

With thanks to Rabbi Zelig Pliskin for kindly giving me permission to use extracts from his book, "Guard Your Tongue" (based on "Chofetz Chaim").

הַלְכָה of the Week

~ שְׁמִירַת הַלְּשׁוֹן ~

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

Rabbi Pliskin said he will be pleased to know these halachot are being publicised more widely, especially in view of the fact that his own father was a talmid of the Chofetz Chaim, who went to great lengths to make these laws better known.



If at all possible you should give people the benefit of the doubt. If you relate an incident without giving the benefit of the doubt when you should have done you would be guilty of speaking **לְשׁוֹן הָרָע** and of failing to perform the mitzvah of,

"בִּצְדָּקָה תִּשְׁפַּט עַמִּיתָךְ" (Vayikra 19,15):

"Judge your neighbour with righteousness."

Keep in mind what our Rabbis taught:

"Whoever gives others the benefit of the doubt, Hashem, may He be blessed) will deal kindly with him."

(Shabbat 127b)

also see story on next page →

פָּרָקִי אֲבוֹת of the Week

(continued from week 13)

פרק ו'

וְגָדוֹלָה תֹּורָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַכְּהוֹנָה וּמִן הַמֶּלֶךְ, שְׁהַמְּלֻכּוֹת נִקְנִית בְּשָׁלְשִׁים מְעֻלֹּות,
וְהַכְּהוֹנָה בְּעֶשֶׂרִים וּאֶרְבַּע, וְהַתֹּורָה נִקְנִית בְּאֶרְבַּעַם וְשִׁמְנוֹת דְּבָרִים. וְאַלּו הָן, . . .
בְּבִנְתַּת הַלְּבָב, בְּשְׁכָלוֹת הַלְּבָב, בְּאִימָה, בְּירָאת, . . .

To learn Torah is greater than to be a kohen or a king.

A king has thirty advantages, and a kohen has twenty-four, but in order to gain Torah learning a person must improve himself in forty-eight ways.

They are:

understanding in the heart,

ability to perceive clearly

awe of his teachers,

fear of Heaven . . .

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Giving the Benefit of the Doubt: A Story

The Talmud (*Shabbos* 127b) relates an incident from which we can gain some insight into the extent of our obligation to grant the benefit of the doubt.

A man from Upper Galilee hired himself out to someone in the south of Eretz Yisroel for three years. Before Yom Kippur he said to his employer,

"Give me my wages so that I can go home and feed my wife and children."

"I have no money," was the employer's reply.

"Then give me fruit," suggested the man.

"I have none," answered the employer.

"Give me property."

"I don't have any."

"Give me livestock."

"I haven't any."

"Give me pillows and blankets."

"I haven't any."

The man slung his belongings over his shoulder and went home, bitterly disappointed. After Sukkos, the employer brought the wages plus three donkeys loaded with food, drink, and delicacies to the home of his employee. After they had eaten, and the salary was paid, the employer asked,

"When you asked me for money and I said that I didn't have, what did you suspect?"

"I thought that you might have spent your money on a bargain that had just then presented itself."

"When I told you that I had no livestock, what were your thoughts?"

"I thought that you might have lent them to others."

"And when I said I didn't have any property?"

"Maybe it was leased to others."

"And when I said that I didn't have any fruit?"

"Perhaps you hadn't separated *ma'aser* (tithes) yet."

"What did you think when I said that I didn't have any pillows and blankets?"

"I thought that you might have dedicated all of your possessions to the Beis Hamikdosh."

"I make an oath, that is exactly what happened! Just as you have judged me favorably, so too should Hashem judge you favorably."

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