

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 250

**Tetzaveh** | Rectifying the Sin of Evil Speech

# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

Dedicated to the hatzlacha of  
Avi and Mordi Berko and her Family

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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## Parshat Tetzaveh

### The High Cost of Defamation

The newspapers "Yom HaShishi" and "Erev Shabbat" were newspapers with religious content, but sometimes they stumbled – like any newspaper – into *lashon hara* (derogatory speech), even against rabbis in general, including the illustrious Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, of blessed memory. It was not always intentional; sometimes a reporter brought an unverified item, and the editors did not check thoroughly. And so it happened once, twice, or more.

One way of dealing with such defamatory articles is a lawsuit in a civil court. Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was not willing to go to a civil court even in cases where he certainly would have emerged vindicated. A person of his stature could have won hundreds of

thousands of shekels for each claim, but he thought it would be a desecration of G-d's Name to resort to secular courts – even in cases where it is permitted according to *Halacha* (Jewish law). The public might learn from him to resort to the courts even in a case where one should go to the Beit Din (rabbinical court). Therefore, he was willing to absorb the insults rather than resort to the courts.

The publicist Yisrael Gelis once recounted:<sup>1</sup>

I was a new editor at the *Erev Shabbat* newspaper, which in the past had stumbled a few times in the publication of *lashon hara*. I often tried to correct any distortions, but one time I was in the United States for two weeks, and in that short period, one of the reporters wrote something

## Parshat Tetzaveh - The High Cost of Defamation

negative about one of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu's family members – something that turned out to be completely false. That family member decided to take retribution against the newspaper for everything that had been written about the rabbi in the past, and he sued me and the paper in a civil court for a very substantial sum.

The rabbi's son won the entire sum in the lawsuit, and in the end, I had to pay that amount out of my own pocket. I did not know how I would raise such a significant sum.

I did what I would always do: I went to Rav Eliyahu's house. I told him that I had been found liable in court and asked him what I should do. The Rav said to me: You were found liable? Pay up! I said to him: I don't have the funds.

The Rav looked at me with his luminous eyes and said: It is your responsibility to ensure that no *lashon hara* is published in the newspaper you edit. You did

not fulfill your responsibility —  
you must pay up!

The Rav further told me that paying this amount of money does not even cover the damage caused by the *lashon hara* written and publicized about rabbis. “*Lashon hara* about a rabbi can cause a grave injury to Halacha. Imagine that someone who regularly attends the Torah classes of a certain rabbi reads a negative article that is published in your paper. He will say: Why should I go to hear classes from that rabbi? And the blame for preventing his Torah learning – and that of others – falls on you!

“Imagine further,” the Rav continued, “that someone has a halachic question in the laws of *niddah* (family purity) or the laws of Shabbat, and he reads that a certain rabbi did something improper. Whether it's true, false, or half-true – it no longer matters. That person will no longer go to ask that rabbi any halachic questions. He might not ask any rabbi a question because he will lump all rabbis

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together; as a result, he will act according to his own personal opinion and not according to what the Torah commands him."

When I realized the severity of the matter, I was shaken. When the Rav saw what I was going through, he took out a personal checkbook from a drawer near his desk and said to me: You hurt a member of my family, and you need to pay. I know you don't have it – take the money, only make sure that the family member never knows that you got the money from me. The Rav wrote me a personal check for the entire amount of the judgment and said to me: Cash this check at the bank and pay him in cash.

I left the Rav's house, trembling with the check in my hand, and I couldn't stand on my feet. I sat outside on the steps and started to cry like a little child. I had never seen such nobility of spirit in my entire life.

I did what the Rav said, of course, and that family member does not know to this day what the true source of the money he

won in the lawsuit was. Perhaps only now, when he reads this story, will he know the real story.

Needless to say, from that day on, I was much more careful that words of *lashon hara* would not emerge from under my editorial pen. I had learned my lesson...

Every Jewish man and woman - after living to a ripe old age - will have to stand trial before the Heavenly Court for all their deeds, both good and bad. When the court will prosecute the soul for sins of *lashon hara*, the feeling of fear and remorse will be immense. But there, in the World of Truth, it will already be too late – there, one can no longer repent.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, in his wisdom and holiness, succeeded in imparting to the newspaper editor a bit of that feeling of fear and remorse...

In this discussion of ours, we will interweave the gravity of the sin of *lashon hara* through the weekly parasha and the holiday of Purim.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Priestly Garments**

We will address the intellectual dimension of the severity of speaking *lashon hara* – for the

very moment that one speaks *lashon hara*, its ugliness and stench are exposed for all to see!

**The Priestly Garments**

In our parasha, Parshat Tetzaveh, there are 101 verses. Of these, 43 verses (the entire chapter 28) deal with the priestly garments.

In these verses, we were commanded to make priestly garments for Aaron the Kohen and for his descendants – garments that would serve them during their service in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and later in the Holy Temple.

There were a total of eight priestly garments, which were divided as follows:

A regular Kohen would use four garments (of the eight), namely: *michnasaim* (breeches), *ketonet* (tunic), *mitznefet* (turban), and *avnet* (sash).

The Kohen Gadol (High Priest) would wear eight garments – the four priestly garments of the regular Kohen, plus four additional garments: the *tzitz*

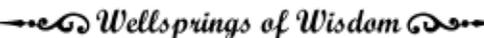
(forehead plate), the *choshen* (breastplate), the *efod* (apron-like ephod), and the *me'il* (robe).

