

## Readers Write

(Continued from Page 14)

plete all my assignments for college before I leave home for *Pesach*. Why am I appalled? A few hours ago, my mother called to keep me company as I work and I had shifted the conversation to the improvements I am making to better myself as a Torah Jew. I have an amazing relationship with my mother. Despite issues we have had in the past, I now share with her a lot of my life and tell her both the good and the bad. I just told to her something I knew would disappoint her, but I told her that I have been working on bettering myself in this certain area in which I have a large weakness. She responded that although she had given me the benefit of the doubt and that it hurts her that I have verified a fear she has had, she has faith in me and is proud that I am taking steps to improve who I am as a Jew. I asked her how she knew and her answer left me heartbroken. Someone spread my bad name and it got back to her.



That people are talking negatively about me isn't what hurts. What hurts is that the adults, the role models of my religion, are doing things that contradict the very essence of what a Jew is. We were in exodus for more than two hundred years. Upon leaving, we became a nation, meriting that by not changing who we were. Not just our garb, haircut, and Jewish names, but our *bein adam lachaveiro*, the way we treat and speak of each other.

We all sin. Everyone can think of a time that he/she did something that shamed them and could easily be spread around through slander, tainting their good name. It isn't our sin that defines us, but rather the steps we take towards self improvement that speak for who we are. How can we expect to bring *Moshiach* if a jealous mother says to another mother that her son is a disgusting person involved in sin? Not only is that not constructive, but it is hurtful and spiteful.

That jealous mother is raising children and keeping a Torah home. How can she be a good role model for her children if she behaves in such a manner?

The very essence of our religion is how we treat a fellow *Yid*. Giving the benefit of the doubt is extremely important. That a person can slander another Jew is beyond me. I know I am not perfect, but I strive to be. I strive to follow the path of Torah. When I walk through the back of a *shul* on *Shabbos* around *laining* time, I almost always hear at least one conversation mentioning another Jew in a bad light. To do that is such a contradiction. You might as well go up to the Torah and rip it in half.

We are now in *Mitzrayim* - in a different form - and we've been here in *golus* since the second *Bais Hamikdosh* was destroyed. We all want to leave and we all want *Moshiach*, or so I hope. *Pesach* is here. I implore the Jewish community to begin introspecting about our own lives. Before passing judgment on each other, let us think about the consequences of the things we say about one another not only how it affects the people we discuss, but their families as well. Think of what you can do better in your life. Focus your negative energy on your sins. I, for one, know how difficult this is, but focus on self-improvement and giving a fellow Jew the

benefit of the doubt, for you know not of the effort they are applying to better themselves. Only bad comes from negativity and degradation toward others, as we see with *Kamtza* and *Bar Kamtza* and the destruction of our *Bais Hamikdosh*. It is through this that we will, once more, leave *Mitzrayim*. Let us, in the following months, accept the Torah once more in its entirety as we approach *Matan Torah*.

*Chag someiach* and a *kosheren Pesach*.

**A Pained Jew**

### PICTURES AND BURKAS

Dear Editor,



I wish to echo the sentiments in the letter from Dina Levenson, who rightly praised the *Yated* editor for allowing a discussion within the pages of the *Yated*. *Yasher koach* for continuing this important

discussion.

I wish to add what I think is an important point to the back and forth.

Currently, our children, no matter how protected they are by us and their *rabbeim* and *moros*, are regularly exposed to printed images that are not modest. Even if you simply drive back and forth between Lakewood and Brooklyn, these types of images are constantly assaulting us from billboards and bus signs. The best way to counter these harmful images is with our own positive images and showing our children the *tznius* we value. Our blank spaces have no chance of competing. We need to fight their distorted, objectifying message with appropriate, respectful pictures of our own.

Images matter. They are said to be worth a thousand words for a reason, and we are putting a gag over our mouths, while allowing the secular world to chatter away into the eyes of our kids.

As an artist, I am very aware of the value and uses of image, and I worry that this new *chumrah* is costing us terribly in numerous subtle ways. I hope our culture and community will rethink this. This dialogue has given me hope that we can.

Thank you again for using this space in your publications for this important discussion.

**Ann Koffsky, Artist**

### TOO MANY QUESTIONS

Dear Editor,



I've been meaning to write this letter for a long time, and now that it's before *Yom Tov*, I'd like to make people aware of a problem that seems rampant in our communi-

ties.

