

The Lecture Series With Reb T (Biweekly): *The Shiur where we talk a topic per session with some practical lessons*, Tonight's topic is "**Do Not Judge, But Make Sure to Budge**"

Sources from [Sefaria](#) and [aish.com](#) (unless noted otherwise); Lookout for the *Points To Carryover (PTC's)*, to take with you hopefully from the Shiur

All Shiurum on [shiurenjoyment.com/shiurim/shiurim-reb-t/](#) -Shoutout to Jake W. & Eli N.!

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-The Shiur should serve as a **zechus for the refuah sheleimah of** anyone sick or needing a yeshuah or refuah

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How could he do that to me? I can't believe she just cut me off like that! Who does he think he is to jump right in front of us?? I cannot fathom how she could leave without paying! I've been waiting for three hours and he can waltz right in?? What audacity of that guy! He has SOME NERVE! Where is the decency, where is the proper derech erez?? What a Shonda!

Chances are if you've said or thought any of these things, or things along similar lines, you're guilty of not judging favorably.

We are instructed by Hashem through the Torah to do what we can in a logical way to judge others favorably, to give people the benefit of the doubt, to think about the other side of the story.

How often do we judge others? How easy is it to automatically assume you know or have all the facts? All too often this is most definitely not the case. The Gemara explains that we are obligated to judge someone favorably, if they are a Tsaddik doing an act that seems negative, to find something positive and look for something good. We will gd willing see the source in person later.

There is an amazing book published by Artscroll called "The Other Side Of The Story" by Yehudit Samet which depicts stories and the other side of the story, quite literally. A highly recommended and excellent book, which literally goes through this topic with stories and looking at the other side as well as with tips and pointers, a few of which we will gd willing see soon.

Too often we falsely accuse, without giving people the benefit of the doubt, without thinking about the other side of the story. **We need to make sure to not judge, but to make sure to budge** and think differently.

We don't know what was going on in a persons life at a time something happened...we can't judge a person for what happened as we weren't in their shoes and we can't imagine what it was like to be in such a situation at such a time. We don't have all the info, we don't have all the details, we don't know all the story.

If you are going to judge, I always say, the only type of judging you should do, are allowed to do, are implored to do, is **to judge others favorably**. That is the one type, the only type, of judgment that should ever be allowed.

The Pasuk teaches us in [Vayikra 19:15](#)

לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂוּ עֹל בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא־תִשָּׂא פְּנֵי־דָל וְלֹא תִהְיֶה פְּנֵי גָדוֹל בַּצְּדָקָה תִּשְׁפֹּט עַמִּיתָהּ:

You shall commit no injustice in judgment; you shall not favor a poor person or respect a great man; **you shall judge your fellow with righteousness**.

[Rashi](#) says

**Judge your fellow with righteousness:** [This is to be understood] according to its apparent meaning. **Another explanation is: Judge your fellow favorably [i.e., give him the benefit of the doubt].**

We are implored by Hashem, literally from the words of the Torah, by law, to judge others favorably. Hashem exhorts us, commands us, to look to the positive of those around us, judging them to the benefit of the doubt.

*Im my own personal life, when I see someone engaged in a behavior, or doing something, for example, John Doe, an upstanding righteous religious orthodox Jew, and he runs into a McDonald's, I immediately think about and say to myself this response: "What?? John?? How could you?? And I thought you were an upstanding citizen of the Jewish Faith!" —my immediate reaction is to judge negatively, but, I must think to myself "STOP! PAUSE! Think about the situation logically. Why did he go inside there? Did he have a purpose? A Reason? I'm sure there must be a logical explanation. Maybe he desperately needed to use the bathroom. Maybe he was chafing from thirst and desperately needed a drink and bought a bottle of water, perfectly kosher, as this was the only place to get one in the immediate vicinity. Maybe he desperately needed change in order to give money to a poor person." The possibilities abound and we must try to think through them.*

*Whenever we are driving and someone cuts us off, speeds by us, or is zipping through the lanes, quite often my wife will say the classic line "Maybe they are rushing to the hospital and need to get there fast." A simple way to think and reframe a situation that could otherwise make us upset.*

*If we are driving and are stuck in major traffic, maybe we could think to ourselves, “I hope that no-one is hurt and there is no accident. Maybe there is construction, I hope it’s roadwork that is tying up the lanes and that everyone is ok.” Don’t automatically think negative or accuse falsely.*

*There are different examples through the Torah and Tanach about how characters spoke and interacted especially in this area, I just want to point out a few.*

*Look at this famous example from [Samuel I:1](#)*

**Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!” And Hannah replied, “Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the LORD.** Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress.” “Then go in peace,” said Eli, “and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him.” She answered, “You are most kind to your handmaid.” So the woman left, and she ate, and was no longer downcast.

