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16,908

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ISSUE 96

SHABBOS PARSHAS EIKEV 5786

Please treat this newsletter with proper respect.
Please do not read during davening or Krias HaTorah.

He Can't Sing, And He Knows It

Last Shabbos, Moshe our *gabbai* was looking around for someone to be the *baal tefillah* for Mussaf. It's a small shul, and we're all friends. One of the shul members, Menachem, is notoriously loud and enthusiastic whenever the minyan uses a *niggun* in the davening, but he's also notoriously off key. Benji, who sits next to me, quipped to me with a little chuckle, "Hey, maybe Moshe should ask Menachem to do Mussaf."

Was Benji allowed to make that joke?

—Yossi

What's the Psak?
Do you know the halachah?

A Yes,
but only if
Menachem would
laugh at the joke.

B No.
Jokes about
people are also
loshon hora.

C Yes.
It was a joke, and even
Menachem knows that
he's not a *baal tefillah*.

Not All Jokes Are Funny

When someone makes a joke about another person, the humor is very rarely based on a positive trait. Almost always, the joke shines a light on some negative trait or peculiarity about the person. If the joke is degrading, even if it won't cause harm, it is not allowed.¹ This is because the person who hears the joke will think less of the subject. Even in a case like Yossi's, where the whole shul already knows that Menachem is tone-deaf, Benji's joke reminds Yossi of Menachem's flaw.² Such jokes are not allowed even if Benji would say them in front of Menachem.³

Secondly, if the joke *were* said in front of Menachem, he might laugh—so as not to appear oversensitive—but he would likely

not appreciate his lack of singing ability becoming the subject of public discussion. The joke would then also be *onaas devarim*.⁴

Answer: The halachah is B.

Reviewed by **Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy**

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

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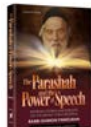


THANK YOU!



RABBI SHEM TOV FOR DISTRIBUTING ADERABA IN
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See the
good
in the
heart
of a Yid



Adapted from
**The Parashah
and the Power
of Speech**, by
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The young woman, a single mother, felt like she was holding the whole world up on her shoulders. When she needed help, there was no one to turn to. When she wasn't sure what to do, there was no one to ask. If she reached out to her friends and relatives, she felt like a nuisance. It was better to carry the whole load than to feel as if everyone saw her as a needy person.

But one night, she was going through something even more difficult than her regular challenges.

She decided
to see the
Bobover
Rebbe, R'
Shlomo



Just Checking

Halberstam, who was known for his great love for every Jew.

The Rebbe's *gabbai* brought her into the study. Although it was late, she spent a long time pouring out all the pain in her heart. The Rebbe listened

with care and patience, trying his best to encourage her. It was after midnight when she was ready to leave, and there were still others

waiting to speak to the Rebbe.

"How are you getting home?" the Rebbe asked her.

"I'm just a few blocks away. I can walk. I do it all the time," she answered.

"Not from my house," said the Rebbe. He asked his *gabbai* to call a car service to take the woman the few blocks to her home.

A few minutes after she got there, the phone rang. It was the *gabbai*. "The

Rebbe wanted to make sure you arrived home safely," he told her.

The woman hung up the phone and cried, not from sorrow, but from joy. For the first time in a long time, she remembered what it felt like to have someone who cared about her. That alone made life different.



See the
good
What's the
Real
Story?



For the Goldbergs, who live in Beitar, sharing a *simchah* with family in America often requires a little technological know-how. When Mrs. Goldberg had her new baby boy, her older children were eager to follow up the news with some photos of their new brother, ASAP. They uploaded the pictures from the family's camera onto their laptop to forward by email.

One of the people they wanted to include in the email was their new aunt Batsheva, who had recently married Mrs.

Goldberg's youngest brother, Yosef.

The next day, they got back an email from Batsheva saying, "Mazel tov! Is it a boy or a girl?" The

children couldn't believe it. Didn't their Uncle Yosef even tell his wife about the baby? Doesn't he talk to



her? For a couple of days, the new *chassan's* communication skills were the subject of many snickers and some confusion. Did Yossi even realize he was supposed to tell his wife the big family news?

Doesn't He Even Talk To His Wife?

Mrs. Goldberg came home from the hospital and was catching up on her missed emails—when she noticed the reply from Batsheva. "Which Batsheva did you send the newborn pictures to?" she asked. "To Batsheva S.," said her daughter.

"That's so funny!" said Mrs. Goldberg. "Batsheva S. isn't Batsheva Shechter (who married Yosef). She's Batsheva Solomon, our accountant. Of course she had no idea whether we had a boy or girl, or even that we had a baby in the first place. She probably thought it was very strange to be included in our family email!" Obviously, our family had jumped to a very wrong conclusion about Yosef. We all learned a lesson on being *dan l'chaf zechus*, even when there's no obvious explanation.

Can you **Crack** the case?

YatedNe'eman

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