

H Ha Pa a M a

continues to detail the intricate laws of the skin, cloth, and house affliction, . While is often considered a punishment for evil speech in rabbinic literature, the Talmud relates six other possible causes, one of which is arrogance (16a). Psalms connects these two sins in one verse, He who slanders his friend in secret I will cut off; I cannot endure the haughty and proud man (Psalms 101:5). There is a conceptual similarity between slander and hubris. Evil speech is often an external manifestation of the internal trait of arrogance. People who are humble and internally self-confident, do not need to talk badly about others to lift their own egos.

The ritual process of purification reflects this moral message. One of the sacrifices offered by the priest on behalf of the metzora is an , a guilt offering. Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno explains that this type of offering atones for , a misuse of the sacred domain. Evil speech and haughtiness

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personality. Hyssop, a shrub whose leaves are tiny, is used because the person necessarily lowered himself through the purification process. Rabbi Alter argues that it only makes sense to include symbolic objects in the purification process that reflect the aspirational goals of the process. Since the cedar represents haughtiness, why would it be singled out and have a place of prominence in the process of purification?

Rabbi Alter suggests that there are times that the cause of our sins is not arrogance but erroneous humility. The Talmud, after a dozen or so serious denigrations of arrogance, writes in the name of Rav, that a Torah scholar needs to embody at least a small measure of arrogance (Eruvin 5a). In Hasidic

texts, this nuanced notion is referred to as *holy*