

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

הלכה of the Week

~ שמירת הלשון ~

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.

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לשון הרע of Habitual Speakers

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 לָשׁוֹן הָרָע (Ba'alei Lashon Hara - habitual speakers of Lashon Hara). 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 לָשׁוֹן loses his share in עוֹלָם הַבָּא (the World to Come) unless he does תְּשׁוּבָה. (Yerushalmi Pe'ah 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

פְּרָק ה'
 מִזֵּי אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּנוֹתָנִי צְדָקָה. הָרוּצָה שְׂתֵתֵן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, עֵינֹי רָעָה בְּשָׁל אֲחֵרִים. יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים וְהוּא לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינֹי רָעָה בְּשָׁלֹו. יִתֵּן וְיִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, חֲסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אֲחֵרִים, 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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