

This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification. (14:2)

No purification process is more extensive than the one for the *metzora*. As soon as the plague surfaces, the *metzora* is to go to the *Kohen*. He is then isolated for seven days to see if it will disappear. If it is clearly *tamei*, a *nega*, plague, for which one becomes ritually impure, he is sent out of the three *machanos*, camps. He must be completely isolated with no one nearby and sit, wearing torn clothes, to ponder how he has ended up in this miserable place. Once the signs of impurity have disappeared and the *metzora* is declared healed, he begins to prepare for his purification and eventual return to society. He offers the *korbanos*, washes his clothes, and, after seven more days, his hair is cut and more *korbanos* are brought, until, finally, he returns as a changed man! Why so much? No other sin has a purification process which is so demanding.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains this with a *mashal*, analogy. If a man were permitted to enter the surgical suite of any hospital, he would notice a marked difference between the preparation for a routine surgery and that of a transplant. When the surgery is major, the room is laid out with every imaginable tool: scalpels, forceps, scissors, retractors – with advanced procedures requiring specialized tools, such as laser devices or robotic instruments. The more serious and extensive the surgery, the greater the preparation. From the fact that the Torah goes into such detail, and is so demanding of the *metzora* in his process of return, we derive how egregious is the sin of *lashon hora*. Indeed, *Chazal* (*Midrash Tehillim* 52:2) teach that the sin of *lashon hora* is more harmful than the three cardinal sins of idol worship, murder and adultery. One who murders his fellow takes his life. The slanderer, however, harms/destroys three lives: his own, the victim's and the one who heard the *lashon hora*.