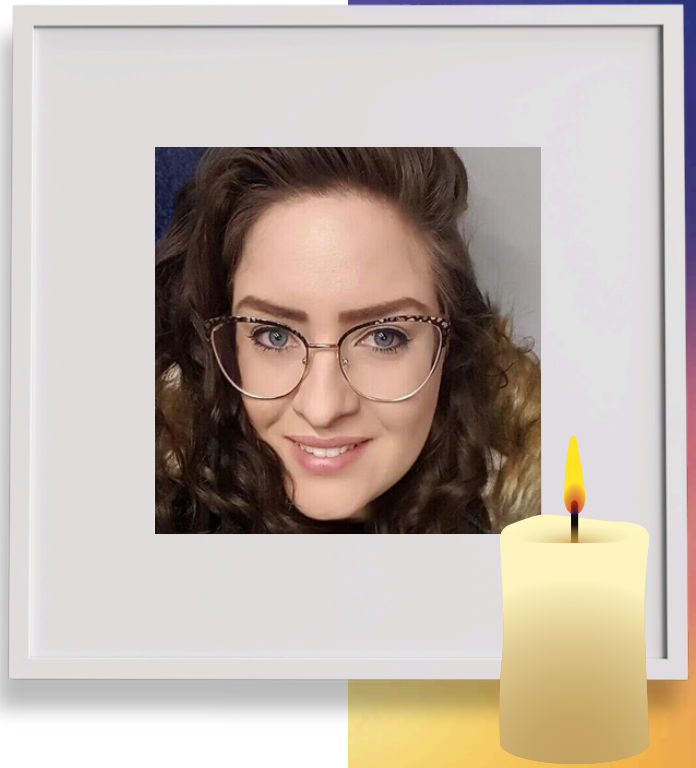
SESSION 6

IN BLESSED MEMORY OF SHANI BACHAR



The Michael and Andrea Leven Family Foundation

LEGACIES INITIATIVE

OLAMI MENTORSHIP

SHANI

On January 9th, 2024 as Shani Bachar, an amazing young lady from Netiv Hashayara, was driving, she was ambushed by an Arab and murdered in cold blood.

Shani's death made waves through the young Jewish professional world and particularly Olami's Nefesh Yehudi program where she was beloved and adored.

Shani lived in Netiv Hashayara in Israel's North with her parents Rotem & Yehuda, her twin Eden, and her younger twin sisters Tal & Shachar.

Shani loved life and she loved people. She could not bear injustice which is what drove her to join law enforcement where she seamlessly blended her innate compassion for others and the importance of law and structure.

A number of years ago, Shani joined Nefesh Yehudi; Olami's Israel program where she quickly became a beloved participant. Shani found deep value in the Torah driven ideas and life enhancing concepts that she learned at Nefesh Yehudi.

Shani quickly moved from a passive participant to an active component of the program sharing her inspiration with others and enhancing events and programs.

In her short life Shani accomplished so much. In terms of her relationships with others, Shani always looked for ways to upgrade her life and add meaning and purpose to her daily experience. Shani excelled in so many facets of life, but there was one area that she was particularly passionate about and that was shemirat halashon/refraining from speaking or listening to gossip.

To perpetuate Shani's memory, please take a few minutes to review the content below, reflect about the importance of positive speech and try to make a few small upgrades over the next week.

Just last week we discussed the requirement to refrain from speaking negatively about others and you brought me the book Chafetz Chaim (a complete book on this important concept.)

On Sunday, you shared that you work really hard to refrain from negative speech. That speaking negatively about others just makes you feel bad..

I ask all of you, for Shani's sake, to strive to speak only good and avoid saying bad things,"

From the eulogy of Hodaya; Shani's employer

DID YOU KNOW...

...That the celebrity gossip industry in the USA nets over $3 billion annually?!

With social media platforms leading the charge, Americans are thirsty for dirt and the low down on actors, athletes, politicians and the wealthy. But... we do not merely satisfy our gossip-lust on celebrities, a 2019 study found that Americans spend an average of 52 minutes a day engaged in gossip about really anyone!

Please take a moment to reflect on why this phenomenon is so prevalent? Why are people so interested in celebrity gossip and more importantly about those around them?

Check out this fascinating story from the Midrash:

A peddler used to travel around the cities near Tzipori proclaiming that he was selling the "Elixir of Life." Crowds used to gather around him to hear more about the product...