*This may be a source for giving a Bracha for falsely accusing someone and not judging favorably. This is a classic example on negatively interpreting the situation. I believe there is a commentator or midrash that explains that Eli used the urim vtumim, literally asking Hashem, about Chanah, and the letters shin, chuf, reish, and heh lit up, and he thought it was shekeirah, which could be interpreted to mean drunk, but really the letters were mistakenly put together and really read Kisheirah, kosher, misinterpreted in the wrong way.*

A different example from [Samuel II:6](#)

As the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him for it. They brought in the Ark of the LORD and set it up in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the LORD. When David finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of Hosts. And he distributed among all the people—the entire multitude of Israel, man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a cake made in a pan, and a raisin cake. Then all the people left for their homes. David went home to greet his household. **And Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “Didn’t the king of Israel do himself honor today—exposing himself today in the sight of the slavegirls of his subjects, as one of the riffraff might expose himself!” David answered Michal, “It was before the LORD who chose me instead of your father and all his family and appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel! I will dance before the LORD and dishonor myself even more, and be low in my own esteem; but among the slavegirls that you speak of I will be honored.”** (So to her dying day Michal daughter of Saul had no children.)

Two people looking at the same action in vastly different ways. A false accusation led to devastating consequences for one of the characters much later on.

Another example from [Samuel I:17](#)

Early next morning, David left someone in charge of the flock, took [the provisions], and set out, as his father Jesse had instructed him. He reached the barricade as the army was going out to the battle lines shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines drew up their battle lines opposite each other. David left his baggage with the man in charge of the baggage and ran toward the battle line and went to greet his brothers. ... **When Eliab, his oldest brother, heard him speaking to the men, Eliab became angry with David and said, “Why did you come down here, and with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your impudence and your impertinence: you came down to watch the fighting!” But David replied, “What have I done now? I was only asking!”** And he turned away from him toward someone else; he asked the same question, and the troops gave him the same answer as before. The things David said were overheard and were reported to Saul, who had him brought over. ...

David’s brother negatively accused him of coming for trouble or for a spectator sport, when really David was following his fathers orders and ends up saving the whole Jewish people as a young lad with only a slingshot and a few rocks to kill and behead Golias the giant.

[Pirkei Avot teaches in 1:6](#)

יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי הארכלי קבלו מהם. יהושע בן פרחיה אומר: עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, וקוי דן את כל האדם לכה זכות.

Yehoshua ben Perachiah and Nitai HaArbeli received (Torah) from them. Yehoshua ben Perachiah said: "Make yourself a teacher; acquire a friend; **and judge every person favorably.**"

**Notice how the wording of the mishna is stated. Dan et KOL HADAM. We will touch on this again later g-d willing, but the phraseology teaches us we have to judge the whole person, and the whole of the person, not just the small situation or act we are seeing. The whole person and the whole of the person in our life—proving to us we are most definitely missing details in front of us.**

**We are implored not only by Hashem himself to judge favorable those around us but by the sages themselves, asking us in their words of ethics and morals to go about thinking about others in a favorable and benefit of the doubt way.**

The Mishna in [Pirkei Avos 2:4](#) teaches us

הלל אומר, אל תפראש מן הצבור, ואל תאמין בעצמך עד יום מותך, ואל תדין את חברך עד שתגיע למקומו, Hillel said: do not separate yourself from the community, Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death, **Do not judge your fellow man until you have reached his place.**

We don’t know what’s going on in someone’s life behind closed doors so how can we judge them? We don’t have all the facts or all the information so how can we decide what really

happened? We can't really understand a person in their situation unless we ourselves have been in that exact situation, and most times we are not or have not been, so we shouldn't judge them to begin with.

[Pirkei Avos 4:18](#) also tells us

רבי שמעון בן אֵלְעָזָר אוֹמֵר, אַל תִּרְצֶה אֶת חֲבֵרְךָ בְּשַׁעַת כְּעֶסוֹ, וְאַל תִּנְחַמְנוּ בְּשַׁעַת שְׂמִתּוֹ מִטַּל לְפָנָיו, וְאַל תִּשְׁאַל לּוֹ בְּשַׁעַת נִדְרוֹ, וְאַל תִּשְׁתַּדֵּל לְרֵאוּתוֹ בְּשַׁעַת קִלְקִלְתּוֹ:

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar said: Do not try to appease your friend during his hour of anger; Nor comfort him at the hour while his dead still lies before him; Nor question him at the hour of his vow; Nor strive to see him in the hour of his disgrace.

