

SHABBOS MENU

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INFORMING ON THE INFORMER

The Torah looks down on an informer. But does that mean he's outside the protective umbrella of shmiras haloshon? Can we fight fire with fire?

T H E

DILEMMA

Yehudah opens a new wine shop in an exclusive shopping center. He sells expensive wines and schnapps in elegant surroundings. Dan's old store, Kosher Spirits, loses many of its high-end customers to Yehudah's superior shopping experience and selection.

Dan, a long-time resident of the town with many political connections, advises the state liquor authority that they would find Yehudah selling wine and beer to underage customers. The department sends an undercover officer into the store, who observes that the report is true. This results in a threatened suspension of Yehudah's liquor license at worst, and an expensive legal case at best. "I'll bet Dan is behind this," Yehudah's friend tells him. "I heard him say he has 'ways' to protect his business and he 'knows who to talk to.'"

Believing that by informing on him, Dan had forfeited his right to be afforded the love and care one Jew owes to another, Yehudah (after confirming the report) calls the state immigration department and reports that Dan is employing illegal immigrants and paying them below-minimum wages. An official visit to Dan's shop proves the accusation true, and now he faces his own legal troubles. Was Yehudah allowed to inform on Dan?



T H E

HALACHAH

The only allowance for someone to inform on an informer is if by doing so, he will accomplish a constructive purpose, such as deterring the person from informing on others in the future. Informing simply for retaliation is not permitted.

Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Hilchos Rechilus 6:10

We know shmiras haloshon opens the channels of brachah and earns us Hashem's protection. So what can we do differently before Yemei Hadin to bring what we know from our heads to our hearts?

The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's mission is to give every Jew a shmiras haloshon tool that empowers us to change our habits of speech so that when we stand before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, we will be holding the transformative merit of shmiras haloshon. We will be able to honestly say, "I've changed," and on Yom Kippur our Al Cheits for the aveiros involving speech will have new power, for "I'm sorry" counts only when we sincerely try to do better. Visit cchf.global to join the program that works for you or to purchase a new daily learning book and bring the blessing of shmiras haloshon into your life.

Kesivah vachasimah tovah.

FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL

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"Middah k'neged middah (measure for measure) is the rule of Heaven in all instances. When a person restrains

himself
from speaking disparagingly
of his fellow, then
in Heaven the

accuser
is unable to open
his mouth to accuse."

– Sefer Shmiras Haloshon, Shaar HaZechirah, ch. 2

In the early 1900s, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was the Rav of Yerushalayim. In his shul was a man named Rav Nachum, an inspiring *baal tefillah*. For decades, Rosh Hashanah Musaf was marked by Rav Nachum's soaring voice. Then one year, Reb Nachum passed away, just two weeks before Rosh Hashanah.

When *shivah* was over, shul members began asking the Rav who would replace Reb Nachum. "Don't worry," said Rav Yosef Chaim. "I will take care of it."

As Rosh Hashanah grew closer and no announcement was made, they asked the Rav again about a new *baal Musaf*. Again they were reassured: "I'll take care of it."

But when the night of Rosh Hashanah arrived and there was still no news of who would be davening Musaf the next day, someone approached the Rav again. He answered simply, "Don't worry. I'll take care of it."

The next day, right before shofar-blowing, the Rav approached Reb Nachum's son. "You are going to daven Musaf," he told the young man.

"Me? How can I? I don't know how!" the son answered.

"Come, now," the Rav persisted. "I see you every year watching and listening intently to your father. You know what to do. Just do your best and it will be very special."

Once shofar blowing began, there was no talking allowed until after Musaf. No one in the shul could voice any further opinion on the subject. The young man did a beautiful job.

But when the davening was over and most people had departed, one man

sage advice

PREVENTIVE MECHILAH

How far should we go to make it easier for others to repent?

During his time as *Av Beis Din* in Yerushalayim, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld participated in a decision regarding a divorce. The woman in the case felt that the *beis din's* decision was unfair, and her relatives took up her cause.

A few days before Rosh Hashanah, a group of these relatives burst into Rav Yosef Chaim's home and shouted angry accusations at him. Meanwhile, the Rav sat quietly studying a *sefer*.

As the abuse intensified, he rose, drew himself up to his full height and thundered at the shocked intruders: "If your objections are justified and I and my court have made a mistake, then you have already handed over to Heaven your case against us. May Hashem have mercy on us because we only did what we thought was right. But if we were correct, then I hereby declare that I forgive you completely for all the pain you have caused me and my family and I wish you to be inscribed and sealed on Rosh Hashanah for life and peace."

"Why?" asked a rabbi who witnessed the scene. "Why didn't you let them feel pangs of guilt and ask for *mechilah* before you offered it to them?"

Rav Sonnenfeld explained. These people would surely regret their deeds on Erev Yom Kippur, but their *yetzer hara* would give them a way to rationalize. They would never do *teshuvah* and never ask *mechilah*. "They would be punished because of me," he said.

Since he didn't want any part of such an outcome, he made it easy for them. Now that he had already forgiven them, their desire to do *teshuvah* would meet with less resistance. They had the chance to redeem themselves.

TALK ABOUT IT

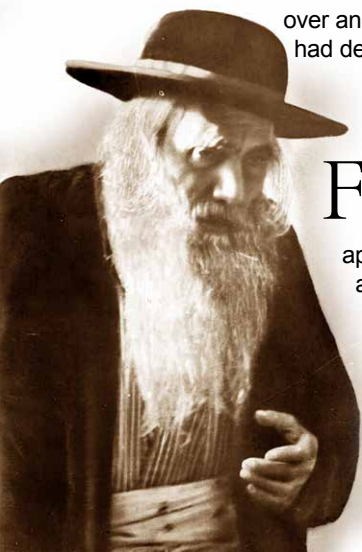
What makes it hard to admit we are wrong? What are some benefits of doing so?



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THE ONLY MAN FOR THE JOB

approached the Rav and asked, "Doesn't the *Shulchan Aruch* say someone who is in mourning cannot daven for the community?"

"That's true," said Rav Yosef Chaim. "But to

Reb Nachum's wife, who was sitting here in the *ezras nashim*, the sound of another *baal*

tefillah's voice would have been heartbreaking. The *Shulchan Aruch* says that if there is no one else to daven, the mourner should do it. Well, there was no one else who could have davened without causing this widow pain. Therefore, her son was the right choice."

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the Rav kept quiet about his choice of *baal Musaf* until the very last minute?

לע"נ
שמואל חיים בן אברהם יוסף ז"ל
דבורה בת ישראל ע"ה
Dedicated by Uri & Riki Sklar

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ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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