INTERPERSONAL/BEIN ADAM L'CHAVEIRO

INTRODUCTION TO INTERPERSONAL (BEIN ADAM L'CHAVEIRO)

Introduction to Interpersonal (Bein Adam L'Chaveiro)

Commandments are of two types; those governing:

- Interpersonal behavior (*Bein adam l'chaveiro*), which this section presents, and
- Behavior between people and God, which most of the rest of this website deals with (but interpersonal behavior is also a commandment between people and God).

BUSINESS/PROPERTY

INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS/PROPERTY

Business Ethics

The *Torah* requires ethical behavior in business, as it does in all other areas of interpersonal behavior. We must be honest in business. We may not cheat or mislead the customer or misrepresent what we are selling. We may follow whatever are the accepted norms for honest people in our area of business.

AMENITIES AND OFFICE SUPPLIES/UTILITIES

AMENITIES

Amenities: Hotel Room

You may take whatever amenities are in your hotel room, as long as they are expected to be taken.

Amenities: Employees' Authority

Hotel employees are assumed to be authorized to give you whatever they give you.

OFFICE SUPPLIES/UTILITIES

Office Supplies: Personal Use

You may take office supplies for your personal use if your employer allows you to. If you are uncertain, ask!

Office Supplies: Permission from Boss

If your boss gives you permission to take or use things in an office where he is not the owner, we assume the boss has the authority to allow you to do whatever he tells you.

Office Supplies: Employee Directing Employee

An (non-owner) employee may not tell another (subservient) employee to take or use things for the benefit of that superior employee, unless the superior employee has the authority to take the items for himself.

EXAMPLE A doctor may not tell a secretary to take hospital envelopes and postage and mail personal items for the doctor.

Utilities: Personal Use

You may use telephone and other services that do not cost your employer anything as long as you do not have any work to do for your employer.

BET DIN

Jewish Court or Secular Court

A Jew must go to a Jewish court before going to a secular court if the issue is suitable for judging at a Jewish court.

BILLING

Billing: Personal Time

Someone who bills for his or her time may not charge a client for time used for personal purposes.

EXAMPLE A lawyer must receive the client's OK before billing that client for time he used eating a meal in order to work more hours for the client.

Double Billing

If you normally bill for your travel time, it is unethical to bill another client for work you did for the second client during the travel.

BUYING STOLEN ITEM

Buying Stolen or Knock-Off Items

You may not knowingly buy a stolen item, nor an item that is illegally trademarked (for example, a knock-off purse or watch). However, if it is not certain that it is illegally marked or stolen, you may buy it.

Finding Out a Bought Item Had Been Stolen

If you bought an item and later found out that it had been stolen, you must return the item to the original owner, but that owner must refund to you the amount of money you paid.

NOTE If the article was insured and the previous owner had already received payment for the loss, you do not need to return it.

CLERICAL ERRORS

Clerical Errors and Non-Jewish Business

If a non-Jewish business makes a mistake in your favor, it is considered a saintly trait to correct the mistake. It is especially a *kiddush HaShem* to return the money to them if they know that you are Jewish.

Clerical Errors and Jewish Business Owner

If a business makes a mistake in your favor, you must correct it if the:

- Business owner is Jewish, and
- Error is more than 1/6th of the item's value.

NOTE It is recommended to correct the error even if the owner is not Jewish.

NOTE In some situations, you must correct the error to a Jewish owner even if the error is less than 1/6th of the item's value—consult a *rabbi*.

NOTE If the owner (Jewish or non-Jewish) forgot to charge you at all, you must return the item or pay for it.

COMPETITION

Creating Competing Business

Generally, you may not go into a business if an existing business owner will go out of business or cannot survive on what income he/she will have remaining.

EXCEPTION If a better *Torah* teacher is available than the current one, the better one may be hired.

DAMAGES

Abusing Rental Cars

You may not abuse a rental car. This means you may not use it in any damaging way that you would not do to your own car.

