

# א ביסל תורה!

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## Why Do Physical Deformities Prohibit a מקדש From Serving in the כהן?

By Adina Cheses '28

In the second פרשה of this week's עליה, we get a list of all of the different physical deformities that would disqualify a כהן from being able to work in the מקדש. To us today, these rules might seem unjust. Why should a physical trait, that someone might be born with, prohibit them from having the privilege of doing Hashem's work? Isn't a person's value completely separate from their appearance?

The רלב"ג explains that the work done in the Mikdash is supposed to reflect Hashem's complete perfection, and, therefore, it is crucial that those performing the work are whole in every way, just like Hashem.

While this answer provides solid reasoning for this law, another explanation is given in מסכת מגילה כד: In the discussion of a משנה about this issue, when it comes to ברכת כהנים, it says that רבי יוחנן is of the view that one who is blind in one eye may not perform ברכת כהנים, since people will gaze at him and become distracted. The גמרא asks: wasn't there a כהן who was blind in one eye in the neighborhood of רבי יוחנן, and he would perform ברכת כהנים? The גמרא answers: that כהן was a familiar figure in his town, and, therefore, would not attract attention. This גמרא suggests

that the issue is not about the כהן himself, rather, it is about a concern that the people observing him, while he is performing his service, may become distracted by his physical differences. This poses a problem, as it is incredibly important that those bringing sacrifices are able to focus one hundred percent on what they are doing, and do so with the proper intent.

As people, we are naturally drawn to things that are different from what we are used to, and, unfortunately, this can cause us to single out people who have physical deformities. However, we also learn from this גמרא that it is possible for us to learn to see beyond someone's physical traits, despite any differences they might have. The ideal is for us to only look at people for who they are inside, and not to judge them on, or get distracted by, their appearance. As opposed to the רלב"ג, whose explanation suggests that this law was put into place because a כהן having physical deformities conflicts with the image of perfection, that should be presented in the service, this explanation highlights one of our human flaws and calls us to work on the way that we view others.

## Should We Get Even With Another Who Harmed Us?

By Amira Kahan '28

In this week's פרשה אמר, פרשת אמר, it says "שֶׁכָּר תַּחַת עֵין שֶׁן תַּחַת שֶׁן כְּאֶשֶׁר יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּאֵדָם כֵּן שֶׁכָּר עֵין תַּחַת עֵין שֶׁן תַּחַת שֶׁן כְּאֶשֶׁר יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּאֵדָם כֵּן" "a fracture for a fracture, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the injury inflicted on a human shall be inflicted in return" (ויקרא כד:כ). If we were to take this פסוק literally, then a person who breaks another person's arm, should have his arm broken in return. Why would the תורה want us to get even and hurt each other?

According to אבן עזרא, this does not actually mean that we should inflict the same pain on the other person. The original wound was done unintentionally, and could cause serious damage to the person receiving the wound as punishment. We cannot justify hurting each other even if it is to get even. He says that instead of inflicting pain upon the person, we should instead have to pay the monetary value of the limb that we injured on the other.

The phrase "נֶפֶשׁ תַּחַת נֶפֶשׁ" "a soul for a soul" (ויקרא כד:יז) which refers to someone who kills another's animal, can be interpreted in two different ways. One interpretation, which is the view of רבי דוסטאי בן יהודה, בבא קמא פג: is that, since it is written in the same form as "עֵין תַּחַת עֵין" "an eye for an eye," then it should also be paid monetarily. However, the other opinion says that this statement is taken literally, meaning that the

person who killed the animal gets their animal killed in return.

This does not, however, explain why the תורה would give us such harsh language to begin with. Why not tell us to pay for the damages we cause towards another human being or animal? The רמב"ם says that we have to remember that this law was originally given to the Jews who were former slaves, and were used to being beaten for even the smallest mistake.

The concept of having money to pay for your mistakes is a very foreign concept to slaves, who have never had a dollar in their lives. Telling them to pay for hurting another person is not anything meaningful or understandable to them.

All of this is to say that Hashem never intended for us to intentionally harm one another, rather, the intention is for us to be just and fair people. This is something we should keep in mind and take with us in all aspects of our lives.



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