

When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh an intensely white spot, or one nearly so, or a shiny white one... then he shall be brought to the Kohen. (13:2)

The *Netziv*. z.l. cites the *Zohar*, which states that the word "*adam*" refers to one who is dignified and respected. This statement seems enigmatic. *Tzara'as* is an affliction visited upon one who has spoken *lashon hara* and slandered others. Indeed, *Chazal* say that the word "*Torah*" is written five times regarding *tzara'as*, to teach that one who speaks *lashon hora* transgresses the five *chumashim* - or the entire *Torah*! Why then would the *Torah* refer to this person as an "*adam chashuv*"?

Horav Nissan Alpert, z.l., suggests the following resolution to this question. The *Talmud* provides great detail describing the causes of *tzara'as* in man, clothing and the home. The *Torah*, however, hardly alludes to its etiology. This seems puzzling. Should not the *Torah* have emphasized the root of the sin, so that man would refrain from the dysfunctional forms of behavior which precipitate *tzara'as*? It is even more striking that the sin of *lashon hora* is not even mentioned until *Parshas Kedoshim*!

The greatness of a man is apparently not assessed by whether or not he is plagued with *tzara'as*. Man's stature is commensurate with his ability to learn from his mistakes and to do whatever he can do to rectify his wrongdoing. One who studies proficiently, but does not change his baneful *middos*, achieves nothing. An "*adam*", man, is esteemed if, when he is stricken with a plague in his body, goes to the *Kohen* for guidance. One who subdues his ego and goes to the spiritual mentor of *Bnei Yisroel*, the *Kohen*, manifests his own respectability. A person's response to punishment is the determining factor of its efficiency.