—>It's impossible to understand a person's actions or behavior unless you were in their place, especially if they majorly struggle in an area...for someone who loves the smell of McDonalds , unless you are in that same situation or feeling you can't and won't really understand why they want to or did walk by McDonald's all the time. It's also of importance to remember the value of timing and place. If someone is angry at the moment because they couldn't withstand walking by McDonald's to inhale the aromas, that is not the time for mussar. Unless we have such a situation in our own lives, we can't really fathom or understand what others go through and we should thus not judge, or give benefit of the doubt or only judge favorably.

Make sure not to judge, but make sure to budge.

[aish.com](#) points our with author [Yakov Astor on the Pirkei Avot Mishna of 1:6](#)

### **JUDGING FAVORABLY**

*The last part of the Mishnah, "Judge every person favorably," has a few interpretations. It can be teaching that in addition to a rabbi and a friend, you need others, i.e. "every person," in your life, and therefore judge them favorably.*

*Alternatively it could be referring to the way you should deal with your two primary others: a rabbi and a friend. 1 Sometimes our rabbi or best friend may do something that appears out of character. Nevertheless, the Mishnah exhorts, judge them favorably. 2 Do not assume the worst. You are probably missing the full picture.*

**The trick is to look at each person as an aggregate whole: a combination of good and bad who are decent human beings dealing with their life struggles just like you are.**

*The phrase could also mean "Judge the whole person [not every person] favorably." Even though each of us has our faults, the trick is to look at each person as an aggregate whole: a combination of good and bad, success and failure, who are, in the final analysis, decent human beings dealing with their life struggles just like you are.*

[aish.com](#) points out with Author Sara Yocheved Rigler

*The Torah enjoins us: "Judge your fellowman justly." [Lev. 19:15] The classic commentators explain this to mean "judge your fellowman favorably and interpret his actions and words only to the good." [Sefer HaChinuch 235]*

***Instead of condemning, whenever possible, devise a favorable interpretation.***

*Three thousand years before the advent of Cognitive Psychology, the Torah recognized that our attitudes (and consequently our words and actions) are formed not by what the other person said or did, but rather by our interpretation of what the other person said or did. Therefore, the Torah obligates us, whenever possible, to find or devise a favorable interpretation.*

*This mitzvah pulls the rug out from under the critical, condemning attitude that characterizes much of our interpersonal relations. In practice it looks like this:*

- *Instead of faulting a friend for not calling you back when she said she would, you could think: "She may have tried to call me back, but my line was busy," or "She may have received an important call just when she was about to dial my number."*
- *Instead of faulting your spouse for being late (again!), you could think: "I'm not time-challenged like s/he is, but how much have I really changed my own ingrained bad habits?"*
- *Instead of faulting a repairman for not coming when he said he would (leaving you sitting at home all afternoon waiting), you could think: "His previous client may have had a more complicated job than expected," or "When he went to phone me that he'd be late, he couldn't find my number or his cellphone battery was low."*

*The result of judging others favorably is that we cultivate a positive, sympathetic attitude toward others. When we don't think badly about others, we don't speak badly about others, and we certainly don't act out angry, vengeful behaviors. We don't jump to conclusions. We don't condemn people who may be suffering circumstances far beyond our ken. We avoid a host of sins simply by putting our minds into the mode of favorable judgment.*

*Judging others favorably does not preclude self-protective actions or positive steps to redress wrongs. Judging others favorably doesn't mean to leave your \$300 iPod on your desk when you go to the rest room. It does mean that if you don't find your iPod where you're sure you left it, check every drawer and pocket before you start suspecting your fellow workers. Often we are sure -- and wrong!*

*Judging others favorably does not mean that when your child comes home in tears because her teacher yelled at and insulted her, you should refrain from taking measures to handle the situation. It does mean that before angrily calling the principal and demanding that the teacher be fired, you entertain the possibility that you haven't heard the full story and that, even if the teacher did act wrongly, extenuating circumstances may have caused a usually fair teacher to act out of character.*

***STRATEGIES FOR JUDGING FAVORABLY***

*The great book, The Other Side of the Story, by Yehudit Samet, offers strategies for judging others favorably. Here is a sampling:*

- ***Stop applying a double standard.*** *Many of us judge others severely while we have a host of excuses for our own reprehensible behavior. For example, we grumble about other drivers who double-park their cars and thus block a whole lane, but when we double-park it's okay because our son is just jumping out of the car for one minute to pick up the dry cleaning and we didn't know there'd be a line...*