When Rav Yannai heard the peddler hawking his wares, he insisted that he wanted to know what it was exactly that the peddler was selling. The peddler came over, pulled a book of Psalms out of his pocket and showed Rav Yannai the verse, "Who is the man who wants life, who loves days of seeing good?... Guard your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from speaking deceit." [Psalms 34: 13-14]

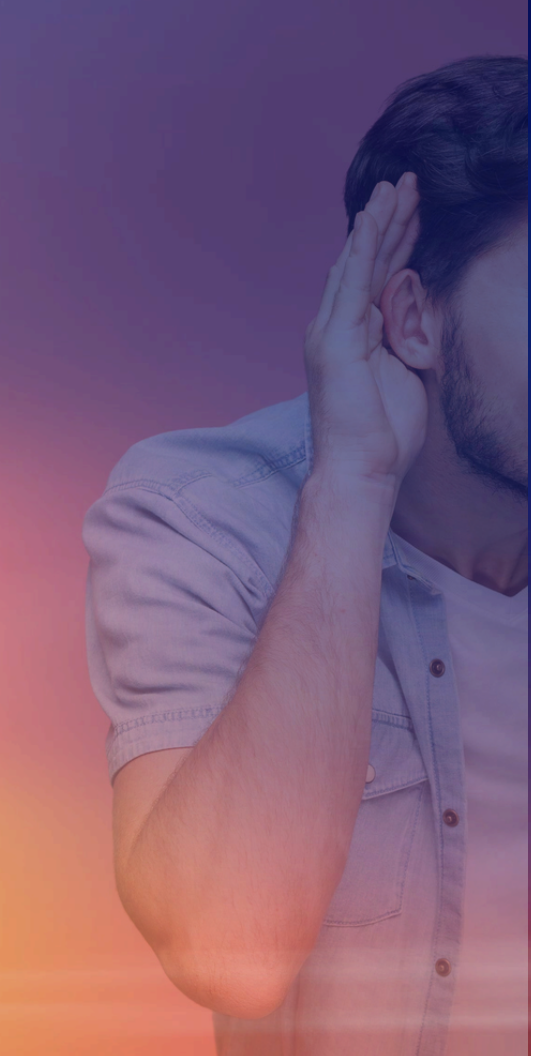
QUESTION: HOW IS GUARDING ONE'S TONGUE FROM GOSSIP AN ELIXIR FOR LIFE?

Think about this: There are two ways to feel superior

A) Elevate Yourself

B) Put someone else down

One who constantly puts others down to feel superior, sadly never really has a life of their own. If one wants a genuine and authentic life, one must focus on the positives in others and aspire to elevate themself.



WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT LASHON HARA / GOSSIP?

1. Throughout the Torah the concept of refraining from negative speech is mentioned countless times.
2. The Talmud shares that one who gossips harms 3 people; the one being spoken about, the speaker, and the listener.
3. Once you say it, you can't take it back.
4. Lashon hara highlights the negative in people vs. the positives. No one likes negative people!
5. Gossip destroys everything in its path ie. Friendships, business, marriages...

A DEEPER LOOK

1. In the story of the creation of Adam, Adam is created from earth hence his name Adam meaning earth. The Almighty then breathes "the soul of life" in his inanimate form and Adam comes to life.
2. Fascinatingly, our tradition teaches us that included in that very first "soulful" breath of life was the gift of speech. Speech is very much a soul thing.
3. Here is why: Our soul is a piece of the divine, hence speech on some level is divine. How so?
4. The ability to create and conclude life is very much the Almighty's realm. So too through our speech we have the ability to enhance and sustain life or to diminish and destroy life.

"Life and death are in the hands of the tongue!" Proverbs 18:21

Take a moment to reflect on the gift of speech and its power to build and destroy. Can you think of practical examples of this in your own life?

HOW CAN I CUT GOSSIP OUT OF MY LIFE?

It's so prevalent and everybody does it?

1. Learn more about it. (There are many amazing books and resources available out there such as "Words Change Worlds", "Chofetz Chaim; A Daily Companion".)
2. Focus on positive word power. Try to find one opportunity a day to compliment someone and make their day!
3. Commit to not speaking about others for a 30 minute slot each day and be conscientious during this time.
4. Take a daily one hour break from social media (hey, you know that you should anyway...)
5. Take five minutes a day to focus on the positive attributes of the people in your world. Write these down!

POSITIVE SPEECH WAS SO IMPORTANT TO SHANI

As you take this week to upgrade your life by focusing on staying away from negative speech, please **use this QR code to send a message to Shani's family.**

It will mean the world to them!

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