

## IF A SOUL SINS\*

וְנָפֵשׁ כִּי־תִחַטָּא וְשָׁמְעָה קוֹל אֱלֹהִים

וְהוּא עֵד אֹךְ רָאָה אֹךְ יָדָע

אִם־לֹא יִגִּיד וְנָשָׂא עֲוֹנוֹ:

And if a soul sins in hearing the voice of swearing,  
and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of it,  
if he does not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.

*And if a soul sins*—That is, if one makes a mistake or error and misses the right path, thus wronging or losing oneself and, possibly, others. *In hearing the voice of swearing*—And the mistake occurs when the person is asked to swear or has taken an oath in a matter to be adjudicated, one in which the parties face damaging legal consequences. *And is a witness*—And this person is a witness in the matter, with the capacity to establish the truth of events which are contested. *Whether he has seen or known of it*—As a witness, he has either direct or circumstantial evidence. *If he does not utter it*—That is, if one who may ensure that justice will prevail fails to speak out and prevent harm to an innocent party, thereby allowing the world to be tilted toward evil. *Then he shall bear his iniquity*—He shall thereby tilt himself toward evil, committing the same by failing to act against it when it is within his power; thus he shall bear the burden of self-imposed alienation from the Creator of the world and all that is good in it, and he shall require atonement.

\* Leviticus 5:1 (in Vayikra)