Rabbi Zechariah David Valles wrote the following insight:<sup>2</sup>

The reason for the various garments is not uniform; rather, they fall into one of three categories:

The *michnasaim* were for the sake of modesty, as it says: “And make for them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the hips to the thighs they shall reach” (Exodus 28:42).

The *ketonet* (tunic), *mitznefet* (turban), and *avnet* (sash) were for honor and splendor, as it says: “For Aaron’s sons you shall make tunics and make sashes for them, and make turbans for them, for honor and for splendor” (Exodus 28:40).



Parshat Tetzaveh - The Priestly Garments

The Ramban explains (ibid. v. 2) as follows: “‘For honor and for splendor’ – to be honored and adorned in honorable, beautiful garments, as it says: ‘Like a bridegroom adorns himself with a turban of glory’ (Isaiah 61:10); for these garments are royal garments...”

The four additional garments of the Kohen Gadol – the *tzitz*, *choshen*, *efod*, and *me’il* – alluded to the Divine holiness that rested upon the Kohen Gadol, and to the fact that he sheltered in the shade of G-d, in his place in the Holy Temple.

To indicate all this, all of the Kohen Gadol’s garments were made of wool dyed *techelet* (sky-blue), which is called “*techelet*,” symbolizing the dwelling of the Shechinah (Divine Presence)...

As Rabbi Meir would say (Menachot 43b): Why is *techelet* more unique than all of the other colors? Because *techelet* resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the Throne of Glory – as it is said: “Under His feet was

the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the heart of the sky for purity” (Exodus 24:10), and it is written: “Like the appearance of sapphire stone, the semblance of a throne” (Ezekiel 1:26).

To explain further:

The regular Kohen’s garments (*michnasaim*, *ketonet*, *mitznefet*) were made of linen – except for the *avnet*, which was made of linen woven with *techelet*. Whereas the Kohen Gadol’s garments all contained wool of the color *techelet*: three of the garments (*tzitz*, *choshen*, *efod*) were woven from *techelet* and linen (among other materials), and the fourth garment – the *me’il* – was made entirely of *techelet*.

As it says: “You shall make the robe of the ephod completely of *techelet*” (Exodus 28:31), and Rashi explains: “‘Completely of *techelet*’ – all of it *techelet*, with no other kind [of thread] mixed in.”

As such, the *me’il* had a special power, as we shall explain further.

But first, let us preface with the following...

## Garments of Atonement

In a lecture delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram, of blessed memory, he said as follows (Imrei Noam, Parashat Tzav – Essay 7):

In the first part of Parashat Tzav (in the Book of Vayikra), the Torah deals with the various sacrifices: *olah* (burnt offering), *chatat* (sin offering), *asham* (guilt offering), and *shelamim* (peace offering) – as the Torah summarizes by saying: “This is the law of the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of the peace offering, which G-d commanded Moses...” (Leviticus 7:37–38).

Then, in the second half of the parasha, from the Fourth Aliyah and onward, the Torah deals with the priestly garments and with the procedure of dressing Aaron and his sons, the Kohanim.

One of the principles in the interpretation of the verses of the holy Torah is that whenever the Torah places two different topics next to each other, it is not by chance, Heaven forbid;

rather, it has deep significance.

As our Sages interpreted the verse (Berachot 10a): “Intertwined forever, made in truth and uprightness” (Psalms 111:8) – even the juxtaposition of topics in the Torah is done with truth and uprightness, and it contains a great matter of depth and meaning.

The holy Torah is comparable to a wondrous building constructed layer upon layer, where every single detail is precise to the utmost. Consequently, even the placement of portions of the Torah in proximity to each other has deep meaning, and we are required to put in effort to understand what the Torah wants to hint at us through this juxtaposition.

In this vein, our Sages explain the reason for the juxtaposition of the section on the sacrifices to the verses that discuss the priestly garments in Parashat Tzav (Zevachim 88b):

“Rabbi Anani bar Sasson said: Why was the section of sacrifices placed next to the section of

Parshat Tetzaveh - Garments of Atonement

priestly garments?<sup>3</sup> To tell you – just as sacrifices atone, so too priestly garments atone.”

That is: just as the sacrifices that the people of Israel would offer had great and tremendous power to atone for their sins, so too the priestly garments that the Kohanim wore had great and tremendous power to atone for the sins of Israel.

Specifically, the *ketonet* (tunic) atoned for bloodshed.

The *michnasaim* (breeches) atoned for forbidden relations.

The *mitznefet* (turban) atoned for arrogance.

The *avnet* (sash) atoned for [impure] thoughts of the heart.

The *choshen* (breastplate) atoned for miscarriages of justice.

The *efod* (apron) atoned for idolatry.

The *me'il* (robe) atoned for *lashon hara*.

The *tzitz* (headplate) atoned for acts of brazenness.

Thus, we have learned:

(A) that the color *techelet* hints at spirituality and ultimate meaning;

(B) that the *me'il* (robe) was the only garment made entirely of *techelet*;

(C) that the *me'il* atones for *lashon hara*.

And we must explain the unifying principle that underlies these three points.

But first, we will take a moment to discuss a concept that is central to Purim – the obligation to erase Amalek...<sup>4</sup>

...*Wellsprings of Wisdom*...

3. Rashi in tractate Zevachim (ibid.) explains that the Gemara's reference is to the juxtaposition of these subjects in the parashah of Tzav.

In his commentary to Arachin 16a, however, Rashi explains that the reference

is to their juxtaposition in the parashah of Tetzaveh, where the inaugural offerings follow immediately after the command to prepare the priestly garments.