Recovering Damages

When a company damages something of yours, you are entitled to do what you need to in order to get compensated--as long as it is legal. This is ethical and honest and you do not need to actually do what the company wants or tells you to do.

ENCROACHING (MASIG GVUL)

Encroaching (Masig Gvul)

Masig gvul can mean:

- Actually stealing property, or
- Stealing business from someone else.

NOTE This is complicated, so consult a *rabbi* if needed.

GAMBLING

Gambling and Jews

Gambling may not be approved for Jews; some types are completely forbidden. Consult a *rabbi*.

INHERITANCE

Timing of Giving

Property may be given away in any manner and amounts desired during a person's lifetime. A Jew must give his property away before death if he does not want to make the inheritance according to Jewish law (such as double portion to a father's first-born son, etc.--consult a *rabbi* for details). A person should reserve some money to fulfill the *Torah* commandment of inheritance. Consult a *rabbi*.

NOTE In inheritance issues, the first-born son means the first-born son of the father (although *pidyon ha'ben* refers to the first-born son of the mother).

NOTE A mother can leave whatever she wants to her children without being required to give twice as much to a son who is the first-born of his father.

American Will

Since a person cannot give away property after his/her death (since he/she does not own it anymore), an American will has no *halachic* validity. An American will should be written to keep the inheritance out of the hands of the government and lawyers. In order for a secular will to be effective under *halacha*, an acquisition should be made that starts to take effect beginning at the time of the *kinyan* and finalize one hour before the person's death.
Rabbinic guidance is recommended.

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INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Access

You may use a public or private internet without paying if it does not cost the owner or slow down the owner's use of it (or if the owner gives you permission!) and as long as doing so does not violate the secular law wherever you are.

LABORERS

Paying Day Laborer

You may pay a laborer at whatever time intervals you agreed upon; you do not need to pay the laborer each day before sunset unless you agreed to do that. If you did not make any agreement, follow local custom. If there is no local custom, pay by the end of the work day.

LOANS

LOANS: WITNESSING/WRITING DETAILS

Loans: Witnessing/Writing Details

You must have a witness or write down the details of an agreement before loaning money or material goods. Both parties should count the money together unless there is a written record, as with electronic transfers, checks, etc.

NOTE If the amount is so small that the lender would not mind its not being paid back, it is customary to lend without a written record or witness.

LOANS: CHARGING INTEREST (RIBIT)

General Law on Heter Iska

A Jew is not permitted to charge interest (*ribit*) for a loan made to another Jew. A *heter iska* should be used in any case where a loan has been made between Jews if more money will be paid back than what was received.

NOTE In some cases, if you prepay for a purchase and thereby get a discount, it might be considered as interest paid on a loan, and you would need a *heter iska*.

Charging Interest: Loans or Borrowed Items

Prohibitions of charging interest *(ribit)* apply only to loans of money or a commodity (*halva'a*), not to borrowed items (*she'eila*):

1. **Loan/*Halva'a***

You do not get back the exact item you loaned but, rather, some equivalent of the original, such as money. The borrower may not give back more than he/she borrowed and the recipient may not accept more. Even saying "thanks" is considered to be a form of interest.

2. **Borrowed Items/*She'eila***

The original item is returned to the loaner (for example, borrowing a car), and there is no prohibition of paying more than what was originally received.

Heter Iska in Normal Language

If you use a *heter iska* for a loan, the document should be in English or whatever is the normal language of both parties.

RETURNING LOST OBJECTS (HASHAVAT AVEIDA)

Returning Lost Objects (Hashavat Aveida)

You are required to return a lost object (*hashavat aveida*) to its Jewish owner if you can. This is a *Torah* commandment.

NOTE It is saintly behavior to return lost objects to non-Jews, too, if it will be a *kiddush Hashem*.

NOTE You should tell a person if his or her cigarettes fall out of a pocket, even though the cigarettes are dangerous to the smoker's health.