- *"Don't judge your friend until you reach his place." [Ethics of the Fathers 2:5] This is the Jewish version, dating back 1800 years, of "Don't judge your friend until you've walked a mile in his shoes." This means that even when another person has done something culpable, consider the possibility that you would have done likewise if you had been in the same situation. Your employee or co-worker quits and takes a better paying job, showing no loyalty to the company that gave him his start. Before you say, "I wouldn't do that!" think: "But would I do that if I had his mortgage, his debts, his size family?"*
- *Admit that you don't know the whole story. No court would render a judgment based on insufficient evidence, but we do it all the time. We see someone do something reprehensible, and we immediately decide, "Guilty!" What do we know of the background of the situation or that person's circumstances or challenges? Conjuring up the humility to admit, "I don't know," can save us from judgments that are severe -- and wrong.*

***Listen to this story about "THE PLUMBER" from the author Sara Rigler:***

*Several years ago, we put in a new bathroom, complete with cabinets and new plumbing. A few hours after the workmen left, I turned on the new faucet. The water pressure was nil. The faucet was defective.*

*The next morning, I called the plumber. Yes, Rami assured me, the faucet was guaranteed. He would replace it. He couldn't come that day, but he would come the following afternoon.*

*I waited all afternoon, but Rami didn't show. At 4:30, I called his cellphone. He apologized, but said he couldn't come. "Why not? Where are you?" I asked, annoyed.*

*"I'm at home," he answered meekly.*

*"Well, then, just come. You can be here in half an hour."*

*Rami refused. In reply to my entreaties and accusations, he promised to come the next day.*

*The next day, no Rami. By now the water from the defective faucet was coming out in a trickle. It took three minutes to fill up a cup to brush my teeth. I was irate. What lousy service! But he was the only plumber who could make good on the guarantee. I called again. Again he promised to come and didn't. Over the next ten days, he failed to show up seven more times. By now we were filling up basins of water from the bathtub.*

*During that period, I was studying The Other Side of the Story with a friend daily over the phone. One of the strategies the book teaches is to imagine extenuating circumstances that could account for a person's acting improperly. Since we have no way of knowing what the real story is behind the person's actions, the story we make up to judge him favorably is as likely to be true as the condemning version.*

*I decided to judge the plumber favorably. After all, I told myself, even the worst plumber doesn't fail to show up ten times in a row. Something must be very wrong in his family, I concluded.*

*Perhaps, God forbid, one of his children is seriously ill. Perhaps the child is in the hospital and Rami's wife is sitting by his bedside all day, so Rami, worried and grieving, has to stay home to take care of the other children.*

*Once I concocted this hypothetical story, my anger cooled. I could fill up a basin of water from the bathtub to use at the sink without fuming. I continued to call Rami every day, but the bark was gone from my voice.*

*One day the doorbell rang. There was Rami with the new faucet. I greeted him kindly, showed him to the bathroom, and stood there while he worked. Gently I asked him, "Is everything all right in your family?"*

*He shook his head. With a choked voice he told me his story: His wife of 17 years had run off with another man, leaving Rami, stunned and stricken, with their six children. A few days later, his wife realized that the man was alcoholic and violent. He threatened her that if she tried to leave him, he would hurt her children. After a few iterations of physical violence, she fled back to her family. While I was fretting about my faucet, Rami was home protecting the lives of his children.*

*You don't have to be highly creative to imagine a story that puts someone else in a good light. You just have to want to do the mitzvah of judging others favorably. In the end, their truth may be stranger than your fiction.*

*If we try to think of stories, reasonable stories, to put others in a more favorable light, often times we will be right, but much more than that, it will give us more energy to deal with the situation at hand and more empathy and honesty to deal with all those around us.*

*[aish.com](http://aish.com) points out with author Emunah Braverman*

*1. **If we react without listening, we need to begin by apologizing.** "I'm really sorry; I should have listened to you first. Tell me what happened."*

*2. **Try, if at all possible, to get the facts straight or at least a firmer grip on the facts.** Another friend described this scenario to me: After a play date she received a phone call. She hung up and immediately launched an attack on her 10 year-old daughter. "Shana's mother called to say that when her daughter came over to play with you, you wouldn't share your toys, you didn't offer her anything to eat and you just sat in the corner and played by yourself. I was shocked to hear that. Didn't we speak many times about how to treat guests? Don't you understand about sharing?" Her daughter started sobbing. When she calmed down she said, "That's not what happened at all. I offered her some toys and she wasn't interested. I brought out cookies and some juice and she said she wasn't hungry. Everything I suggested she just shrugged her shoulders and said no. So I finally gave up and just started playing by myself."*

*3. **Support your child and at the same time encourage her to take the high road.** A mother once called me (I find I've gotten at least one call per daughter, usually around 5th grade!) to say that a bunch of girls were picking on her daughter in school and my daughter was a part of the group. I was very surprised – not because my kids are angels but because it seemed uncharacteristic for this particular child – but I promised to speak to her. As I gently raised the issue, my daughter reassured me that she was not a part of this group. "I believe you," I said, "but since this other girl seems to think you are, could you just apologize anyway? You won't lose anything and you'll make her feel better."*

*There are at least two sides to every story. Sometimes our children really do make mistakes (yes it's true). We need to give them a chance to own up to it themselves or explain. And whatever their story, we need to listen with love and encouragement. With your arm around their shoulder – if they'll let you.*

*You may discover they really did act incorrectly. They may really need to apologize. They may really need consequences.*

*But it will be a very different dialogue if your main concern is How can I help my child grow through this experience and continue to feel loved? versus What will the neighbors think? or How could this happen to me?*

*Children can never be hurt by too much love.*

*Emuan braverman explains on [aish.com](http://aish.com)*

*...It made me think about times I may have been the one on the other side, wondering why a guest wasn't more helpful at dinner, a friend just sat there as I was struggling with packages, my children's friends didn't make a greater effort to clean up their mess. Yes, it could also be just laziness or bad character, the same qualities I'm sure others were imputing to me. But maybe they too had a good reason. Maybe they too had an injury that needed to heal, a wound that I couldn't see and so I therefore assumed didn't exist.*

*I have a friend who had a heart transplant many years ago. She has a handicapped parking sticker for her car. She doesn't look handicapped. Some outsiders may think she is trying to game the system. But she has an internal issue that requires a parking advantage. We just can't see it. It's hidden to the regular eye...*

*Everyone has challenges – some physical, some emotional, some psychological – and many of them private. Before we make assumptions, and particularly before we judge others as inadequate or worse, we need to remind ourselves that we don't know the full story...*

*From [aish.com](http://aish.com) with author Sara Radcliffe*

*Money is missing from your wallet. Your daughter says "I saw Josh take it out of your wallet." What are your immediate thoughts? Do you first give him the benefit of the doubt – maybe someone came collecting charity, or the paperboy came to be paid, or do you assume the worst? Judging others favorably is a mitzvah. Instead of jumping to conclusions that your son is the culprit, look for possible positive explanations for the seemingly incorrect behavior. Since we want others to give us the benefit of the doubt, we should try not to be quick to make negative judgments about our fellow humans and come up with "escape clauses" -- possible, reasonable, favorable explanations for their behavior. The Torah teaches that the way we behave toward others is the way that God will behave toward us.*

*From [aish.com](http://aish.com) with author Nesanel Safran*

*We all have a courtroom in our head, and each of us is the judge and jury. Whenever we see our friend do something that looks like it might not be right, we make a decision -- will we give him the benefit of the doubt or pronounce him guilty on the spot? The Torah teaches us to judge each*

*other favorably. Maybe there is a good reason why our friend did what he did, or perhaps we didn't see the whole picture.*

*Listen to this following story Called "DOUBLE DIP" from the author Nathan Safran, where a girl learns the value of giving the benefit of the doubt.*

*Leah Stern had only recently moved into the city. Although it was a big change from the small town where she had grown up, Leah was a friendly, outgoing girl who seemed to be able to adjust quickly. In fact, she had already started to make several friends in the new school.*

*She hit it off with one girl in particular named Debbie. Since they had first met it seemed like they had always known each other. Leah would excitedly tell her parents about things she did with her new friend, and she was especially looking forward to the coming Sunday when Debbie had agreed to come to her house so they could do homework together.*

*Sunday arrived and Leah was excitedly preparing for her friend's visit when the phone rang. Leah raced to pick it up.*

*"Hi ... sniff ... Leah?" said a hoarse voice on the other end. "This is Debbie... cough, cough ... I'm really sorry but I caught this terrible cold over the weekend. I ... sniff ... don't think I can make it today."*

*Leah was quick to assure her friend that she understood and wished her a speedy recovery. Feeling disappointed, Leah sat down alone and began to attack the homework assignment she had looked forward to doing with her friend.*

*An hour later Leah put down her pencil. "Whew," she said to herself. "That wasn't easy, but I'm finished." Then and there she decided to reward herself for her hard work with an ice cream from Benny's. Though she had never been there, all the kids in school were talking about how great it was, and Leah figured this was a good time to try it out.*

*She enjoyed the three-block stroll down the busy shop-filled avenue, so different from the quiet, almost empty streets of her old hometown. Finally arriving at the ice-cream shop, she got in line to place her order. As she stood in line, she glanced around at the packed tables. Suddenly she felt a shock. There sitting at one of the corner tables with a group of kids from her school was -- Debbie!*

