



FOOD
FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION

SHABBOS MENU

PART OF THE CCHF SHABBOS TABLE MACHSOM L'FI PROGRAM • PARSHAS TETZAVEH 5781 • ISSUE 231

HE GAVE \$100!

What could possibly be wrong? You're collecting money for a needy family and you tell someone how much various people gave. Are you speaking *loshon hora*?

T H E

DILEMMA

It's Purim and your yeshivah has sent you and a small group to collect money from alumni. You're thrilled to see that Mr. Asher Kessef – a guy who's said to be worth more than a billion dollars – is on your list! You save him for last, hoping to cap off your day with a huge haul. Finally, you arrive at his stately home. A housekeeper leads you into a hall-sized dining room filled with people who are waiting for a turn to get Mr. Kessef's ear. When your turn finally arrives, he asks about his old yeshivah and shares his warm memories of the Rosh Yeshivah; then he writes you a check for \$100. When you rejoin your group, everyone's dying to know: "So? What did you get from Kessef?" What should you say?



T H E

HALACHAH

If you simply state that he gave \$100, you would be speaking *loshon hora*, because the amount he gave is stingy, relative to his ability to give. If you say, "I'd rather not say," that implies something negative as well. Therefore, if you're on the spot and have to say something, you should give him the benefit of the doubt and say, "Mr. Kessef isn't giving a high school kid his big donation. I'm sure he gives that straight to the yeshivah. But he did give us \$100." Make sure that your statement doesn't sound sarcastic.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim,
Hilchos Loshon Hora 5:6*

HOW YOU SAY IT

Within a family, conflicts inevitably arise. Between spouses, between parents and children, among children, one person's agenda will often clash with that of another. Mother wants the bedtimes observed; daughter wants to read. Wife wants to economize; husband wants a nicer car. What keeps these conflicts from turning a home into a battle zone where hurtful words fly? Megillas Esther gives us the answer. It lists Mordechai's many virtues, ending with "He spoke peacefully to all his offspring." The Ibn Ezra says that although it isn't likely that each and every child and grandchild did exactly as he wanted, Mordechai spoke peacefully with them nonetheless. Mordechai saved Klal Yisrael, but the fact that he spoke peacefully to all his children was, in the Megillah's view, his crowning praise.

FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

Shabbosmenu@cchfglobal.org

"[Klal] Yisrael will not be

redeemed
until they become a
unified
entity."

– Tanchuma Nitzavim 1

L'CHAIM

In the early part of the 20th century, the Mafia had influence in every part of the Chicago's government and police force. Living there at that time was a Jew who had emigrated from Austria and worked as a glazier – someone who installs glass windows.

One night, this man heard sirens wailing somewhere in his neighborhood. When he stepped out of his home to investigate, he saw that a nearby factory was engulfed in flames. The glazier realized that this building would need all new windows, and so, the next morning, he presented himself to the factory owner to offer his services. The owner hired him and he went to work.

After a few hours, he needed a break. He found a bathroom and a sink to wash his hands. When he turned on the faucet, however, the water looked rusty. Then he noticed that the water had an unusual smell: It was beer!

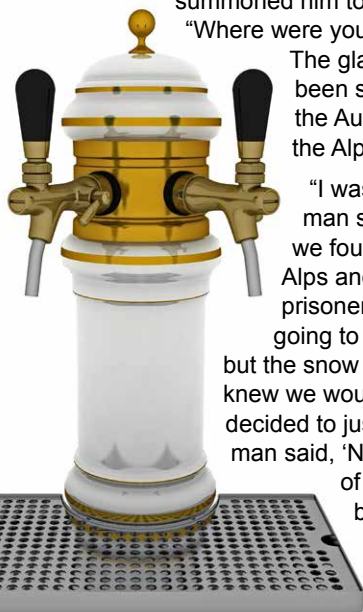
Since this was during the Prohibition, when alcohol was illegal in America, the glazier realized he had stumbled into a Mafia-run factory producing illegal alcohol. If anyone knew he had discovered the secret, he would be killed. But it was too late; he was being observed by a small group of men who were arguing over his fate. One man was defending him while the others were clearly determined to silence him for good.

After several frightening minutes, his defender summoned him to the group and asked, "Where were you in January of 1918?"

The glazier said that he had been serving in World War I in the Austrian Army, stationed in the Alps.

"I was in the Italian army," the man said. "One stormy day, we fought the Austrians in the Alps and we lost. We were taken prisoner. The Austrians were going to march us to their base, but the snow was falling fast and they knew we would slow them down. They decided to just kill us instead. But one man said, 'No, these are prisoners of war. They're human beings. We can't just kill them in cold blood.'

When the others kept insisting that they kill



sage advice

HELP WANTED: LEADER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

When Hashem is looking for leaders to guide *Klal Yisrael*, what are the qualifications He seeks? Wisdom would certainly seem to be a vital asset. Patience and perseverance would also be necessary to shepherd a diverse, opinionated people in the right direction. Humility, too, is key, for it prevents the leader's ego from getting in the way of his better judgment.

In *Parashas Shemos*, we observe the moment when Hashem commissioned Moshe to become the leader of the Jewish people, and in that scene the Torah reveals the one qualification that tops them all. As Moshe came upon the burning bush, the Torah (*Shemos* 3:4) tells us that "Hashem saw that he turned to see," after which Hashem called his name.

Although the simple meaning of the verse is that Moshe turned to see the burning bush, the Midrash offers another perspective. Back in Egypt, Moshe had ventured out of the protective bubble of Pharaoh's palace to observe the lives of his fellow Jews. He had tried to alleviate their burdens, interceding when he saw a Jew being beaten. Moshe didn't limit his vision to the concerns of his own comfortable world, but turned – actively strove – to see what was going on and look for ways he could help his people.

This, says the Midrash, is the key qualification for Jewish leadership. Hashem chooses those whose hearts overflow with concern for the Jewish people. They lead not only by guiding and advising their generation, but by "turning to see," setting an example of *ahavas Yisrael* for us to follow.

TALK ABOUT IT

Can you relate stories of your own *rabbanim*, *rebbeim*, or *gadolim* that further illustrate this point?

us, this man said, 'If you're going to kill them, you'll have to kill me too.' Finally, they gave in. That man was you. You saved my life, and now I am repaying you."

Adapted from a story by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer for CCHF

TALK ABOUT IT

What are some lessons this story teaches us?

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