SHMITA AND DEBTS

Shmita and Cancellation of Debts

Shmita applies to debts in our era, but the normal requirement of forgiving debts may be circumvented via a document (*prozbul*).

TAKING ITEMS

Taking Items

You may not take items that do not belong to you even if they are worth less than a *shava pruta*, unless the items have no perceived value.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

ACKNOWLEDGING THE GOOD (HAKARAT HATOV)

Giving Gifts

Acknowledging the good that other people do or have done for us applies to all people, Jewish and non-Jewish. You may give a gift to any person who has done something nice or good to you as acknowlegment of what they did for you in the past or in anticipation of what they might do for you in the future.

BEARING A GRUDGE

Do Not Bear a Grudge (Lo Titor)

You may not bear a grudge (*lo titor).*

EXAMPLE Someone did something not nice to you and some time later asks you for a favor. You may not make the person feel bad about what he or she did previously, even if you do grant the favor.

NOTE This applies to monetary issues and the custom is to apply it to non-monetary issues.

COUNTING PEOPLE

Counting Jews

Jews should not be counted by number individually, but they may be counted as groups. The prohibition is only verbally, out loud.

EXAMPLE

You should not say "There are 53 people here." You may say, "There are more than 50 people."

NOTE You may use a sentence, such as *Hoshiya et amecha* (counting each person as a word in the 10-word phrase).

DEROGATORY SPEECH (LASHON HARA)

Introduction to Lashon HaRa

Lashon ha'ra is saying (or communicating in any way--even by rolling your eyes, winking, etc.) anything derogatory or negative about someone that can hurt him or her in any way--by causing embarrassment, loss of money, lowered esteem, bad reputation, etc.

Lashon ha'ra in which you attribute the negative statement about the person to whom you are speaking to someone else is called *rechilut* (gossip).

Lashon ha'ra that is false is called *motzi shem ra*. Saying something that is true is not *lashon ha'ra* if it is being said for a positive purpose (even though the same words would be *lashon ha'ra* if they were only intended to hurt another person and had no positive purpose).

Lashon ha'ra, including *rechilut*, is forbidden to be said about *shomer Shabbat* Jews except for a positive purpose; *motzi shem ra* is forbidden to say about anyone--Jewish or not, *shomer Shabbat* or not, whether for a positive purpose or not.

Speaking *Lashon HaRa*

When You May Say *Lashon HaRa*

Lashon ha'ra, including *rechilut*, even if truthful, is not permitted except for a constructive or positive purpose. (*Motzi shem ra* is never permitted.) Its purpose cannot be to hurt a person. It is permitted and recommended to tell the facts about someone:

1. To protect others from being hurt (being cheated, molested, etc.), or
2. For a positive purpose that cannot be achieved through any other means.

***Lashon HaRa* To Protect Others from Being Hurt**

You may say truthful *lashon ha'ra* (including *rechilut*, if it is necessary to divulge the name of the person who told you):

- To prevent a bad person from telling children bad things or to keep children from learning bad behavior from the bad person;
- To avoid being implicated in what the bad person is doing;
- To prevent other Jews' suffering a loss by using a worker who did bad work for you.

NOTE You may not say that X is a bad/inexperienced workman, even if that is the truth, unless the listener needs to know this to protect himself or herself.

- If a businessman cheats you or lies to you, you should warn other Jews about him (but only if you suspect they want to do business with him).
- If you know something bad about someone who a third person wants to date or marry, in many cases you are required to tell what you know (but this can be very complicated and dangerous and a *rabbi* should be consulted about what to do in many cases)!

When You May Add Facts to Correct Possible *Lashon HaRa*

If the reasons behind an action are not clear and someone may get the wrong/negative impression of someone in question, then you should tell the facts and tell the entire story.

EXAMPLE

Someone (A) insults another person (B) in public. Entire story is that B beat up A previously**.** Knowing the full story changes how people might view A.

NOTE If it is only your opinion, state that instead of declaring it as fact.

