

## **"A man who is of your seed throughout their generations that has a blemish shall not approach to offer the bread of his G-d." (21:17)**

In the *Moreh Nevuchim* the *Rambam* explains the requirement that the *Kohen* be unblemished to be based upon public opinion. Unfortunately, people do not tend to judge an individual by his own true value, but rather by the external perfection of his limbs and the beauty of his garb. It was, therefore, necessary for the *Kohanim* to be unblemished to ensure that the *Bais Hamikdash* would be universally respected.

The *Rambam* notes that this requirement only applied to *Kohanim*, who offered sacrifices and were the people's agents in entreating Hashem for forgiveness. The *Leviim*, however, whose sole function was to perform the vocal music, were disqualified from service only upon losing their voice. *Horav Eliyahu Munk Z"l* cites the *Rekanti* who observes that while physical defects did not render the *Levi* unfit for service, he was subject to an age limit of fifty. This contrasts with the *Kohen* who had no age limit for service. The *Rekanti* explains that the *Levi*, who performed a physical function, served as long as he possessed his vitality and inner zeal. The age of fifty was arbitrarily chosen as the time at which his strength began to wane. The *Kohen*, however, was a spiritual mentor, a teacher of the people, who grew wiser with age as he gained life experience. This is a remarkable statement which carries a timeless message.