

What Constitutes a Toeles?

Question: It is common knowledge that one is permitted to speak Lashon Hara for a "*toeles*". What exactly constitutes a *toeles*?

Answer: People tend to think that "*toeles*" is a blanket *heter* to say *Lashon Hara* for any beneficial reason. This is not the reality. For example, one might be learning with a bochur who has a weak head, and in order to give him encouragement, will relate that a specific Rosh Yeshiva also had a weak head when he was young, and yet, he still became great. Even though there is a benefit to say this, it might not be permitted because it could hurt the reputation of the Rosh Yeshiva.

Most of the time, the Chofetz Chaim bases the *heter* of *toeles* on the rule of "*avad inish dina d'nafshei*." According to this rule, if someone is coming to hurt you or someone else, you are allowed to hurt him in order to stop him. The same applies to *Lashon Hara*. If someone is doing something that will hurt you or someone else, you are allowed to stop him by relating this information.

While there are a minority of cases where it is permitted to speak *Lashon Hara* for a *toeles* even when the one being spoken about is not doing anything wrong, this is the *heter* in the vast majority of cases.

An example of this idea is if someone intends to sell a defective item without revealing the defect to the buyer. In this case, the seller is guilty of "*geneivas daas*," being dishonest, and you are permitted to stop him from hurting the buyer by revealing this information in order to save him from being harmed.

It is important to note that one is only permitted to speak Lashon Hara for a *toeles* if he meets the seven conditions of the Chofetz Chaim, which we will delineate in a later segment.