

הלכה of the Week

~ שמירת הלשון ~

Habitual Speakers of לשון הרע

Someone who only speaks לשון הרע occasionally is guilty of a serious sin. However, those who habitually gossip about the faults of others are guilty of a much more serious sin, since they deliberately and repeatedly disregard one of Hashem's מצוות.

Habitual offenders can often be found sitting around making disparaging remarks about others:

“Reuven is a good-for-nothing; just the other day he...”

“Don’t think that Leah is so special; she comes from a family that...”

“Do you know what I just heard about Shimon?”

Our Rabbis have labelled these people בְּעָלֵי לִשׁוֹן הָרַע (Ba’alei Loshon Hora - habitual speakers of Loshon Hora). The Talmud (Erchin, 15b) states that someone who constantly speaks לשון הרע commits sins greater than idolatry and murder. The עֲבֵרָה of constantly speaking evil of others is so enormous that a בְּעָלֵי לִשׁוֹן הָרַע loses his share in עוֹלָם הַבָּא (the World to Come) unless he does תְּשׁוּבָה. (Yerushalmi Paioh 1:1)

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Beware of לשון הרע when speaking on the telephone. If the person with whom you are speaking insists on speaking לשון הרע you should rebuke him (tell him off).

If this is not possible, find an excuse to hang up: “Excuse me, something has just come up,” (it has - the לשון הרע!) and end the conversation.

פְּרָקִי אֲבוֹת of the Week

פָּרָק ה'

שְׁנֵי אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּנוֹתֵי צְדָקָה. הָרוֹצֵה שְׂתֵּתֵן וְלֹא יִתֵּן אַחֲרָיו, עֵינָיו רָעָה בְּשָׂל אַחֲרָיו. יִתֵּן אַחֲרָיו וְהוּא לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינָיו רָעָה בְּשָׂלוֹ. יִתֵּן וְיִתֵּן אַחֲרָיו, חֲסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתֵּן אַחֲרָיו, רָשָׁע.

There are four types of donors to צְדָקָה:

- one who wishes to give, himself, but wants others not to give: he begrudges others;
- one who wants others to give but does not want to give himself: he begrudges himself;
- one who wants to give and wants others to give is pious;
- one who does not want to give and does not want others to give is wicked.

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