

## Parshat Tazria (תשפ"א): Compassionate or Insensitive

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והצרוע אשר בו הנגע בגדיו יהיו פרמיו וראשו יהיה פרוע ועל-שפם יעטה וטמא טמא יקרא (תזריע יג:מה)  
And the person with tzaraat in whom there is a legion, his garments should be torn, his head should be unshorn, and he should cover himself downward toward his mustache and he should call out, "Unclean, unclean" (Vayikra 13:45)

There is a famous debate over the words וטמא טמא יקרא "He should call out, 'Unclean, unclean' -- does the *posuk* indicate that the *metzora* himself yells out that he is *tamei*, or does it mean that the *metzora* should be given the title, "*Tamei*"? Rashi explains מְפֹרָשׁוֹ מִמְּנוּ, "He is *tamei* and people should know to keep away from him." The Targum Onkelos takes another approach, understanding the *posuk* to mean that the *metzora* needs to dress in the manner of an *avel*, a mourner, and he should call out for people to keep their distance so that they won't become *tamei*. Nefesh Hager, the classical *meforash* on Targum Onkelos, explains that the *metzora* should yell out that he is *tamei* and so people shouldn't touch him and they will therefore avoid becoming *tamei*.

The Haamek Davar describes the *posuk* in a similar way to our understanding of the Nefesh Hager based on Onkelos; that is that the responsibility is placed on the person who is *tamei* -- the *metzora* should make a public announcement that he is *tamei* so that people will not make a mistake. Why would the people make a mistake regarding the *metzora's* status? Perhaps because the *metzora* will be dressing in the way of an *avel* people will truly believe that he is an *avel* or that he is in *cheirem*, as those that have been excommunicated also dress in mourner's garb. Seemingly, there is room for confusion, and so the *metzora* must call out that he is *tamei*. The onus lies on him.

One of the most perplexing issues that the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to is the "Anti-vaxxer." A single person who chooses not to vaccinate is not a large problem; however, if this individual spreads an infection or virus, he endangers the lives and health of others. If he wants, let him carry a large sign like the *metzora* stating, "Keep away! I am not vaccinated!" Baruch Hashem, as we look around Eretz Yisrael we see that we are quickly approaching a level of herd immunity; yet, in so many countries, Western and non-Western alike, we see this is not the case.

Before the vaccine was widely available in Eretz Yisrael we saw many people who you should assume care for others and are *gomlei chasadim* walking down the street -- yet they were not wearing masks and were gathering together in massive numbers. That is stupidity, and that is the message of וטמא טמא יקרא; the responsibility is placed upon the *metzora* himself to call out and make sure that he is not acting in an uncaring or inconsiderate fashion.

From the biggest Rabbanim to each individual across Judaism's spectrum, all must be compassionate and sensitive. What one wants to do for themselves is one issue, but they must take into account each and every other person. Chaveirim Kol Yisroel, we are all linked together, V'Nomar, Amen!