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Interactive Questions for Your Shabbos Table

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ISSUE 109

SHABBOS PARSHAS VAYEIRA 5787

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

Not What He Wants Advertised

I'm involved in *kiruv*, so we often have guests at our house who are just beginning to keep Torah and *mitzvos*. One Shabbos, my friend Yisrael happened to pass by our house and stopped in to say good Shabbos. When he left, the guests asked who he was. I told them that he's a friend, and that he runs a property management firm. To bring across the point that a responsible job and a Torah life can coexist very nicely, I mentioned, "He learns for a half-hour every morning before Shacharis and every night after Maariv." It made the right impression. They were amazed at his dedication.

But then I felt uneasy. I know Yisrael, and I know that he is not at all satisfied with the amount of time he puts into learning. He's always talking about "getting it together" and finding more time in his day for Torah. If he heard me tell these people about his half-hour in the morning and half-hour at night, he'd be mortified. But I truly meant it as a compliment. Was I allowed to say this to my guests?

—Menachem



What's the *Psak?*

Do you know the halachah?

A Yes.
The guests will look favorably at Yisrael.

B No.
To Yisrael, it's not a compliment.

C Yes,
but only if it was clearly a praise of Yisrael.

Acclaim or **a Calamity?**

Menachem has not said something that, on its face, is a negative statement. In fact, both Menachem and the people hearing the statement see it as praise. However, Yisrael has clearly expressed his belief that his learning schedule is not adequate for a person at his level, and therefore, Menachem knows that Yisrael would see his comment as negative. This is what makes it loshon hora.

Whether a comment is positive or negative depends on how the speaker, the listener, *and the subject* would interpret it.[1] Certainly, if the comment would cause the listener to see the subject in a negative light, that comment is forbidden. And even if the listener sees it as a compliment, it is still forbidden *if the subject would not want this comment to be made about him*.[2] The fact that the speaker considers the information to be praise does not turn it into permitted speech.

Therefore, Menachem should not have mentioned Yisrael's learning schedule even if he meant it as praise, because Yisrael—the subject of the comment—feels that it puts him in a negative light. This is true even though both Menachem and his guests consider the comment positive. Instead, he should have simply mentioned that Yisrael learns every morning and night, without saying how long he learns.

Answer: The halachah is **B**.

1 *Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Hilchos Loshon Hora, 5:6*
2 *Be'er Mayim Chayim, Hilchos Loshon Hora, 4:1*

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



A Clarification:

The halachah for Parashas Noach, issue 107, was not intended to imply that there is something wrong with following a lenient opinion. The issue was the son's words, which implied that his father had an overall lax approach to halachah. Had he said, "My father follows a different opinion," it would not have been loshon hora.

See the **good** in the **heart** of a **Yid**

He Was Willing to Look Bad to Do Good

Itzik, the town water carrier, was one of the happiest people in town. He was a simple man who woke up early, learned a little, prayed a little, and then walked to the river at the edge of town to bring water to his customers.

Back and forth he'd go with his heavy buckets, every day but Shabbos. But he was grateful; he made a living and could feed his family without turning to *tzedakah*. And that contented, humble nature made him beloved by his customers.

One day, people noticed that Itzik was using his "time off" to go around town collecting *tzedakah*. They wondered what happened. He was always so proud of supporting his family.

Most people shrugged it off, but one man felt Itzik was taking money he didn't really need. He told the Rav, who called Itzik in for a conversation.

The Rav tried to get to the bottom of the story, but Itzik remained silent. The Rav's voice became more insistent. In the waiting room, Moshe, one of the town's wealthiest men, could hear every word.

Suddenly, Moshe burst into the Rav's study. "Tell him, Itzik!" said Moshe. "You don't have to keep the secret anymore!"

Moshe walked out and Itzik finally explained.

Moshe had stopped paying for his water. After a few months, Moshe's wife confided in Itzik that they had gone broke, but Moshe was too proud to admit it.

From then on, Itzik lowered himself in the eyes of the whole town, going house to house with a *pushke* to secretly support Moshe's family.

With tears in his eyes, the Rav kissed Itzik's forehead and cried, "I pray that I will be allowed to share your lot in *Olam Haba*!"



Adapted from ***Quill of the Heart,*** **a CCHF publication**

See the **good** What's the **Real Story?**

Why Did She Need My Seat?

Yehudis had a favorite seat for *chuppahs*: four rows back, on the aisle. At her friend's son's wedding, she arrived a full half-hour early to get it.

Just before the *chuppah*, a woman approached. "Would you mind moving down two seats?"

Yehudis glanced down the row. There were still seats available. *She comes at the last minute and needs MY seat?* But Yehudis moved, and everyone shifted down.

A minute later, the woman waved to a girl of about twelve near the doorway—and gave **her** the aisle seat. Yehudis couldn't believe it. *I came half an hour early so somebody's daughter could have the best seat in the room?* The woman didn't even sit down in the seat next to the girl. She disappeared toward the back.

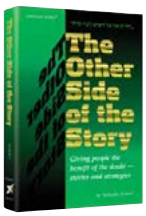
The music began. Yehudis tried to concentrate, but she was annoyed. Then she noticed something strange: The girl wasn't looking at the *chuppah*. She was staring toward the doorway.

Suddenly, the girl jumped up. A woman had just entered. The girl ran to her, threw her arms around her, and began to cry.

Why had the girl needed Yehudis's aisle seat so badly?



Adapted with permission from *The Other Side of the Story,* by Rebbetzin Yehudis Samet, published by ArtScroll/ Mesorah Publications



Can you Crack the case?

The woman who had asked Yehudis to move returned. "That's her mother," she whispered. "She's been very sick. Until tonight, nobody knew whether she'd be well enough to come. The girl begged me, 'Please put me somewhere I can see the *chuppah* and the door. I don't want Mommy to come in and not be able to find me.'"

Yehudis looked at the empty aisle seat. She had thought a spoiled child had been given the best seat in the room. But for that little girl, the most important thing happening that night wasn't under the *chuppah*. It was coming through the door.

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