***Lashon HaRa* To Allow Gain**

Saying *lashon ha'ra* for a positive purpose includes gain for yourself or for someone else; you may talk about others in cases such as these:

- **Psychotherapy** You may say truthful *lashon ha'ra* or *rechilut* to a psychotherapist since you don't know what is important. Outside of therapy and with non-therapists, you may say anything that will bring about a positive result (and only if there is no other way to achieve that result).

EXAMPLES

Abusive Parent

If a child needs to know what an abusive parent did or is doing in order to heal from damage, or if a therapist says it is necessary for the child to be told what the abusive parent did.

Abusive Spouse

If it will help the healing process for an abused spouse to talk about what he or she suffered.

- **Upset** If you are upset by what a person did to you and it will help you to calm down by telling what was done to you (that is, you will gain by feeling better).

NOTE If you want to ask someone for information that could be *lashon ha'ra,* you should say why you are asking so the other person will understand that it is for a positive purpose and is therefore not *lashon ha'ra*.

***Lashon HaRa* and Specific Cases**

Children, *Shomer Shabbat* Person, Groups

Even truthful *lashon ha'ra*, including *rechilut*, may not be said about a Jewish child or a *shomer Shabbat*

person or group of people unless for a positive purpose that cannot be achieved any other way.

- A parent should not rebuke or criticize a child if it will embarrass the child in front of others.
- A child (whether young or adult) may not correct a parent who is saying *lashon ha'ra*, unless the parent would want to be reminded that the parent is saying *lashon ha'ra*. Even then, it must be done respectfully.
- You may make statements about groups of people in general, even if negative, as long as the purpose is to protect other people from them. But what you say must be true.

NOTE It is not *lashon ha'ra* to talk truthfully about someone who cannot be identified. (You may say "someone," but only if that person is not identifiable.)

Lashon HaRa: **Public Knowledge**
You may mention information that is public knowledge. But your intent should not be to spread the word, but rather just to pass along interesting information.

EXAMPLE
Saying, "Did you hear that the president of the *synagogue* just got convicted of..."

Lashon HaRa: **Mass Media**
You may read in the paper, see on TV, or hear on the radio an account of someone's bad behavior (since you cannot know whether it will affect you or be important for you to know until you read or hear the information, it may be OK; ask a *rabbi*). You may not accept it as being the complete truth, but you should be wary.

Lashon HaRa: ***Shomer Shabbat*** **Public Figure**
You may not tell or listen to *lashon ha'ra* about a public figure who is a *shomer Shabbat* Jew unless there is a purpose.
You may give your opinion about a *shomer Shabbat* politician as long as you state it as your opinion and as long as giving your opinion may help other people.

Lashon HaRa: ***Shomer Shabbat*** **Organization**
You may not say any of the three types of speaking ill about an organization, school, *synagogue*, etc., whose members or employees are *shomer Shabbat*--except for a positive purpose.

EXAMPLES
You may not say any of the three types of *lashon ha'ra* about a Jewish school's cost, bad teachers, etc., unless it may be relevant to future students (and even if it is relevant, you may still not say *motzi shem ra*).
You may not say, "I don't like that *shul* because there is lots of talking," unless you think the person will appreciate knowing since he or she will not want to go to a *shul* with lots of talking.

Lashon HaRa: **Asked for Opinion**
If you are asked for your opinion, you may give it if it is relevant (has a useful purpose) to the person asking. Otherwise, no comment.

If you are asked your opinion about a *Torah* lecture or lecturer, you may give your opinion only *AS* your opinion, not as criticism.

Lashon HaRa: **Told in Confidence**
If you have been told something in confidence, even if you think it is best for the person who told you if you pass it along, you may still not re-tell anyone else. You may say, "I cannot speak about that" if you are asked. Consult a *rabbi*.

Lashon HaRa: **Getting Back at Someone**

If someone hurts you, you may get back at the person at the time of the action against you. But afterward, it would be revenge and is forbidden.

EXAMPLE

Someone tells you, “You are good for nothing.” You may say, “You are worse than I am,” if it makes you feel better.

