

## And to his virgin sister who is close to him, who has not been wed to a man; to her shall he contaminate himself. (21:3)

*Chazal* teach that it is a *mitzvah* for a *Kohen* to defile himself to the seven close relatives. Indeed, as *Chazal* say, if the *Kohen* refuses to ritually contaminate himself to any of them, we compel him to do so (*Zevachim* 100a). In a way, this is a form of sacrifice. A *Kohen* who is sincere about his station in life might get carried away. He might feel that, even for a close relative, it is just not worth it. He has heretofore maintained his purity. Why should he ruin his spotless record? Obviously, such a *Kohen* has no clue concerning *kedushah*, holiness, and *taharah*, purity. One is holy and pure as long as he adheres to Hashem's word. When his mind starts playing games, and his perspective on *frumkeit*, religiosity, becomes subjectively flawed – he has a very serious problem.

Family plays a significant role in Jewish life. We see here that while the *Kohen* must maintain a strict and highly-elevated level of personal purity, he must nonetheless defile himself to a member of his family. If family is so important, why is it that individuals who are normally quite generous, suddenly shy away and melt into the background when an extended member of their own family is down and out? **Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita**, goes to the crux of the problem as he explains that it all boils down to *kavod*, respect; payback/gratitude; recognition of all of the things that we want for ourselves in return for being “nice” to someone in need.

Let us face it, when one helps a stranger he is acknowledged, appreciated and overwhelmed with abundant gratitude. When it is a family member whom we have helped, it is quite possible that we will not even receive a “thank you.” Why? Because it is only right that one should help his own. It is expected. On the contrary, Heaven help him if he turns a deaf ear to the pleas of a family member. Family expects to be supported – even when there are no plaques or public accolades. It is difficult to help when there is little or no appreciation.

*Rav* Gamliel quotes **Horav Mottel Slonimer, zl**, who explains that one does not look forward to helping relatives, due to the lack of gratitude associated with his assistance. On the contrary, often he is left with complaints for not doing more. One must be acutely aware that disregarding the plight of a relative is Biblically prohibited. This may be defined from the fact that the *Kohen* may not defile himself to anyone, but he must defile himself to his closest relatives.