

And your camp shall be holy, so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you. (23:15)

Klal Yisrael lives in exile among the nations of the world, who at any given moment can react to us in any manner. True, democracies and governments are supposedly governed by people dedicated to upholding law and order. This was presumably also the situation prior to World War II, when so many of our people were brutally murdered in the most heinous manner. We must confront the fact that we are in exile. We have only one source of salvation--Hashem. He - and only He - protects us, not permitting our antagonists to hurt us.

Why does Hashem refrain from protecting us in some situations? The **Chofetz Chaim** explained this in a very simple, but compelling, manner. Hashem is the “**Shomer Yisrael**”, Guardian of our People. He is obviously not a *shomer sachar*, paid watchman, because we do not compensate Him. He is a *shomer chinam*, unpaid watchman, who guards purely for altruistic reasons. A *shomer chinam* can refrain from watching. He has no binding contract. He has a commitment which is based solely upon trust. As long as the person for whom he is working acts decently towards him, he continues his function in his role.

The *Torah* tells us that Hashem protects us as long as He does not “*see a shameful thing among us.*” This refers to *tznius*, modesty and chastity. As long as we act and dress in a chaste, virtuous fashion, Hashem continues His *shmirah*, guardianship. If we turn away and follow those around us, acting in a provocative and unchaste fashion, we will lose our protection.

The *Chofetz Chaim* said this over sixty years ago. What shall we say today?