Lashon HaRa: *Bet Din* Summons

If someone with whom you have a problem refuses a *hazmana* (summons) from a *bet din*, you may publicize a letter from the *bet din* saying the person refused the *hazmana* so that the recipient might agree to go to the *bet din* due to public embarrassment.

Lashon HaRa: *Bet Din* for Abuse

All matters between Jews should, ideally, initially go to *bet din* but only if the *bet din* is capable of resolving the problem. In cases of suspected child or spousal (or other) abuse, you may report it to the police if there is no *bet din* that is capable of dealing with the problem immediately: You are not required to wait while a *bet din* gets around to your case. The key is to expedite the case.

NOTE Some cities have special *batei din* for such matters.

NOTE Beware of governmental agencies that may take away children from their homes, even without evidence.

Listening to and Believing *Lashon HaRa*

Listening to and believing any category of *lashon ha'ra* is also forbidden. If you do hear something bad about someone else, do not believe that it is definitely true--but you may believe that it might be true. When you hear *lashon ha'ra*:

- You can try to change the subject, since pointing out that *lashon ha'ra* is being said may not stop it from being said.
- If you see a *shomer Shabbat* Jew doing something that seems to be forbidden, you should judge him/her favorably and assume that there is a good interpretation to what is being done.

EXAMPLE

SITUATION

You see someone who is not *shomer mitzvot* get in a car on *Shabbat*.

WHAT TO DO

Make the logical assumption that he/she is going to drive (and not for a *halachically* permissible purpose).

SITUATION

You see a *shomer Shabbat* person get in a car on *Shabbat*.

WHAT TO DO

Assume there is a good, *halachic* reason for it. However**,** you may not ignore reality or make implausible or unlikely excuses for bad behavior.

EVIL EYE (AYIN HARA)

When Ayin HaRa Is Significant

Ayin ha'ra is only significant if a person is worried about being affected.

HONORING THE ELDERLY

Standing for the Elderly

You do not need to stand up for old people (as a form of honoring them) unless the old person is over 70 years old and is *shomer mitzvot*. This applies to women, too, if they are 70 years old or more and are *shomrot Shabbat*.

HONORING PARENTS

INTRODUCTION TO HONORING PARENTS

Introduction to Honoring Parents

Honoring your father and mother—the fifth of the *Ten Commandments*—heads the *mishna's* list of *mitzvot* for which you receive reward in this world as well as in the next. It is one of only two *mitzvot* for which long life is promised (the other is *shilu'ach ha'kein*—shooing away a wild mother bird before taking her eggs). This *mitzva* especially refers to giving your parents food and drink as well as helping them get dressed, get covered, and go out and in. But it also includes:

- Not sitting in your father's chair.
- Not calling your parents by their first names.
- Not disagreeing with, not correcting, or not contradicting your parents if doing so will upset them.
- Agreeing with them by taking sides in an argument (doing so is considered disrespectful since they do not need your agreement).
- Not waking them up when they are sleeping--unless they would want you to do so.

Whatever applies to fathers also applies to mothers, such as not sitting in the parent's chair.

NOTE Many of these *halachot* may be overridden at the parent's request; for instance, you may correct your parent or call him or her by first name if he or she wants you to do so.

All parents—whether biological or adoptive, Jewish or non-Jewish—must be treated well, acknowledging the good they did for the child (*hakarat ha'tov*). If any parent opposes the observance of Jewish laws, the child should limit contact with the parent.

HONORING PARENTS: NAMES

Honoring Parents: Names: Saying Your Parents' Names

Children should not normally call their parents by name, nor say their parent's name without mentioning that this is their parent, as follows:

- When praying for your brother's recovery from illness *(refu'a)*, say:
    - Your brother's name,
    - *Ben imi* (son of my mother) or *ben imi morati* (son of my mother, my teacher), and
    - Your mother's name.
- When praying for your sister's recovery from illness, say:
    - Your sister's name,
    - *Bat imi* (daughter of my mother) or *bat imi morati* (daughter of my mother, my teacher), and
    - Your mother's name.
- An *aliya* for your brother, say:
    - Your brother's name,
    - *Ben avi* (son of my father) or *ben avi mori* (son of my father, my teacher), and
    - Your father's name.

