

Deuteronomy 26:19

וּלְתַתָּהּ עֲלִיּוֹן עַל כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְתַהֲלָה וּלְשֵׁם וּלְתַפְאָרַת וּלְהִיתָה עִם־מֶלֶךְ לִיהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיהָ כְּאֲשֶׁר
דָּבָר: {פ}

and that [God] will set you, in fame and renown and glory, high above all the nations that [God] has made; and that you shall be, as promised, a holy people to your God יהוה.

Tur Ha'aroch

ו'ולתתך עליון וגו', "and to make you supreme, etc.," to set you up as an example that all the other nations praise and wish to emulate.

ולשם, “and for renown,” to enhance your reputation all over the world.

Deuteronomy 28:36

וְהָיִיתָ לְשִׁמָּה לְמַעַל וּלְשִׁנְיָה בְּכָל־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר־יִנְהַגְךָ יְהוָה שִׁמָּה:

You shall be a consternation, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples to which יהוה will drive you.

Jeremiah 24:9

(9) I will make them a horror—an evil—to all the kingdoms of the earth, a disgrace and a proverb, a byword and a curse in all the places to which I banish them.

Rashi on 28:37

1) לַשְׁמָה [THOU SHALT] BECOME AN OBJECT OF ASTONISHMENT — This word means the same as תַּמְהוֹן, etourdison in old French, English astonishment. — Whoever will see you will be astonished about you. (2) לַמֶּשֶׁל [THOU SHALT] BECOME A PROVERB — i.e., when an extraordinary misfortune comes upon a man people will say: “This is like the misfortune that befell Mr. So-and-so!” (3) וְלַשְׁנִינָה AND A BYWORD — This is an expression of the same meaning as (Deuteronomy 6:7) וְשִׁנְנָתָם, “And thou shalt speak often”. — “And thou shalt become a שְׁנִינָה” therefore means: they (people) will talk about you (make you the topic of their conversation).

Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 28:37

(1) A PROVERB. In the ear. [You will serve as an example illustrating a point.] You will serve as an example illustrating a point. (2) AND A BYWORD. In the mouth. [People will speak about you.] People will speak about you. Sheninah (byword) is related to the word ve-shinnantam (and thou shalt teach them diligently) (Deut. 6:7).

Rashbam

ולשנינה, a kind of byword, as in Deut. 6,7 ושננתם, “you will make them a byword, not to be forgotten.”

Steinsaltz

You will become an astonishment, a proverb, and an adage among all the peoples that the Lord will lead you there. Your very name will become an insult. When one wishes to speak of failures and miserable situations, he will compare them to your case as the classic example.

Dubno Maggid

Once upon a time, I was walking in the forest and I saw all these trees in a row with a target drawn on them, and an arrow right in the center. At the end of the row I saw a little boy with a bow in his hand. I had to ask him, “Are you the one who shot all those arrows?!” “Of course!” he replied. “How did you hit all the targets right in the center?” I asked. “Simple”, said the boy, “first I shoot the arrow, and then I draw the target”.

The great Maggid would come up with the lesson of the story first, and then wrap the parable around that message.¹

Jean-Paul Sartre, Antisemite and Jew

"Far from experience producing his idea of the Jew, it was the latter (the idea) that explained his experience. If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him." Antisemitism is a view that arises not from experience or historical fact, but from itself. It lends new perspective to experience and historical fact. The antisemite convinces himself of beliefs that he knows to be spurious at best.²

¹ From Sefaria webpage “Jew as Metaphor” by Geoffrey Stern.

² Ibid.

Philip Roth

When I speak before Jewish audiences, invariably there have been people who have come up to me afterward to ask, “Why don’t you leave us alone? Why don’t you write about the Gentiles?”—“Why must you be so critical?”—“Why do you disapprove of us so?”—this last question asked as often with incredulity as with anger;

Not always, but frequently, what readers have taken to be my disapproval of the lives lived by Jews seems to have to do more with their own moral perspective than with the one they would ascribe to me: at times they see wickedness where I myself had seen energy or courage or spontaneity; they are ashamed of what I see no reason to be ashamed of, and defensive where there is no cause for defense.

I write a story of a man who is adulterous to reveal the condition of such a man. If the adulterous man is a Jew, then I am revealing the condition of an adulterous man who is a Jew. Why tell that story? Because I seem to be interested in how—and why and when—a man acts counter to what he considers to be his “best self,” or what others assume it to be, or would like for it to be.³

Zechariah 8:13

(13) And just as you were a curse I.e., a standard by which people curse; cf. Gen. 12.2 and note; Jer. 24.9. among the nations, O House of Judah and House of Israel, so, when I vindicate you, you shall become a blessing. Have no fear; take courage!

³ Ibid.