

# *Don't Prompt Satan*

PARSHA INSIGHTS - EMOR (5760)

## **BE CAREFUL WITH ILLUSTRATIONS**

“**The *kohen* [priest] who is the highest among his brethren**, upon whose head the anointing oil is poured, and who is sanctified to put on the (special) garments, shall not let the hair of his head go loose, and he shall not tear his clothes” (21:10). This verse is stating that the *Kohen Gadol* [High Priest] may not let his hair grow long as a sign of mourning, nor may he rend his garments.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin makes a clever observation. In general, when the Torah dictates the rules of *Kohanim Gedolim* [High Priests], it uses the name “Aharon” as the example. Aharon *Hakohen* [Aaron the priest], Moshe’s brother, was the first of the *Kohanim Gedolim*, and the regulations observed by him usually apply to *Kohanim Gedolim* throughout history. In these laws of mourning, however, the Torah digresses from its usual style. It does not use Aharon’s name in this context. What is the reason?

The Lutzker Rav answers that we are not supposed to “open up for the Satan”. This concept is found in the *Gemara Brachos* 19A near the bottom. In other words, it would not be proper to name any person as an example in the application of the laws of mourning. Perhaps this could stir up some trouble in heaven, causing his behavior record to be examined, and the result could be tragic. G-d forbid, he might actually become a mourner!

Does the necessity for caution exist in other areas as well? Rav Sorotzkin notices that above in *Sefer Vayikra* [the Book of Leviticus], in 4:3, a similar approach is taken. “If **the anointed *kohen*** shall sin so as to bring guilt to the people...” That topic is its own study, but let us just derive the point relevant to today’s discussion. When teaching the laws of the sacrifice required in the situation described in 4:3, Aharon’s name is not mentioned. As stated before, the Torah often uses “Aharon” as the example of a *Kohen Gadol*. But when it comes to possible transgressions, the anonymous term “anointed *kohen*” is employed. Again, this is so no specific person is mentioned in such a context.

This message is especially significant for educators, who constantly make us of analogies, examples, and illustrations. Let us remember to say names like “John Doe” or “Jane Doe” or “*Ploni Almoni*” [anonymous] if negative situations need to be described for learning purposes. (Use your imagination if you don’t want to stick with the most commonly used generic names.) We see that this even refers to cases that involve no *loshon hora* [evil gossip], just that sins or calamities are the topic.

*By Rabbi Moshe Heigh*

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