

# Let My People Shmooz

Interactive Questions to Spark Your Shabbos Table Discussions



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SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYECHI 5785

We'd love to hear your feedback, stories, and ideas. Email us at [aderaba@cchfglobal.org](mailto:aderaba@cchfglobal.org)

## Is This Something to Share?

I received a horrible voice message from my landlord: "We lived in that apartment with seven kids and hardly made a scratch. You've been there for six months and are destroying the place."

Can I play the message for my husband?

— Bracha



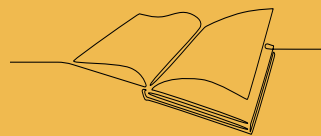
## What's the Psak?

Can you guess the halachah?

- A **Yes**, the husband and wife both need to know this information.
- B **No**, it gives a bad impression of the landlord.
- C **It depends** on whether the husband will believe it without hearing it.
- C **No**, you can't play it back — but you can tell him.

## The Halachah

The answer is A.



Reviewed by Rav Moshe Mordechai Lowy.

Rav Avraham Yaakov Pam zt"l advised great caution when presenting halachic scenarios to the public, as each situation is unique.

This *she'eilah* is for discussion only; actual halachic decisions should be made by a rav or halachic expert on a case-by-case basis.

The Shmiras Haloshon Shailah Hotline:  
718-951-3696 2-3PM / 9-10:30 PM

## A Warning Meant for Two

Husbands and wives must be very careful about loшон hora.<sup>[1]</sup> But in this case, there are two reasons to permit Bracha to play back the message for her husband: First, we can assume that the message was meant for both of them. The landlord didn't see a need to leave a separate message for each of them.

Secondly, there's a *to'eles*. The husband should know that the landlord is not pleased so that he will take better care of the apartment. Also, the husband won't be shocked if the landlord doesn't want to renew the lease, and he can plan for that possibility.<sup>[2]</sup>

## What to Do If It Happens to You

Even if something is a *to'eles*, we may not say more than is necessary. When playing back the message, the couple should avoid making personal remarks against the landlord. They should focus on whether his complaint is valid, and if so, what they can do about it.<sup>[3]</sup>



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the heart  
of a Yid

שגראה מעלת חב"ד

## The Brother You've Never Met

**S**ummertime! Early one Friday morning in July, the Plotnik family loaded up the van and drove to their summer house in the country. After unloading the van, Zev Plotnik got back on the road and headed to the nearest

Walmart, half an hour away, to stock up on the basics.

That first Walmart run of the summer was always a huge one, and Zev's wagon was soon piled high with items large and small. He was grateful to see a line that wasn't too long. He'd check out and drive home with a couple of hours to spare until Shabbos.

One by one, Zev unloaded the items onto the conveyer belt as the bleep-bleep of the cashier's scanner kept a steady beat. When the cashier was finished, Zev reached into his pocket for his wallet to pay the \$263.50

bill. "Maybe the other pocket?" he thought when he didn't find the wallet. "Maybe my shirt pocket?" he thought as he tried again.



"I left it in the house!" he realized. In the rush of unloading and unpacking, he had put his wallet on the kitchen table and forgotten it there. There was no time to go back and get it. The cashier was rolling her eyes. The person behind him in line mumbled, "Oh, no." But the next person in line had a different response.

Before Zev knew what was happening, the man, a religious Jew himself, had stepped up and tapped his credit card on the scanner. "You can pay me back," he told the startled and grateful Zev.

"You know each other?" asked the amazed cashier.

"We never met," said the kind stranger.

The amazing thing about this story is that it's not an isolated incident. Every day, Jewish people feel for each other's needs and step up to save the day, because that's how brothers and sisters take care of each other.

## Take It to the Table

Tell about a time a Yid helped you when you were in a tough situation.

Word  
Power

## Draw the Whole Picture

**I**t's *l'to'eles*. You know for certain. Now you have to choose your words: no exaggeration, no extra information. You meet all the requirements for *to'eles* and have the green light to share some necessary, negative information about

someone.

But wait! There's one more, tremendously powerful thing you

can do—it's a game changer! First say something good about him! After all, no one is all bad. A positive word will help put the negative information into perspective for you and for the listener before you report the negative.

When we paint an image of someone's flaws, it comes out like a caricature—a

cartoonish picture of a person that emphasizes certain features, like a big nose or bushy eyebrows. It looks like him, but a version of him that's missing all the things that balance out his nose and the eyebrows.



Rebbetzin Rena Tarshish says that this idea of a caricature is something to remember when we need to share negative information about another person *l'to'eles*. As the head of the Mesores Rachel seminary

in Yerushalayim and a well-known speaker and adviser, she finds that, at times, negative information must be shared with her for a constructive purpose. In that case, Mrs. Tarshish says that her rule is to ask the speaker to say something positive about the person first.

No person is a caricature. We're all multi-dimensional human beings who are a lot more than our one or two negative traits. When we say something positive first, we give the other person the credit he deserves and put his flaw in its proper place in the picture.

## Take It to the Table

Do you think your words would be **less negative** if you **thought first** about the person's positive traits? Why or why not?