4. The holy Sfat Emet of Gur writes (Parshat Tzav, 5649, s.v. *B'Parashat Zachor*):

## The Ultimate Purpose – To Know Him

The sages of the holy Zohar, in their work *Ra'aya Meheimna* (Zohar, Parashat Bo 42b), explain at length some of the foundations of Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism, including the ultimate purpose of creation.

They explain that the purpose of creation is, in their words, “*be’gin de-yishtemod’un leh,*” meaning so that they may know Him – that the creations may recognize the Holy One, blessed be He, and discover His presence in every detail of creation.

For this purpose, Adam and Eve were created – that they recognize the Holy One, blessed be He, delight in the pleasures of the Garden of Eden, and cling to the Tree of Life.

The “Tree of Life” is the open revelation of G-d’s light – the perception of the true reality of His existence in every detail of creation, prayer to G-d about every matter, and praise of His Name for everything.

Such a person makes no distinction between what seems to be good and bad, for everything

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...*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*...

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It is necessary to eradicate Amalek in thought, speech, and deed. In thought and speech, this can be fulfilled every day when one orally recites the passage “*Remember what Amalek did to you.*” ...

Yet today, when we do not know who Amalek is, we cannot fulfill the command of physically eradicating Amalek, and thus the practical component is lacking.

On Purim, however, by observing the day’s commandments, we succeed in eradicating Amalek in deed as well

(even though we do not know who he is, our Purim actions weaken him).

This is the inner meaning of the verse in *Megillat Esther*: “*And these days are remembered and performed in every generation*” (Esther 9:28)...

Alas! Master of the Universe, Father in heaven, merciful Father, grant us on this year’s Purim a fear-inspiring holiness and an immense, holy joy, and thereby enable us to blot out the seed of Amalek—may his name be erased—from the world, and to merit complete redemption.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Soul's Ascent and Angelic Envy**

is completely permeated by G-dliness, and there is no existence at all besides Him.

Then one lives literally in the Garden of Eden, and is completely absorbed into Him, and this is what is called eternal life...<sup>5</sup>

Every Jew, by his very nature, by his very soul, longs and yearns to attain this.

However, for the sake of free will and the test of life, the Holy One, blessed be He, created the forces of evil that prevent one from becoming holy. Therefore, when they see a Jew who is growing in holiness, progressing, and ascending, they open an all-out war against him.

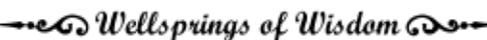
When these evil forces are sent to entice a Jewish Torah scholar, a veteran of warfare against the forces of darkness – a man with broad knowledge of spiritual combat, with astounding expertise in all types of weaponry – they are filled with excitement, they set up a command center, shoulder their weapons, and go out to war with great fervor and enthusiasm...

Against these formidable powers, the Holy One, blessed be He – our merciful Father – gave us a piece of advice to succeed in standing firm against all attempts at conquest: by interconnecting and bonding together with all of the other souls of the people of Israel.

**The Soul's Ascent and Angelic Envy**

The holy Zohar (Tzav, beginning of 29b) states: All of the souls of the people of Israel are hewn from beneath the Throne of Glory.

My father and teacher, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, of blessed memory, explained (Imrei Noam – Shavuot, Essay 6):



5. To quote the words of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick, of blessed memory (*Toch HaNachal*, 5773, p. 29).

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Soul's Ascent and Angelic Envy**

The holy Gemara relates (Shabbat 88b): "When Moses ascended on High, the ministering angels said before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Master of the Universe, what is this human born of woman doing among us?'

He said to them: 'He has come to receive the Torah.'

They said before Him: 'This precious treasure, hidden by You for 974 generations before the world was created – You intend to give it to flesh and blood?!'

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: 'Give them an answer.'

Moses said before Him: 'Master of the Universe, I fear they might burn me with the breath of their mouths.'

[G-d] said to [Moses]: 'Grasp My Throne of Glory and return them an answer.'"

On the surface, this implies that the ministering angels objected to the Torah descending to earth out of respect for the Torah – which is pure and pristine – whereas this world is full of darkness and evil

inclinations. Thus, when the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses, "Grasp My Throne of Glory and return them an answer," it was only so Moses would feel secure and protected next to G-d's Throne and not fear that the angels would burn him with the breath of their mouths.

However, we find that the holy Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, of blessed memory, explains these words in an inner and wondrous manner (Likutei Moharan, Part II, Torah 1):

"The Jewish person was created in such a fashion that he has dominion over the angels, and this is the ultimate state and destiny of the people of Israel – as our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said (Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 6:9): 'In the future, the righteous will belong to a domain higher than that of the ministering angels,' as it says: 'At that time it shall be said to Jacob and to Israel, "What has G-d wrought?"' (Numbers 23:23) – meaning that the angels will have to ask the people of Israel when they want to know 'what G-d has done.'

It is indeed incumbent upon each person to see to it that he attains this ultimate destiny – to have dominion even over the angels.”

In other words: A Jew's soul is, at its root, higher by far than the ministering angels. Therefore, if a Jew purifies himself appropriately and ascends higher and higher in the levels of the holy Torah, he will have the power to rule over the ministering angels, and it is to that level every Jew must aspire.

However, Rabbi Nachman goes on to say: "One must be very careful and see to it that he has the strength to maintain this advantage and dominion, so that the ministering angels do not become jealous of him and knock him down, G-d forbid – for the angels become very envious of such a person who has dominion over them... The advice for this is to attach oneself to all of the souls of the people of Israel; through this attachment, one is saved from them."

