

PARASHAT TETZAVEH- 2014, 5774

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

Next Friday, 14th of Adar-One, (Feb 14) marks the 43 yahrtzeit of my father, Tzvi ben Aharon, A'H. This Dvar Torah is designated lezeicher nishmato. He died on Purim, on a regular Adar, so when we have a leap year I observe the main yahrtzeit on the first Adar and observe also the second Adar –as a minhag. But the main Chiyyuv is on the first Adar because yahrtzeit observance is a form of Kibbud Av; therefore it is observed on the first opportunity when it arises.

Parashat Tetzaveh discusses the clothing worn by the Kohanim and, in particular, the Kohen Gadol. Gemara Zevachim (88b) states that each of the eight garment discussed in this parasha atones for a particular sin. The Me'il, or robe, atones for the sin of Lashon HaRa, therefore it is the largest all garments, a full garment from the neck to the ground. It was made entirely of blue wool, (28:33) a color that is reminiscent of heaven and ocean, symbolizing HaShem's heavenly Throne of Glory. Its color caused people to reflect upon the heaven and sea that stays within its bounds and never diverge from their assigned orbits and tasks. So too says the Kli Yakar, man should contain his Divinely ordained power of speech within the limits of purity and holiness.

The Me'il was designed with a hem at the bottom which contained pomegranate-shaped tassels and between each tassel were bells with ringers (28:34). Altogether, there were seventy-two bells and seventy-two pomegranate-shaped tassels, reminding listeners that some kinds of speech should never be heard.

The Maharal wonders what the connection is between the robe and Lashon HaRa? He suggests by using concept about the role of each Jew. The task of wearing the Me'il, as well as the other seven garments is exclusive to a Kohen Gadol in the Beit HaMikdash. There are some Mitzvot that only a Levi can do, while some Mitzvot must be performed by men and others are exclusive to women. Clearly, each individual has a specific mission to fulfill. Judaism does not subscribe to the idea of equality, which believes that everyone is guaranteed the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities. (That was the argument of Korach who rebelled against Moshe Rabbeinu claiming "Ki Kol HaEdah Kulam Kedoshim U'vetocham HaShem, U'maduah Tit'na'seuh Al K'hal HaShem." "The entire assembly-all of them-are holy and HaShem is among them; why do you raise yourselves over the congregation of HaShem"?)

In Judaism, everyone has a specific role that he/she must fulfill. Instead of focusing on the opportunities for Mitzvot that others have and harbor jealousy over it, a person should focus on fulfilling his/her own role as best as he/she can. The Me'il symbolizes the concept that, just as only one person can be Kohen Gadol; we all need to focus on our individual roles. My granddaughter once told me she was often jealous of her neighbor who had a beautiful home with many luxuries, while her home was in disrepair and in need of painting which she could not afford. But then she saw her neighbor's child in a wheel chair, unable to walk, and another child with emotional problems, she confided to me that, thank G-d, her children were all healthy, bright, happy and well adjusted. She

wouldn't trade places with her neighbor for millions of dollars. Each of us has our own role and mission in life, no need for jealousy which is the breeder of Lashon HaRa.

Furthermore, the rationale of a person speaking Lashon HaRa often stems from intolerance of those that differ. A person who cannot accept that others have legitimate ways of doing things will denigrate those others. For example, a person who loves to study Torah and does so regularly may criticize the behavior of one who does not learn as much. The first person may not be able to accept that not everyone is like him and will speak badly of his peer. This, we must come to realize from the Me'il, that there are many different people in the world with many legitimate paths to follow. Not everyone must be exactly like us to deserve our respect.

The Me'il has a big job and thus, a large garment. Even in our religious community, Lashon HaRa ranks as the #1 most common Aveira (sin) and the most difficult to control. Let us resolve to try to make a small dent, not by faulting others but beginning with ourselves.