

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION

SHABBOS MENU

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‘WHAT? WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?’

When one person has negative feelings about another, he doesn't necessarily name those feelings out loud. But what if he makes a comment about that person that seems neutral, but in reality makes listeners aware of the person's deficiency?

THE DILEMMA

Gila was sweet, soft-spoken, accepting of everyone. Small children loved her and she had infinite patience with them. Everyone who knew Gila thought of her as a wonderful woman.

Chedva, Gila's sister, knew another side to the story. Gila had a hot temper with her own teenage children. As patient and warm as she had been when they were adorable babies and elementary school kids, once they lost that innocence Gila's soft-spoken, accepting demeanor went out the window. Gila had confided in Chedva about fights she had fought with her daughter, and Chedva had advised her many times to calm down and try to develop some empathy. Chedva found it painfully hypocritical when her sister smiled and cooed at all the little kids in the neighborhood, and then waged war with her own children.

"Your sister is such a sweet person," said Chedva's friend. "I wish I had her patience with children."

"Well, sweet isn't always the same as patient," Chedva replied.

It was just a fact – an observation about human nature. Was it *loshon hora*?

THE HALACHAH

It was. It implied something negative about Gila, which Chedva just "slipped in" as if it would not be noticed.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Hilchos
Loshon Hora, Klal 3:5*



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.

WEEKLY WISDOM

This week, in *Parshas Chayei Sarah*, we learn that Sarah Imeinu viewed her entire life as good.

At every stage, through troubles and triumph – infertility, famine, captivity, the joy of having a child and the threat of Yishmael – she saw it all as "equally for the good."

We, her spiritual heirs, can grab that *middah* and make it our own as we view our lives and the people around us as all part of Hashem's plan – all for the good.

FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

Shabbosmenu@cchfglobal.org

"True peace is when
people feel

love

for one another
and are

happy

for one
another's good fortune."

– Ksav Sofer, Esther 10:3

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MALKA BREINDEL A"H BAS SHMUEL FISHEL YLCH"Y

Leah* was a *shadchan* for an organization dedicated to helping older singles find their match. Today, her focus was 29-year-old Gershon Fried.

After some persuasion, Gershon's mother approved a date with the beautiful, refined, 28-year-old Tova Mann. With high hopes, Leah set up the date. However, on the night of the date, as Gershon was already making his way to Tova's house, Tova's mother called to cancel. Although Tova had been given a picture of Gershon a week earlier, she now realized that she found him unattractive. It would never work.

Shocked at the cancellation, Leah tried to salvage the date. In the heat of the moment, she remembered the advice of the most successful *shadchan* on her team: "Sometimes you have to speak to their point of weakness to overcome resistance." Not understanding what the words really meant, Leah reminded Tova's mother that her family had issues that could interfere with *shidduchim*, referring to Tova's older sister's long-ago bout with an eating disorder. Tova's mother felt betrayed. Furious, she ended the conversation and Leah regretfully advised Gershon's mother to call her son home.

The next day, Leah's medical odyssey began. Her physical strength evaporated. For months she sought a diagnosis. When the doctors seemed baffled, she tried various alternative healing methods. Some treatments worked, but only briefly. Then she read a story by Rabbi Paysach Krohn about a woman whose "mystery illness" was cured when she received *mechilah* from someone she had wronged. Leah immediately thought

ONE ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE REALLY WORKS

of Tova's mother. She made the difficult phone call. After an initially icy reception, the mother told Leah to forget about it. Leah's symptoms soon subsided,

but not completely. Then she remembered that in the story the victim had said outright, "I forgive you." Hesitantly, Leah called Tova's mother again. This time she heard the words "I forgive you." Soon after, Leah realized that her full strength had returned. Two weeks later, Tova and Gershon were each engaged – not to each other, but each to the one Hashem had chosen.

*All names have been changed.
Adapted from an article by C.B. Weinfeld in the Yated

TALK ABOUT IT
Why was Leah's mystery illness a gift in disguise?

sage advice

THE WORD IS THE THING


Glowing words. Crushing words. Heavy words. Uplifting words. Why do we depict words as if they have physical powers, glowing like a candle, crushing like a boulder? Are these just figures of speech that we happen to apply to the notion of words?

Loshon Hakodesh gives us the answer. In Hebrew, "speech" is *dibbur*. A closely related word is *davar*, meaning "thing." This describes the essence of a word. It's not a puff of air carrying a few weak sound waves. It's a *thing* – a real, physical entity like the paper you're holding and the chair you're sitting on. It has weight and impact. It has physical characteristics, like beauty or ugliness. It has physical power: it can make you blush, make your muscles tense up, or spread a sense of joy and comfort through your whole body.

The *navi Hoshea* (14:3) urges the Jewish people to "take these words with you," using the same term for take – *kechu* – as we use for taking a book or a pencil in hand. The message, says **Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro**, is that a word is every bit as substantial as a book or a pencil. When we realize that our words are not "nothing," but rather a substantial, enduring "thing" with their own existence and impact, we no longer think, "It's just words. It's no big deal." Instead, we appreciate the power we have in our hands and use it with the utmost care.

TALK ABOUT IT
Imagine if every word you said were recorded in a weekly newsletter that everyone you know would read. Do you think you would speak the same way as you do now? If not, what would change?

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