



SHABBOS MENU

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DIGGING A PIT

You might mean well; you just want someone to know that, in your opinion, he has been cheated. Maybe you're right or maybe you're wrong, but what's the harm in warning the victim?

THE DILEMMA

Yechezkel—known by all as Zeke—is a used car dealer. Nosson, his neighbor, would not dream of buying from anyone else. Zeke shows him a 3-year-old Toyota Camry. “This is the one for you,” Zeke says. “Best car for the best price ... for the best neighbor!”

A day later, paperwork all completed, Nosson drives his new prize possession off Zeke's lot. As soon as he parks it in his driveway, his neighbor comes to take a look.

“Nice car!” says the neighbor. “You got it from Zeke?”

“Sure. He took good care of me,” Nosson replies.

“Look, I'm not one to make trouble, but did you notice this little crevice between these two panels in the back? This car's been in an accident, no question about it,” says the neighbor.

“Really? Zeke didn't say anything about that,” Nosson says, a troubled look clouding his previously sunny expression. “What should I do?”

“What you should do is take it back,” says the neighbor. “I'll come with you if you want. He's going to tell you it doesn't make any difference, but it does. Cars are never the same after an accident. You should get back every penny or he should exchange this for a car that hasn't been in a wreck!”

Is Nosson's neighbor right to push Nosson to seek redress?

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.



THE HALACHAH

The neighbor, with no clear proof, is digging a pit into which everyone involved is bound to fall. Nosson may try to seek remedies that are not permitted, such as cancelling the payment he made or backing out on a proper sale. Both Zeke and Nosson are bound to fall into *machlokes*. The neighbor's ill-informed, casual comment constitutes an *aveiros* trap for all parties.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim,
Hilchos Rechilus 9:13*

PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

From a Shalom Challenge participant

Absolutely phenomenal series. Kol Hakavod! I love how this time it's a lot about making shalom with myself, and how, once I do that, I can move on to making shalom with others.



FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

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“Engaging in
machlokes

is a dreadful sin that is often

accompanied
by a host of severe sins.”

*- Sefer Shmiras Haloshon,
Shaar HaZechirah ch. 15*

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MALKA BREINDEL A" H BAS SHMUEL FISHEL YLCH" T

CARING COUNTS

Rabbi Goldwasser stepped out of the wedding hall into the lobby to make a phone call. There, he saw a young man pacing back and forth, retracing his steps over and over. The young man's expression and the forcefulness of his back-and-forth march nearly screamed, "I'm very, very upset!"

Seeing the *bachur's* obvious pain, Rabbi Goldwasser approached him and asked if anything was wrong.

"I'm fine, I'm fine, thanks," the *bachur* answered.

But Rabbi Goldwasser wasn't satisfied. The boy was clearly not fine. The rabbi asked again, gently, if there was a problem. It took a few more tries, but ultimately, the young man's reserve cracked, and his despair spilled out.

"I was just on the phone with my parents," he said. "They asked me to call them in the middle of the *chasunah* to let them know I'm OK. I hung up and was about to go back inside when I suddenly thought, 'Who even cares that I'm not in there? Who even notices?' If I don't go back in, not one person will know the difference. No one even..."

Rabbi Goldwasser put his arm around the young man's shoulder. "I care," he said. He brought the *bachur* back into the hall and sat him by his side. He spent much of the evening in conversation with this young man, forming a bond that would last beyond that night.



sageadvice

#2 IN A SERIES
ON INNER PEACE

LET YOURSELF OFF THE HOOK

Imagine a man who is in a fender-bender. He wasn't paying attention when the car in front of him stopped, and now the two cars are pulled over to the side of the road. The man who caused the accident is horrified. "I'm so, so sorry," he says. "That was so careless of me. Reckless, really. I really should have my license suspended. I'm a menace on the road!"

"Calm down," says the one who was bumped. "It's a little dent. The insurance will cover it." The men exchange insurance information, the dented car is fixed and two months later, the men meet again at a wedding.

"I'm so glad I ran into you," says the careless driver. "I can't get this off my mind. How could I be spacing out when I'm on the road? I really should give you money just for the trouble I caused you. Here ..." and he begins to take out his checkbook.

"What are you doing!" the other man asks. "It's over. Forget it. I'm fine, my car is fine and you're fine. Everyone spaces out once in a while. That's what insurance is for."

Obviously, this man is carrying guilt that is far out of proportion to his small mistake. Furthermore, he is holding onto the guilt long after the situation is resolved. It seems absurd.

And yet, we do this to ourselves all the time. We run our minds over foolish things we've said or done, letting these episodes live in our minds and cast their shadow over our self-esteem. We might even think this is a noble, humble, righteous trait. After all, regret is part of *teshuvah*.

However, if we've done all we could to resolve the issue, then holding onto the guilt is not helping us in any way. Rather, it's the *yetzer hora's* method of keeping us down and draining our will to strive for higher spiritual heights. We're not meant to carry our mistakes through life with us like a giant backpack that grows heavier each day. We travel much farther in life when we travel light.

TALK ABOUT IT

What can you do to release yourself from guilt if someone refuses to forgive you?

How did Rabbi Goldwasser snatch this young man from the edge of despair? He noticed. He thought about what he was seeing, about what the other person was feeling. And then he reached out with the only tools he had, and the only tools he needed: a listening ear and a caring heart.

TALK ABOUT IT

What does this story teach us about showing other people that we are happy to see them and glad they are with us?



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