

with his deputy priest, who was to serve in his place while the High Priest went to war, and they were suddenly taken captive, and their lives threatened? Who should be saved first?

Mar Zutra said: As far as saving life is concerned, the High Priest (*kohen gadol*) anointed for war has a superior claim [to his deputy, even though the deputy could serve in the Temple and the *kohen gadol* "dedicated" to the war effort was temporarily ineligible for Temple duty]. [His superior claim was] because many people were dependent on him [since he was to lead the battle in their behalf]; but as regards defilement, the deputy was of superior sanctity [even] to the *kohen gadol*.

אמר מר זוטרא לענין החיותו קשוח מלחמה צדיף מאי טעמא דתלו ביה רבים ולענין טומאה סגן צדיף.

Comment: This technical discussion about ritual defilement and the level of priestly status is especially revealing because it brings us back to one of the utilitarian principles that we looked at earlier in this chapter. Then we had noted that some urged a method of triage based on societal value. The idea that first rights to life go to those considered most likely to benefit society is the principle that stirs the most controversy in triage discussions. While it seems to make some sense that valuable resources ought to be reserved first for those who are most likely to give the greatest "return," there are two reasons why people strenuously object to the idea of making life decisions on the basis of societal value: