

EXPECT NOTHING!

by Rabbi Label Lam

You shall not take a bribe, for the bribe will blind the eye of those who can see and will make righteous words crooked! (Shemos 23:8)

Imagine- you are reading the label of a delicious looking drink bottle before taking a sip. There in bold print is inscribed in the strongest terms, "Warning! This drink contains traces of 'bribery' which causes blindness and slurred-crooked speech!" Would you still drink it?

Bribery sure sounds like nasty stuff for your mental health! It ruins judgment not only for judges but for everybody.. We all make judgments every single day about millions of things. In what way are we all judges? How can bribery cause us blindness?

What's the difference between a lawyer and a judge? Sound like the lead in to a good joke but it's not.. A lawyer is hired by one side to build a case for one position alone. He sees only the merits of his client while demonizing the other side. A judge, however, must show equal skepticism to both litigants to be able to arrive at an equitable determination about the truth.

It was reputed about Thomas Edison, when he was considering hiring a scientist to work in his lab he would invite him to lunch first and serve him a bowl of soup. Then he would observe the man's behavior. If he would add salt before tasting the soup then he did not get the job..

Sometimes we are bribed by certain false suppositions as a lawyer assumes his client is innocent or the consumer of the soup assumes it is bland. When we wrongly assume that things must be a certain way, and then our expectations are not met, fits of disappointment and resentment can blind us to the possibility of experiencing any form of happiness!

Rabbi Yisrael Reisman describes on a tape entitled "Great Expectations" his recollections of an incident that occurred when he was yet a young Yeshiva student. He had positioned himself in his dorm room so his bed would be adjacent to the sink for some strategic purpose. The sink, he soon discovered, had a constant drip which he promptly reported to the powers that be. Understanding that it was just a matter of a washer or some such nickel or dime item he assumed it would be taken care of pronto. The next few nights he lay awake tossing and turning to the dripping faucet becoming more upset, frustrated and resentful.

Finally after a couple of days, the janitor arrived. It was a loose washer. The whole thing took a few moments and cost next to nothing. The dripping was finally was over. That very evening there was huge rain storm and as he lay there in bed ready for a good night's sleep he became aware of the dripping from the roof to the window sill below- the same constant drip- drip and it didn't bother him a bit.

He wondered why one drip sound stirred him so and the other had zero effect. He concluded that the dripping sound was not what was actually annoying him. The proof is that the water from the rain didn't wrinkle his psyche at all. What bothered him about the sink? The answer is that he assumed somebody would do something about it, it would be done right away, that his request would be fulfilled and honored swiftly etc. And it wasn't...it wasn't true!

I once heard from Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner ztl two words that he called "the secret to happiness". Admittedly, at the time I felt it sounded rather negative. Over many years, though, I have grown in appreciation for the wisdom of his insight. I share it often with my children and myself too. It's a hard pill, **"Expect Nothing!"** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).