

"A widow or one who is divorced or a profaned (woman or a) harlot; these he shall not take." (21:14)

Why does the *Torah* prohibit the *Kohen Gadol* to marry a widow, while the *kohen hedyot* is only denied marriage to a divorcee? *Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita*, cites the *Moshav Zekeinim*, authored by the *Baalei Tosfos*, which offers an intriguing answer. They state that on *Yom Kippur*, when the *Kohen Gadol* reaches the zenith of *kedushah* and utters the *Shem Ha'Meforash*, Ineffable Name, he might perchance stare at a married woman. During this brief interlude, the *Kohen Gadol* might become momentarily captivated by this woman. His attraction to her might cause him to will death for her husband. Such strong emotion during the *Kohen Gadol's* utterance of the Name can cause the premature death of this woman's husband. Consequently, the *Torah* enjoined the *Kohen Gadol* to marry only a *besulah*, virgin, who has never married.

This statement is disquieting! The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, is powerful. If we can begin to fathom the complex nature of man, it will only be through *Chazal's* interpretation of the mysterious secrets of creation. They have taught us regarding the *yetzer hora's* unscrupulous methods of ensnaring a person to sin. We are concerned here, however, with the holiest Jew, the *Kohen Gadol* who wears the crown of *kedushah*. He stands in the *Kodesh Ha'Kodoshim*, Holy of Holies, on the holiest day of the year, *Yom Kippur*. Are we to imagine that as he utters the Name of Hashem this sublime individual can abruptly fall to the nadir of sin, by entertaining licentious thoughts about a married woman, thereby causing her husband to die? Yet, this is what *Chazal* teach. Man can stand at the height of spirituality and witness the most awesome revelations, yet still descend into the abyss of immorality if he is not constantly vigilant.

Horav Bergman explains that in order for man to aspire to reach the heights of spiritual attainment, he must strive to become similar to a fiery angel, enveloped in *kedushah*, shining forth brilliantly in spiritual light; he must be able to negate and devoid himself completely of his physical and material essence. This could only happen if man is truly insignificant. Man comes to grips with the fact that he is vile and contemptuous by nature. He must develop good character traits through *Torah*, or they will never become integrated into his character. Indeed, man alone without *Torah* can descend to an abysmal state of sin. With *Torah* guidance and constant vigilance, he may aspire to reach the pinnacle of sublimity in serving Hashem.