Though we're very fortunate to live in communities filled with *chesed*, caring and concern for one another, there is a definite issue that persists that I've never seen written about in these pages.

These days, too many people repeatedly ask impertinent, personal questions, ranging from the fairly innocuous to the downright rude. Of course, this is all under the guise of "friendship" and "caring." However, this pointed, deliberate questioning has nothing to do with either one and has everything to do with pettiness, jealousy, competitiveness, and one-upmanship. This is a just a small sample of the baffling, frustrating queries that we've been subjected to over the years:

What did your husband/wife get you for

your birthday?

How much do you earn?

Is your daughter concerned about her weight?

How much do you weigh?

How many girls did your son date?

How much did the *chasunah* cost? Who paid for what?

Where did you go on vacation? How much did it cost?

I could go on, and painfully on, but I'm sure that the astute readers of the *Yated* get the idea. Since when did we become a nation of petty, nosy *yentas*? These questions are clearly a form of *ona'as devorim* and a host of other bad things. In Eretz Yisroel, there is a saying: "*Yeish gevul*. There are boundaries." We should adapt this slogan into our everyday lives here, as well. Making people uncomfortable is never okay, and other people's business is just that - other people's business, not ours. It's sad that people have become so insatiably curious about what is going on in the lives of "*yenem*." Surely, this is not the way to bring *Moshiach* closer.

If just one person will refrain from this awful habit this *Yom Tov*, this letter will have been worth writing.

Thank you.

**Anyone, Anywhere**

### SMALL GESTURES, A LONG WAY

Dear Editor,



During this hectic and holy time of *Pesach*, please remember that the *Reishis Chochmah* teaches that emotional pain is more severe than physical pain, and the most severe form of emotional pain is humiliation.

Please stop with sympathy - the questions, the shoulder rub or the pitying stares. They are humiliating to experience.

Instead, make the phone call, send the card, buy the flowers and offer a genuine heartfelt smile that tells the other person, "I accept, respect and admire who you are - your whole self."

The situation itself is intense, but the lack of empathy and judgment makes it unbearable. Why is it that the person who objectively has the more difficult situation have to be the one to climb into the people who "mean well" in order to understand where they are coming from? Shouldn't it be vice versa?

I personally attest to the feelings described and wish upon you, dear reader, to open your mind and heart to true freedom, understanding the people in pain and giving to them without ego, but only true warmth.

Thank you for reading and considering my words. Good *Yom Tov*.

*Wishing my "friends" would go into my headspace*

### PIZZA ON PESACH

Dear Editor,

This is the time of year when I go into pizza stores and ask the owners if they are open on *Chol Hamoed*. In the past, I've gotten some interesting answers. One said, "Sure, *Chol Hamoed Shavuos*." An owner of a store in a popular neighborhood claimed, "We have to be. That's when the line begins for the first *Motzoei Pesach* pie."

Try asking the owner of a pizza store near you.

*Getting people to smile but without saying "cheese"*

### I DO BOTH

Dear Editor,

There have been many letters going back and forth, and even an article, comparing

*shadchanim* to realtors.

To set the record a little straighter: Being both a realtor and a *shadchan*, I feel qualified to share my two cents. Both involve hard work, and those in both professions are underappreciated and underpaid. With so many people becoming realtors, the business is very hard. It is not just calling up and going to several houses. For every fifty tries, perhaps one deal works out. Meanwhile, there are many expenses inherent in running such a business that have to be paid regardless of how many deals work out.

Many people do not realize how not *mentchlich* they are, and sometimes it is very sad. People try any which way to cut down paying realtors and use them in many ways. A system should really be implemented to ensure that realtors get paid for their effort, experience and knowledge. People should be careful not to steal from them and to deal with them with *derech eretz*.

It is *mentchlich*, by the way, to go back to a realtor you were happy with. It is also not necessary to go to the agent who has a sign in front, but rather to the one who was working with you. Honestly-earned commissions are kosher money, like *shadchanus*. People have been giving realtors a bad name and it is mostly uncalled for.

*Shadchanim* work hard, as well. The one benefit, though, is the incredibly good feeling and *s'char* one gets when completing a *shidduch*. All the *zechuyos* of that couple and their family and generations are credited to the *shadchan*.

Let's be open-minded and be *mentchlich* to all people.