*Although she was wearing her hair in a ponytail instead of the usual way, there was no mistaking that it was Debbie, who was supposed to be sick at home. Not only didn't she look sick, but she looked like she was having a great time, laughing and eating an ice cream cone.*

*Leah quickly turned on her heels and sped out of the ice-cream store before Debbie noticed her. "Some cold! She just wanted to dump me," muttered Leah angrily to herself as she practically raced home, hardly noticing the activity on the street that had so charmed her on the way there.*

*By the time she walked into her front door, her eyes were red and teary. Leah's dad, who had been raking the leaves, noticed his daughter's distress and followed her into the house.*

*"Leah, what's wrong?" he asked with concern.*

*"I thought Debbie was my friend and she made a fool out of me!" Leah blurted out and proceeded to tell him the whole story.*

Mr. Stern nodded empathetically as he listened to his upset daughter. "And tomorrow as soon as I see her I'm going to tell her what I think of what she did!" concluded Leah, bitterly.

"I understand how you feel," said her father. "But maybe you should give Debbie a chance to explain herself first. From everything you've told us about her since you met her, Debbie doesn't seem like the kind of girl who would hurt somebody like that. Perhaps there's a good reason for what happened and a way to judge her favorably."

Leah thought about her father's words, but she just couldn't stop feeling angry with her friend.

The next day at school as Leah was walking down the hall she heard a familiar voice. "Hi Leah!" It was Debbie.

Leah was about to explode. But then she remembered her dad's words and thought twice. "There must be a good reason..." she told herself as she turned around silently in Debbie's direction.

Leah couldn't believe her eyes. She thought she was seeing double. There were two Debbies standing next to each other! One, holding a Kleenex, and next to her, another "Debbie" with a ponytail.

The first "Debbie" spoke up. "Hi ... cough cough," she said. "Sorry I couldn't make it yesterday. But the day in bed did me good. By the way, this is my twin sister Eve. I don't think you've met."

Leah swallowed. "Hi ... Eve," she managed to stutter. "Nice to meet you ... I think I've ... um ... seen you around."

Now Leah realized what had happened and felt very glad that she had decided to judge her friend favorably.

—>Often times we don't have all the facts, we don't know all the information or the full story. Make sure to fact check and think things through before falsely accusing or jumping to conclusions.

[aish.com](http://aish.com) points out with author Aleeza Ben Shalom the following story and scenario:

Diana and David are on a date. The conversation was going well until David got a text and decided to read it at the table with Diana. She decided to excuse herself and go to the bathroom so she wouldn't show how offended she was. When she came back she was clearly upset but didn't say why. The date continued for another half hour. Shortly after the date, Diana called her friend Michelle who set up the date to tell her side of the story.

"He was so rude. He actually texted during the date."

Michelle called David to find out what happened. David answered the phone and said to her in a whisper, "I can't speak right now. My brother was in an accident and I'm in the hospital visiting him."

When Michelle told Diana what happened, her heart sank. If she had only known. She didn't realize the importance of the text and that he stayed an extra half hour with her before heading to the hospital.

Here are five steps to help you start judging people more favorably:

1. **Give others the benefit of the doubt.** *Assume a person is innocent until proven otherwise. Instead of stewing about why David is on his phone, give him the benefit of the doubt. Assume it's an important or urgent call that can't wait. And don't hesitate to ask in the moment, "Is everything alright?"*
2. **Put yourself in the other person's shoes.** *Try to think how they must feel and stretch your thinking as much as you can. Some situations just don't make sense. Was David caught off guard by the urgent text? Was he trying not to worry his date? Was he protecting his brother's privacy? Imagine you were David. Were you feeling pressure, confused, sad?*
3. **Don't take things personally.** *What other people say or do has more to do with their issues than yours. Choose to be a person who has confidence in themselves. Fake it until you make it. Diana could have told herself that David reading a text doesn't mean that their date wasn't important to him. She could have smiled instead of stewing and waited for more information.*
4. **Don't be quick to judge.** *You don't know what's going on in another's life. Diana can choose to reserve her judgment until she speaks to the person that set them up or until she speaks with him directly.*
5. **Be careful of what is sometimes called a 'thought storm.'** *Our minds often spin out of control and come up with a story that isn't true. Trying to make sense of a situation that you don't understand. It's exhausting to think so much. Be patient until you can see the whole picture. Don't waste your time with unnecessary thoughts that will then affect your mood negatively. Practice self-control in your thinking. While Diana can't make her thoughts disappear, she can choose not to pay attention to them.*

What seems to appear on the surface might not really be what you think it is. We definitely don't always know what is really going on and we may be missing a lot of information. Try to think of logical reasons or answers.

[Aish.com](http://Aish.com) points out with Author Rabbi Daniel Fine

*The Torah teaches that we should give people the benefit of the doubt and judge people favorably. As the Torah says, "With righteousness you should judge your fellow man," (Lev. 19:15) For example, let's say that you made up to meet your best friend for a coffee (something you were looking forward to as you hadn't spent quality time together for a while). At the last minute your friend calls to cancel due to "an emergency." Twenty minutes later you see your friend out shopping with another friend.*

*Your natural reaction is one of disappointment, perhaps anger. How could she lie to me like that and dump me to go shopping? Yet the Torah instructs us to reinterpret the situation and judge favourably. Assume that there was some type of genuine emergency – the other friend desperately needed some urgent attention and care and your friend took her shopping to help her out.*

*What is the rationale behind this commandment? Isn't the Torah commanding us to resort to wishful thinking and naiveté? Maybe my friend really didn't want to spend time with me?*

A 13th century French Rabbi named Rabbi Isaac Joseph of Corbeil explained that judging favourably is one of attribution. Social psychology studies show that when it comes to my successes I tend to attribute the success to me, and when it comes to my mistakes I tend to attribute them to situational factors. This is our natural bias. But when it comes to others, the effect is the reverse: I ascribe other people's failures to themselves and their successes to situational factors.

**We view other people's mistakes as them and their successes due to an outside factor.**

My successes are me and my failures are due to someone or something else. But other people's mistakes are them and their successes are due to an outside factor.

This is where the judging favorably comes in. It doesn't mean to naively invent an imaginary, unfeasible world in which everyone is right and innocent. It is teaching us to take into account that other people's failures might be beyond their control and that their successes are really their doing.

When I choose to think that my friend went shopping due to a genuine emergency, I am choosing to think that my friend is someone who would not normally let me down. This is not being naive since it is the same positive attribution you would ascribe to yourself. Use the same bias you have towards yourself and be consistent in applying it to others too. You see yourself positively, so see others in the same light.

Rabbi Gefen points out on [Aish.com](http://Aish.com) that

*...Rav Yitzchak Berkovits explains that the mitzvah of judging favorably does not mean that we should irrationally judge every act in a positive way, rather it is telling us that we should judge people in a logical, reasonable and fair manner. A person may have a tendency to judge others in a harsh manner and not give them a fair judgment; the Torah comes and tells us that this is wrong, however it does not instruct us to judge people in an illogical fashion.*

Rabbi Packouz explains on [aish.com](http://aish.com) that

***There are some tricks to help, such as six possible ways to analyze a situation and jump to a good conclusion:***

- 1. Are you sure it happened at all?** Sometimes our perceptions of what we see and hear are mistaken.
- 2. Are you sure the details are correct?** One small detail can completely alter the scenario. Something may have been exaggerated or omitted that would make a big difference.
- 3. Do you know if the other person intended harm?** Often the consequences are unforeseen.
- 4. Do you know the assumptions the other person was operating under?** Maybe the other person was operating under a misconception that would explain their behavior.

5. **Could the other person's act have been the result of an innocent, human error?**  
Everyone has limitations. Perhaps this person lacked experience, was forgetful, distracted or simply didn't think carefully enough before acting.
6. **Do you know what events preceded the negative action?** The other person may be enduring a great deal of pain, frustration or stress. This might be a response to a specific situation, like an illness or financial loss. Or it could be a deeper, more pervasive problem that effects the person's entire life.

If we could just try to step back, analyze, think about the situations and just judge favorably, the whole world would be so much better for all of us. Remember we don't have all the details. Remember we don't always know the whole story. Remember that we should only judge favorably. Remember to always give everyone the benefit of the doubt. Remember that we need to see others in a positive light, a rational light. Maybe if we do so, the whole world could really be that much more favorable on many levels.

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Let's look at some other sources.

