

## Is it "Lashon Hara" to make the public aware of terrible sins?

Submitted by mdangel1 on Fri, 04/01/2016 - 15:32



In my Angel for Shabbat column several weeks ago, I called attention to the problem of discrimination in the religious school system in Israel. In particular, I mentioned the horrifying practice of Beis Yaacov schools to not only have quotas limiting the number of Sephardic students, but that in Immanuel they actually built a physical barrier to separate Sephardic girls from Ashkenazic girls. Some religious schools have different entrances for children of different ethnic backgrounds.

I referred readers to the article by Professor Yifat Bitton, which appeared in our first issue of Conversations, and which can be found on our website in the Articles section. Professor Bitton and her colleagues have established an organization, Tmura, that brings law suits against institutions in Israel that maintain discriminatory policies. Please read her article for a fuller discussion of this serious topic.

While most readers of my column and of Professor Bitton's article surely were outraged by this scandalous situation in so-called "religious" schools, several of our readers expressed discomfort. They said that it was "Lashon Hara" (spreading slander) to let the public know about what is happening in these schools. They argued that the Beis Yaacov movement is very "frum" and is supported by "gedolei yisrael", and should not be subjected to criticism in a public forum.

Frankly, I was astounded by these reactions.

1. If schools practice overt discrimination, they are ipso facto guilty of moral turpitude not to mention legal malfeasance. If such schools claim to be "religious", their claim is a hillul Hashem. No school that fosters a climate of disdain and degradation for children, based on ethnic backgrounds, can claim to be religious. Anyone who supports such schools is an accomplice to a heinous sin.
2. It is not "Lashon Hara" to call the public's attention to injustice and criminal behavior. To cover up such behavior is the sin. To look the other way while Jewish children are being humiliated and segregated is not virtuous, but is a reflection of a warped idea of Torah and Torah values.
3. It would be so much nicer not to have to speak of unpleasant things. It would be so much easier if all people, especially those who think of themselves as religious Jews, behaved in a morally upright manner and did not engage in immoral, unrighteous and criminal behavior. But when we see a callous, blatant disregard for morality and law, then we are obligated to bring this information to the attention of the relevant authorities and to the public at large. "Cover-ups" not only don't succeed, but they create an even greater hillul Hashem when the public learns that good people knew about the sins but kept quiet and allowed the injustices to proceed without

intervening.

4. Ideally, we should have no scandals in the Jewish community, and certainly not in the Orthodox community that claims to follow the ways of Torah. But when in fact we learn of serious transgressions, such as a system of institutionalized segregation in so-called religious schools, we all need to stand up for the victims of these heinous policies. We need to let the sponsors and supporters of these schools know that they are sinning against Jewish children, Jewish families, the Jewish people, and the Torah of Israel. That isn't Lashon Hara. That is standing up for truth and righteousness; that is standing up for our children and the honor of our people. We should defend the victims, not the victimizers.

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