



Parshas Emor

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A Kohen is not allowed to become טמא except for his closest relatives. Why not? The Seforno (21,4) explains that a Kohen's job was to teach Torah so he must act princely in order that people listen to his words. And by being טמא he won't be able to go into the temple or eat holy foods. And the Gemara in Sanhedrin (23) says that going to a funeral is primarily an honor to the deceased (as opposed to the living relatives). He can only go to a relative's funeral because honoring them is honorable to him. But for a non-relative, the fact that a kohen would go to a funeral and become טמא would detract from his students' ability to learn from him. It seems from the Seforno that it's not the impurity itself because if that was the case then he wouldn't even be able to go to his relatives funeral. It also seems from the Seforno that it's dependent on the fact that a funeral is in order to honor the dead. So the point seems to be that he's טמא and he's טמא in the context of giving honor to someone else. That combination is what detracts from a Kohen's ability to teach! How can this be true? People don't have these calculations when they see a Kohen become טמא? They don't think - "oh, he's טמא? Well it was for his brother so it's ok...!" Or "Oh my goodness, it was for a friend, what an embarrassment for him!" They'll think instead that he did a mitzvah by attending a funeral and did the right thing to show honor to the deceased. And who cares if he's טמא anyway?! He's a Rebbi, a big tzaddik, and he knows a lot of Torah so we'll learn from him! What's the problem? We see from here that a Rebbe must be on a pedestal. But even more so, we see from here that a student's receptivity antennas are so sensitive. They will sense the Rebbi is "damaged" by tumah, and unable to do one of his main functions of serving in the temple and eating holy foods, and also why he's טמא will make a difference in the students subconscious mind that if it's for someone else, even in the best of circumstances will substantially affect the student abilities to learn from him.