



# SHABBOS MENU

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## DON'T COUNT ON IT

Based on a leniency of the Rambam, the Chofetz Chaim teaches us about “apei t’lasa” – the license in halachah to repeat loshon hora that was said in front of three people. He then goes on to describe the many instances when this license doesn’t apply, and the person repeating the story is therefore unknowingly doing an aveirah. Is there any sure way to avoid this mistake?

### THE DILEMMA

Sitting at a wedding with friends and some cousins of the bride, you’re surprised to hear from a cousin that the *chassan* had become non-religious as a teenager. “Someone sent him off to a program in Eretz Yisrael and I guess it turned him around,” she says. “Now he’s 110 percent all in. I think he’s planning to get *semichah*.”

You have a friend who’s not at this table, who told you after seeing the *chassan* at the *vort*, “There’s something different about him. I don’t know what. He gives off a vibe.”

You’d love to tell her that you’ve discovered the “something different.” After all, the information was given at a table full of people, any of whom could—and probably will—share it.

But wait: Would the *kallah*’s cousins spread this information? Would her close friends? Are there really three people here who will most likely repeat it? And what will your friend do with the information? No doubt, opinionated as she is, she’ll add her own two-cents’ worth and spread it around. What should you do?



### THE HALACHAH

Since this allowance depends on a) a leniency held only by the Rambam and b) a multitude of questions you can’t always know the answer to, the Chofetz Chaim urges anyone who wants to avoid the sin of loshon hora to avoid relying on *apei t’lasa*.

*Sefer Chofetz Chaim, Hilchos Loshon Hora 2:10*

## WEEKLY WISDOM

*I used to forward lots of news posts (from Jewish news sites) to my family group but now I think twice if it’s about specific people. Do I need to share this story that looks bad for x group in Klal Yisrael? Why am I sharing it? I’m spreading loshon hara about Klal Yisrael.*

*Even if it’s on the Jewish news, that doesn’t make it kosher.*

*Thank you for helping me think twice before I share.*

**FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS, EMAIL**  
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“The tongue stands as the *gate* of one’s consciousness. And when the gate is *guarded*, the treasure within is guarded as well.”

– Chovos HaLevavos, Shaar HaPerishus ch. 5

The world of shidduchim is a world of its own, and those who inhabit it are often tempted to discuss their experiences with each other. But as this story illustrates, talking about dates can do great unintended damage, even to the friends you're unloading to.

**T**wenty-seven years ago, Sarah Levov\* was a 29-year-old professional, living in Manhattan with a group of apartment mates. All of them were "in the *parshah*." As part of Sarah's *hishtadlus*, she was learning *shmiras haloshon* with a group of friends, which had been recommended by Rebbetzin Kanievsky.

A local *rebbetzin* with whom Sarah was close set her up with a boy who met her basic requirements—a sincerely *frum* professional. From the first moment of the date, Reuven Katz's awkwardness was clear. All Sarah's efforts to get a conversation going fell flat.

An entire restaurant meal passed by in silence. Sarah felt that she had taken herself out to dinner. The other party was all but absent. When she got home, she put a smile on her face for her roommates and went to her room to collect herself.

Later that night, Sarah joined her friends for their daily *shmiras haloshon* lesson. She was reminded that even if negative information is 100 percent true, it may not be repeated. This, she knew, was a message from *Shamayim* to her personal inbox. When she called the *rebbetzin* later that evening to report on the date, she said simply, "I don't think Reuven Katz is for me."



A few months later, there was big excitement in Sarah's apartment. Her apartment mate, Leah, was to be engaged that night. Sarah had sensed that something was up, but Leah had kept the details private. Now, to Sarah's utter shock, she found out that the

## sage advice

### PAID JUST TO TRY *Why shmiras haloshon is never wasted*

No one pays the baker for the pie he burned, or the dressmaker for the gown she botched. When it comes to restraining ourselves from negative speech, however, we get paid lavishly, just for the effort.

*Chaya knew the value of positive speech. But this information was not enough to still her tongue when she had a comment to make. The best she could do was to feel a little guilty about her words.*

*In the first weeks of tenth grade, Chaya's school conducted a positive speech campaign. As Chaya and her friends sat down to lunch one day, she thought about their intimidating math teacher. "I'd better not say anything," she decided. "We just heard a speech about loshon hora."*

*Then she reconsidered. "What's the difference if I say it now or later? I know I'm eventually going to say it."*

*She began, "Don't you think that Mrs. Levine is kind of..." She stopped. "Maybe just this once I'll keep quiet," she thought.*

In Heaven, Chaya's account got a sudden influx of riches. On earth, Chaya got a sudden influx of self-respect. Her job wasn't finished, **but to Hashem, every effort is worth its weight in gold.**

#### TALK ABOUT IT

How does holding your tongue—even if it's "just this time"—improve your self-image?

## DON'T MENTION IT

*chassan* was none other than Reuven Katz.

Sarah tried to digest this information. Her worst date had turned out to be Leah's best. Today, Sarah acknowledges the full power of the restraint she had exercised after her awful evening. Had she shared the details, Leah would most likely have turned down the *shidduch*. Twenty-seven years of marriage and the family that blossomed from it may never have come to be.

With the merit of *shmiras haloshon* standing her in good stead, Sarah, too, found her *bashert* two years later. Nothing was lost, and everything was gained, by keeping a date private.

\*Names have been changed.  
Adapted from a story in Mishpacha Magazine.

#### TALK ABOUT IT

What are some damaging outcomes that can result from sharing stories about dates?

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