

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION

SHABBOS MENU



PART OF THE CCHF SHABBOS TABLE MACHSOM L'FI PROGRAM • PARSHAS BESHALACH 5782 • ISSUE 275

'HE'S NO RABBI AKIVA'

Is every person who achieves the status of a posek, a Rosh Yeshivah or Rav considered a true Torah scholar? Compared to the old days, who today really merits those lofty titles?

T H E

DILEMMA

When the first wave of Covid-19 hit, the Jewish community, like all the other communities, was in shock. A few months into the pandemic, a Jewish newspaper published an interview with the *Rosh Yeshivah* of a small but elite *beis medrash* located in the town.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* provided encouragement and drew some lessons from the unfolding events. One subject he touched upon was rampant materialism. This rankled many of the well-to-do families in town, including the Nussbaums. "I can't stand when these guys act like they know what G-d wants," Mr. Nussbaum told his wife. "They're not *nevi'im*. They're not even *gedolim* if you compare them to the generation before the war. When the Sanhedrin sits again, I'll listen to what they have to say."

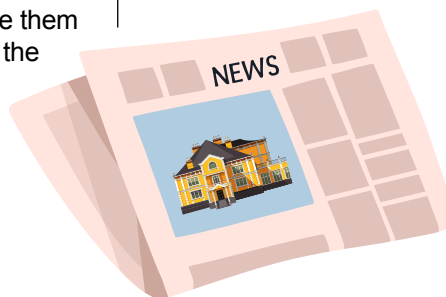
Given that we acknowledge the greater stature of previous generations, is there anything wrong with Mr. Nussbaum's assessment?

T H E

HALACHAH

The *yetzer hara* uses this argument to convince us that the Torah scholars of our day do not merit any special consideration. This is untrue. Each generation must revere its scholars and certainly not speak against them.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim,
Hilchos Loshon Hora 8:4*



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



Thank you for Li'shuasecha. The book is my companion as I recover from a serious illness. Your work is truly a gift to Klal Yisrael.

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"Just as you accept that others do not

look

like you, accept that they do not

think

like you."

– the Rebbe Reb Menachem Mendel MiKotzk, cited in *Pisgamim Nivcharim*

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sage advice

WIELD THE WEED WHACKER

People who take pride in their lawns know that the trick to keeping out the weeds is to make sure the grass is thick. Weeds take root in the bare spots, and then they begin choking off the healthy grass. The thicker the blanket of healthy grass, the less opportunity there is for weeds to take root.

Conversation works the same way. The more positive ideas and thoughts a person expresses, the less room there is for the negative. If we want to ensure that we stay on the right track in our verbal interactions, we can do so by including as much "loshon tov" — positive speech — as possible. Negative thoughts, words, complaints and criticisms are incongruous in the midst of praise and appreciation. There's simply no place for them to take root.

People often think that a commitment to shmiras haloshon means that we must refrain from speaking. Actually, the best strategy is to fill our conversations with positive words, leaving no room for loshon hora to sprout.

TALK ABOUT IT

What are some topics you can bring up to keep your conversations positive and interesting?

In Eretz Yisrael, a man stood in the courtyard outside his local shul. That's where he observed the "crime." He saw a man carrying several stuffed shopping bags walk up to a *sheimos* receptacle in the courtyard and begin pushing his bags in. Then, when he could fit no more, he placed the remaining bags down in front of the receptacle and walked away.

"How could he?" the observer scolded silently. "The sign clearly states that this receptacle is only for the shul's *sheimos*. How dare he burden the shul with disposing of his private *sheimos*, especially when there's a public receptacle right down the block!"

But then the observer caught himself. He was assuming the worst. Surely there could be a dozen good reasons why this man did what he did. He strained his mind to think of even one and came up empty.

However, the "perpetrator" himself supplied the background that changed the picture. The observer heard him telling another man: "I was walking down the street and saw a mound of *sheimos* from the shul outside," he recounted.

"It was about to rain, and I was worried that the *sheimos* might be debased if it were left there and got soaked. So I found a few plastic bags and brought the items to the *sheimos* bin."

BELIEVING YOUR EYES

Now it was clear. Not only was the man *not* taking advantage of the shul by

burdening it with his private *sheimos*, but he was going out of his way

to *help* the shul. The observer learned a crucial lesson in being *dan l'chaf zechus*: We

may not be able to find out why someone is behaving as he is, but it's a safe bet that he has his reasons.

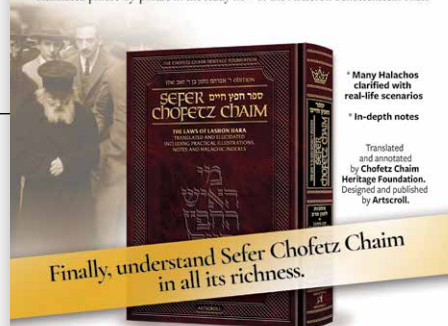
TALK ABOUT IT

Is there ever any harm in withholding judgment? Is there any situation that demands a snap judgment?

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