

Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye
Toldot Yaakov Yosef
Parshas Metzora

Commandment — "And the one who has the house shall come and tell the priest [saying] something like a plague has appeared to me in the house" (Vayikra 14:35).	מצוה — ובא אִשֶּׁר לוֹ הַבַּיִת וְהִגִּיד לַכֹּהֵן [לְאמֹר] (כִּנְגַע נִרְאָה לִי בַּבַּיִת) (ויקרא י"ד, ל"ה)
And behold, to understand, that the commandment is eternal from His Blessed Essence, and it is at every time and every person,	וְהִנֵּה לְהִבִּין, כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הוּא נִצְחִי מֵעַצְמוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ, וְהוּא בְּכָל זְמַן וּבְכָל אָדָם,
and it is against the reasoning, for our eyes see that it is not practiced in this time.	וְהוּא נֶגֶד הַסִּבְרָא, כִּי עֵינֵינוּ רֹאוֹת שְׂאִינוֹ נוֹהֵג בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.
Further, it is difficult: "something like a plague has appeared to me" is redundant, for it should have simply stated "something like a plague appeared in the house."	עוֹד קוֹשֶׁה, כִּנְגַע נִרְאָה לִי הוּא מְיוֹתֵר, דִּהְיָה לִּיהִי לְמִימַר בְּקִצְרוֹת כִּנְגַע נִרְאָה בַּבַּיִת.
And it appears to me, that man is a small world,	וְנִרְאָה לִי, דִּהְיָאָדָם הוּא עוֹלָם קָטָן,
and he has within him the four elements just as there is in the general world: mineral, vegetable, animal, and speaking.	וַיֵּשׁ בּוֹ ד' יסודות כְּמוֹ שֵׁשׁ בְּכָל־לוֹת הָעוֹלָם, דּוֹמָם צוֹמַח חַי מְדַבֵּר
And man, through the blemish of his sins, whether in himself or the root of his soul that was in Adam HaRishon and in the 288 sparks that fell into the broken vessels in the four worlds of Atzilus, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Asiyah,	וְהָאָדָם עַל יְדֵי פֶגַם עֲוֹנוֹתָיו, הֵן בְּעַצְמוֹ אוֹ שׁוֹרֵשׁ נִשְׁמָתוֹ שֶׁהָיָה בְּאָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן וּבְרִפ"ח נִיצוֹצִין שֶׁיָּרְדוּ בְּמַאֲנֵין תְּבִירִין בְּד' עוֹלָמוֹת אֲבִי"ע
and man needs to elevate the sparks of his soul, whether through his eating or his Torah and prayer,	וְהָאָדָם צָרִיךְ לְהַעֲלוֹת נִיצוֹצֵי נִשְׁמָתוֹ, הֵן עַל יְדֵי אֲכִילָתוֹ אוֹ תוֹרָתוֹ וּתְפִלָּתוֹ
until he rectifies and elevates all his sparks,	עַד שֶׁיִּבְרַר כָּל נִיצוֹצָיו שְׁלֹו
for this is the purpose of the creation of man and the secret of the number of his days, as it is written (Tehillim 39:5) "and the measure of my days, what it is,"	שֶׁזֶהוּ תְּכִלִּית בְּרִיאַת הָאָדָם וְסוֹד מִסְפֵּר יָמָיו, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב (תהלים ל"ט, ה') וּמִדַּת יָמֵי מָה הִיא
for just as he needs to rectify and elevate the sparks according to the number of days, thus were given to him the years of his life — see writings about this.	כִּי כְּמוֹ שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְתַקֵּן וּלְהַעֲלוֹת הַנִּיצוֹצִין בְּמִסְפֵּר הַיָּמִים, כִּךְ נִתְּן לוֹ שָׁנֵי חַיָּיו, עַיִן בְּכַתְּבִים מְזִנָּה
And at the time when man rules over man to his own harm (Koheles 8:9),	(וּבִיעַת אִשֶּׁר שָׁלִיט הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם לְרָע לוֹ) (קהלת ח', ט')
meaning that the sins of man are what torment the man himself,	רָצָה לוֹמַר כִּי הָעֲוֹנוֹת שֶׁל הָאָדָם הֵן הַמִּסְפָּרִים אֵת הָאָדָם עַצְמוֹ
as it is written (Yeshayahu 64:6) "and we melt away in the hand of our iniquities" etc.	ל'פִּמְשָׁכָתוֹב (יִשְׁעִיָּה ס"ד, ו') וְתִמְוֹגְגְנוּ בְּיַד עֲוֹנוֹנוֹ וְגו'