That is, although the sanctity of the ministering angels is great and immense, nevertheless, whenever they see a Jew who is greatly ascending and becoming holier – and is likely to rise above their level and rule over them – they envy him with a great envy and attempt to make him fall from his lofty level. Rabbi Nachman teaches that there is only one advice to be saved from the angels' envy: to attach oneself to all the souls of the People of Israel.

Based on this introduction, Rabbi Nachman goes on to explain the words of the Gemara (Shabbat 88b) we mentioned above, where the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Grasp My Throne of Glory and return them an answer":

The ministering angels' objection to the holy Torah descending below to earth was because they were jealous of the People of Israel – that through the study of the holy Torah, the People of Israel would ascend

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Original Agitator – Amalek**

above their level and even come to rule over the angels.

Because of this envy, the ministering angels wanted to harm Moses and knock him down from his level.

To this effort of theirs, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: “Grasp My Throne of Glory and return them an answer.”

Meaning, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Moses advice as to how to be saved from the angels’ envy – by attaching himself to all of the souls of the people of Israel that are hewn from beneath the Throne of G-d’s Glory.

This is the meaning of “Grasp My Throne of Glory” – i.e., grasp and attach yourself to the root of the souls of the People of Israel, which are hewn from beneath My Throne of Glory – and thereby you will be saved from the angels’ envy.

Attaching oneself to the souls of the people of Israel is accomplished by a person loving each and every Jew, and doing everything in his power to uphold the attribute of peace and live in peace and harmony with everyone – as it says: “Seek peace and pursue it” (Psalms 34:15). And through this, one wins the war.

But we must still understand: Rabbi Nachman of Breslov explained that by attaching oneself to the souls of the people of Israel, one can be saved from the accusations of the angels. But if so, where is the element of free will and trials from G-d?

If everyone were to fulfill this advice, there would never again be someone who stumbles in sin.

To this end and for the purpose of facilitating free choice and trials, the Holy One, blessed be He, created Amalek...

**The Original Agitator – Amalek**

The entire power of Amalek is directed only to demean

and humiliate everything, and the People of Israel

had to face him several times.

The first encounter occurred following the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt:

Ancient Egypt was a superpower. Egypt served as a source of inspiration for all of civilization in those days, and had decisive importance in the global economy and security.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was a person of great power and might, ruling his land with firm and forceful authority.

But then, on one ordinary day, Moses walked into his palace, stood before Pharaoh, and said to him: Let the People of Israel go!

Pharaoh, as expected, refused: Who are you? Why should I listen to you?

He was very soon 'rewarded' for his insolence toward G-d and His servant Moses – as he justly deserved.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan in the year 2448 from Creation,

the Children of Israel went out of Egypt and began their journey: Sukkot, Etam, Pi-Hahiroth, Marah, Elim, the Sea of Reeds.

A month later, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, they arrived at the Desert of Tzin, and on that day, the bread they had taken out of Egypt was depleted; the Holy One, blessed be He, sent down the great and sublime manna.

They continued on their journey and passed through Dofkah and Alush, and when they reached Rephidim, a war arose against them.

Their fateful foe, Amalek, had caught up to them.

Amalek's soldiers lined up in preparation to attack the camp of Israel, and with tense faces, they waited for the signal to charge G-d's newly redeemed nation...

The end was clear from the start: the few Amalekite soldiers who survived the battle returned to their land beaten and humiliated.

However, we must understand:

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Amalek – The Power of Disdain**

Where did Amalek get the strength and audacity to go out to war against the nation

that had been rescued by G-d with great signs and miracles?!

**Amalek – The Power of Disdain**

Amalek's power lies in the ability to harbor disdain, to scorn, and to belittle everything.

A Jew who is connected and united to all of the souls of the Jewish people is then able to cleave to the Throne of Glory.

Consequently, he is protected from the jealousy of the angels, and he is fortified with the strength to stand firm against all temptations.

But to preserve free choice and the trial of life, the Holy One, blessed be He, fashioned Amalek – a lowly and despicable nation, devoid of any real content or value. That is also how they look upon the entire creation – with scorn and lack of respect!

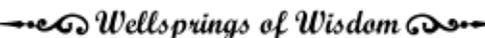
Rabbeinu Bachya explained (Deuteronomy 25:18): “Who are

Amalek? A people (*am*) that came to lick (*lelakek*) the blood of the people of Israel like a dog.”

When the *klipah* of Amalek cleaves to a Jew, he too begins to seek out and look for the deficiencies of other Jews, which then gives birth in his heart to disdain for Jews, and results in his love for his fellow Jews ceasing. Consequently, he is cast down from the Throne of Glory!

As Rabbi Natan of Breslov, of blessed memory, wrote:<sup>6</sup>

Our holy Sages commanded us (Avot 4:3): “Do not be scornful of any person,” and Amalek – his trait was exactly the opposite, and he therefore came to fight with the Jewish people, despite the defeat of Pharaoh – a mighty and powerful king – and



6. *Likutei Halachot* (Laws of Collecting a Debt from Customers and *Apoteki*, 5, §8).

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Ahasuerus's Feast**

his army, who had humbled themselves and fallen before the people of Israel.

The same mouth that said, "Who is G-d that I should heed His voice?" (Exodus 5:2) later said, "G-d is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (ibid. 9:27).

However, Amalek, in his great wickedness – not only did he belittle the people of Israel and held them in contempt, but he also held Pharaoh and all of the other nations in contempt and regarded them as worthless.

