



5780 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Tazria-Metzora / פרשת תזריע-מצרע

## Connected from a Distance

After describing the type of leprosy that makes a person a metzora, the Torah describes some of the relevant rules of his state: “He is unclean; he shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.”<sup>1</sup> The Torah mandates social isolation for the metzora – he must stay outside the camp until the purification process.

In the context of the Jewish people’s journey through the desert, the definition of “outside the camp” is clear. However, once the Jewish people settle in the Land of Israel and no longer have a “camp,” where must the metzora stay? Rambam, based on Chazal, writes as follows:<sup>2</sup>

With regard to one inflicted with tzara'at states: " he shall dwell isolated; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." [The camp from which he is sent] refers to the camp of the Israelites which parallels the area from the entrance to Jerusalem and beyond

The metzora is banished from the holy city.

At first glance, this is a devastating consequence. Yerushalayim is the home of God, where His presence can always be felt. Forbidding the metzora from entering the city is effectively representing the fact that he is excommunicated from God. This sorry state is mainly intended to give the metzora the time and space to repent and be worthy once again of reentering a relationship with God.

However, it is important to emphasize that even as the metzora is banished from the holy city, a Jew can never truly be disconnected from Yerushalayim. The midrash uses the metzora as a model to generate a general principle about people who are impure:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vayikra 13:46. Translation from Chabad.org.

<sup>2</sup> Mishneh Torah, hilkhos Biat Mikdash 2:2. Translation from Chabad.org.

<sup>3</sup> Sifrei Naso, piksa 1.



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The Metzora teaches us a general principle about other cases (*lamed al ha-kelal*): Just as a metzora has stringent contamination and has a stringent form of banishment, so, too, any other person who has a stringent form of contamination has a stringent form of banishment.

The midrash refers to Metzora as teaching us something about the “kelal.” The simple meaning of this word is that it refers to other cases of contamination.

However, it is possible that the midrash uses this formulation to allude to a deeper concept.<sup>4</sup> The word “kelal” at times refers to the Jewish community as a whole. Yes, the metzora is banished from God and from the community. Yes, he must sit outside of Yerushalayim. But even in that state, he should not think that he is disconnected from the “kelal” – from the broader Jewish community and from God and His home. Rather, a Jew, no matter how contaminated is always connected to the “kelal” and always has something to contribute to it.

This is a crucial lesson for the metzora but also for all Jews. Even if we are seemingly excommunicated from God and must sit outside of Yerushalayim and are banished from sacred spaces, we cannot be permeated by feelings of rejection. Rather, a Jew is always connected to God, to sanctity, to Yerushalayim and to one’s fellow Jews – one always has that deep bond with the “kelal.”

<sup>4</sup> This idea is from <http://www.yesmalot.co.il/shiurhtml/malotsh1812.asp>.