HONORING PARENTS: ADOPTIVE

Adoptive Parents: Acknowledging the Good

Adoptive parents must be treated well by the adopted child, acknowledging the good they did for the child (*hakarat ha'tov*). But they are not considered *halachic* parents and the child may not be required to give them the honor that is required by the *Torah* for natural parents.

HONORING PARENTS: NON-JEWISH

Respect for Non-Jewish Parent

Treat a non-Jewish parent who does not interfere with the Jewish observance of his or her Jewish child with more respect than any other person, even though the specific laws of honoring a Jewish parent do not apply.

HONORING PARENTS: NON-OBSERVANT JEWISH

Shabbat/Jewish Festivals with a Non-Observant Jewish Parent

You should spend *Shabbat* or *Jewish festivals* with your non-religious Jewish parent (even in a non-religious environment) if he or she wants you to, as long as you can still observe all of the *Shabbat* or *Jewish festival* laws AND if your parent needs your help.

NOTE You do not need to stay with your parent if your parent does not need your help or if you will not be able to fulfill all of the requirements of *Shabbat* or the *Jewish festival.*

HONORING PARENTS: ABUSIVE JEWISH

Honor an Abusive Jewish Parent but Not Suffer

A child is not required to suffer from any type of abuse (not physical, emotional, psychological…) from a parent, but the child should honor his or her Jewish parents as much as possible without suffering.

NOTE Consult a *rabbi* to define individual cases of abuse by parents because the issues are complex.

HONORING TORAH SCHOLARS

WHO IS A TORAH SCHOLAR

Who Is a Torah Scholar

Who is a *Torah* scholar? It depends on location and era. Someone with minimal Jewish knowledge may be considered a scholar if no one else knows as much.

MAIN TORAH TEACHER (RAV MUVHAK)

Who Is Main Torah Teacher (Rav Muvhak)

It is theoretically possible--but highly unlikely--to have one main teacher (*rav muvhak)* who taught you most of your *Torah* knowledge. However, a *rav muvhak* might exist for a person who was not brought up religiously observant and did not have a traditional Jewish education.

Correcting a Rav Muvhak

Although a *rav muvhak* is deserving of the same honor you would give your parents, you may correct him if he wants you to correct him, just as you may correct a parent who wants you to do so.

TORAH SCHOLAR HONORING OTHER TORAH SCHOLARS

Torah Scholar Honoring Other Torah Scholars

A *Torah* scholar should stand up for another *Torah* scholar who is greater in knowledge; a greater *Torah* scholar should acknowledge the lesser scholar by standing up a little bit.

HOSTING GUESTS (HACHNASAT ORCHIM)

To Whom To Give Food and Lodging

We are commanded to give food and accommodation (*hachnasat orchim*) to people who do not have food to eat or a place to sleep. This applies to any day, not just to *Shabbat* and *Jewish festivals*.

Inviting Friends for Meals

Inviting friends to your house for meals, even on *Shabbat* and *Jewish festivals*, is not *hachnasat orchim*--unless the friends do not have food or a place to sleep. But inviting friends for meals may qualify as other *mitzvot*.

Accompanying a Guest

You should walk a guest to the door or even along his/her way when he/she leaves your home. This is an act of kindness (*chesed)*.

HURTING PEOPLE

Hurting People

You are forbidden from hurting another person physically, emotionally, or psychologically.

KINDNESS (CHESED)

What Are Acts of Kindness

We are commanded to do acts of kindness (*chesed*), which means helping someone by doing an action that that person cannot do (or has difficulty doing) for him/herself.