He said in his heart: Pharaoh and his servants are despicable and lowly, and they senselessly humbled themselves before Moses. But I am exceedingly

wise and perceptive, and I do not bow before anyone!

I will go out to war – and I will win! The whole world will know: Amalek is the ultimate victor...

This is essentially the nature of Amalek's *klipah* (evil "husk") – he belittles everything. Not only is he steeped in vile desires, but he even further demeans everyone, as if no one has any qualities and understanding compared to him...

Hundreds of years passed since that war, and the People of Israel battled Amalek for a second time in the era of King Saul – but we will proceed and skip to discuss the third encounter that occurred in the times of Queen Esther...

**Ahasuerus's Feast**

Announcements were published throughout the city of Shushan: "King Ahasuerus is preparing a seven-day banquet for all of the residents of Shushan."

The banquet would begin on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei (in the

year 3396) and conclude on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei – Yom Kippur.

Signs of excitement and preparation were felt among the Jews of Shushan upon hearing the royal invitation.

## Parshat Tetzaveh - Ahasuerus's Feast

After all, Ahasuerus, the new king, desired friendly relations with the Jews.

The Jewish community council announced that every effort would be made to promote and develop a friendly and cordial relationship with the Persian King.

Rumors from senior officials in the royal palace confirmed that, indeed, a special array of strictly kosher food was being arranged in honor of the Jews, under the supervision of Mordechai the righteous. Special wine, produced solely by Jews and sealed with a double seal, would be served, so there was no concern of *yeyn nesech* (wine used in idolatrous libation).

The excitement among the Jews of Shushan swelled. Some members of the community suggested that, before taking such a significant and fateful step, it would be advisable to approach the great sages of the generation for their blessing and consent. And so, a distinguished delegation from the community

leadership went to Mordechai and laid out before him the latest developments, and expected to receive words of guidance and blessing in advance of their participation in the royal banquet. However, they were stunned to hear Mordechai's adamant instruction: Do not go or take any part in the banquet!

The members of the delegation were sure that Mordechai had not properly understood their words. They went over the details again and emphasized the positive outcomes that would develop from their participation in the banquet, against the grave consequences that could, G-d forbid, result from refusing the royal invitation. They also pointed out the fact that there was no concern about non-kosher food.

However, the resolute ruling did not change: Do not go to the banquet!

Sadly, the majority of Shushan's Jews did not obey Mordechai's instruction, and many thousands of Jews took part in Ahasuerus's feast.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Haman's Accusation**

Since they sinned by participating in the forbidden

banquet, Amalek was given the power to accuse...

**Haman's Accusation**

The story of Megillat Esther is well-known.

The wicked Haman seethed with anger at Mordechai, who refused to bow to him, and approached the royal secretary and asked him to arrange an appointment with the king.

On the appointed date, Haman entered and sat next to the king, and thus he said: "There is a certain people, scattered and separated among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are different from those of every people, and the king's laws they do not obey; and it is not worth the king's while to let them be" (Esther 3:8).

The Gemara records (Megillah 13b) that Rava said: There was no one who spoke *lashon hara* (slandering speech) as did Haman !

Haman said thus: "Know, Your Majesty, that the Jews hate us and wholeheartedly yearn for

our downfall. And it doesn't stop at hatred – they ridicule us and demean us amongst themselves. Look here: if a Jew is drinking a cup of wine and suddenly a fly falls into the cup, what will he do ? He will remove the fly and drink the wine. But if you, His Royal Majesty, merely touch the Jew's cup of wine, he will immediately pour out all of the wine and rinse the cup well ! Behold – you are more repulsive to them than a fly !

Rabbi Tzadok of Lublin, of blessed memory, wrote (Pri Tzadik – for Rosh Chodesh Adar II, Essay 1):

Our holy Sages have said, "There was none who spoke *lashon hara* as did Haman." Certainly, their intention was not about the literal content of his words – for there may have been others as well who possessed tongues sharper and more cutting than Haman's.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Mordechai and Esther's Communication**

Rather, here we speak of the power of speech to make an indelible impression in the upper worlds. Through the disgrace with which Haman disgraced the people of Israel, besmirching their name to the king, he succeeded in arousing the forces of heavenly judgment and triggering a

dreadful accusation against them!

Consequently, it was decreed in Heaven: "to annihilate, to kill, and to destroy all the Jews, from youth to old age, children and women, in one day – the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar – and to plunder their possessions" (Esther 3:13).

**Mordechai and Esther's Communication**

The city of Shushan was in turmoil and ferment; the Jews were overwhelmed with sorrow and worry. The bitter news spread quickly to many other cities, and wherever it reached, it brought in its wake mourning, crying, and anguish.

Mordechai the Jew knew more than everyone else what had truly transpired. "And Mordechai knew all that had been done" (Esther 4:1) – he understood what lay behind it all, why this terrible decree had been issued. And "Mordechai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes; he went out into the city and cried a loud and bitter cry" (ibid.).

Queen Esther heard that Mordechai had torn his clothes, and she sent a messenger to him to find out what had happened and why.

Mordechai told her about the decree, and asked her – via messenger – to go into Ahasuerus's inner chamber and revoke the evil decree. The messenger came to Esther and told her Mordechai's request, but Esther refused!

The messenger did not want to go back and tell Mordechai these disheartening tidings, so Esther sent another messenger to tell Mordechai her response.

