



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh  
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org  
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

## Calling Out Impurity

The Torah prescribes several actions that must be performed vis-à-vis a person afflicted with *tzaraat*:

והצרוע אשר בו הנגע בגדיו יהיו פרטים וראשו יהיה פרוע ועל שפם יעטה וטמא טמא יקרא. (ויקרא יג:מה)

And the leper upon whom the *nega* is [located] – his clothes shall be ripped, and his head disheveled, and he shall cloak his upper lip and shall cry out: “*tamei, tamei.*” (*Vayikra* 13:45)

The simple reading of the end of this verse means that the leper has to call out “*tamei, tamei*” to others, presumably to notify others of his impure state. This is how Rashi understands it. It is also possible that it means that others call “*tamei, tamei*” as though attesting to his impure state.

The Shelah HaKadosh offers a different interpretation based on a *gemara* (*Kiddushin* 72b) that states that one who condemns another condemns with his own faults. A *tzaru'a* is one who badmouths others, who calls others impure. One who recognizes specific faults with others, who always highlights others' shortcomings, is

likely subject to the same shortcomings. He publicly denounces it on others to deflect it from himself. The *pasuk* can thus be read as meaning that the impure one will call others impure.

The Baal Shem Tov says something similar in a comment on a mishna in *Nega'im* (2:5):

כל הנגעים אדם רואה חוץ מנגעי עצמו

A person can see all *nega'im* aside from his own *nega'im*.

The basic meaning is that a *kohen* may diagnose a *nega* for anyone but himself. The *baalei musar* read this homiletically to mean that it is easy for a person to diagnose the faults of others but not his own faults. The Baal Shem Tov goes even further, suggesting that by placing a comma at a different spot, the mishna takes on a radically different meaning (place the comma after the word “*chutz*”): “All the *nega'im* that a person sees outside are of his own *nega'im*.” Every fault that one finds with another is actually one's own fault.

To clarify the point, the Baal Shem Tov told the story of a town milkman who was suddenly summoned to court. He was a very honest man and was surprised that someone had filed a complaint against his integrity. The plaintiff was the baker

in town. The baker was accustomed to acquiring all his dairy products from this milkman. The baker suspected that the milkman was cheating him, so he weighed the butter. Lo and behold, what was labeled as a pound of butter was in fact slightly less. On the day of the trial, the milkman arrived in court for the first time in his life. The judge recited the alleged crime of fraud by selling incorrect measurements of goods. The judge then asked the milkman whether he checks the weight of the goods he sells with a professional scale. The milkman replied that he does not own a professional scale. The judge responded in disbelief: “How can you just estimate the weight of products! You just decide on your own? That’s cheating!”

The milkman responded that he does not own a professional scale but has another way of determining the accuracy of the weight of his products. “Every morning,” the milkman said, “I buy a pound of bread from the baker. I put the bread on one side of a scale and the butter on the other side. When it’s balanced, I know that’s a pound of butter.”

The judge the turned to the baker, now red in the face and says. “One who condemns another condemns with his own faults.”

At this point in time when we ourselves are all separated from others like a *Tzarua*, before we begin to explore and disclose (“call out”) the faults of others, let us look deep inside ourselves and see how we can improve. ■

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