review the events of his life as personalized to him. HaRav Dessler, writes that stubbornness can come from a strong desire (*ta’avah*) implanted in him by the Yetzer Hara which he does not want to change. After the Cheit HaEgel, Hashem advised Moshe Rabbeinu that K’lal Yisrael had acted as an ‘*Ahm Keshei Oref*’--stubbornly not allowing themselves to be free of the passions and desires they had before Kabbalas HaTorah. Succinctly stated, if one finds himself ‘digging in’ in any area--whether an opinion or in conduct--and not with an open ear and mind to the words, to the circumstances, to the situation around him--he is acting with stubbornness, and must do Teshuvah for doing so.

RAISH:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeRitzas Raglayim Leharah--Running to do Bad

Hashem has given us the ability to act with *zerizus* to perform Mitzvos and Ma'asim Tovim. Today, in the fast-paced society that we live in, we may even have an added measure and level of *zerizus* in everything that we do. However, the Yetzer Hara abuses this usually beautiful trait and persuades us to anxiously or hurriedly sin. This *Ahl Cheit* teaches us that the passion and desire, the joy and the pleasure, one demonstrates in his pursuit of a sin is in and of itself a sin. One must most certainly avoid running out of a Shul or Beis Midrash, walking quickly towards someone to tell him something that he should not be told, or move quickly to hurt somebody in any way. We may add that when one performs an aveirah with speed or quickness, he is giving kavod to the aveirah and demonstrating his dedication and sincerity towards it. The word '*ratz*' (run) is related to the word *ratzon* (will)--as this demonstrates one's true feelings towards what he is doing (*Kuntres Avodas HaTefillah*, quoting *Alei Shur* II, p. 257).

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeRechilus--Tale Bearing

The Torah specifically proscribes Rechilus with the words "*Lo Seileich Rachil Be'amecha--do not tale bear among your people.*" Commentators have pointed out that the term *Lo Seileich* (do not go) is used in the Torah in order to show that the very act of going to tale bear is sinful. Rabbi Aaron Werner, in his commentary on the Yom Kippur Shemone Esrei, notes that the sin of Rechilus also includes revealing secrets and encouraging contention. We must remember that it is not only forbidden to speak Rechilus--it is also forbidden to accept the Rechilus, or even to begin listening to it, unless there is a valid purpose. We need only look at what happened to Nov Ihr HaKohanim, to the great sage Do'eg and to the Malchus of Shaul HaMelech because of only a few words that were uttered by Do'eg to Shaul HaMelech. Death and Destruction. We should not be guilty of Rechilus--we should shudder at it!

SHIN:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BiShvuas Shav--Swearing Falsely or In Vain

HaRav Dessler, Z'tl, explains that swearing in this manner represents a lack of the true honor that is due to Hashem. In fact, *Pathway to Prayer* brings from the *Sha'arei Teshuvah* (3:45) that one who swears falsely desecrates the name of Hashem, and the punishment for desecration of Hashem's Name is greater than all other sins. The prohibition of *Shvuas Shav* is so severe, that it constitutes the third *dibrah* of the Aseres HaDibros. One may be faced with situations where he must 'solemnly swear', or provide an affidavit which is 'sworn to'. He must accordingly consult with his Rav or Posek about the situations and circumstances which are permitted--and which are prohibited.

Hakhel Note: HaRav Uren Reich, Shlita, explains that each member of Bnei Yisrael carries Hashem's Name with him--and that we should not take our royal bearing in vain as well.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeSinat Chinam--Improper Hatred

The Torah provides for *extremely limited circumstances* in which hatred of another Jew is permissible. When it is not permissible, and one nevertheless feels hatred he has violated an express *Lo Sa'aseh* in the Torah of "*Lo Sinah Es Achicha Bilvavecha*". **This means that, among other matters one cannot dislike another because he does not like the way he speaks, behaves, conducts his business, or because he 'rubs him the wrong way', is more prosperous, or is more honored than him.** Chazal teach that it is because of *Sinat Chinam* that we have been in our current *Galus* for almost 2,000 years. As the *Viduy* Booklet succinctly states--we may hate wicked *deeds*, or someone's *behavior*--but we are not permitted to hate the person himself. The *Viduy* Booklet adds in the name of the *G'ra* that because everything that happens to us is decreed in heaven, it is wrong to hate the person offending you--since he is Hashem's messenger in doing so. HaRav Aryeh Finkel, Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Yerushalayim was once reciting the short paragraph of *Avinu Malkeinu* near the end of the *Mussaf Shemone Esrei* on the *Yomim Noraim*--in which we ask Hashem to spare us from sickness, disease and other *tzaros*--but broke down crying only when he asked Hashem to spare us of *Sinat Chinam*. This is an *aveirah* that we all can shed something of--and if we do so together, may it bring the *Geulah Shleimah* in our time!

TAF:

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeSesumes Yad--Not Acting Properly with Money

Money is an item that most deal with every day. Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat deals with many situations and how one must handle them according to Halacha--whether as a partner, employee, lender, or borrower. One also has communal responsibilities with his money--including an obligation to pay his share to his Shul and to organizations, to lend money to the poor when necessary, and to repay loans when they are due. One also has an obligation to only do business and to partner with those who are upright. By not acting properly in monetary matters, one can be guilty of the most serious of sins. Indeed, the Mishna Berurah writes that one must do his best to settle his financial affairs before Yom Kippur as *HaMekatreig HaGadol Ahl Ha'adam* involves financial matters (SA OC 606 seif katan 1). The Mishna Berurah adds that one should not rely upon his own decisions in monetary matters with others, "*Ki HaYetzer Hara, Yesh Lo Heterim Harbey*--for the Yetzer Hara finds many leniencies"! In monetary matters or issues with others, one should consult his Rav or Posek.

Ahl Cheit Shechatanu Lefanecha BeSimhon Leivav--Wondering and Confusion

The *Viduy* Booklet includes in this *Ahl Cheit* a person's wondering about why he has problems and worries, and thinking that he has not done anything bad enough to deserve such punishment. Also included in this *Ahl Cheit* is taking action when perturbed and confused which leads to sin (such as overreaction and anger). *Pathway to Prayer* brings from the Alter of Kelm that this is the final *Ahl Cheit* in the Aleph Bais series, for after all of the other sins, we confess that we have acted with confusion--not properly realizing what is right and what is wrong--and that is the biggest sin, **for one must learn, and one must know!**

Hakhel Note: We have now concluded our review of the *Ahl Cheits* by Aleph Bais. The *Sefer Tomer Devorah* (Chapter 1), writes that one's Kavannah in Viduy should be **LeKabel Alav Taharah**--to bring purity upon oneself. It is for this reason that Dovid HaMelech in the Tehillim Kepitel of Teshuvah exclaims (Tehillim 51:4): "*Herev Kabseini Mei'avoni U'Meichatasi Tahareini*--abundantly cleanse me from my iniquity and from my sin purify me." When reciting Viduy, one should visualize Hashem cleansing his soul!