

Interactive
Questions
for Your
Shabbos
Table

לזכות רפואה שלמה
בתשבע רחל
בת הנדא גיטל בשח"י

ISSUE 36

SHABBOS PARSHAS BEHAR - BECHUKOSAI 5785

Please do not read during
davening or Krias HaTorah.

Can I Speak Loshon Hora About Myself?

I'm a well-known public figure who speaks in many places to teach Torah and give *chizuk* to people. Sometimes, I use exaggerated stories or descriptions about myself to keep the audience involved. For example, I might make a joke about our family "only being ready for Shabbos at the last second" or that "I can't remember when

was the last time I had *kavanah* saying *Asher Yatzar*."

The audience knows that I'm exaggerating, but they appreciate the humor; it makes them feel normal, and it catches their attention. Am I allowed to make these jokes?

—Rav Asher

What's the Psak?

Do you know the halachah?

A Yes,
it's necessary so that you can get through to your audience and help them too.

B Yes,
the part about yourself is okay, but the part about your family is forbidden.

C No,
speaking loshon hora about yourself is also forbidden.

The halachah is B. In this case, the part about yourself is okay.

It's Not Just You

Many people think that they're allowed to speak loshon hora about others if they include themselves. But the truth is that including yourself makes the situation worse, because it makes the loshon hora about the others more believable. You're not just reporting on yourself, but you're also acting as a witness to what everyone else was doing wrong. It is certainly forbidden.¹

Rav Asher can tell humorous stories about his own flaws, but he must not include his family or anyone else in them.

However, in general, it is not a good idea to speak honestly

about your neglect for *mitzvos* or your bad character traits. Listeners might then think, "Well, if he's this way too, it's normal. I don't have to try to improve in this area." Furthermore, speaking badly about yourself can build a habit of focusing on the negative, leading you to say negative things about others.²

For Rav Asher, however, there is a constructive purpose. If a public speaker discusses his flaws in an exaggerated way that is clearly meant to capture the audience, and he uses it as a platform to inspire the audience to grow in that area, it is okay.

Reviewed by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy

Be aware! When discussing shmiras haloshon issues, using personal examples may lead to unintended loshon hora. Keep it general to keep it kosher.

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

1- Chofetz Chaim, Loshon Hora, 19
2- Chut Shani, Shmiras Haloshon pg. 328; Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 2:5

We are an **אדרבה** family

We **see** the good so we can **say** the good.



See the
good
in the
heart
of a Yid



“Rabbi! Please help us!” cried the family of the sick man. Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Rav of Yerushalayim in the early 1900s, listened to their desperate plea.

But would Rav Yosef Chaim help the sick man? They weren't sure, because this man had let it be known all over Yerushalayim that religious Jews, Rav Yosef Chaim chief among them, were his sworn enemies.

So little did this man think of the great rabbis that he had himself admitted into a hospital run by Christian missionaries, which the rabbis had banned. There, his condition only got worse.

When an “Enemy” Needs You



His family wanted the man to have the expert care he would get only at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital, which was run by religious Jews. But they knew the hospital might not admit a patient who had ignored the ban. So, they came to Rav Yosef Chaim to beg him to help their sick relative, who had once vowed, “We’ll fight to the death against Rabbi Sonnenfeld and his cronies.”

The moment Rav Yosef Chaim heard about the sick man’s life-or-death situation, he jumped to his feet, grabbed his hat

and coat, and hurried outside into a rainstorm. He was already past

seventy years old, but he moved with energy and determination to get to the hospital and arrange for the man to be admitted. Within just a matter of minutes, it was done.

His legendary *ahavas Yisrael* wasn’t limited to a certain group of Jews—those who kept the Torah and accepted the rabbis’ authority. It was for every person who was a child of Yaakov Avinu, even those whose Jewish *neshamah* was hidden very deep inside.



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that belongs
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Say the
good
word
power



It was a sunny summer day at Bubby and Zeidy’s house. After a big family Shabbos, everyone had stayed over on Sunday to enjoy the pool. Raizy’s* children finished swimming and headed into the house to change into dry clothes. Her two-year-old was asleep in his stroller in the backyard, and Raizy’s husband and father-in-law were out there too, having a nice schmooze.

Calm and relaxed, Raizy settled on the couch and began texting her friends an amusing description of the family weekend.

She slipped in a few semi-funny comments about various in-law relatives. There was nothing insulting of course—she loved them all—just a few mentions of certain personality quirks and awkward moments. She read it over, smiling at her own jokes,

and was ready to send. Suddenly, she felt a little guilty. Why say anything negative at all? Why did any of it matter? She deleted the text.

At that exact moment, she heard a scream and went running to the backyard. Her husband had jumped

How to Become a Lifeguard

into the pool to rescue their two-year-old, who had somehow climbed out of his stroller, walked through the gate of the fence around the pool, and had fallen in. The gate was supposed to lock automatically, but it hadn’t. Her husband grabbed the little boy, who was already turning blue, and slapped him on the back a few

times. *Baruch Hashem*, the child began to breathe again and was soon back to normal.

To Raizy, the message was clear. The moment she deleted her text, her husband noticed that the stroller was empty. The *yeshuah* happened in a flash. From then on, Raizy decided, her words and texts would be purely positive.



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DEDICATIONS

L’ilui nishmas Chaim Elazar Sholom ben Tuvya Gedalia z”l v’ishto Chava Faiga bas R’ Shamai a”h • As a *zechus* for a *shidduch* for Aharon Meir ben Yehosheva

Dedicated anonymously as a *zechus* for our family • As a *zechus* for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren

L’ilui nishmas Chana bas Yehoshua a”h Dedicated by her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren

לעיני חיים יחיאל מיכל בן רפאל פיוועל שניאור ז”ל