

Yettele's Feathers

(based on the book by Joan Rothenberg; written by Rabbi Amy Scheinerman)

Cast:

Narrator:

Yettele:

Rabbi:

Yussel:

Rivkah, Yussel's wife:

Goldie Pishkin:

Dressmaker:

Moishe Mushnik:

SCENE 1 *Yettele's house. Yettele is sitting in a chair, cutting vegetables to make soup. For a backdrop, we painted a picture of her living room wall, mostly a large picture window showing the village.*

Narrator In a little village, people know a lot about one another. And sometimes they talk too much about one another. This is the story of a woman named Yettele, who loved to talk about the people of her village, and how she learned that Lashon Hara is truly bad.

Yettele Ah, sometimes I am so lonely since my wonderful husband, Mendel, may he rest in peace, died. I miss talking to him. So I suppose I must talk to others to keep my mind busy.

Yussel: *[enters]* Good day, Yettele. The butcher asked me to bring you this chicken for Shabbat. How are you today?

Yettele: Ah, Yussel. So good to see you. I'm going to make chicken soup with knaidlach, but not like Goldie Pishkin. Did you know that she adds sawdust to her matzah balls to make them bigger?

Yussel: How do you know that?

Yettele: I heard it from someone who knows.

Yussel: Have a good Shabbat, Yettele, but don't tell people stories like that. *[Yussele leaves Yettele's from same place he entered.]*

Narrator: Yettele took the chicken and began her preparations for Shabbat. But she ignored Yussel's good advice. She knew too much about other people to keep it to herself.

Rivkah: *[Rivkah enters Yettele's home.]* Yettele, I'm looking for Yussel. Have you seen

my husband?

Yettele: He was here just a few minutes ago. Brought me a chicken for Shabbat. Rivkah, did you know that Tillie Schnitzele the tailor makes everyone's dresses a little too tight so they will think they're fat? What a thing to do!

Rivkah: No! That couldn't be. Why would you say such a thing?

Yettele: Look at this dress she made for me? It fits too tight. She didn't make it the right size.

Rivkah: Maybe you gained a little weight?

Yettele: No, couldn't be. It's that Tillie, trying to make everyone think they're too fat.

Rivkah: Goodbye, Yettele, have a good shabbos. [*Rivkah leaves.*]

Moishe: Yettele, I heard that you are telling people that I put my finger on the scale when I weigh their meat. What kind of thing is that to say! Your rumors are hurting my business.

Yettele: I heard it from someone else and I thought people should know, in case you're cheating them.

Moishe: I have never cheated anyone, but now the Goldsteins and the Shapiros don't come to my shop anymore. [*Moishe leaves.*]

Narrator: Yettele's stories were hurting people. But that didn't stop Yettele. She loved telling stories and to her, they were only words. If they weren't true, she would take them back.

Goldie: Yettele, how could you tell people I put sawdust in my knaidlach! Now they don't want to eat at my house.

Yettele: I heard it was true.

Goldie: Yettele, you have gone too far.

Yettele: Well, you know Goldie, sawdust isn't the worst thing. I saw Yussel go past Moishe Pushnik's shop and take an apple. That's stealing.

Narrator: Goldie was not the only one who thought Yettele had gone too far.

Rivkah: Yettele, you have gone too far. Telling people that my Yussel was stealing an apple! He made a delivery for Moishe Pushnik and Moishe told him to help himself to an apple. I'm staying away from you, Yettele.

Narrator: Rivkah and Goldie were not alone in avoiding Yettele. Soon everyone in the little village was avoiding Yettele. No one would talk to her. No one wanted to hear her stories. Yettele felt very sad and couldn't understand why people were avoiding her, so she went to speak with the rabbi.

SCENE 2 *Rabbi's study. The background shows shelves of sifrei-kodesh. The rabbi is sitting and studying when Yettele enters.*

Rabbi: Yettele, so good to see you. What can I do for you today?

Yettele: Rabbi, it seems that people in town are avoiding me. They don't want to hear my stories or talk to me.

Rabbi: Could it be that your stories about other people are hurtful, Yettele?

Yettele: Hurt by my stories? My goodness! They're only words, not sticks or stones. What harm can come from a word? Certainly no more harm than from a feather.

Rabbi: I think I can help you, Yettele, but first please go home and bring back the biggest, nicest feather pillow you have in your house.

Narrator: Yettele didn't understand how a feather pillow would solve her problem, but she went to do as the rabbi asked nonetheless. An hour later she returned with a feather pillow in hand.

Rabbi: Ah, good Yettele. [Rabbi rips open the pillow and the feathers fly out.]

Narrator: The rabbi cut open the pillow and a wind came along, picking up the feathers and scattering them in every direction.

Rabbi: And now, Yettele, I want you to collect all the feathers and bring them back to me. I will help you solve your problem as soon as you have collected all the feathers that were in this pillow. [Rabbi walks away from Yettele.]

Yettele: How can I possibly collect all these feathers? They're flying in every direction!

Narrator: Yettele scurried about collecting feathers all that day and on into the night. [A

poster of a sun is carried across the stage.] By the time the sun came up the next morning, she was exhausted and miserable. She had been able to find only a small fraction of the feathers that had once been in the pillow. Tired, hungry, and unhappy, she returned to the rabbi.

Yettele: Rabbi, this is all I could find. If I spent the rest of my life looking for the feathers, I could never get them all back.

Rabbi: And so it is with those stories of yours, Yettele. Once the words leave your lips, they are as impossible to put back as the feathers.

Narrator: Yettele thought long and hard about what the rabbi said and came to understand that when she told stories about others, it hurt them. Then she realized that she could still tell stories: she would tell stories about herself. She told stories about her childhood and her marriage to her wonderful husband Mendel, may he rest in peace. People loved these stories.