

"When you shall come to the land of Canaan which I give to you as a possession, and I put the plague in a house of the land of your possession. And he that owns the house shall come and tell the Kohen saying, "It appears to me that something like a plague is in the house." (14:35-36)

Chazal cite one form of social functioning to be especially responsible for causing plagues of the house. This trait is selfishness, which is manifest by one excluding himself from performing neighborly kindness. *Chazal* emphasize the words, "he that owns the house," to mean, "who keeps his house exclusively to himself." Such an individual applies the principle of Sodom. This principal distorts the incisive principle of property right saying, "What I have is mine, what you have is yours". He seems to forget that the inclusiveness of love must be added to the exclusiveness of property rights. He doesn't recognize that *tzedakah* (charity) must be added to *tzedek* (justice, righteousness) These are prerequisites essential to enable a society to bear the mantle of a Jewish society before Hashem, to enable every household to maintain the right of private living within the framework of society.

Horav Shamshon Rephael Hirsch Z"l point out that Hashem's judgment in this cold structure of wood and stone is a message to the owner concerning his abuse of his individual property rights. This may be aptly noted from the *pasuk*. When the homeowner states to the *Kohen* "It appears to me that something like a plague is in the house", in reality he is saying, "Hashem's finger is pointing directly at my house!" One must understand that living only for oneself, dictating one's actions purely by selfish motives, is a justifiable way of life only for the animal world. Man, however, can only rationalize his social existence by demonstrating a readiness for self-sacrifice and service towards others. The "roof" which we merit from Hashem above is obtainable only through opening our homes and hearts to others.