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# SHABBOS MENU

PART OF THE CCHF SHABBOS TABLE MACHSOM L'FI PROGRAM • SHABBOS CHAZON PARSHAS DEVARIM 5781 • ISSUE 249

## 'GET ME OUT OF HERE!'

*Loshon hora is being spoken all around you but there's no place to go and no place to hide! What can you do? Are you doomed to bear the guilt of hearing forbidden words? How can you mitigate the damage?*

### THE DILEMMA

Eliezer has met almost all the colorful characters in the family of Penina, his new wife. This Shabbos, at the home of Penina's parents, he meets yet one more – Aunt Dalia from Eretz Yisrael, the sister of Penina's grandfather. She is a repository of family stories and she regales all those at the table with her uncensored accounts.

"You all only know your Zeidy as an old man with a gray beard. But you know, on the kibbutz where we grew up, things were very different..." She goes on to tell familiar family stories about Zeidy's wild adventures as a young *Sabra* and Israeli soldier. Although everyone knows that Dalia and Zeidy both eventually became religious, the family sees nothing wrong with having a hearty laugh at the old stories.

Eliezer, on the other hand, is horrified. He wishes he could leave the table, but as the new member of the family, that certainly is not going to happen. He sits in his place with a serious expression, which his wife notices.

"Could we *bentch* now?" she asks her father. "Eliezer and I want to take a walk."

Did Eliezer do the right thing?



### THE HALACHAH

The Chofetz Chaim offers two possible responses to a situation in which *loshon hora* is being spoken: leave the scene or put your fingers in your ears. If neither of those are

possible, a person must firmly resolve not to accept the *loshon hora*, refrain from taking any enjoyment in the words, and show by facial expression that he does not approve. Eliezer did the right thing and, in fact, motivated his wife to end the conversation.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim  
 Hilchos Loshon Hora 6:5*

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.

## PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

*Thank you for your weekly email; my family enjoys it!*

Yasher koach!

Yehudo Weisz  
 Manchester UK

MANCHESTER

## FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

[Shabbosmenu@cchfglobal.org](mailto:Shabbosmenu@cchfglobal.org)

Whoever will strive to

*correct*

[*loshon hora*] will have a

*share*

in the building of the  
 third Beis HaMikdash.

–Sefer Shmiras Haloshon, Part II, 7

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MALKA BREINDEL A"H BAS SHMUEL FISHEL YLCH"Y

We can easily imagine that words, like the breath that carries them, dissipate into the air. This story told by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer proves that this is a dangerous illusion.

**R**abbi Aharon Pessin of Ramat Beit Shemesh often travels to America and stays in the city where his in-laws live. There are two nearby cities where he can *daven* with a *minyan*. In the closer of those two shuls, he noticed that getting a *minyan* together is always a challenge. One day, he overheard two men in that shul discussing a new kosher restaurant that had opened there. After *davening*, Rabbi Pessin asked the *gabbai*, "Why is there enough of a community to support a restaurant but not a *minyan*?" The *gabbai*'s mysterious answer: "The Rabbi's Curse."

About 100 years earlier, a new rabbi came to town determined to upgrade the community's Torah observance. He imposed higher standards on the local butchers, which they deeply resented. They decided to get back at him through his family. That Purim, they brought a large *shalach manos* to the rabbi's house. The *rebbetzin* took it to the kitchen to open it and found live rats scurrying around inside. The shock gave her a nervous breakdown from which she never recovered. The rabbi, seeing this tremendous cruelty and hatred, cursed the city that it should never become a *makom Torah*.

The *gabbai* then told Rabbi Pessin of countless failed efforts to gather a *minyan* to ask *mechilah* at the rabbi's grave. The last such effort was curtailed by an epic storm. Rabbi Pessin returned to Eretz Yisrael and, troubled by the town's fate, asked Rav Eliyashiv for advice. The *Rav* said that the current generation, who had nothing to do with the *aveirah*, was not obligated to ask *mechilah*.



## THE WORDS THAT STOOD 100 YEARS

However, Rav Eliyashiv recommended that the entire community gather at the grave on the rabbi's *yahrtzeit* and seek his forgiveness. A great gathering at last took place at which the community

said *Tehillim* and asked *mechilah*. Not too long after, Rabbi Pessin visited again. This time, the *minyan* overflowed

and for the first time in the city's history, a regular *shiur* took place.

Rabbi Seltzer points out that the rabbi's curse stood for a century, proving the staying power of words. We can never open our mouths to speak without first considering what our words might do.

### TALK ABOUT IT

What is the positive side of a word's staying power?  
How can you use this in your life?

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## sage advice

### WHAT A WORD CAN DO

*Pass or fail. Guilty or not guilty. Accepted or rejected. Yes or no. Positive or negative.*

At some point in everyone's life, the power of a word becomes a vivid reality. It can convey a person's entire destiny. Will he be plunged into a world of illness, or go home to live a healthy life? Will he be licensed in the field he has chosen, or be forced to postpone or change his plan? Is this girl his *bashert*, or must he keep looking? Although we see so clearly that even one word can change a life, this awareness can easily become submerged in the massive flow of words we speak each day.

But on Tishah B'Av, our entire nation reawakens to the power of words. The negative words of the *meraglim*, which they spoke on our first Tishah B'Av in the *midbar*, plunged the Jewish people into despair. Beset by doubts in Hashem's promise to them, they wept needlessly. Hashem, in response, set this day as a time of tragedy and tears. Words – soundwaves carried on puffs of breath – had that power.

But there is another side to the power of words; surely Hashem did not give us this unparalleled power so that we should destroy ourselves. We see the other, positive, side to the power of words in the statement made by Ben Hei Hei (*Pirkei Avos* 5:26), "L'fum tzaara agra – In proportion to the pain is the reward." However, in Aramaic, the word "l'fum" means "according to the mouth." Using this translation, the phrase states that the mouth can be the source of pain, or a source of kindness, friendship, and respect.

We know that one word can send us into exultation or despair. Our task, for which Tishah B'Av is here to remind us, is to keep this in the front of our minds when we speak to others. We choose whether to give another Jew a bitter taste of *galus* or a glimmer of *Geulah*.

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