

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Ailing Forester

TAZRI'A-M'ITZORA

Wyatt was a solitary forester, the kind of man who prefers trees to people. He lived alone in a ramshackle hut deep in the woods, where the birds were his neighbors and the squirrels his only critics. Life was peaceful – until it wasn't.

One morning, Wyatt woke up burning with fever. His head pounded, his limbs ached, and worst of all, he was too weak to stagger to the door and yell for help. Not that there was anyone around to hear him. That's the downside of solitude. Independence is wonderful, right up until the moment you need another human being.

Wyatt, however, got lucky. A hunter happened to be passing nearby. Hearing Wyatt's feeble groans, the hunter pushed open the rickety door and took one look at him. It wasn't good. Wyatt was pale, sweaty, and had the glassy-eyed look of a man contemplating his last regrets.

"I'm no doctor", the hunter announced – because stating the

obvious is what people do in emergencies – "but I can haul you to the nearest village. There, someone will know what to do."

Wyatt, having no better offers, nodded weakly. The hunter slung him over his shoulder like a particularly unwieldy deer and trudged off toward civilization.

Bringing out the Hidden

Tzara'at – commonly translated as leprosy, though, let's be honest, it's more complicated than that – is a wake-up call. It's not just a skin condition. It's an announcement, a flashing neon sign that says, "There's something deeper going on here." The word M'ITZORA comes from MOTZI RA – "bringing out the evil". Not exactly a flattering diagnosis, but there it is.

A person afflicted with tzara'at suddenly finds himself under scrutiny. He's sent to a kohen, not a doctor, because this isn't about medicine; it's about repentance and spiritual repair. The discoloration on his skin is merely a symptom of something inside – something that needs fixing.

It is like the hunter in the parable. Wyatt, left alone, would have perished in his hut, unseen and untreated. But the hunter, hearing his cries, carried him to the village, where others could help him heal.

Tzara'at does the same: it exposes what would otherwise stay hidden. Without it, people would remain unaware of their moral and spiritual failings.

Yet, there is hope. The Midrash tells us that now, it is the kohen who diagnoses the m'tzora, but in the future, God Himself will heal us. "I will sprinkle clean water over you, and you will be purified" (Yechezkel 36:25). Not just cleansed, but renewed. A new heart. A new spirit. A fresh beginning.

Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 225-226