

FOOD FOR
THOUGHT
TO SPARK
CONVERSATION



SHABBOS MENU

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MAKING IT BETTER

You hear that someone has spoken ill of you, and the report is totally believable. So you believe it. Is there any way to undo the damage once you've let the words into your heart?

T H E

DILEMMA

Nachum, Shimon, and Ezra share a dorm room in a yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael. Nachum and Shimon knew each other before arriving at this yeshivah. Ezra always feels a little left out of their conversations.

"I know they can't help it," Ezra complains to another student. "They know all the same people and they've been through all kinds of stuff together, so once they get on a roll, they leave me behind. Especially Shimon. He doesn't realize it, but he can make me feel like a piece of furniture."

The student tells Shimon that Ezra thinks he lacks social skills. "He told me you treat him like a piece of furniture."

Shimon takes great offense. From his own point of view, he's being doing all he can to include Ezra. Now Ezra's going around talking about him! What a snake! He shares the room and sits and schmoozes with him and Nachum, and then turns around and says vicious things!"

Shimon has obviously taken the *rechilus* as truth. Is there anything he can do to make amends for believing the worst about Ezra?



T H E

HALACHAH

To do *teshuvah* for believing *rechilus*, a person must do his best to cast doubt on the story he has taken to heart. He should assume that something in the speaker's words did not convey the full picture: context, tone of voice, wording, intentions—any of these can change the damaging story into a benign one. He must then commit to never again accept *rechilus* about a fellow Jew, and he must verbalize his confession of wrongdoing. If he has not spread the story further, this is complete *teshuvah*.

Sefer Chofetz
Chaim,
Hilchos
Rechilus
5:7

PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

Thank you for the Q&A! I find them very clear, interesting and practical!

E. Shapira

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"The mouth of a
fool
brings destruction to
himself, and his lips are a
stumbling
block to his soul."

—Mishlei 18:7

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MALKA BREINDEL A"H BAS SHMUEL FISHEL YLCH"Y

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.

“LOOK, I GREW!”

When we see that we're growing, we're not only excited, but also inspired to keep it going. That is the experience of many people who learn shmiras haloshon. Here is a report from Malky, a 10th grader who participates in CCHF's daily learning program, Hour of Caring:

Last week we had a math test, and baruch Hashem I knew the material well. After the test, I was schmoozing with two friends in the hallway. One of them is in my math class and the other isn't. The girl who isn't in my class asked the other girl how she did on the test. My friend said she found it very hard. Then the girl asked me what I thought. I didn't want to say I did well in front of the other girl, so I just smiled.

Later, I was talking to another friend who also did well on the test. I asked her what she would have said in that situation. I was about to identify the girl who didn't do well when I stopped myself. I realized that she might not want the information shared, and if she did choose to share, that was up to her.

But what stopped me was that I remembered a story from Hour of Caring. It was about a boy who got his license and wanted to go driving with his friends. His father was about to warn him about the danger of driving with friends by telling him a story from his own younger years that involved a cousin. Then he realized that maybe that cousin didn't want his old adventures to become public.

Had I not been learning, I never would have been aware of this. Thank you, CCHF!

TALK ABOUT IT

What is something you have learned about shmiras haloshon that has changed how you speak?

sage advice

AS LONG AS WE LIVE

“That’s the way Hashem made me. I can’t change it.”

“I’m not the smiley type.”

“I’m not a people person.”

“I’m too old to change.”

“I’m just a kid. What do you expect from me?”

We tell ourselves a lot of things to justify various flaws and unproductive habits. If we think of these traits as set in stone, then we relieve ourselves of the obligation to work to improve them. And in that case, we may very well miss the purpose of our life.

Every minute we are alive is a minute meant for us to work on ourselves. A revealing story about the Chofetz Chaim portrays this mindset at its pinnacle:

Rav Hirsch Zaks, the Chofetz Chaim’s grandson, lived with him in the last months of his life. One of his poignant memories of those days was the *cheshbon hanefesh* his grandfather would often engage in. Rav Zaks would hear the Chofetz Chaim questioning himself out loud: “Did you have enough *simchah shel mitzvah*?” regarding the *mitzvos* he did in his life.

Sometimes he worried that his *simchah* was lacking, but he placated himself with this assurance: “Yisrael Meir, you’re still alive. You can improve now!”

Already in his 90s, the Chofetz Chaim was still working on his spiritual growth. He knew that he still had imperfections to correct and was delighted that Hashem had given him more time to work on them. And he left us with a message; **as long as we’re alive, we can always reach higher.**

Heard from Rav Yisroel Brog, Rosh Yeshivas Toras Avigdor

TALK ABOUT IT

How can you work on an inborn trait that you really feel is “just the way I am?”

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ודבורה בת ישראל ע"ה
Dedicated by Uri & Riki Sklar

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