

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION

SHABBOS MENU

PART OF THE CCHF SHABBOS TABLE MACHSOM L'FI PROGRAM • PARSHAS VAYEIRA 5781 • ISSUE 215

'A CERTAIN PERSON, I WON'T SAY WHO...'

You saw something worthy of outrage, and you want to tell your tale. Of course you would never disparage a fellow Jew, so you leave the names out of the story. Does that prevent it from being considered loshon hora?

THE DILEMMA

Dassi works in a small office as a customer service rep. The office also includes two salespeople, Sam and Beverly, and the partners who own the company – Nate and Joe. One day, Dassi comes home from work in a sour mood. When her husband asks what's wrong, she says, "One of our customers was unhappy with his delivery and he canceled the rest of his huge order. Someone in the office thinks this is all my fault. Someone thinks he knows everything about sales and he's an expert on psychology. Someone won't be happy until I get fired and his wife gets my job."

"Someone," her husband quickly figured out, was the salesman, Sam. But Dassi never mentioned who it was, other than indicating that her subject was a male. Did she speak loshon hora?



THE HALACHAH

From Dassi's disparaging description of "Someone," it's clear that she wants his identity known. Without naming names, her words are loshon hora.

If Dassi feels that she must vent her feelings because she is so distressed, she may do so, but must follow the halachos of loshon hora l'to'eles.

*Sefer Chofetz
Chaim, Hilchos
Loshon Hora,
Klal 3:4*

Reviewed by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy. For discussion only; actual halachic decisions should be made by a rav or halachic expert on a case-by-case basis.

PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

We really enjoy it [the Shabbos Menu] – thank you! It makes for excellent conversation, especially when company is with us. We see a positive improvement at the Shabbos table and wish more people would know about it.

Pessy
Spring Valley, NY

FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

Shabbosmenu@cchfglobal.org

"... Hillel says:

Be among the
disciples of Aharon,
loving

peace
and pursuing peace,
loving

people
and bringing
them close to Torah."

– Avos 1:12

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MALKA BREINDEL A"H BAS SHMUEL FISHEL YLCH"T

SPRING VALLEY

After five years of devoted service as a *rebbe*, Rabbi Holtzman's* principal informed him that he would not be rehired for the coming school year. The news shocked him, but he wasted no time dwelling on it. He began to search for a new job. Two weeks later, when Rabbi Holtzman was still jobless, the principal called him. The school had found a new *rebbe* for his class but needed someone to teach one class in *Navi*. Was Rabbi Holtzman interested?

The rejected *rebbe* was shocked once again. How could the principal fire him and then ask for a favor two weeks later? But upon further thought, he realized that saying "no" out of wounded pride might transgress the Torah's law against taking revenge. He went to Rav Chaim Kanievsky for advice. Rav Chaim told him that refusing the job would not be revenge, but then he told the *rebbe* this story:

Shlomo and Chavi were dating and seemed headed toward marriage. However, since Chavi's father was in the hospital, the father and Shlomo had not yet met. Shlomo took it upon himself to go alone to the hospital and introduce himself to Chavi's father. For some reason, the father's impression was unfavorable, and he told his daughter that he did not approve of the *shidduch*. Chavi broke it off.

Shlomo was disappointed, but he respected the father's wishes. However, out of his high regard for Chavi, he decided to pay one

LET THE JUDGE BE THE JUDGE

more visit to the father and let him know that he bore no resentment and wished him a complete recovery. A few days later, the father was surprised to find

his would-be son-in-law standing in his hospital room offering him his good wishes. The boy's generous spirit impressed the father and he

realized he had made a mistake. The engagement was announced a short time later.

Concluding his story, Rav Chaim told Rabbi Holtzman that when a person trusts in Hashem to determine whatever justice is due to him – even when his heart cries out at the injustice – Hashem repays his trust.

Adapted from *Stories for the Jewish Heart* by Binyamin Pruzansky.

sage advice

'THAT'S A DIFFERENT STORY'

There's a famous story of a person who sat next to a well-known rabbi on a flight to Israel; he was shocked to see that the rabbi didn't make *brachos* on his food and that he spent his time reading secular books. Coincidentally, this person's good friend was a loyal follower of this rabbi. The observer was sure that he had discovered what a phony the rabbi was and felt that he should tell his friend what he saw. On landing, however, he found out that the rabbi had come for his father's burial. Since a mourner is not allowed to do *mitzvos* or learn Torah between the time of his relative's death and the burial, the rabbi's "bad behavior" was in fact completely proper.


Context matters. When something is taken out of context, the bare facts may be true but the meaning implied by the words or actions might be totally false. For example, imagine someone said, "My neighbors handed their son over to a man who stabbed him in the stomach." You'd say, "Call the police!" That is, until you discovered that the child had appendicitis and a doctor performed surgery.

Because context is so vital, the rules of *to'eles* teach that a story not only has to be true, but it must be true in context. We may not like what we see others do, but to repeat it *l'to'eles*, we have to know why they did it. Might their action have been justified? Were they permitted or even required by *halachah* to do it? Without knowing these details, we might be using facts, yet telling a false tale.

TALK ABOUT IT

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