

Tazria

According to authoritative *Poskim*, the Torah not only sanctions but encourages the assiduous employment of medical remedies and effective therapies for the alleviation of physical maladies. The medical practitioner is thus considered to be an instrument of the Healer of All and an extension of His Divine protection.

Many of our great Sages, in addition to their role as inspired teachers of Torah were also renowned physicians. The most famed is *Rambam*, who is universally recognized as one of the great pioneers in the field of preventive medicine.

In this Parsha, *Tazria*, the Torah departs from the normative healing relationship of G-d and the physician and introduces a new dimension in the diagnosis and treatment of the *Metzora*, namely the Kohain:

“When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh...the plague of leprosy then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or unto one of his sons the priests...”¹

On this verse, two questions come to mind: Why does the *Tzoraas*—affliction require the services of a Kohain rather than a medical expert and why does the Torah specify that he come to Aaron Hakohain, when in reality it refers to any Kohain, in any period in our history?

Our Sages give us deeper understanding of this complex theme, by teaching that the affliction of *Tzoraas* represents not only an acute physical debilitation but in a larger sense is indicative of a moral and ethical disintegration that may afflict its victim. The term *Tzoraas* is viewed by our teachers as an acronym which spells out *Tzoras Ayin*, a spiritual myopia in which an individual cannot see beyond himself.² The psychological aberration in which one can only see his own reflection in all that is around him, transforms him into a

narcisctic personality, who adores, worships, and serves only himself.

The Chinese tell of a man who goes into a crowded bazaar and grabs a gold chalice and begins to flee. Immediately he is apprehended and put in chains. When asked how could he commit such a foolish act in broad daylight, with so many people watching, he answered: "When I looked upon the beautiful gold chalice, its lustrous glitter so blinded me that I saw no people, no policeman, all I was able to see was the gold."

Tzoraas, according to the Torah, is the moral affliction where man looks upon the world as a giant merchandise mart in which one's existence is defined by the acquisition of things and material wealth. Where living is having and prospering is possessing. This ego-centered individual, afflicted with society's most devastating disability, Torah teaches him to begin his ethical and moral therapy by coming to the Kohain. To Aaron Hakohain, more specifically, who is everything the *Tzar Ayin* is not. The role model, who epitomizes the grandeur and nobility of the human personality—to whom life is defined, not in the acquisition of things, but in the service to G-d and man. Who sees others not as a reflection of himself, but as an extension of his own being, who teaches and practices that life is not having but becoming. It's not what others can do for you which counts most but what you can do for others. Aaron Hakohain becomes the true exemplar for the resolution and relief of man's direst social sickness and moral dilemmas. As our Rabbis teach in *Pirkei Ovos*:³ Hillel said, "Be thou of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, pursuing peace, loving thy fellow being, and bringing them closer to the Torah."

FOOTNOTES

1. Vayikra 13:2
2. Kli Yakar ibid.
3. Chapter 1:12