**A Realtor and Shadchan**

### CHIN UP

Dear Editor,

The letter in last week's issue titled "We Are Suffering," written by a hopeful single, was well expressed. So many of us can relate to the writer. Lots of people take too much liberty in passing judgment and giving unsolicited advice.

Stay strong and keep your chin up. The best things come to those who wait.

**David F.**

### JUNIOR PARSHA

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your outstanding newspaper and all the hard work that it surely involves.

I would like to share my longtime admiration for I. Yosef, whose weekly *Junior Parsha* column, despite its apparent simplicity, can only be properly described as truly inspiring and brilliant. The charming rhymes send crystal clear messages straight to the heart. The beautiful column for *Parshas Tazria* has impelled me to finally write this letter. I hope that, as soon as possible, we will see all of I. Yosef's *Junior Parsha* poems collected and published in book form.

*Yours sincerely,*  
**L. Orbach**  
*Lakewood, NJ*

### HELPING FAMILIES

Dear Editor,

Tomche Shabbos of Rockland County is dedicated to helping struggling families in any way possible. Over the past 5 years, we have inaugurated multiple programs aimed at helping people *avoid* the need for Tomche Shabbos. Among them is our adult education division where volunteers teach courses that give people the skills to hopefully land a new job, and our job placement division, where, to date 214 unemployed people have *boruch Hashem* been placed in successful jobs. The one initiative in which we have struggled though, has been our budget counseling divi-

sion. Typically, couples meet with our budget counselor, and rarely come back for a second meeting.

I was recently informed about Mesila, an organization in Israel dedicated to helping families budget wisely. Mesila has for 15 years experienced an unusually high success rate. I found their success rate hard to believe, so I decided to go to Israel to investigate Mesila myself. I thought about the *posuk*: "ah-sura na v'ereh, es hamareh hagadol hazeh."

My trip from which I have just returned can be best described as "amazing and unforgettable." The director of Mesila who heads a hedge fund, has turned most of his office complex over to Mesila for its use. Mesila consists of a system of trained counselors who help people grasp the basics of budgeting, and empower them to make financial decisions on their own. Through Mesila they gain an understanding of how to discern the difference between "need" and "want," how to maintain a budget, how to quantify their monthly shortfall or surplus, and how to plan for the future. They emerge changed in outlook, newly empowered to make wise financial decisions on their own. The most insightful statement was by Mesila's director who said "We don't address the wallet. We address the mind."

Mesila has as well created a curriculum geared to *yeshivos* and *Bais Yaakovs*, where children in junior high school, teen agers in *mesivta* and high school, and young ladies in seminary, are taught the basics of budgeting. So as to prepare them to handle finances, they are eased into concepts that prove vital in their adult lives.

It was refreshing to speak to people who have undergone Mesila counseling. One man told me that he and his family proudly live debt free for the first time in their lives. Another couple with whom I spoke was careful-

ly planning to make their daughter a reasonable *chasunah*, and would emerge owing no money after the *simcha*. People spoke about the new freedom they have found now that they understand money and how it is to be used. The most common sentiment expressed by those who absorbed the Mesila message, was that they are now empowered to make intelligent financial decisions.

Talking to the many people who have been affected by Mesila, it became clear to me that it would be advantageous for Mesila to open a branch in the Monsey community. In fact, it became clear to me that it would be advantageous for Mesila to open a branch in every Torah community in North America. Graciously, Mesila has offered to help bring this to fruition. Upon returning home, I immediately met with a group of *askanim*, and we are forming Mesila Monsey. Our team is dedicating themselves to the creation of Mesila branches in all Torah communities throughout North America. So as to help achieve this, Mesila has graciously offered to assist any community interested in adopting the Mesila approach, by providing materials, education, and training. I can be contacted on behalf of Mesila by anyone who seeks to open a Mesila branch in their community, and am prepared to work with any school interested in implementing the Mesila curriculum.

I will continue to dedicate myself to the *anyim* who so desperately need our help, while at the same time help Mesila educate people how to live in a financially responsible manner. On behalf of Mesila, I ask you to contact me so that we can work together for the benefit of your community. I have arranged a special e-mail address for this purpose: [alan@Mesilausa.org](mailto:alan@Mesilausa.org).

Together we can make a difference.

**Alan Rosenstock**

*Tomche Shabbos of Rockland County*

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