

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION

SHABBOS MENU

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“WHO CARES WHAT HE MEANT!”

Even when a report that sounds bad is confirmed to be true, there's almost always a more positive interpretation that's feasible. Are we required to consider that possibility?

T H E

DILEMMA

“I’m worried about the way Zev spends money,” said Shmuel, Zev’s brother, to Michael, another brother. “I know he makes a lot, but he lives like a king. It’s all going to come crashing down on him if he’s not careful.”

Zev continued living large while his debts built up to the sky. Shmuel kept commenting on his brother’s lifestyle to Michael. Then the predicted crash came.

Zev needed to sell his house and downsize, rent out his summer home, sell his Lexus, and lease a Honda. “It’s not fair,” he told Michael. “I work so hard. Why shouldn’t I be able to enjoy the good stuff?”

“Look, Zev, Shmuel saw this coming years ago,” Michael tells him. “He always said you were spending more than you were making. Don’t worry, you’ll start over and do it right this time. You’ll be fine.”

“I knew it!” Zev said. “He’s been jealous of me all along. He gave me an *ayin hara*. That explains everything!” Does it?



T H E

HALACHAH

Even though Shmuel has been criticizing Zev and Michael’s report is true, Zev has a mitzvah to judge favorably and needs to consider a possible positive angle; perhaps Shmuel’s comments were motivated by love and concern.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim,
Hilchos Rechilus 5:6*

To connect with our neshamos and with Hashem, we need time to think. But our yetzer hara keeps us running, assuring us that we’re being wildly productive when we’re effectively running in place.

As we fast on Shivah Asar b’Tammuz, let’s take the time to realize that we have to stop running, and start thinking, connecting, moving up—and before long we’ll be ready to be free once again. In Yerushalayim Habenuyah!

**FOR QUESTIONS AND
COMMENTS, EMAIL**

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“When Hashem

favors
a man’s ways, even his
foes
will make peace with him.”

– Mishlei 16:7

HERO'S WELCOME

You're having Shabbos guests. One is Gershon, the son of your Rav from your hometown. He's attending a local yeshiva, and you're honored that he chose your family for his Shabbos meal. The other is Dani, an older single man who is your frequent guest. Gershon knocks on the door. You run to greet him and place him right next to you at the table. A few minutes later, Dani knocks. You yell "Come in!" and he walks alone to the table. "There's an empty place next to David," you tell him, pointing to your spill-prone four-year-old.

Anyone observing this scene would know that Gershon is an honored guest and Dani is a *chesed*. Yet Dani is no less a person, no less a Jew, and no less deserving of respect. **Seeing the dignity in every Jew is a mark of greatness**, as this episode in the life of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer illustrates:

Rabbi Isser Zalman was sitting in his apartment in Jerusalem when one of his students reported, "The Brisker Rav is coming up the stairs!" Rav Isser Zalman ran out the door to greet him, only to find that the visitor was

someone else entirely. He escorted the man into the

house with great fanfare and asked his wife to set out special refreshments for their esteemed guest.

When the guest

departed, the puzzled students asked the Rav why he had treated him with such honor. "I ran out of the house thinking it was the Brisker Rav," said Rav Isser Zalman. "I was wearing my biggest smile and thinking about how I would honor this great man. Then I saw it wasn't him. But don't I owe every person my best smile and the greatest honor?"



TALK ABOUT IT

Imagine going to a *simchah* where you don't know anyone. How would you feel if the host gave you a warm greeting, and then brought you to your table and introduced you to the people sitting around you?

sage advice YOUR EMUNAH-METER

When you're on the road, you keep an eye on your gas gauge. You wouldn't want to run out of fuel in the middle of the highway. On the road of life, *emunah* is our fuel. It gets us everywhere we need to go. But how do we know how much *emunah* we have? Are we in danger of running out just when we need it most?

There is actually a gauge for measuring *emunah*, and it is called "shalom." Here's how it works:

Eli was a married man who had trouble supporting his family. Eli's parents quietly contributed to his budget month after month. Eli's sister, Rivky, found out about it when she overheard a conversation between her mother and Eli. She told the other siblings. "Mommy and Daddy only give us money on Yom Tov," they griped to each other. "Maybe if Eli wasn't sucking it all away, there'd be something for us. Is it our fault he can't get himself together? They're enabling his laziness! They're enablers!"

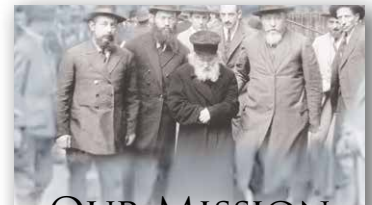
Or, an alternative scenario:

Eli's sister Rivky found out that her parents were giving Eli significant financial help. Neither she nor the other four siblings were receiving any money from her parents except for special expenses like Yamim Tovim and simchos. At first, she felt cheated. But then she thought, "Baruch Hashem, we all have what we need. And they help us in plenty of other ways, so there's really no reason to feel jealous."

When we don't trust Hashem to take care of us, we're grasping and jealous. We think others have what's ours; we fight for justice. When we trust Hashem and believe He is in control, we recognize the gifts He has given us. "That's what's mine," we can say, "and it's perfect for me."

TALK ABOUT IT

Where does *emunah* fit in when something really is unfair and should be fixed, such as when someone actually cheats you or causes you damage?



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Dedicated by Uri & Riki Sklar

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