Parshat Tetzaveh - The Sin of Bearing Bad News

The Gemara (Megillah 15a) taught: From the fact that Mordechai's messenger did not want to go back to

report to him on the mission's failure, we learn that one should not seek to relay a message of calamity!

### The Sin of Bearing Bad News

The Gemara relates the following tale:<sup>7</sup>

Rabbi Acha of Kafri married a woman, and a son was born to them, whom they named Aivu. Then that woman (the first wife) died, and Rabbi Acha of Kafri married a second wife, who had a daughter from a previous marriage named Ima. From his second wife, Rabbi Acha had a son whom he named Chiya.

Rabbi Acha also had two additional children (the Gemara does not specify whether they were from his first wife or the second) for a total of five children: Aivu – the father of Rav; Chanah – the father of Rabba bar Chanah; Sheila – the father of Rabba;<sup>8</sup>

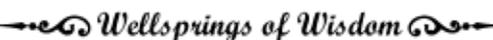
Marta – the mother of Rabbi Shmuel bar Marta, and Rabbi Chiya the Great.

Aivu grew up and married his stepsister Ima (whom he was permitted to marry, since they were not siblings at all – neither from the father's side nor the mother's). They were blessed with a child: the holy Amora Rav.

Years went by, and Rav went up to the Land of Israel, where he met his uncle, Rabbi Chiya.

Rabbi Chiya was happy to see him and asked him: Is my brother Aivu (your father) still alive?

Rav replied with a question of his own: Why don't you ask



7. Pesachim 4a (explained per Rashi, s.v. *Rav bar Achua*).

8. Rabba bar Sheila merited to be the first *Amora* mentioned in the Talmud; thus it is stated in Berachot 2b: "*Rabba bar Rav Sheila said.*"

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Sin of Bearing Bad News**

whether your sister Ima (my mother) is alive?

Rabbi Chiya asked: Is Ima alive?

Rav answered evasively: But I have not yet told you whether Aivu is alive.

Rabbi Chiya understood the hint – that both his brother and his sister had passed away long before – and so he observed mourning as is done for tidings received long after the passing.

Although Rav had bad news to deliver – his parents had died

– and his illustrious uncle requested to know if they were alive, he would not say it outright; thus, we are cautioned to speak in a clear and clean tongue – the tongue of the Sages.

A Jewish man and woman must not be bearers of bad tidings. When there is no choice, Heaven forbid, and one is required to do so – one must devise a thoughtful way to convey the news by hint and with great sensitivity.<sup>9</sup>

One who toils greatly in acts of kindness and in thinking of

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

**9.** The *Shulchan Aruch* writes (Yoreh De'ah §240:1): One must be extremely careful with the honor of his father and mother and with their reverence.

It also states there (§240:4): What constitutes honor? Feeding and giving them drink, clothing and covering them, bringing them in and taking them out—and all with a cheerful countenance; for even if he feeds them the finest delicacies every day yet shows a scowling face, he is punished for it.

The Rema adds: Conversely, if a son sets his father to grind at a mill, intending it for his benefit so that he be spared something

harsher, and he soothes his father with conciliatory words and shows that his intention is good until his father agrees to grind, he inherits the World-to-Come.

Rabbi Aharon Aryeh Katz writes (*Pisakim U'Teshuvot*, §240, 17):

It must be stressed that honoring with words is not merely a peripheral aspect of the mitzvah but its essence and a condition for its fulfillment, as proven by the early authorities:

If one feeds his father delicacies yet shows him a sour face, he has not fulfilled the mitzvah at all, and his sin is unbearable.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Mordechai Assembles All the Jews**

others receives the gift of finding the good in everything, and as a result, only good news comes out of their mouths.

However, if a person's soul is constantly miserable, he will constantly feel an urge to break bad news to people, and as the verse states: "He who spreads slander is a fool" (Proverbs 10:18).

Therefore, if a person has good news to tell, he should hurry and tell it, but if he has negative things to report, Heaven forbid, and is compelled to say them – it is better that he delivers them through hints.

After this digression, let us now return to our discussion regarding Mordechai and Esther...

**Mordechai Assembles All the Jews**

Esther was persuaded to go to Ahasuerus, but she conditioned it on the following: "Go, assemble all the Jews who

are to be found in Shushan, and fast on my behalf; do not eat and do not drink for three days, night and day" (Esther 4:16).

—*~* **Wellsprings of Wisdom** *~*—

Whoever adds soothing, respectful words—speaking as to a king—is praiseworthy.

Accordingly, if one sees his father or mother in distress, he should speak words of comfort and appeasement to remove their sorrow. Likewise, if his parents need conversation on sundry topics to relieve boredom, the son is obliged to oblige them, even at the expense of Torah study. Furthermore, he must not interrupt them but first listen to their words.

Included in "honoring them with speech" is refraining from anything that might cause them pain; therefore, he must not

convey bad news to them, Heaven forbid—even regarding matters that concern them personally.

If a father, G-d forbid, is terminally ill and the son knows his condition, it is forbidden to reveal to him his dire situation, even if the father presses him.

However, if knowing the truth would aid recovery—e.g., by prompting greater caution in the future—the son must inform him. Great wisdom and sensitivity is required in such matters; in each and every case one should ask a halachic authority and consult expert professionals.

## Parshat Tetzaveh - Mordechai Assembles All the Jews

Go tell them that since they participated in Ahasuerus's banquet,<sup>10</sup> Haman was given power to demean and humiliate the Jewish people, and now, to cancel all of these accusations and eliminate the divine judgments; to arouse G-d's mercy and kindness, they must take refuge under the shade of the Throne of Glory, where no angel will be able to accuse them, and where all of the divine judgments against them will be nullified!

