

4 Nisan, 5784
April 12, 2024

Parashat Tazriya

As part of his purification process, a metzora needs to bring three unique items. He needs to bring wood from a cedar tree; a thread of wool dyed red; and a hyssop branch.

Rashi explains that the wood from the cedar tree represents the arrogance of the person who spoke lashon hara. Someone who speaks lashon hara thinks he is better than everyone else, which leads him to speak badly about others. The wool dyed with the blood of a lowly worm and the low hyssop branch represent the humility of a person that does not speak lashon hara. Someone who does not speak lashon hara understands that every person has value, and he is careful to speak positively about others.

The Olam Maleh asks, if the metzora is going to use three items, then all three should represent either the attribute of arrogance that he is trying to avoid or the attribute of humility which he is trying to develop. Why does he mix the two together?

The Olam Maleh suggests the following answer. When the metzora is trying to change his behavior, he needs to do more than just think about the bad things he did. He also needs to focus on the good things that he could do. For this reason, he uses items that represent both the bad attribute of arrogance and the good attribute of humility.

The purification of the metzora teaches us an important lesson. If we are going to improve the way we speak, we need to work on both things at the same time. We need to try to stay away from saying lashon hara, and we need to look for opportunities to speak positively about others.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Roth