

TRUTHFULNESS WITH A SHADCHAN

by Rabbi Yisroel Belsky ztl

QUESTION 57:

How truthful must one be when talking to a shadchan (match-maker) - or anyone helping to find a shidduch (match) - about the age of a person? Is there a distinction here between what men and women can say? For example, if a woman says she's 33, won't people automatically assume she's a bit older, so isn't 'being honest' really giving the wrong information? If understating is allowed at times, at what point should the person being dated be told the truth? How about regarding information regarding yichus (family), or medical history?

RABBI BELSKY

There is a whole discussion devoted to this topic, in the second section of the Chafetz Chaim. How much information do we give? Sometimes we can't reveal everything, because doing so may risk invalidating the person immediately. People do assume that everything that's told to them is inflated. If you say a person is 31, the listener may think it most probably means 35. If you say they have this and this fault, the listener will think it's much worse than it is. Therefore, if you want to present the 'truth', you could subtract a little from the information.

Downplay everything, unless it's an alarming characteristic. Issues are typically exaggerated and inflated. Certainly if you make it into an issue they'll exaggerate and inflate it even more. Always remember, however, that the goal is to convey an honest picture.

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION 58: RETURNING A BORROWED BOOK

If I borrow a book from someone, and both of us forget about it, is that a transgression? How much an obligation do I have to go through my bookshelves to find books that I borrowed, and return them? After a certain amount of time, let's say a year, can we assume the original owner has despaired of it, and that eliminates my need to return it? Can we assume that most people are fairly casual about this, or is it an area that people should be much more careful about?

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