



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Tazria 5759

In *Maseches Negaim* (פ"ג מ"א), the Mishnah states;

הכל כשרים לראות את הנגעים, אלא שהטומאה והטהרה בידי כהן. אומרים לו אמור טמא, והוא אומר טמא, אמור טהור והוא אומר טהור

“All are qualified to examine *negaim*. However, the *tumah* and *taharah* are in the hands of the *kohen*. They tell him, ‘Say *tamei*’, and he says *tamei*. They tell him, ‘Say *tahor*’, and he says *tahor*.”

The Rambam (פ"ט מצרעת, ה"ב) brings this as the *halachah* in the *Mishneh Torah* and elaborates,

“How does this work? If a *kohen* doesn’t know how to examine, a *chacham* examines and tells him to say *tamei* and the *kohen* says *tamei*, say *tahor* and the *kohen* says *tahor*. The *chacham* tells the *kohen* to confine him, and he confines him... And even if the *kohen* was a minor or mentally deficient, the *chacham* tells him and he (the *kohen*) declares him to be a *metzora*, non-*metzora*, or a case that requires confinement.”

If we think about this and imagine the scene, we will discover something surprising. For example, let’s imagine that the man who discovers a blemish on his body is a respected member of the community. Let’s also imagine that there is no *kohen* in the vicinity who is also a *talmid chacham* well versed in the complex *halachos* of *negaim*. The only *kohen* available is a total *am ha’aretz* (ignoramus), who can barely read or pronounce Hebrew words. The *metzora* will have go to this ignorant



[1]

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kohen, and bring along a *talmid chacham* who knows the *halachos* of *negaim*.

The *talmid chacham* will examine the *nega* and decide whether it is *tzaraas* or not, or whether the man needs to be confined until the status of his *nega* becomes clear. However, despite the *talmid chacham's* decision, the man's status doesn't change. The *talmid chacham* will now have to tell the ignorant *kohen* exactly which words to say, and how to pronounce them. Only when the *kohen* pronounces those words correctly will the man become *tamei* or *tahor*.

It's hard to imagine that an ignorant *kohen* would agree to participate in such a humiliating process. He will have to stand around doing nothing while a group of *talmidei chachamim* debate *halachos* that are totally foreign to him. Then, with everyone watching him, he will have to repeat the *talmid chacham's* words and display his illiteracy to everyone present. Why would he agree to put himself through such an experience?

We need to look at the process from a different perspective. This great *talmid chacham* who can answer complex questions in every area of Torah, must admit that he has no ability to impact the status of a potential *metzora*. He must humble himself before the *kohen* who may be a total *am ha'aretz*. The *talmid chacham* declares publicly that he knows his place, and despite his knowledge, certain aspects of *halachah* are not, and never will be his domain. He needs to find a *kohen* who has been imbued with powers that he cannot acquire through learning.

The humility of the *talmid chacham*, enables the *am ha'aretz* to admit without shame that he doesn't know the relative *halachos*, and to proudly utilize the power of his *kahuna* to determine the status of a potential *metzora*. When both the *talmid chacham* and the ignorant *kohen* openly recognize each other's roles with respect and humility, the *metzora* himself learns an important lesson.



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Let us not forget that this man was afflicted with *tzaraas* because he was so arrogant that he felt justified to slander and look down on others. The *talmid chacham* and the *kohen* teach him how important it is for a person to know his place, and realize that he has no right to treat others as if they were lesser beings.

Even though the actual *halachos* of *negaim* don't apply today, there are those who say that the accursed *machalah*, a disease that has killed so many, is a type of *tzaraas*. They base this idea on a comment of the *Seforno*, (who was known to be an expert physician), in our parshah (י"ג:ב).

Since we have explained that the *tahara* of the *metzora* depends on his ability to abandon his arrogance, stop looking down on others, and develop humility, now is the time to work on these *midos*. We should treat every Jew with *kavod*, empathizing with and caring about the suffering of both individuals and *Klal Yisrael*.

ובזה נזכה להמשיך ישועה ורפואה על כל חולי ישראל אכי"ר



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