EXAMPLE

- Visiting sick people;
- Opening a window for a crippled or weak person;
- Giving charity;
- Teaching non-religious Jews about Judaism;
- Finding marriage partners for single people.

MEMBERS OF THE OTHER GENDER

CONTACT (NEGIA)

What Constitutes Negia

Unrelated people of one gender may not generally have intimate physical contact with members of the opposite gender (*negia*). The prohibited types of contact are any that express affection or promote interpersonal relationships or intimacy. *Negia* does not apply to:
For Males--mother, grandmothers, daughters, granddaughters, and other descendants and antecedents.
For Females--father, grandfathers, sons, grandsons, and other descendants and antecedents.

Non-Intimate Contact between Men and Women

Non-intimate contact is permissible between men and women--even if the two people are related or have a close personal relationship (except a husband and wife when she is a *nida*).

EXAMPLES

- Doctor and patient.
- Massage therapist and patient.
- Lifeguard and swimmer.
- A Jewish *man* may catch a Jewish girl or woman on the flying trapeze.

  REASON This is not intimate contact.

INTER-MARRIAGE

Family Member Who Intermarries

Treat as single a sibling or parent or any other Jew who marries a non-Jew, as he or she is not considered to be married.

EXAMPLE If they visit, don't let them share a bedroom.

MISREPRESENTING YOURSELF (GNEIVAT DA'AT)

When Misrepresenting Yourself (Gneivat Da'at) Applies

It is forbidden to give a falsely positive impression to other people (*gneivat da'at*), whether to Jews or non-Jews. Pretentiousness is a type of *gneivat da'at.*

Gneivat da'at may be through actions or speech and requires intent. It applies only when someone else will be affected.

REBUKING (TOCHACHA)

When To Rebuke (Tochacha)

You must tell another Jew--but only if he or she will appreciate your comment—if he or she:

- Is violating a Jewish law, or
- Has done a hurtful action.

REVENGE (NEKAMA)

You May Not Take Revenge

You may not take revenge on someone.

EXAMPLE You ask for a favor--to borrow an item or for help--and you get refused. Later, if that person asks to borrow something of yours or for help, you may not refuse, saying "No, because you did not lend to me (or help me) when I asked."

NOTE Revenge applies to loaning money but also deals with other cases.

TZNI'UT

INTRODUCTION TO TZNI'UT

Introduction to Tzni'ut

Tzni'ut, or modesty, is the concept of not standing out--commonly applied to attire, behavior, or speech--and includes privacy and separation of genders. Jews should not exhibit their bodies--but they should also not speak unnecessarily loudly, be boastful, or do anything that attracts attention to themselves. *Tzni'ut* applies between people and other people and also between people and God.

For *tzni'ut* in attire, see ATTIRE.

VISITING THE SICK (BIKUR CHOLIM)

Why Visit the Sick

The main commandment of visiting sick people is *chesed* (kindness):

- To see if they need anything, and
- To pray for their recovery.

WASTING PEOPLE'S TIME (TIRCHA TZIBUR)

Wasting People's Time (Tircha d'tzibura)

You may not waste people's time or upset them (*tircha d'tzibura*).

EXAMPLE A prayer leader should not:

- Roll a *Torah* scroll during the *minyan* in order to get to the correct place for reading (it should have been done previously) unless necessary;
- Roll up his *tefilin* after taking them off for *musaf* on *Rosh Chodesh*, before *hallel* on *chol ha'moed* of *Sukkot*, or after *hallel* on *chol ha'moed Passover*. (Instead, he should take them off and leave them on the *bima* until the prayer service is finished, or roll them up during *Torah* reading).

WIDOWS, ORPHANS, POOR

Oppressing Widows, Orphans, Poor

There is a special *Torah* prohibition against antagonizing widows, orphans, and poor people.

- **Widow** You may not antagonize a widow even if she is rich and even once she remarries.
- **Orphan** An orphan only gets special treatment until he/she can fend for himself/herself.

