

## And the Kohen shall look at the plague in the skin of the flesh (13:3)

*Tzara'as*, which is inappropriately translated as leprosy, was actually a spiritual affliction. One who had transgressed certain sins, such as speaking *lashon hora* was inflicted with *tzaraas*. This affliction appeared on one's body, his clothes, even the walls of his home. One who suspected himself of being a victim of this disease would go to the *Kohen* in order to be examined. Only after the *Kohen* declared him a *metzora* would he be considered *tamei* and consequently subject to all of the laws of *tzara'as*.

*Horav A. H. Lebovitz, Shlita*, cites the *Midrash* which relates a story about an impoverished *Kohen* who chose to leave *Eretz Yisroel* in order to seek a livelihood. After telling his wife about his intentions, he began teaching her the laws regarding *tzara'as*, so that she could substitute for him during his absence. He told her to check the hairs of the afflicted person. Each hair on a person's body is nurtured by its own follicle, which is created particularly by Hashem to sustain the individual hair. If the hair has withered it indicates that the source beneath has dried up. Upon hearing this, his wife exclaimed, "If Hashem sustains each and every hair of the human body, surely He will provide sustenance for you." This naive, but profound, admonishment caused the *Kohen* to reconsider and remain in *Eretz Yisroel*.

*Horav Lebovitz* questions this *Midrash*. Obviously, the *Kohen* was aware of Hashem's omnipotence, nonetheless, he chose to abandon *Eretz Yisroel* to seek a livelihood elsewhere. What did his wife tell him that precipitated his change of mind?

He explains that one can be aware of a certain truth and even teach it to others, yet still neglect to follow his own teaching. People can acknowledge a reality for others, but fail to apply this knowledge to themselves. The *Kohen* was aware of Hashem's constant providence, yet he did not integrate his reality fully into his life. Had he done so, he would have practiced what he taught.

Why is this? How can someone who is a mentor to others, a ceaseless fountain of knowledge, who is empowered to transmit *Torah* to others fail to reflect upon his own teachings? How often do we inspire others to perform deeds and activities, while we personally are lax in their performance? How do we implore others to believe, trust, and hope for sustenance and salvation, while we are personally diffident?

Perhaps the solution lies in the manner in which one views the vocation and responsibility of teacher. An individual who devotes himself to transmitting the ideals of Hashem's *Torah* to others is a conduit to bring these truths to his people. One can be a vehicle for transmission in one of two ways. He can be like a hollow pipe through which the liquid flows effecting no change upon the conduit; alternatively, he can be like a sponge, into which the liquid is absorbed and subsequently "squeezed" out. The *Torah* one teaches must be completely infused into the teacher. In order to

inspire others, he must be a paradigm for his own teachings. His teachings must be reflected in his demeanor, so that one can be properly transmitted to others.