



SHABBOS MENU

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ALL IN THE FAMILY

The Torah requires us to put so much thought and caution into the words we speak about a fellow Jew! Do the same rules apply when speaking about people who deny the Torah?

DILEMMA

Shimon was an elderly man who had once been in charge of a large *tzedakah* fund, but but was caught stealing money from the fund and was removed from his position. He managed to blame the entire episode on the town's rabbi. Eventually his situation became so uncomfortable that he left town, changed his name to Sam, and stopped keeping the mitzvos.

A time came, many years later, when there was some business he needed to take care of in his old town. He introduced himself to some new residents who did not know his story and began telling them "the inside scoop" on their rabbi. The residents were shocked at the information Sam was reporting. One, a man named Ephraim, decided to tell the rabbi about it.

"This man named Sam is spreading rumors about you!" Ephraim said.

Was he speaking *rechilus*?



THE HALACHAH

The laws of *rechilus* apply only to "*amisecha*" – your nation, meaning people who identify themselves with the Torah and the Jewish people. Since Shimon—now known as Sam—has rejected both, he is not considered *amisecha* and Ephraim may report his words, even if there is no constructive purpose.

Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Rechilus Klal 9:15

WEEKLY WISDOM

It's Sefirah time, when we mourn the loss of Rabbi Akiva's 24,000 talmidim due to a lack of kavod among them. As we count the days, let us prepare ourselves for Matan Torah by improving bein adam lachaveiro, learning the halachos of Shmiras Haloshon Yomi each day. May we arrive together at Har Sinai, k'ish echad b'lev echad!

A gut Chodesh

FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL
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"It is impossible
to merit the quality
of peace without
first

ridding

oneself of baseless hatred
and loshon hora."

– Sefer Shmiras Haloshon, Part 2, ch.7

When we're young, we tend to think that what we do and say doesn't matter very much. Does anyone really take us seriously? A little teasing, a little mischief, a practical joke or two – isn't all to be expected from boys and girls who haven't quite reached adulthood? Here's a true story, with names changed, that offers a clearer perspective.

Mimi was a top student and a class leader. When her teacher went on maternity leave, a tall, broad-shouldered, unfashionably dressed young woman, Miss Selengut, took over. Her first lesson was way above the students' heads.

The class decided that Miss Selengut was fair game. The next day, Mimi brought in her sister's talking doll. As the teacher tried to teach, the doll complained, "I'm hungry," and "I have a tummy ache." The teacher stopped the class to find the owner of the doll, but Mimi, who had it hidden in her knapsack, was able to shut it down before she was discovered.

The next morning the teacher gave a pop quiz, and the students turned in blank. Realizing that Mimi was the force behind the rebellion, Miss Selengut had a private conversation with her, with the principal's backing, warning her that if she continued on this path, she would be sent home. Mimi held her peace for a few weeks, until she couldn't resist the temptation to plant a fake mouse on the teacher's seat. Chaos ensued.

When PTA arrived, Mimi's mother got the first-ever negative report about her daughter. Mimi cried to her parents that the teacher was picking on her. Her father, a member of the school's board of directors, complained, and Miss Selengut was asked to leave. When Mimi overheard her father explaining the situation to someone, she was overcome with guilt. She had cost this innocent woman her job! Suddenly she realized that her words have real power.

The lesson stuck with her as she went on in life. One day, already married with children, Mimi spotted Miss Selengut while shopping. Mimi knew she had to ask

IT MATTERS

forgiveness. She discovered that Miss Selengut hadn't forgotten and had in fact never taught again. "Let me compensate you somehow for the humiliation I caused," Mimi pleaded.

"I want only one thing," said the former teacher. "Please publicize this story so that teenagers will learn that their actions have consequences that can last a lifetime!"

Adapted from a true story by C.B. Weinfeld in the Yated Ne'eman



sage advice



PART 4 OF A SERIES ON INNER PEACE

GIVE ME A BREAK!

Peace with others starts with peace with ourselves.

Imagine: You knock yourself out to make a royal Shabbos for your guests, the family that just moved next door. The salmon is cooked to perfection. The dips are home-made and delicious. Your best schnapps – the one that's saved for special occasions – comes out for a Y'chaim. The roast is perfectly pink in the middle, soft and succulent. Even the vegetables are done just right.

The kugel, however, stayed in the oven a bit too long. It has a vaguely burnt taste.

"You burnt the kugel!" your guest cries out. "It tastes like ashes! How could you serve this?"

How unfair and absurd would this complaint be? The hours of time you put into shopping for, cooking and serving this gourmet meal all fall by the wayside because one out of the dozen dishes you served was not quite right. Who would act like this?

Oddly, the answer to that question is that you do. We all do. Not toward other people, but toward ourselves. We kick ourselves endlessly for the things that go wrong, readily overlooking the things we do right:

You burned the kugel, but your table was warm and welcoming. You lost the account, but you've gained many others. You said the wrong thing to your friend, but you've always been there when he needs you. Your *davening* was distracted today, but yesterday, your heart was connected.

Research shows that people notice seven times more of their mistakes than their triumphs. But when we walk around with so much negativity inside, it's hard to project positive feelings to the outside world. The trick is to catch ourselves doing good, even the smallest thing. This will help reverse the ratio and fill up our emotional fuel tank with love we can share.

TALK ABOUT IT

Do you tend to appreciate the good you do or think of it as no big deal?

TALK ABOUT IT

How can a person resist going along with a class leader or social-group leader who gets others to treat someone poorly?



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