

ALWAYS ON

by Rabbi Label Lam

Look at three things and you will not come into the grip of sin. What is above from you? 1) An eye that sees 2) An ear that hears 3) All of your deeds are written in a book. (Avos 2:1)

Do not abuse one another and should have fear of your G-d, for I am HASHEM your G-d! (Vayikra 25:17)

Do not abuse one another: Here the Torah cautions us regarding verbal abuse that one should not annoy his fellow or give him advice that is not appropriate for him and according to his need or benefit but rather for the benefit of the one giving the advice. And if you'll say, "Who knows if I had wrong intentions when I gave the advice?" That is why it is written, "You should have fear of your G-d" the One Who knows thoughts, He knows your intentions. Anything given over to the heart which no one can recognize except the one in whose heart the thought is, about it is written, "You should have fear of your G-d!" (Rashi)

This subject has broad implications and daily applications in all business and personal relationships. The person giving agenda-driven advice may not even be fully aware of how distorted his opinion has become. Caution is therefore advisable for recipients and for givers of advice as well. Besides skeptical vigilance what else does the Torah recommend?

A great Rav was approached with a serious communal matter. The leaders had informed him about a problem with the butcher. His son had misbehaved in such a way that it brought about a weakening of their total confidence in him. He was not worthy of dismissal but there was creeping lack of ease with his role as the local butcher.

The Rabbi considered well the plight and advised that they seek out a new position for the butcher in a different town. There he could start fresh with his dignity intact and they could find for themselves a new butcher. With painstaking effort they found a new position for the butcher and presented to him the offer. He went immediately to the Rav to ask his advice about whether or not to take the new position.

The Rabbi listened carefully and after deliberating the matter decided that he should not take the new job but should rather stay on as the butcher. When the communal leaders heard about the Rabbi's advice they were outraged and they felt betrayed. When they complained he told them, "You came and asked for advice about what to do. I gave the best advice I knew of, to you. When he came and asked me advice I gave the best advice I knew, for him."

There was a "reality show" on TV in Israel with the aim of entrapping and shaming scammers. A hidden-camera was set up in an apartment. Plumbers were called to fix a non-existent leak in the kitchen sink of some defenseless elderly women. One plumber after another was caught on film ratcheting up the problem and the price. Then a Chassidishe plumber was filmed telling the lady there was absolutely nothing wrong with her sink. Maybe there was a loose fitting pipe about which he expressed his willingness to adjust for no cost. The camera crew was amazed and when they asked him if he knew or suspected that he was on camera, he calmly and correctly replied, "Of course! The camera is always on!" DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.