Esther pleaded: "Go, assemble all the Jews" – not

merely in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense as well.

"Explain to them that a pure and innocent Jew does not see flaws in others. Explain to them that anyone who searches for flaws in others – is of the disciples of the wicked Amalek!<sup>11</sup>

Thus, by correcting and straightening their outlook, Esther brought salvation to the Jewish people and succeeded in nullifying the decree against them!

Now let us explore the connection of the three topics we opened with...

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

**10.** To quote the Midrash (*Midrash Tehillim*, Psalm 22 §5):

"*Fast for my sake and do not eat or drink.*"—Does anyone fast while eating and drinking? Why, then, did she say this?

Rather, she meant: *Fast for my sake, [that I may nullify the evil decree that came about] because you ate and drank from the banquet of Ahasuerus.*"

**11.** Just as Amalek, through his accusations, stirs harsh judgments against the Jewish people, so too does

one who seeks out other people's shortcomings inflict dreadful harm.

As Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Shick, of blessed memory, writes (*Toch Ha-Nachal*, 5773, p. 139):

"*Lashon hara* (malicious speech) is considered so catastrophic because the speaker of *lashon hara* exposes the evil within another person, belittling and nullifying him.

That is why it is so grave: by hunting for the evil in another, he weakens the power of that person's soul and plunges him deeper and deeper into the abyss of his wickedness ..."

## Techelet – Resembles The Throne of Glory

The Gemara states (Menachot 43b): “Rabbi Meir would say: What is different about *techelet* (which was chosen for the mitzvah of tzitzit) from all of the other colors? Techelet resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky is reminiscent of the Throne of Glory.”

That is, were a person to contemplate the *techelet* in the tzitzit, he would be reminded of the sky and the Throne of Glory.

The sun, the moon, the stars, and all of the hosts of heaven fulfill their task with great, immense joy; even the sky itself is full of light and joy to fulfill its divine mission.

As our holy Sages testified (in the Shacharit prayer of Shabbat): “Blessed are the luminaries that our G-d created... rejoicing in their going out and exulting in their coming in,” and likewise in the text of the Blessing of the Moon we say: “By His word He created the skies, and by the breath of His mouth all their

hosts; a law and a time He set for them that they not change their task; joyful and glad to perform the will of their Possessor.”

Similarly, by contemplating the *techelet* on the tzitzit, a Jew is given the power to serve his Creator with love and joy, feeling great delight and immense privilege to fulfill His commandments.

That is, the perfection of the performance of a mitzvah depends on it having both aspects: the first – that a person strives to do it secretly and with great modesty, so that others do not know about the great mitzvah he has done. The second – that he performs it with great joy and cheerfulness.

When a mitzvah contains these two aspects, it has the power to protect the person who performed it, as well as his offspring after him for generations, with a wondrous protection.

This is [the meaning of] “You are my shelter” – if a person

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Techelet Robe Atones for Lashon Hara**

merited to do a mitzvah in secret and modesty; “from distress You preserve me” – that the mitzvah will have the power to guard and protect him from every distress; “with glad song of deliverance You envelop me, Selah” – that is, if he performed the mitzvah

with joy and exultation, it has the power to save him from all evil and to envelop and surround him with kindness at all times.

Thus, we have learned that the *techelet* reminds us of the Throne of Glory, and we shall continue further...

**The Techelet Robe Atones for Lashon Hara**

Rabbi Shneur Kotler, of blessed memory, Rosh Yeshiva of Lakewood, once said the following:<sup>12</sup>

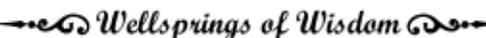
In the Gemara (Zevachim 88b), it is taught that the *me'il* (robe) atones for the sin of *lashon hara*.

The connection between the High Priest’s robe and the sin of *lashon hara* is as follows. “*Techelet* resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky is reminiscent of the Throne of Glory” (Chullin 89a) – therefore it is said regarding *tzitzit*: “And you shall see it and remember all the commandments of G-d” (Numbers 15:39) – since one’s

thought is directed upward to the Throne of Glory when looking at the *tzitzit*, and thus, one is aware of all of the commandments of G-d.

Such is the effect of *techelet*: through it one’s thoughts are directed upward to the Throne of Glory, where it is impossible to see blemishes in others; from the perspective of the Throne of Glory the entire picture is taken into account, and one thus sees the person’s complete stature – and consequently there is no room for *lashon hara*.

For the cause that leads a person to speak *lashon hara* is



12. His words are cited in *Al Tedichenu* (p. 340) by Rabbi Avraham Chanunu Shlita.

**Parshat Tetzaveh - The Techelet Robe Atones for Lashon Hara**

seeing only particular details and parts of the other person; when one sees the entire person to his full extent and depth, one will not notice or be able to see the flawed spots.

Thus, by contemplating the inner meaning of the robe, a person's mind and perspective are elevated to the level of the Throne of Glory – from where it is impossible to see flaws in others.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



### *Summary and Practical Conclusions*

1. The ultimate purpose of creation is for the Jewish people to recognize the Holy One, blessed be He, and discover His presence in every detail of the creation. To this end, man was created, and every Jew by his very nature and soul longs and yearns to attain this. A Jew's soul, at its root, is far higher than the ministering angels, and if he purifies himself appropriately and ascends higher and higher in the study of the holy Torah, he will have the power to rule over the ministering angels and subdue them beneath him.

