



# Held to different standards

Nobody likes being held to a different standard than others. We expect everyone to be judged using the same metrics. If we give one individual a pass for a certain misdeed, we are expected to allow the same for others. The reverse is true too; if one individual is held liable for their actions then others need to be held accountable too.

While this is generally the way most of us operate—after all we live in a society today that values equality over almost anything else—there are areas where holding people to different standards actually makes sense. For example, a person that is for the most part considered religious and spiritual will inevitably have their misdeeds attract more attention than someone else's. That's because when you present yourself as righteous, and you may in fact be truly righteous, you must act the part at all times, even when it comes to something simple that everyone else will be given a pass.

It's like a dark spot on a light colored garment. If you spill your morning coffee on your freshly laundered white shirt, you will most likely not be able to get away with wearing that shirt to your important meetings. You'll either have to change the shirt or wear something over it. But if it's a dark colored shirt, or perhaps the spill was on something not visible, you can get away with leaving it on.

An interesting example of this can be found in the Torah's description of tzaraat, biblical leprosy. While this was a dermatological condition visible on the surface of one's skin, it is considered to have been a spiritual ailment, the result of the afflicted being guilty of slander or other forms of gossip. That's why tzaraat was treated so harshly, because slander and gossip are what tear away at the fabric of society, so as a deterrent anyone afflicted with leprosy is treated as having one of the worst forms of ritual impurity possible.

The thing is, today there is no such thing as tzaraat, and various authorities of Jewish law explain that because today the Jewish people as a whole are on a much lower spiritual plane than we once were, the reflection of the stain of sin is not as visible on us today as it once was. Additionally, even at a time when tzaraat was prevalent, not necessarily everyone who gossiped became afflicted with tzaraat—just people who were generally considered righteous and who may have faltered just a bit when it came to talking about someone else. For them, it created a greater stain on their soul than it would have on someone else.

There are other examples of this in the Torah, such as when Miriam, the sister of Moses and the one who helped raise him and care for him throughout his childhood, had tzaraat. She had misspoken about Moses in what for most other people would have never even been considered something negative, but because of her stature it was considered slander and she had to go through the process of purification from tzaraat.

And the same goes for anyone who is in a position of leadership, or in a position where others look up to you. If you serve as an example to others, be prepared to live your life under a microscope and ensure that even your slightest and most nuanced action or speech is completely pure. Be sure that nothing you do or say can be

misconstrued, and that you will continue serving those who look up to you for guidance in the cleanest and most pure way possible.