

## The one to whom the house belongs shall come... (14:35) Anyone who comes into the house...shall be contaminated (14:46)

A house that has a *tzaraas* plague, appear on its structure is rendered *tamei*, ritually contaminated. This is a miraculous phenomenon which occurs only in *Eretz Yisrael*. If it does not disappear, the walls – and, at times, the entire structure – is demolished. Initially (*Ramban*), *tzaraas* on a house is Hashem's subtle rebuke to its owner. Something is amiss in his behavior. The house is his first warning. Hashem first afflicts (he who is deserving) something outside of his body. If he does not listen to the message and positively alters his demeanor, the ailment will spread to his clothing, and, if after this occurs, he still refuses to shape up, the affliction strikes his body. Furthermore, historically, *tzaraas* of the house was actually a blessing in disguise, since the heathens who inhabited *Eretz Yisrael* hid their treasures in the walls of their houses so that the conquering Jewish army would not discover them. When a person was compelled to demolish his home, his sorrow turned into joy when he found the treasures.

Things happen, or rather, they do not “just happen.” They happen for a reason and a purpose. It is our obligation to listen to our Heavenly messages. Hashem is reaching out to us out of Divine love, in the hope that we will hear His subtle messages and act upon them. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in a vacuum. *Hashem Yisborach* speaks to us, but, if we are not listening, or worse, if we refuse to listen, to what avail are the messages? *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates an incident which he saw recorded in the *Sedei Tzofim*, by *Horav Dovid Friedman, Shlita*. Apparently, a family in Manchester, England, renovated their guest house and rented it out to a young, recently-married, couple. Sadly, a few months into the rental, the couple experienced marital discord and divorced. A second couple moved in shortly thereafter. Shockingly, their marriage ended up in a manner similar to that of the first couple. When this tragic outcome happened to the third couple to rent the guest house, the owner acknowledged that there was a problem. He was, thus, relieved when the fourth couple to rent the house had to escape in the middle of the night when a fire broke out and destroyed a large portion of the house. It was crunch time. The messages were certainly real and becoming more compelling. They decided to remove the *mezuzos* and check to confirm their *kashrus*. How shocked they were to discover that, in the phrase, *Asher Anochi metzavecha ha'yom al levavecha*, “Which I command You today on your hearts.” (*Krias Shema*), the *reish* (last letter of *asher*) was prominently missing; thus, *asher* read as *eish* – fire!

It now all made sense. Fire can be a reference to the all-consuming energy that destroys everything in its path, or to the fire of controversy that is equally devastating. Regarding the first three couples, the fire of controversy was sadly successful in destroying a marriage that was probably already on shaky ground. The fourth couple's relationship with one another was unshakeable (as ideal marriages should be). Thus, it required the fire of energy to send home the message that the protection which is usually provided by the *mezuzah* had been incapacitated.