

THE STRATEGY OF SENSITIVITY

This session will explore when is it appropriate to air your feelings and grievances to another. Through the lens of a European rabbinic controversy, strategies of sensitivity

THE PUBLISHING OF THE WORK "CHAFETZ CHAIM"



Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan (1838-1933), popularly known after his work *Chafetz Chaim* (trans: Seeker of Life) was a Jewish leader in Radin. His work *Chafetz Chaim*, published in 1873, details all of the laws of speech. Covering the restrictions of slander and gossip, the work remains popular today.

R. Kagan was a leader recognized throughout the world for his ethical writing and his work detailing all of daily Jewish law, known as the *Mishnah Berurah*.

Following his death an obituary was written in the *New York Times*. His works are still widely studied throughout the world.

CHOFETZ CHAIM, 106, IS DEAD IN POLAND

Venerated by Orthodox Jews as One of 36 'Saints Who Saved the World.'

LIVED LONG IN POVERTY

Gave Up Store When Popularity in Village 'Deprived Other Merchants of a Living.'

WILNO, Poland, Sept. 15 (Jewish Telegraphic Agency). — The famed Chofetz Chaim, venerated by orthodox Jews throughout the world as one of the thirty-six saints because of whose piety the Lord has not destroyed the world, died today in the village of Radin, near here, where he had spent most of the more than 100 years of his life. He had been ill only a short time.

The Chofetz Chaim, whose real name was Rabbi Yisroel Meier Cohen, had been a figure of almost legendary importance for almost half a century. Stories of his piety sprang up in the lore of Eastern Europe and among orthodox Jews all over the world. The village where he had served for a few months as a rabbi was the scene of pilgrimages of thousands of orthodox Jews seeking the blessing of the Chofetz Chaim.

In 1873 Rabbi Cohen published a book in Hebrew, entitled the "Chofetz Chaim," listing all the forms of slander from which a pious Jew must guard himself. It was because of this book that he became known as the Chofetz Chaim.

THE CONTRITION CONTROVERSY

When R. Kagan traveled throughout Europe asking Rabbis to write approbations for his work, one very notable Rabbi refused. The Rabbi, R. Yisroel Salantar (1810-1883), was the founder of a movement known as *Musar*, which spread ethical teaching throughout European Yeshivot. He objected to writing an approbation based on the following passage in the work *Chafetz Chaim*:



ואפילו אם חברו אינו יודע עדיין כלל מזה צריך לגלות לו מה שעשה נגדו שלא כדין
 And even if the person about whom you spoke negatively was unaware, you must still reveal to him what you unjustly did against him and ask for forgiveness.

- ❖ WHAT DO YOU THINK R. YISROEL SALANTER FOUND OBJECTIONABLE ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?
- ❖ IS IT EVER INAPPROPRIATE TO SAY "I AM SORRY"?

VENTING: SUCK IT UP OR TALK IT OUT?

As we have seen it is not always clear when a person should be forthcoming about wronging another. Here we will examine a source that discusses more generally when and how a person should share their frustrations with another person.

Leviticus 19:17	
You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your fellow, but you shall not bear a sin on his account.	לֹא תִשְׁנָא אֶת אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְךָ הוֹכַח תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֲטָא:

WHAT DOES NOT HATING SOMEONE IN YOUR HEART HAVE TO DO WITH REBUKE?

Ramban – Nachmandies ibid.	
When the verse states: “Do not hate your brother in your heart” - it refers to a time when your friend does something against your wishes. You should rebuke him, saying: "Why did you do this to me?" [The continuation of the verse,] “And do not bear a sin because of him,” means that you should not hide your frustration in your heart by not telling him what he did to offend you. Because when you are honest, your friend will either justify what he did, or he will repent and admit his offense, and you will forgive him.	והנכון בעיני, כי “הוכח תוכיח”, כמו והוכיח אברהם את אבימלך (בראשית כא כה). ויאמר הכתוב, אל תשנא את אחיך בלבבך בעשותו לך שלא כרצונך, אבל תוכיחנו מדוע ככה עשית עמדי, ולא תשא עליו חטא לכסות שנאתו בלבבך ולא תגיד לו, כי בהוכיחך אותו יתנצל לך, או ישוב ויתוודה על חטאו ותכפר לו. ואחרי כן יזהיר שלא תנקום ממנו ולא תיטור בלבבך מה שעשה לך, כי יתכן שלא ישנא אותו אבל יזכור החטא בלבו, ולפיכך יזהירו שימחה פשע אחיו וחטאתו מלבו. ואחרי כן יצווה שיאהב לו כמוהו.

WHEN SHOULD ONE COME FORWARD WITH THEIR FEELING? IS HONESTY ALWAYS APPROPRIATE? THESE QUESTIONS, WHATEVER YOUR ANSWER, HELP US BECOME MORE STRATEGICALLY SENSITIVE.