

When you arrive in the land of Canaan that I gave you as a possession... He shall demolish the house – its stones, its timber, and all the mortar of the house. (14:34,45)

A balance must be maintained between reward and punishment. With regard to *nigei batim*, an affliction that strikes a house, the owner must call the *Kohen* to determine if, in fact, it is *tamei*, ritually contaminated. Prior to making his *tamei* pronouncement, the *Kohen* orders that everything be removed from the house, which must now be demolished. Otherwise, whatever is in the house will be declared *tamei* as well. The lesson we derive from here is that the punishment one administers should not be overly aggressive, certainly not more noteworthy than the infraction. A balance should exist. Prior to punishing anyone, one must make a rational assessment to make sure that the required discipline not exceed the deed.

The Torah teaches us that discipline is meted out gradually. First, the affliction appears on one's house. It is then followed by an affliction on the surface of his clothing. Last, if he, by his actions, indicates that he has yet to learn his lesson, the affliction strikes his body. Hashem has no interest in hurting the sinner. He would much rather that the individual repent his ways. Thus, the discipline works its way up, but only if the sinner's obtuseness prevents him from acknowledging his error. Only by maintaining balance between infraction and discipline will the intended message be heard.

Rashi teaches us that the destruction of the *metzora's* home is intended to uncover the gold and jewelry that the Canaanites had concealed prior to the advancing Jewish army. They were not about to give away their wealth to their conquerors. This was, in effect, great news for the Jews, but did it have to be this way? *Chazal (Arachin 16)* teach that the affliction appears on the house in order to show everyone that the owner who had always claimed that he had nothing to lend or give to those in need – actually had plenty, which he was hoarding for himself. He deserves punishment, yet he also receives a reward. How do these opposites integrate?

The Torah is teaching us a powerful lesson concerning *chinuch*, education. A sin does not erase a *mitzvah*; punishment does not expunge reward. One who rightfully deserves a reward will receive it. The *mitzvah* will not whitewash the sin that he committed and the punishment for which he is liable. Neither will the sin nullify the *mitzvah*. We must find the balance and consistently maintain it.