

And you shall make the M'eil of the Eiphod entirely of turquoise wool. (28:31)

Chazal (*Zevachim* 88b) teach that the *Me'il* was *mechaper*, atoned, for the sin of *lashon hora*. *Yavo davar she'b'kol v'yechaper al kol ha'ra*, "Let something that emits sound (through the ringing of the bell on its hem) come and atone for the sound of hurtful speech." [The wearing of *Bigdei Kehunah* effects atonement only in conjunction with the actual repentance rendered by the specific sinner. Furthermore (*Mahara*), when the *Kohen* wears the vestments *l'kavod u'liferes*, "For glory and splendor" (*Shemos* 28:2), they introduce a sense of loftiness in *Klal Yisrael* which counteracts the degradation that results from sin.] *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, suggests another reason why the *Me'il*, Robe, atoned for *lashon hora*. The color of the Robe is similar to the color of the sea, which coincides (in color) with the color of the sky, which, in turn, is like the color of the *Kisei HaKavod*, Heavenly Throne. When a person realizes what he is seeing, the perception causes him to contemplate and acknowledge that he is in the proximity of Hashem. When one is united with Hashem, he will be extremely careful to watch everything that exits his mouth, to make sure that it is pure and cleansed of any spiritual deficiencies.

Concerning the *Me'il*, the Torah writes, *V'hayah pi rosho b'socho*, "And the opening of its head shall be folded over within it" (*ibid* 32). Simply, this means that the opening of the *M'eil* at its top, the opening of its collar, shall be folded to its inside so that its fold shall serve as a hem for it. The *Maggid* suggests that this "fold," which has its top folded over into its inside teaches us a way to protect our mouths from evil speech: place the *rosh*, top, head into the inside opening, *peh*, mouth. *Machashavah*, thoughts, cognitive process, should precede the mouth, speech, that exits our mouths. In other words, let us apply the age-old maxim, "Think before you speak," by placing the head into the opening/mouth. By placing thought before speech, we will think twice and carefully contemplate what we are about to say.

Let us look at this pragmatically. To speak before, or without, aforethought is a bad habit that hurts one in all areas of his/her life's endeavor. Furthermore, it can cause relationships to suffer, and cause one's climb up the ladder of success to be stunted at a level far below that of his talents, a situation that will create a lack of self-confidence.

An individual's words reflect who he is and what he values. If words are the cause of a person's mishap, he is obviously showing a negative aspect of himself. He presents himself as thoughtless, careless, or just plain foolish or hurtful. Everyone has a negative side packed away deep within his psyche – where it belongs. If he speaks without thinking, he is thereby unlocking the door that confines his negative side and allows it to hurt others.

When one blurts something out of his mouth and then immediately realizes that it was wrongful or hurtful, his first reaction is to apologize and say, "I did not mean it. I was not thinking." What he is really saying is, "I was too lazy to make the effort to engage my mind before I shot off my mouth."

One who puts effort into controlling his words can ultimately alter his life.

The flipside of not speaking does not necessarily ameliorate the problem. There are positive words that one should say, such as praising people, paying compliments. Not only does such behavior cement relationships and win friends, it also earns a person respect. It shows that he is a person who is secure in his own skin, so that by offering honest praise or complimenting another person, he will not demean himself. Sadly, some people find paying a compliment a traumatic experience. The greater the genuineness of one's praise of another, the more positively people will respond to him, the greater self-confidence he will have, and the more successful he will be in life. He should just "fold over his head into his mouth."