

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno

by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Sick Forester

Tazri'a

Jack was a simple forester, living alone in a primitive hut in a large forest.

One day Jack woke up with a raging fever. He was in a desperate situation. He was too weak and dizzy to move out of his bed, and there was no one in the area who could hear his cries for help.

Fortunately, a hunter happened to pass near the hut and heard Jack's cries. The hunter entered the hut and realized that Jack was in a bad way.

"I am not a doctor and cannot treat you", the hunter told him. "But I can take you to the nearest village. There people will see you and do the best they can to treat you."

Bringing out the Evil

Tzara'at is a wake-up call. It is meant to uncover spiritual illness within a person. The word M'TZORA comes from the words MOTZI RA -- this disease "brings out the evil". When an unusual discoloration appears on a one's skin, the person is made aware

of his illness and will seek out a kohen to be treated. The process of purification is a lesson in t'shuva and spiritual repair.

Tzara'at works like the hunter in the parable, who brought the sick man out of the forest (where he was hidden) to the town, where others will notice him and treat him. Were it not for tzara'at, people would not be aware of their moral and spiritual failings.

The Midrash notes that it is the kohen who sees the metzora and diagnoses his condition. But in the future, God Himself will purify us, as it says, "I will sprinkle clean water over you and you will be purified" (Yechezkel 36:25). God will purify us, giving us a new heart and a new spirit, and elevate us to a totally new spiritual level.

Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 225-226