

## **"When a man will have in the skin of his flesh a rising, or a scab, or a bright spot." (13:2)**

It is a well known fact that these plagues were manifestations of Divine Justice meted out for sins which were either the effect of an evil-tongue or associated with sinful speech. *Bearos Yitzchak* suggest the following rationale for these plagues constructing the specific form of punishment for sinful speech. Man is distinguished from all other creations by his ability to express himself through the medium of speech. In fact, the term "one who speaks" is used to describe human beings. In contrast to all other creations, man's power of speech is an inherent part of his essence. This may be noted in the commentary of *Unkeles* on the *pasuk* in *Bereishis 2:7*, "*And the man became a living soul*". He translates this to mean, "*And man became a speaking spirit*".

When man sins using his G-d-given power of speech, he exhibits an apparent contempt for this attribute which was granted only to him. His actions manifest a complete lack of regard for this sublime characteristic. He, therefore, ascribes superiority to his physical body, rendering him indistinguishable from an animal. This absurd view will be corrected only when one is able to clearly see the folly of his beliefs. Through the degradation of the body caused by such a debilitating illness as leprosy man comes to reflect upon his true essence. The purpose of these plagues is not the pain which is associated with them, but rather their humiliating effect upon the individual. With the realization that the body is no more than a superficial covering for true essence, man will mend his ways and seek true repentance.