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And sometimes, through his sins, a person is created to cause him distress,	וּפְעָמִים שֶׁעַל יְדֵי עֲוֹנוֹתָיו נִבְרָא אָדָם לְהַצִּיר לוֹ
until he is punished for his sins,	עַד שֶׁנִּפְרָע עַל עֲוֹנוֹתָיו
and then he extracts the sparks from the person who causes him distress,	וְאָז מוֹצִיא הַנִּצּוֹצִין מֵאָדָם הַמַּצִּיר לוֹ
and then he [the oppressor] has no vitality, and he dies and is nullified from the world after he performed his mission.	וְאֵז אֵין לוֹ שׁוּם חַיּוּת לְזֶה הַמַּצִּיר, וְיָמָת וְכֻטַּל מִן הָעוֹלָם אַחֵר שֶׁעָשָׂה שְׁלִיחוּתוֹ
And sometimes the sparks of his soul descend through the blemish of his sins into the mineral,	וּפְעָמִים שְׂוִירָדִין נִצּוֹצֵי נִשְׁמָתוֹ עַל יְדֵי פֶגַם עֲוֹנוֹתָיו בְּדוֹמָם
like in a house, where a man who sinned resides in this house to cause him distress through the sparks of his soul that are in the trees and stones and material of the house's surface,	כְּמוֹ בְּבַיִת, שֶׁאָדָם שֶׁפֶגַם הוּא דָר בְּבַיִת זֶה לְהַצִּיר לוֹ עַל יְדֵי נִצּוֹצֵי נִשְׁמָתוֹ שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּעֵצִים וְאֲבָנִים וְחֹמֶר שְׁטַח הַבַּיִת מִנִּצּוֹצֵי נִשְׁמָתוֹ שֶׁיֵּרְדוּ שָׁם
until the man who is there repents,	עַד שֶׁהָאָדָם שֶׁם בְּבַיִת שָׁב בְּתַשׁוּבָה
and returns and elevates the sparks of his soul to their root from the mineral to the level of the living, the animal, and the speaking.	וְהִתְזַר וְהִעֲלָה נִצּוֹצֵי נִשְׁמָתוֹ אֶל שָׂרֶשׁן מִן הַדּוֹמָם אֶל הַבְּחִינָה הָאֲדָמָה חַי מְדַבֵּר
And this is called repentance (Teshuvah), that he returns to his source,	וְזֶה נִקְרָא תַשׁוּבָה, שֶׁשָּׁב אֶל מְקוֹרוֹ
for everything is sparks of the Shechinah in the secret of "His Kingdom rules over all" (Tehillim 103:19),	כִּי הַכֹּל הוּא נִצּוֹצֵי הַשְׁכִּינָה בְּסוּד מַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכָל מְשָׁלָה ((תְּהִלִּים ק"ג, י"ט
that she [the Shechinah] connects and cleaves to her root, to the Life of Lives.	שֶׁשְׁשָׁרָה וְדָבָקָה לְשָׂרֶשָׁהּ אֶל חַיֵּי הַחַיִּים
And as is written in the writings of the Arizal in Etz Chaim, section Tazria:	וְכֵמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב בְּכַתְבֵּי הָאָר"י בְּעֵנָף עֵץ חַיִּים פְּרָשָׁת תַּזְרִיעַ
"and he shall be brought to the priest," meaning that the lights that went outside and became blemishes shall return to their place and cleave to their source,	וְהוּבָא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן, כִּי הָאוֹרוֹת שֶׁיֵּצְאוּ לַחוּץ וְנִעְשׂוּ נִגְעִים, שֶׁיִּחְזְרוּ לְמְקוֹמָם וְיִדָּבְקוּ בְּמְקוֹרָם
and through this the external forces have no power to draw sustenance when he is attached to his source,	וְעַל יְדֵי כֵן אֵין כֹּחַ בְּחִיצוֹנִים לִיְנוֹק כֶּשֶׁהוּא דְבוּק בְּשָׂרָשׁוֹ
and this is the returning of the light to the priest, to its place in Zeir Anpin etc., see there,	וְהוּא חֲזָרַת הָאוֹר אֶל הַכֹּהֵן לְמְקוֹמוֹ בְּזַעִיר אֲנָפִין וְכו', עֵינֵינוּ שָׁם
and this is exactly as we have said above, and then healing occurs, whether in the house or in the man.	וְהֵינּוּ מִמֶּשׁ כְּדַבְּרֵינוּ הַנ"ל, וְאֵז נִרְפָּא בֵּין בְּבַיִת בֵּין בְּאָדָם
And with this will be understood, "And the one who has the house shall come,"	וְיָבֹה יוֹבֵן, וְכָא אֲשֶׁר ל"ו ה"בֵּית

