

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION



SHABBOS MENU

PART OF THE CCHF SHABBOS TABLE MACHSOM L'FI PROGRAM • SHABBOS PARSHAS YISRO 5783 • ISSUE 329

DON'T EVEN GO THERE

Certain relationships and certain people carry a negative charge. If you are relatively sure that someone will interpret the neutral comment that you are reporting as an insult, does the fact that you don't intend to impart a negative message protect you from trespassing the laws of rechilus?

T H E

DILEMMA

Shalom thought he might help tamp down the wildfire that was raging between Aryeh, his neighbor, and Dov, Aryeh's former partner. At a wedding, Shalom saw Aryeh standing with a few neighbors, complaining about his business break-up.

"You know, Aryeh, I saw Dov yesterday and he told me that he learned a lot from you about sales," Shalom said.

"Ha! I know what he meant by that," Aryeh answered angrily. "He's been walking around telling everyone I stole his customers. Coming from him, that's a veiled threat. He's planning to steal my customers. You can bet on it."

In fact, Dov's comment had been sincere and Shalom had only repeated it in hopes that it would help quell the feud. Was he allowed to repeat Dov's words to Shalom if they were neutral words repeated in front of three people?



T H E

HALACHAH

If the subject of the comment is someone who tends to become angry and take offense, or there is animosity between the subject and the speaker, then a person is not permitted to report *any* words said by the speaker about the subject. Since it can be expected to arouse animosity regardless of the intent, such a report is *rechilus*.

*Sefer Chofetz
Chaim,
Hilchos
Rechilus 2:2*

PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

This coming Monday is the yahrtzeit of the founder of Shmiras Haloshon Yomi, Rav Yehuda Zev Segal, zt"l.

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"Hillel says...

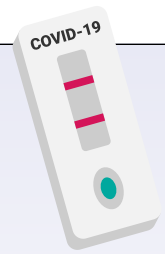
do not
judge your fellow
until
you have reached his place."

– Pirkei Avos 2:5

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.

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BEYOND ME

Covid-19 was still a presence across the land. At a conference, attendees sat six feet apart from each other, wearing masks, as the public health authorities had mandated. A man in the audience began to cough. Perhaps it was just a bit of congestion; after all, people can often be heard coughing in shul, at meetings, and in other public places.

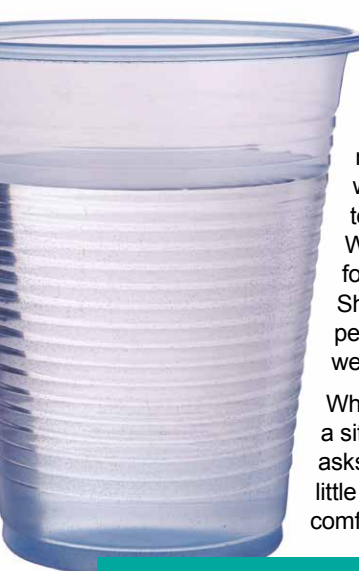
But in this unique era, coughing set off alarms. People kept looking at the man as if to say, "What are you doing here? Do you want to get us all sick?" Others glanced at him with sympathy. Then, as the man struggled through another bout of coughing, one woman rose from her seat and left the room.

"How rude!" thought another audience member who witnessed her flight. "People are really taking this Covid business too far!"

What he saw next, however, flipped his entire perspective. The woman returned to the room with a cup of water in her hand and brought it to the coughing man.

It was a time in history when "every man for himself" seemed to be the world's motto. But that can't be a Jew's motto. We're here to help each other, even when it's sometimes at our own expense. When we're just about to lie down for a night's sleep, but a spouse or child needs to talk, we give him or her the time. When we're just making it financially, but a neighbor is in need, we dig a little deeper to give *tzedakah*. When we're looking forward to a quiet Shabbos, but a lonely person needs a meal, we open our home.

Whenever we face a situation in life that asks us to give just a little more than we're comfortable giving,



sage advice

HANGING ON A WORD

It's Erev Sukkos, 2020. Mrs. Rosenberg is expecting her married children and their families to arrive later that day to spend the Yom Tov together. But this morning, Mrs. Rosenberg is shivering with fever, standing in line at the local Covid-19 testing site. "It couldn't be Covid," she tells herself. "Where would everyone go for Yom Tov?"

Finally, it's her turn to take the rapid test. She and her husband go back to wait in their car, all the while wondering, what will they be told? "Positive" will mean quarantining for two weeks—and a lonely, strange kind of Yom Tov. They return to the nurse who should have their results by now. They watch anxiously as she sorts through her papers. "Rosenberg?" she confirms. They nod. As she opens her mouth to reveal the results, they are focused on nothing but her words.

In Torah's times, this was the mindset of the Jew who went to a *kohen* because of a possible case of *tzaraas*. Rabbi Yisroel Gottlieb of Monsey observes that it was the word of the *kohein*—"tamei" (impure) or *tahor* (pure)—that sent the person into quarantine or set him free. He suggests that one reason for the emphasis on the *kohen's* word was that this forced the person with the *nega* to hyperfocus on the power of one word. Since *tzaraas* was a punishment for *loshon hora*, the lesson was especially appropriate.

Our experience with Covid quarantines gave us a firsthand understanding of the same lesson. A word can put a fellow Jew "in quarantine" by ruining his reputation among others. It can inflict loneliness on someone—not just for two weeks, but for a long, long time. Whether we are listening or speaking, each word deserves our full attention.

From a CCHF Live Life Better video by Mr. Michael Rothschild

TALK ABOUT IT

Can you think of other instances in which words create a new spiritual reality or situation?

we have the opportunity to break through our natural preoccupation with ourselves and live the bigger, greater life of a member of Klal Yisrael.

Heard from Rabbi Tzvi Sytner on a CCHF Live Life Better video



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TALK ABOUT IT
If you were sitting in that conference and saw the woman bring the coughing man some water, would you have wished you'd done it yourself? Would you have thought of it?

As a *zechus* for Eliezer ben Yaffa

As a *zechus* for *brachah, hatzlachah, and siyatta diShmaya* for the Moskowitz family

L'ilui nishmas Shlomo Fishel ben Aharon z"l
Dedicated by his family

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