

## "And there shall be taken for the person being purified two birds." (14:4)

*Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita*, observes that there are two types of *baalei lashon hara*, slanderers. There are those who are blatant, who disparage without shame. Their lack of sensitivity for others is overshadowed only by their own personal lack of self-respect. There is yet another type of *baal lashon hara*: one who attempts to veil his invidious activities, because he is embarrassed by his reprehensible maligning of others. He seeks to hurt; he has no qualms whatsoever about character assassination, but he doesn't want to have his own name revealed as the cause of this embarrassment.

The *Torah* addresses itself to the varied "methods" for defaming another Jew's reputation by relating a "story". An individual presents two birds. He brings the first one as a public *korban*, reflecting the sin of *lashon hara* which was spoken without restriction or shame. He sends the second bird away to the field, where people are not to be found. This implies the sin of veiled *lashon hara*, the type whose source people seek to conceal.

The *Torah* teaches us that this *lashon hara* is just as malicious. Immediately, before the second bird is released, it is dipped in the blood of the bird that serves as a *korban*. One should remember that despite his attempts to hide his involvement in this iniquitous act, it will ultimately be known. We may infer another lesson from the dipping of the second bird in the blood. Regardless of one's apparent ability to obscure his own involvement in destroying another Jew, he must reckon with one thought: He has spilled Jewish blood, a reality from which he can never escape.

In the laws of *nigei batim*, *Chazal* explain that leprosy that attaches itself to some stones in a wall of a house is intended to expose a failing of human character. They offer the following illustration. A man asks his friend to lend him some wheat. The "friend" selfishly refuses, claiming that he has no wheat. In his desire to expose this lie, Hashem strikes the man's house with a leprous plague which attaches itself to his wall. Consequently, the *kohen* orders that all vessels be removed from the house prior to rendering a final decision regarding the *halachic* status of the house. Now that all the vessels are publicly displayed outside of the house, the wheat which he claimed he did not have suddenly appears. The owner's lie is revealed, his shame publicly exposed. A slanderer thinks he can hide behind the veil of anonymity just as the wheat owner had thought he could hide behind his lie. In the end Hashem exposes them both.