



Volume 6. Issue 35

“Something like” *Tzara’at* on Houses

...The one to whom the house belongs shall come and declare to the *kohen* saying: Something like an affliction has appeared to me in the house.

Vayikra 14:36

The *Mishnah* (12:5) learns from the above *pasuk* that even if one is a *Torah* scholar and knows with certainty that a *nega* has indeed appeared on his house, he should nonetheless not say that a *nega* has appeared, but rather “something like a *nega*” (*k’nega*) has appeared. Why?

The *Tosfot Yom Tov* brings a number of reasons for this law. Firstly, it fits with the general rabbinic instruction that one should train themselves to say “I am not sure” in order to develop the trait of modesty. Secondly, it is inappropriate to rule in front of the *kohen* in the same manner as it is prohibited to rule in front of one’s rabbi or teacher. Thirdly, the owner’s direct statement may end up rushing the *kohen* into ruling that the house is *tameh*. Another reason is that a person stating that a *nega* appeared on his house, implying a *tameh nega*, is tantamount to lying, as it is only *tameh* upon the *kohen*’s declaration. Finally, one should not declare it, so as to “not open the mouth of the *Satan*”, for it is possible that the *nega* would have disappeared prior to the *kohen*’s inspection. The admission of guilt, that a *nega* has appeared, might be incriminating and thus ensure the *nega* stays.¹

The *Tosfot Yom Tov* adds that he understands that the law would apply to other forms of *negaim* as well. Therefore, if one had a *nega* on his clothing or skin, the same wording must be used. The *Tosfot Anshei Shem* argues that the ruling only applies to a house since it is not movable and the *kohen* would need to be invited. Everything else could be brought to the *kohen*.

The *Oznayim L’Torah* however understands that there is a greater scope to the position of the *Tosfot Yom Tov* rather than the practicalities. He suggests that the homeowner is considered a “*karov*” to himself and therefore unable to testify or rule about his house. Consequently, even though we have learnt that a *Yisrael* can prompt an unlearned *kohen* to declare a *nega* as *tameh* or *tahor*, the homeowner cannot. This, he continues, explains the wording of an earlier *Mishnah* (2:5): “All *negaim* a person” – not *kohen* – “can inspect, excluding his own.”

The *Ohr Ha’Chaim* explains in great detail that the above law is not learnt from the word *k’nega*; had the *Torah* stated only “*nega*” one might have thought that the *kohen* is only summoned when one is certain that a *nega* has appeared. Instead it is learnt from the superfluous word “saying” (*leimor*) that precedes “*k’nega*”. Interestingly the *Torat Kohanim* learns from this superfluous word that the *kohen* is to say to the homeowner words of admonition. One opinion is that he should be told that *tzara’at* arise as a result of *lashon ha’rah*. *R’ Shimon ben Eliezer* explains that he should be rebuked that *tzara’at* come due to haughtiness. How does the *Torat Kohanim* learn this new ruling from this word? What connection does this derivation have with the entire verse?

The *Binyan Ariel* (*Chadrei Torah*) explains that the rebuke comes about through the limit on how the homeowner must approach the *kohen* – stating *k’nega* and not *nega*. Firstly stating *nega* would be (like) speaking *lashon ha’rah* about the stones of his house (see *Erchin* 15a); he is deliberately prevented from doing so. Secondly, as state above, he is prevented from ruling openly in front of the *kohen*, which would indeed be a haughty act.

Yisrael Yitzchak Bankier

¹ The *Oznayim L’Torah* adds that another reason is that one is not allowed to incriminate themselves. As we have learnt (2:5) a person bearing a *nega* on his house is considered a *rasha* (due to the sins that brought the *nega* about). Consequently one cannot declare that his house has a *nega*.

Revision Questions

נגעים י"ב:א' – י"ג:ז'

- What is the law regarding a house purchased from a *goi* that already had a *nega*? (י"ב:א')
- Can a round house become *tameh* through *negaim*? (י"ב:א')
- Can a houseboat become *tameh* through *negaim*? (י"ב:א')
- Can a house whose walls are covered with marble become *tameh* through *negaim*? (י"ב:ב')
- What are the three materials must a house be made from in order to become *tameh* through *negaim*? (י"ב:ב')
- Explain the debate regarding the number of stones on each wall and the minimum size of a *nega* for a house to become *tameh* from *negaim*. (י"ב:ג')
- What is the minimum quantity of wood and earth for a house to become *tameh* from *negaim*? (י"ב:ד')
- Houses in which locations cannot become *tameh* from *negaim*? (י"ב:ד')
- Describe the process of how a house is inspected for *negaim*. (י"ב:ה')
- What items were cleared out of the house? (י"ב:ה')
- Where would the *kohen* stand when declaring the house required *hesger*? (י"ב:ו')
- What would happen if the *nega* spread after one week of *hesger*? (י"ב:ו')
- Regarding the previous question, what would happen if after another week, the *nega* returned? (י"ב:ז')
- From where does the *Mishnah* learn the following phrase: **אוי לרשע אוי לשכנו**? (י"ב:ז')
- Complete the following: (י"ב:ז')
 _____ והרחוק _____ והחוזר לבתים _____
 הפשיון הסמוך _____
- What are the "Ten laws of Houses"? (י"ג:א')
- In what case is removal stricter than dismantling? (י"ג:ב')
- What is the law regarding the attic above a house that requires *netiza*? (י"ג:ג')
- What is the law regarding a house below an attic that requires *netiza*? (י"ג:ג')
- Explain the debate regarding the minimum size of the stone, wood and earth of a *bayit menuga* for them to be a source of *tumah*. (י"ג:ג')
- What is the difference between, with respect to *tumah*, of a *bayit muchlat* and a *bayit musgar*? (י"ג:ד')
- What is the law if stone from a *bayit musgar* were used in the construction of another house and a *nega* returned to the original house? A *nega* returned to those stone? (י"ג:ה')
- Explain the debate regarding a *bayit menuga* that is built inside another house. (י"ג:ו')
- What is the law regarding a case where: (י"ג:ז')
 - A *metzarah* is standing under a tree and someone else walk by?
 - A *metzarah* walks by a tree under which someone is standing?

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday

After maariv
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha
Beit Ha'Roeh

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
18 th October ז' תשרי	19 th October א' חשוון	20 th October ב' חשוון	21 st October ג' חשוון	22 nd October ד' חשוון	23 rd October ה' חשוון	24 th October ו' חשוון
Negaim 13:8-9	Negaim 13:10-11	Negaim 13:12-14:1	Negaim 14:2-3	Negaim 14:4-5	Negaim 14:6-7	Negaim 14:8-9