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for this house is specifically connected to "thirty-six,"	כי בית זה הוא שנה ל"ו דוקא
for the sparks of his soul are there,	שנצוצי נשמתו שמה
which through the blemish of his sins caused the sparks of the Shechinah to descend from the level of "living, speaking" to the level of "mineral,"	אשר על ידי פגם עונותיו ירדו נצוצי השכינה מן מדרגת חי מדבר אל מדרגה דומה
and through the suffering that he experienced in the house to afflict him,	ועל ידי הצרות אשר עברו עליו בבית ליסרו
and he repented,	ונשב
and he told the priest — meaning he returned the light, the sparks of the Shechinah, which is a portion of his soul, to its source,	והגיד לפהו — שהחזיר האור נצוצי השכינה שהיא חלק נשמתו אל מקורו
and this is the language of "vehigid" ("and he told"), as is known,	וזה לשון והגיד כנודע
and this is what it says, "to the priest."	וזה"ש לפהו
"Something like a plague has appeared to me" — meaning,	כנגע נראה לי, ר"ל
like the plague that I saw in myself through the blemish of my soul,	כמו הנגע שנראה לי בעצמי בפגם נשמתו
it is in my house, as mentioned above,	הוא בבית שלי כנ"ל
and through the return of the light to its source — which is the priest — the plague is healed, and understand this.	ועל ידי חזרת האור למקורו שהיא הפהו נרפא הנגע, והפהו
And with this you will understand, "This shall be the law of the metzora on the day of his purification, and he shall be brought to the priest" (Vayikra 14:2).	ובזה תבין, "זאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום טהרתו (והובא אל הפהו)" (ויקרא י"ד, ב')
For we have mentioned above that through the blemish of his sins, a destructive force or an evil person is created to cause him distress,	כי זכרנו לעיל, כי על ידי פגם עונותיו נברא משחית או אדם רשע להצור לו
in the secret of "when man rules over man to his harm" (Koheles 8:9),	בסוד "ואשר שליט אדם באדם לרע לו" (קהלת ח', ט')
as is written in the writings of the Arizal, that it means to the harm of the oppressor,	כמשפחות בכתבי האר"י, דר"ל לרע לו של המצר
for his vitality was due to the sin of the sinner.	כי חיותו הוא ממחמת עון החוטא
And after he received his punishment and repented, the good was separated from the evil,	ואחר שקבל עונשו ושב בתשובה, נברר הטוב מן הרע
and only evil remained without the part of good that had been its vitality,	ונשאר רק רע בלי חלק הטוב שהיה חיותו
and this is what it says, "to his harm."	וזה"ש לרע לו

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And with this will be understood, "And this is the law of the metzora,"	"וּבְזֶה יִיבֹן, "זֹאת תֹּרַת הַמֵּצָרָע
for through the sufferings of tzaraas he clarifies and extracts the good, and only evil remains,	,כִּי עַל יְדֵי יְסוּרֵי צָרַעַת מְבַרֵּר וּמוֹצִיא הַטּוֹב וְנִשְׁאַר רָע
and this is what it says, "he brings out evil" (Arachin 15b),	,(וְזֶה"ש "מוֹצִיא רָע" (עֲרַכִּין ט"ו
that by extracting the good, only the evil remains,	,שְׂעָל יְדֵי מוֹצִיא הַטּוֹב נִשְׁאַר הָרָע
and this is "on the day of his purification and he shall be brought to the priest,"	,וְזֶה "בְּיוֹם טְהֻרָתוֹ וְהוּבָא אֶל הַכֹּהֵן
the return of the light to its source, which is the priest, and understand well.	.הַתּוֹרַת הָאֹר לְשׁוֹשׁוֹ שֶׁהוּא הַכֹּהֵן, וְהֵבִין

[NOTE: 📖 Summary

The discourse explains a deep mystical process connected to the verse "ובא אשר לו הבית" — "and the one who has the house shall come."

It teaches that when a person sins, sparks of his soul — originating from the Divine Shechinah — fall into lower states of existence, even down to the mineral (דומם). These fallen sparks sometimes manifest as suffering, either through a house afflicted by tsaraas (spiritual leprosy) or by oppressors and hardships in life.

When a person repents (תשובה) and rectifies his sins, he elevates those sparks back to their holy source. This is symbolized by "telling the priest," meaning the restoration of the Divine light to its original place.

The process of tsaraas and healing — as detailed in **Parshas Metzora** — is actually the story of clarifying the good from the evil: after the suffering and repentance, the good is extracted and the evil is left without vitality and disappears.

Ultimately, healing comes — in the house and in the person — when the sparks return to their root, symbolized by their being brought back to the "priest" (representing Divine source and purity).

🔧 Practical Takeaway

When you experience suffering — whether emotional, physical, or even environmental — realize it is not random.

It may be an opportunity to **elevate fallen sparks** related to your soul.

Instead of just trying to escape suffering, use it as a trigger to do real תשובה, repair breaches in your connection to Hashem, and "return the sparks" to their root.

Small actions like sincere prayer, fixing your middos (character traits), repairing broken relationships, and renewed commitment to mitzvos — these "return the light" and heal your personal "house."

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The suffering will then naturally end, not just because of external efforts, but because its mission — your inner healing — has been accomplished.



Chassidic Story

The Baal Shem Tov and the Ill House

Once, a Jew came to the Baal Shem Tov crying that his home had become cursed: he suffered endless troubles since moving into a new house — illness, fights, and financial collapse.

The Baal Shem Tov listened carefully and said:

"Your soul had sparks trapped in the wood and stones of that house from long ago. They called you there to release them."

He instructed the man to dedicate time in the house for heartfelt prayer, Torah study, and acts of kindness.

Within weeks, the atmosphere of the house changed — the illnesses faded, peace returned to the family, and prosperity blossomed.

The Baal Shem Tov later explained:

"When the sparks are lifted back to their Source, the 'curse' becomes a blessing."

This story exactly parallels the teaching of the discourse: sometimes the very place of suffering is the place of your greatest spiritual mission — and your greatest redemption. **END NOTE]**