

## "When there is a plague of leprosy on a man, he shall be brought to the Kohen." (13:9)

The *Medrash* states, "*One sees all plagues except one's own plagues.*" *Kohanim* were licensed to examine and diagnose the leprosy of all Jews, except their own. This *halacha* is not meant to imply that a *Kohen* would deliberately alter his findings in an effort to cover up the truth. There is a valid assumption, however, that despite his most sincere efforts at objectivity, man's judgment invariably yields to self-interest. This is the implication of the above *midrashic* dictum.

Another message conveyed in this *pasuk* is that man will perceive other people's faults, but not his own. Perhaps it is man's instinct for self-preservation which leads him to seek to justify his actions, to be less than willing to assume responsibility for whatever misfortunes he confronts. People in distress habitually blame other people or circumstances for their lack of success. Parents blame the teacher, the school, and even the whole educational system for their child's lack of adherence to proper religious guidelines. They do not examine the possibility that they may be guilty of providing an unsatisfactory atmosphere for their child. Did they supervise their child's friends? Were they selective in how their child spent his or her free time? Did they fulfill their obligations as parents, offering the necessary emotional support when needed?

It is difficult to accept responsibility for one's failure to fulfill his own obligations. The key to success in any endeavor is the ability to accept constructive advice from those professionals who are more competent to assess the situation. This does not preclude noting another individual's shortcomings for the specific purpose of guiding him towards the proper path. One must exercise caution, however, that he, too, is not overcome by these faults. An individual may proceed with an objective admonishment only after such introspection. He can then hope that his advice will be accepted in the spirit in which he has offered it.