

He shall dwell in isolation; his dwelling shall be outside the camp. (13:46)

The *metzora* is called this because the name is an acronym for *motzi ra*, (he) brings forth evil (speech). In the *Talmud Arachin* 16b, *Chazal* explain why the *metzora* is the only one of the *tameiim*, individuals who are subject to ritual contamination, who is isolated from the community. He was the cause of divisiveness between man and his fellowman; thus, he should also be separated from the society which he slandered. This presents a question. The first person to speak *lashon hora*, slanderous speech, was Chavah, who repeated the serpent's critique of the Almighty. Exploiting a ploy favored by the usurpers of Torah to rationalize their errant behavior, the serpent said that G-d did not prohibit the *Eitz Hadaas*, Tree of Knowledge, out of any concern for their lives, but out of concern that, if they ate from the tree, their wisdom would expand and they would become omniscient like Him. The last thing Hashem wants is for us to become independent of Him. This ludicrous statement has been repeated by those who are alienated from the Torah way of life. After all, the Torah's laws as conveyed by the rabbis who interpret them, are motivated by a selfish desire to centralize and solidify their power base. Chavah repeated this foolishness, which makes her a slanderer. If so, why was she not struck with *tzaraas*?

Horav David Chanania Pinto, Shlita, begins by explaining the *metzora's* punishment. In the *Talmud Nedarim* 64b, *Chazal* state that four individuals are classified *halachically* as being similar to a corpse: one who is poverty stricken, a *metzora*, a blind person, and one who has no children. Clearly, this statement requires an explanation, which is not the focus of this paper. The *metzora's* inclusion in this group is questionable. He really lacks nothing. Why is he considered like a dead person? He has it all. Seclusion is not the end of the world – or is it?

Rav Pinto explains that the *metzora* has received what we might term as a "Divine snub." Hashem says to him, "Separate yourself from everyone. I also want nothing to do with you. Whatever you possess is of no value to Me. You are a *persona non grata*. This teaches us that one who is *nechshav k'meis*, considered like a dead person, has nothing of value. Anyone who speaks *lashon hora* becomes distanced from Hashem. One really cannot get much worse than that.

The *Midrash* teaches us that, while the Jewish people in Egypt had descended to the forty-ninth level of spiritual impurity, they still maintained one *z'chus*, merit, for being redeemed from Egypt: They had made a pact among themselves to maintain *achdus*, harmony, among one another. We now understand why Hashem did not want to visit *tzaraas* upon Chavah. As the only female in the world, to separate her from the only other human being would have created a rift in the world. If *shalom*, peace, did not reign in the world, Hashem would be "compelled" to distance Himself from it. Thus, Hashem diminished her punishment from *tzaraas*, to *niddah*, menstruant, which also mandates a separation between herself and her husband – but one with which people can live, since it is only for a set period of time and not as reclusive.

This, adds *Rav Pinto*, is the reason for the juxtaposition of *tzaraas* upon *ishah ki sazria*, childbirth, and the ensuing period of ritual impurity. As explained, the reason there is a *tumah* of *niddah* is that *tzaraas* would have been an encroachment that would undermine the future of the world. Thus, the Torah places these two *tumos*, forms of contamination, side by side, so that the woman will have a formidable reminder of the severity of *lashon hora*.