

Metzora 5784

The process for the purification of a *metzora* involved the Kohen taking עץ ארז - a (piece of) cedar wood, תולעת שני - red (from a worm) dyed wool and איזוב - hyssop grass. Rashi points out that these three ingredients allude to the idea that one who sins due to haughtiness (represented by the tall **cedar** tree) should humble and lower himself like the lowly **grass** and **worm**. Why then, should the cedar tree be used at all? Shouldn't the focus be exclusively on correcting the problem of arrogance and haughtiness, which lead to the sin of *lashon hara*? Would it not be better to just use the grass and the (worm) wool, highlighting the *midah* of humbleness and humility? Why include the cedar at all?

Perhaps we can say that while one must humble himself and recognize his limitations, he cannot become fixated on being inadequate or think of himself as a worthless individual. Focusing on the negative alone is also not a healthy way to live. The goal of this process is not to break us but to give us a healthy appreciation of who we are and what is expected of us. Remembering our "cedar" tree qualities and balancing them with the lowly grass is essential! Either extreme is unhealthy. It is hard but a Yid is always supposed to achieve a balance between אנכי עפר ואפר and בשבילי נברא העולם .

When it comes to *chinuch*, how careful we must be especially when disciplining our children, not to identify them by their weaknesses or misdeeds. Yes, we must teach them humility to be receptive to criticism and accept responsibility for their wrongdoings. Certainly, we must instruct them how to be receptive to redirection and repair their behavior. However, we must be careful to emphasize that they are a mighty cedar and therefore this behavior is unbecoming and unworthy.

As we approach the *Yomtov* of Pesach we are also reminded of the message that HKB"H sends to us as a nation. No matter how low we may have stooped, we are still *Bnai Melachim* and it behooves us to act as such.

May we successfully transmit this essential message to our children all year long!

Gut Shabbos and a *chag kasher v'sameach*

B'yedidus,

Rabbi Tzvi Krigsman