

## And I will put a plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possessions (14:34)

*Chazal* tell us that the possibility of *tzaraas habayis* was indeed good news. The Emorites had hidden treasures of gold in their houses during the forty years in which *Bnei Yisrael* wandered in the desert. When the Jews demolished the house in reaction to a plague, they would uncover the treasure. *Rashi's* version of *Chazal* is that the *tzaraas* will be "upon them," rather than "upon the house". This implies that a hidden treasure will be discovered in all cases of *tzaraas*, even *tzaraas ha'guf*, leprosy affecting the body.

The idea of hidden treasure within a human being is certainly a realistic one. Many of us have unlocked potential just waiting to be tapped. The treasure is, however, buried beneath layers of conceit, envy and material desires which veil the *neshamah's* yearnings for spiritual ascendancy. While demolition uncovers the hidden wealth within the house, the subjection of the body to a harsh, painful plague in itself constitutes demolition. The *negaim*, plagues, humble one's spirit as they teach him the tragic effect of *lashon hora*.

No one has asserted that suffering would be easy or that pain and tribulation would be pleasant. Every cloud, however, has a silver lining. Rather than complain and criticize Hashem's decree, it makes sense to seek out the buried treasure within us. After all, is that not what Hashem requires of us?