  NOTE An orphan is usually someone:

  - Without parental support,
  - Who cannot fend for himself either financially or otherwise, and
  - Is usually under 18 years old.

WITNESSES

WITNESSES: WHO MAY TESTIFY IN JEWISH COURT

Witnesses: Non-Observant Jew in Jewish Court

A Jew known not to observe the laws of *Shabbat* is not accepted as a witness under Jewish law. However, if it is known that the person would not lie, he or she may be trusted in some cases.

Witnesses: Women in Jewish Courts

It is customary today for Jewish courts to accept the testimony of Jewish women.

Witnesses: Non-Jews in Jewish Courts

It is customary today for Jewish courts to accept non-Jews of both genders as witnesses in some circumstances.

Witnesses: Relatives in Jewish Courts

These relatives of participants in a Jewish court case or wedding may not be witnesses:

- Parents and their spouses
- Children and their spouses
- Siblings and their spouses
- First cousins and their spouses.

However, it is customary today for Jewish courts to accept relatives as witnesses in some cases.

YICHUD

When Yichud Applies

The general rule for *yichud* is that a *man* and a woman who is not his wife or a woman and *man* who is not her husband may not be secluded together. If another adult can enter the room at any time without knocking, there is no problem with *yichud*, even if the adult is not present initially. *Yichud* does not apply whenever:

- A woman has a lockable door that only she controls, which is locked (in this case, men are permitted elsewhere in the building).
- Direct descendants or ancestors are in a room together (in this case, all other men/women combinations are permitted--even if the other people are not related).
- Three (or more) women and one *man* (or more) are in a room, except when they will be sleeping. At those times, four (or more) women and one *man* (or more) are permitted in a room or enclosed area.
- Two (or more) men and one (or more) woman/women are in a room.
- Other people have keys to the room and may enter at any time.
- One (married) woman is with one or more men and the woman's husband is in the same area (*RMH* looks at the local business district as the “area,” so wherever businesses would be advertising or marketing would be a local area).
- For other cases, consult a *rabbi*.

Father and Daughter Sleeping in Same Room

It is OK for a father and a daughter to sleep in same room.

PEACE

PEACEFUL WAYS (DARCHEI SHALOM)

Peaceful Ways (Darchei Shalom)

Darchei shalom is behaving in a manner that engenders harmony and good relations between Jew-to-Jew and Jew-to-non-Jew. *Darchei shalom* allows some customs, but not *halachot*, to be overridden.

PEACE IN THE HOME (SHALOM BAYIT)

Introduction to Shalom Bayit

Shalom bayit is a family at peace, as one unit. When leniencies in law are used to avoid intrafamily conflicts, customs and *d'rabanan halachot* can sometimes be overridden. But *d'oraita halachot* may not be violated. Consult a *rabbi*.

SITUATION

You want to go to *minyan* but your wife is overwhelmed with trying to feed several children and she asks you to help.

WHAT TO DO

You must miss *minyan* and help her since your wife's needs take precedence over your wish to pray with a *minyan*.

NOTE With *shalom bayit* problems between spouses**,** a *rabbi* should be consulted for details.

NOTE Once someone is married, his or her in-laws are part of his or her family and are included in *shalom bayit* rules.

Shalom Bayit: Non-Observant Parents and In-Laws

Ba'alei *teshuva* often have problems with issues of *kashrut* in their parents' homes. Pots, dishes, and utensils might not be *kosher* or toveled. Consult a *rabbi*. Questions of *bishul akum* (cooking that was done by a non-Jew) might apply to non-shomer *Shabbat* parents, but the custom is to be lenient.

If the parent's kitchen is known to be non-*kosher*, food must be prepared with care (see How To Use a Non-*Kosher* Kitchen). If the parents do not lie to their children, they may be trusted as to the source of food and its *kosher* status.

Since we may not eat from dishes or utensils that have not been toveled (immersed in a *mikva*), you may want to consider *toveling* your parents' dishes or utensils, or using disposable goods. In such cases, it is OK to use china that has not been toveled.

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