

Something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house. (14:35)

Toras Kohanim comments: *Li v'lo l'ori*, "To me – and not to my light." This teaches that in a dark house, one does not open the windows (to allow sunlight to penetrate) in order to see the affliction (to determine its status of purity). *Damesek Eliezer* suggests that the approach taken by the Torah with regard to the sins committed by man should serve as a paradigm for us in our approach towards the sins of our fellow man. In other words, the Torah is adopting a compassionate and understanding approach to the failings of our fellow man. As we are not permitted to use artificial light (that is not already in the room) to judge an affliction, so, too, should we not reveal the sins of he who has erred in secret.

Obviously, this man has committed a sin, but, at least, he demonstrates shame. He does not want to publicize his weakness, which indicates that his sin is not an act of rebellion – but an act of character deficiency, a predilection toward the inappropriate. Rather than call him a sinner who has neither fear nor shame, he is a weak, troubled (possibly sick) person. By rebuking him in private, we create a favorable climate for his return through *teshuvah*, repentance. As long as his sin is not publicized, he is very much like the affliction in a dark house. Once the shades are raised, we can no longer judge the affliction. Likewise, once his sin receives headlines, the chances for *teshuvah* have been impugned and not likely to occur.

Second, we derive from here that, as long as one is (so to speak) darkened, he has not made it to the public eye; he is not noticed, and people do not talk about him. When the shades are elevated, when he (due to increased wealth or spending) grabs the public's attention or becomes the subject of public adulation and acclaim, the artificial lighting has been "turned on," and people tend to see the imperfections that are otherwise overlooked. In other words, it is best to maintain a low profile if one has something to hide. Even if he has nothing to hide, by placing himself under the light of publicity, someone will "discover something" about him – even if it is prefabricated, it will still be damaging. So, is it worth it?