Whenever the ministering angels recognize a Jew who is greatly ascending and becoming holier, thus becoming likely to rise above their level and rule over them, they become jealous of him and try to knock him down from his spiritual level. For a person to be saved from their clutches, one must unite with and attach oneself to all the souls of the Jewish People.

2. By attaching oneself to all of the Jewish people and cleaving to the Throne of Glory, one is then protected from the envy of the angels and is fortified with the strength to stand firm against them.

But to provide a person with free choice and to test his resolve, G-d

created the *klipah* of Amalek – whose entire purpose is to cause division among the People of Israel and to disconnect a person from the Throne of Glory, thus dashing any hopes that he may have had.

3. One of the grave sins that result from a person belittling others is the sin of *lashon hara*. If a person truly valued every Jew and every human being, he would never be able to speak evil about or hurt them.

If each and every person were to look at the other with a wholesome perspective, without finding faults or blemishes in him, there would never be quarrels or speech of *lashon hara* among them.

Thus, the People of Israel would remain whole and protected from harsh accusations and judgments.

4. The many mitzvot that a person fulfills protect and guard him from all evil – on the condition that he strives to do so with great modesty, so that others are not aware of the great mitzvah he performed; and that he performs it with great joy and cheerfulness. When the mitzvah is complete with these two aspects, it has the power to protect the person who performed it – as well as his

**Parshat Tetzaveh - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

offspring after him for generations – with a wondrous protection.

5. One of the things required of every Jewish man and woman is to not be a bearer of bad news.

Even when there is no alternative, and one is required to do so, one must put in much thought about how to convey it by hint and delicately.

One must toil greatly in acts of kindness and in thought of others. When a person purifies his soul abundantly and guards against even the slightest trace of sin, his soul is granted a glimmer from the light of Elijah the Prophet – the light which

helps him to see the good in the creation and in every person.

Thus, if a person has good news to tell, he should hurry to tell it; however, if he has sad or negative things to report, Heaven forbid, and he is compelled to say them, it is better that he conveys them indirectly, by hint.

6. The most deadly and destructive force that exists is depression. Conversely, joy is the source of salvation from all of the troubles of the world.

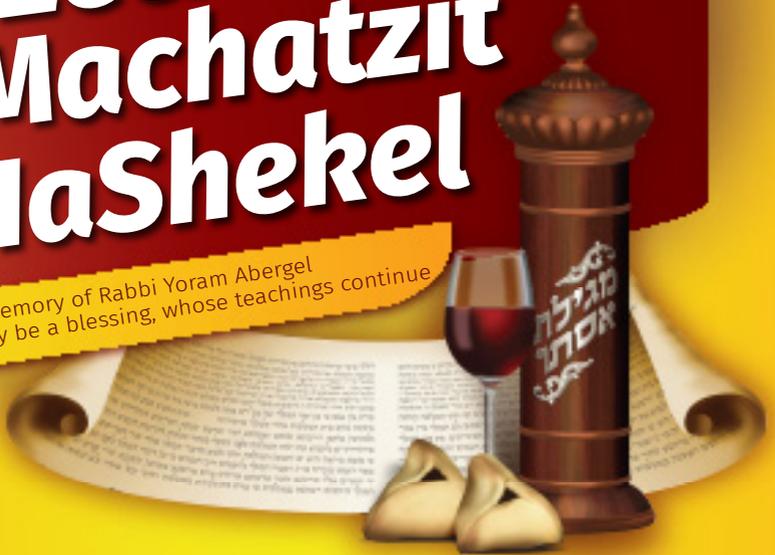
Joy has the power to shatter all of the forces of harsh judgment that hover over a person.





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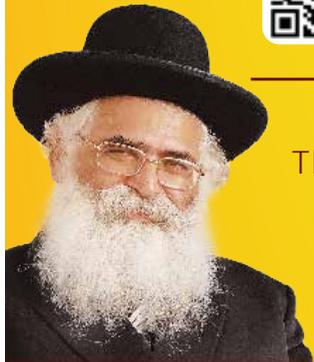


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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:27 pm	6:27 pm	6:58 pm
Miami	6:03 pm	6:56 pm	7:34 pm
Los Angeles	5:30 pm	6:26 pm	7:01 pm
Montreal	5:21 pm	6:24 pm	6:52 pm
Toronto	5:46 pm	6:48 pm	7:17 pm
London	5:19 pm	6:28 pm	6:51 pm
Jerusalem	5:20 pm	6:11 pm	6:50 pm
Tel Aviv	5:16 pm	6:08 pm	6:47 pm
Haifa	5:15 pm	6:10 pm	6:48 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:17 pm	6:11 pm	6:50 pm

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From the Words of

**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*Even someone who works during the day can be called a ben Torah, if, after he returns home from work, he immediately goes to learn or to hear a shiur. And likewise, if he puts his children into a Talmud Torah and not into institutions that prevent the children from accepting upon themselves the yoke of Torah.*

*It is all worthwhile, all of the requirements and challenges that are involved in getting one's children accepted into proper Talmud Torahs. It is like the many requirements and prerequisites necessary to be hired in a high-level job. It is all worthwhile ultimately.*



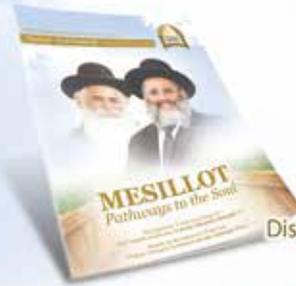
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