

"The Kohen shall command to take for him that is to be cleansed two living birds, and cedarwood, and crimson thread and hyssop." (14:4)

Rashi explains the symbolism of the cedarwood, crimson thread and hyssop as an allusion to the need for humility, the *metzora's* need to focus on and to neutralize his arrogant nature. This is consistent with *Chazal's* teaching that the various *nega'im*, plagues, are the result of *gasus ha'ruach*, vulgarity and haughtiness. **Horav Shimon Schwab, zl**, suggests that these three objects signify three types of humility.

First is the fellow who sees his own insignificance. He realizes that the insignificant amount of *Torah* he may have studied is nothing in relation to the vast storehouse of *Torah* knowledge that exists. He is compared to a hyssop which is a tiny shrub-like grass that grows near the wall. It is a growth that is ignored by people because of its lack of importance. Although he does not view himself as lowly, the second type recognizes that he has imperfections in character and spiritual achievement. He has come to accept his iniquitous behavior before Hashem. He acknowledges the fact that he has little about which to be arrogant. He is likened to the *shni solaas*, crimson thread, a string which is dyed in the blood of a lowly worm. The aversion one has to this creature is similar to this individual's loathing for his own sinful behavior.

There is yet a third form of self-effacement. One can view himself as virtuous and upright. He may even acknowledge his spiritual acumen and *Torah* knowledge. He recognizes, however, that his accomplishments are limited in comparison to the *Torah* scholars of the past. He sees himself as nothing more than a small wooden stick that comes from a gigantic cedar tree. This individual's sense of humility is reflected by the cedarwood. Humility is virtue which is relative to the individual. Although it is not demanded that one be blind to his positive attributes, his positive traits should not totally determine his self-image.