

Good Shabbos Everyone. Reb Mordechai of Pintchov was in a serious bind. He had three daughters to marry off, but he had not one wretched kopek with which to put together dowries and pay for weddings. Understandably, Reb Mordechai's wife nagged him incessantly to describe their woeful situation to his rebbe, the Holy Tzadik, the "Chozeh" of Lublin.

Time after time Reb Mordechai would travel to Lublin, but never once did he mention his troubles to the rebbe, because on arriving there he would forget his worries completely. The sight of the saintly Tzadik took all of Reb Mordechai's worries away. The next time Reb Mordechai journeyed to his Rebbe, his poor wife hatched a plan. She herself made the journey to the Rebbe in Lublin with a separate wagon. When Reb Mordechai arrived to Lublin, he was confronted by the fact of his wife's presence. This time he remembered to tell the rebbe what the state of affairs was at home.

"Why did you never mention this until now?" asked the Chozeh. "Rebbe," answered the chassid, "I assumed that my situation would be known to you through ruach hakodesh, through the holy spirit that rests upon you."

"Not so," answered the rebbe. "In the case of plagues of the soul the Torah says: 'A man in the skin of whose flesh there shall be a plague of tzaraas shall be brought to Aharon the kohen ...and the kohen shall see the plague'." (Vayikra 13:2-3)

...That is to say: As soon as the ailing man is brought before him, the kohen will discern the sickness himself, without being told. In the case of plagues that affect houses, however, the Torah teaches us otherwise: "And he who owns the house shall come and tell the kohen, saying: 'Something like a plague seems to be in the house.'" (Vayikra 14:35) From this we see that with plagues affecting houses - the needs of a household - one must come to the kohen and speak up and tell him of them." (A Treasury of Chassidic Tales, on the Torah R.S.Y. Zevin, U.Kaploun, trans. p. 344)

Soon after the Jews left Mitzraim, Hashem gave Aharon and the kohanim the ritual leadership of the nation. The kohanim were responsible for the holy service in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and later in the holy Temples. The kohanim were largely responsible for the spiritual health of the nation.

In this week's double portion Tazria-Metzorah the Torah describes how the kohan was responsible for diagnosing tzaraas, a skin disease which inflicted Jews who had violated Torah ethics. A person who was suspected of being contaminated was to be brought for diagnosis before Aharon the Kohen or to one of his sons the kohanim. Several verses in the Torah reading describe how the kohen was to examine the affliction to determine the status of the patient. If a Kohen found the person to be contaminated, the kohen would send the afflicted person out of the camp.

Being alone outside of the camp allowed the afflicted metzora to reflect on his spiritual deficiencies, allowing him to do Teshuvah and later return to the community. (Stone Tanach, citing R 'Hirsch, p.276) The kohen was not a medical doctor, but then again, tzaraas was a skin disease caused by spiritual shortcomings. Thus we see the great role that the Kohanim played in the spiritual lives of each and every Jew.

The Jewish nation is sadly still wandering in the desert, in golus. Whom do we look to for spiritual guidance during our current wanderings? Until the Temple is rebuilt (it should be soon) we are unable to consult the Kohanim. Instead, the Chassidic Masters teach us that our Rabbis take the place of the Kohanim, as our spiritual leaders. The great Rabbis are those who live exemplary lives based on the Torah.

When choosing a Rabbi, it is very important to choose someone who actually practices what he preaches. Who would go to an obese dietician or an imprisoned attorney? Similarly, let us take the following example. There was an airline mechanic who worked for airline "A" yet insisted on flying on airline "B" because he did not find airline "A" to be safe. No one in their right mind would fly on airline "A" if even its own mechanics did not want to fly on it. The same thing is by Rabbis. Our spiritual health is so important, that we have to be very careful with whom we trust our spiritual lives. Therefore, if we really want to "take off" spiritually, we must choose our Rabbis wisely.

Unfortunately, the title "Rabbi" has never been easier to acquire than it is today. Let us therefore scrutinize those who call themselves "Rabbi" before we put our spiritual lives in their hands.

Consulting with the right spiritual leader can be the key to living happier lives. This idea is hinted to in the Torah with the Kohanim. We know that one of the most important of the Kohen Gadol's vestments was the "*Oorim v'tumim*." The "*Oorim v'tumim*" served as a prophetic guide to Yisroel. The "*Oorim v'tumim*" were a great source of happiness to the B'nai Yisroel because they guided the Jews during some of their difficult times. As the Sages teach us, "*there is no happiness like the happiness of resolving doubt*." Thus the kohanim brought happiness to the nation through their spiritual guidance. So too, by turning to our spiritual leaders, we will have more clarity in life and will consequently live happier lives. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**