

## Seeing the Good in our People

The *Gemara* in *Zevachim* (88b) explains that the garments worn by the *Kohanim* are not only to show respect and to glorify *Hashem's* service. They also serve as atonement for serious misdeeds such as immorality, murder, injustice, etc. *Rabbi Chanina* says that the מעיל, the blue wool tunic, is atonement for לשון הרע, gossip and speaking ill of others. He bases this on the fact that the *meil* was lined at the bottom with little bells that tinkled as the *Kohain* walked. He explains, "A garment which makes sounds will atone for sins that are created with sound (speech)." This seems like a very casual comparison and there seems to be something deeper in this symbolism.

*Rav Shamshon R. Hirsch* suggests that the idea is based on both the bells and the little pomegranate-like ornaments which are interspersed with the bells along the hem of the tunic. When one denigrates a fellow Jew, it is because he chooses to focus on the negative attributes of that person. We are all a combination of good and bad and when we judge others by focusing on their failures, we speak *l'shon hara*. Pomegranates are mentioned in *Shir HaShirim*, the love poem composed by *Shlomo* to describe the beauty and greatness of *Hashem* and of His people. The *possuk* says (6:7):

"Your forehead is luscious as an opened pomegranate - כפלה הרמון רקתך"

The *Gemara* interprets this verse homiletically by translating רקתך as "your empty ones." This means that even the emptiest Jew is filled with good deeds like the numerous seeds in the pomegranate.

*Rav Hirsch* says that this might be what the *meil* is announcing by ringing its little bells. It is saying, "Look at the pomegranates and be reminded that this is a nation that may have simple people but even they are filled with goodness and that is what you should focus on." This will lead to the diminution of *l'shon hara* and gossiping amongst people.

Although we don't observe the *mitzvah* of wearing the priestly garments today, we must use these lessons to create a sanctuary inside of ourselves and to deploy the attitudes which these holy garments convey. When we focus on the good in our fellow man, we will become elevated and be inspired to be even greater as *Hashem's* chosen people.