

In the book **מגלה עמוקות** (Natan Shapiro 17th century CE) it says of our parsha, that the word “אלה” (these) in the opening “אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה” (these are the words which Moshe spoke...) can be interpreted as an acronym for “אבק לשון הרע” (the shades of slander), and Moshe was warning the people against this.

He gets this from **Baba Batra 165A** (קט"ה ע"א) which says:

Rav Avram said in the name of **Rav**: There are three sins a person cannot avoid, immoral relations (הרהור עבירה), not having the proper intention while praying (עיון תפילה) and slander (לשון הרע).

The sages object to the last item, asking – Can we really think that people say slander every day ?

No, says **Rav Yehuda** in the name of **Rav**, the intention is not true slander but “אלה” (Alef-Lamed-Hey) - “אבק לשון הרע” and he carries on to say: Most people cheat (רוב בגזל), some have improper relations (מיעוט בעריות) but everybody talks slander – then he clarifies that he does not mean real slander but “shades of slander” – borderline, not-quite but very near to slander.

The **מהרש"א** (Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer haLevi 16th century CE) comments on this saying that there are three kinds of sin: concerning money, concerning our physical appetites and concerning our souls, and that “stealing” does not refer to actual theft but rather to the slightly dishonest way we carry out business transactions and to the way we may use other people’s property without always having permission.

The “sins of our souls” (עבירות בנפש) refers to the “shades of slander” and the **Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 30:4** gives many examples:

There are certain matters which are considered the "shades of slander"; for example, someone says: "Do not talk about so and so; I do not want to say what happened." and other similar statements.

Similarly, when one speaks favorably about a friend in the presence of his enemies, it is also considered the "shades of slander", for this will surely prompt them to speak disparagingly about him....

It also includes one who says slander slyly, pretending to be innocently telling a story without knowing that it is slanderous. When he is reproved, (he excuses himself by) saying: "I did not know that this was slanderous or that so and so was involved."

The **מגלה עמוקות** concludes: הרע לשון הרע – everyone is guilty at one time or another of this sin, and this is why Moshe had to warn all the people against this.

May we also, be helped by Hashem to avoid לשון הרע in our everyday conversations.