

FOOD FOR  
THOUGHT  
TO SPARK  
CONVERSATION

# SHABBOS MENU

PART OF THE CCHF SHABBOS TABLE MACHSOM L'FI PROGRAM • PARSHAS VAYECHI 5781 • ISSUE 223

## THE INFAMOUS FRIEDMANS

*We don't choose our families. Hashem places each person in the family He chooses, and sometimes that family has a history that its members would like to forget. Are we permitted to dust off the skeletons in someone else's closet?*

### THE DILEMMA

**Y**ehudah Friedman's family had a secret. Many years ago, his grandfather cheated a partner out of a large sum of money. The case stayed out of court but went to *beis din* and became the cause of a big scandal. Although his grandfather worked hard to restore his reputation, his children's *shidduchim* and his future business prospects were all clouded by this mistake.

Yehudah goes away to a prestigious yeshivah in ninth grade. On his first night in the dorm, he walks into the room to see his three roommates sitting on one boy's bed in the middle of a conversation. The last word he hears before they stop talking and look up at him is "grandfather." By their guilty expressions, Yehudah instantly knows what the conversation is about. Someone was providing fascinating background information on their fourth roommate and his family's "claim to fame." Are the boys speaking *loshon hora*?



### THE HALACHAH

**B**ecause the boys are degrading Yehudah with this report of his family member's misconduct — even in the past — their words are *loshon hora*.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim  
Hilchos Loshon Hora  
4:1*

## WEEKLY WISDOM

*Vayechi Yaakov — When did Yaakov really live? B'Eretz Mitzrayim — When he was in Mitzrayim.*

*Why only then? At that time there was shalom between his children.*

*Without peace, what is life?*

*Good Shabbos!*

### FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

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"How great is

*peace,*

for when Melech  
HaMashiach  
arrives, his

*greeting*

will be with nothing  
other than peace."

– Vayikra Rabbah 9:9

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.

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MALKA BREINDEL A"H BAS SHMUEL FISHEL YLCH"Y

# UNWANTED TIDBITS

BY MALKIE SCHULMAN

**W**hat do you do when someone tells you something about someone else that you have no interest in hearing? It's none of your business, you don't get any pleasure out of knowing it, and on top of that, you're now guilty of listening to loshon hora!

When I met an old acquaintance on the street, I approached her and said, "Hi, how are you?" I then unthinkingly mentioned that the last time we had spoken, a year earlier, she had been involved in helping an unnamed older woman with her many dysfunctions.

"Oh, yes," she said. "I'm still involved with her, and you know what? You even know her."

She had never mentioned before that I knew this woman; otherwise I wouldn't have brought it up at all. But now she proceeded to tell me who she was, and that she was still having problems. Why did I have to ask and why did she have to answer? I mentally berated myself.

So here I was with this unwanted tidbit of gossip. I had to start the work of mentally not accepting the gossip. But what was I not accepting? All my acquaintance had told me was that the woman has problems. Is it loshon hora to have problems? After all, we all do.

Unfortunately, too often someone says something I don't need to hear because I asked a thoughtless question or didn't stop to think about the direction the conversation was taking.

Now I wondered, what was I to do with the information I had just received?

First, I determined not to think poorly of this woman. She was in fact a pleasant person who had experienced many difficulties. Hashem gave her challenges and I lauded her for seeking help. And I could pray for her that Hashem should send it soon.

At last, I arrived at my answer. What can I do with this unwanted piece of loshon hora? I can pray for her complete and genuine healing from all her tzaros.

Then I can move on. And for the future I plan to remember, when I meet an acquaintance, to greet her warmly with a "Hi, it's wonderful to see you," and then, with lips still curved upwards, close my mouth.

## TALK ABOUT IT

How does praying for someone help reverse the harm of hearing loshon hora about him?



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## sage advice

# YOU AND HASHEM SHARE A SECRET

One day, in the course of a conversation, your friend David reveals to you a piece of private information about a major mistake he had made that he now regretted. "Please don't tell anyone else about this," he requests.

Later that day you meet Shaul, who is also close to David.

"Have you seen David lately?" Shaul asks.

"Yeah, in fact I just saw him this morning," you answer.

"Great! How's he doing?" he asks.

David's secret pops up to the top of your mind and pushes hard against your tongue. Here in front of you stands someone whose jaw would drop at this piece of news.

As the words form in your mouth, you face a choice. You can spice up this relationship with your interesting news report. Or you can keep faith with David, who trusted you with his secret. The moment you choose loyalty over gratification you deepen the bond with David, whose secret you've protected.

This describes the inner workings of Shmiras Haloshon. When you see a fellow Jew doing something wrong, Hashem makes a request of you. He asks that later in the day, when you come across a mutual friend, you should keep the information to yourself. Through the laws of Shmiras Haloshon, He implores you, "Please, please, don't repeat what you've seen."

Hashem, Who knows everything, knows the wrongdoing that has occurred. Because you also know, it is as if you and Hashem share a secret about one of His children. And like any loving father, Hashem does not want to hear people demeaning His children.

Through the laws of proper speech, He asks you not to spread this information, not to compromise His child's reputation. And the moment you choose to keep His secret, the moment you choose loyalty to Hashem over your own gratification, you have immeasurably deepened your bond with Hashem. That is Shmiras Haloshon.

## TALK ABOUT IT

What are some reasons that it's tempting to reveal another person's secret?

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