[Sifra, Kedoshim, Chapter 4 פרק ד' 4', ספרא, קדושים, פרק ד' 4', Chapter 4](#)

דבר אחר: "בצדק תשפט עמיתך" – הוי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות

[Shabbat 127b](#)

*The Sages taught in a baraita: One who judges another favorably is himself judged favorably. And there was an incident involving a certain person who descended from the Upper Galilee and was hired to work for a certain homeowner in the South for three years. On the eve of the Day of Atonement, he said to the homeowner: Give me my wages, and I will go and feed my wife and children. The homeowner said to him: I have no money. He said to him: In that case, give me my wages in the form of produce. He said to him: I have none. The worker said to him: Give me my wages in the form of land. The homeowner said to him: I have none. The worker said to him: Give me my wages in the form of animals. He said to him: I have none. The worker said to him: Give me cushions and blankets. He said to him: I have none. The worker slung his tools over his shoulder behind him and went to his home in anguish. After the festival of Sukkot, the homeowner took the worker's wages in his hand, along with a burden that required three donkeys, one laden with food, one laden with drink, and one laden with types of sweets, and went to the worker's home. After they ate and drank, the homeowner gave him his wages. He asked him, when I did not give you the money, of what did you suspect me? Why did you not suspect me of trying to avoid paying you? The worker answered, I said: Perhaps the opportunity to purchase merchandise [perakmatya] inexpensively presented itself, and you purchased it with the money that you owed me, and therefore you had no money available. The homeowner asked: And when you said to me: Give me animals, and I said: I have no animals, of what did you suspect me? The worker answered: I said: Perhaps the animals are hired to others. The homeowner asked: When*

you said to me: Give me land, and I said: I have no land, of what did you suspect me? The worker answered: I said: Perhaps the land is leased to others, and you cannot take the land from the lessees. The homeowner asked: And when you said to me: Give me produce, and I said: I have no produce, of what did you suspect me? The worker answered: I said: Perhaps they are not tithed, and that was why you could not give them to me. The homeowner asked: And when I said: I have no cushions or blankets, of what did you suspect me? The worker answered: I said: Perhaps he consecrated all his property to Heaven and therefore has nothing available at present.. The homeowner said to him: I swear by the Temple service that it was so. I had no money available at the time because I vowed and consecrated all my property on account of Hyrcanus, my son, who did not engage in Torah study. The homeowner sought to avoid leaving an inheritance for his son. And when I came to my colleagues in the South, the Sages of that generation, they dissolved all my vows. At that point, the homeowner had immediately gone to pay his worker. Now the homeowner said: And you, just as you judged favorably, so may God judge you favorably.

**PTC. We should do what we can to concoct reasonable stories to judge others favorably, on any small level we can. I.e. “Maybe he couldn’t text me back because he got really busy at home.”**

#### [Shevuot 30a](#)

**The Sages taught: ...Alternatively, it is derived from the verse: “But in righteousness shall you judge your colleague,” that you should judge another favorably, and seek to find justification for his actions, even if when interpreted differently his actions could be judged unfavorably. Rav Yosef teaches that from the verse: “But in righteousness shall you judge your colleague [amitekha],” it is derived: **With regard to one who is with you [im she’itekha] in observance of Torah and in fulfillment of mitzvot, try to judge him favorably****

#### [Shaarei Teshuvah 3:218](#) שְׁעָרֵי תְּשׁוּבָה ג'ר"ח"ח

behold when you see a man who is saying something or performing an act, and one can judge the thing as him being guilty or being innocent: If the man is one that fears God, you have been obligated to judge...him favorably in truth - even if the thing is closer to, and makes more sense to be, understood unfavorably.

**PTC. We are commanded to judge those around us to the benefit of the doubt, even if it might seem hard on some level to do so. Try to think about their side, what could have been going on for them in their own lives. The only judging we should do is the judging favorably of others.**

#### [Sefer HaChinukh 235:1](#) סֵפֶר הַחִינוּךְ רל"ה:א'

And also included in this commandment is that it is fit for every person to judge his fellow favorably, and only to understand his deeds and his words favorably.

#### [Bartenura on Pirkei Avot 1:6:3](#) בַּרְטָנוּרָא עַל מִשְׁנַת אַבּוֹת א'ו'ג'ג'



[ליקוטי מוהר"ן רפ"ב:ב:ד'](#)

..A person has to **judge** himself **favorably** and find in himself some remaining good point, in order to give himself the strength to avoid falling completely, God forbid.

[Peninei Halakhah, Days of Awe 7:11:3](#) זי"א:ג:11:7 פניני הלכה, ימים נוראים

Just as we **judge** these sinners **favorably** and treat them with benevolence and love, so we hope that God judges us favorably and showers us with His love and benevolence.

[Chofetz Chaim, Part One, The Prohibition Against Lashon Hara, Principle 3 7:1](#) חפץ חיים, חלק 3 7:1 ראשון: הלכות איסורי לשון הרע, כלל ג ז:א'

And if he is one of the plain people, who guard themselves against sin, but occasionally stumble into it — if the doubt is balanced, he must incline it and **judge** him by the scales of merit, as Chazal have...said: "If one judges his friend by the scales of merit, G-d will **judge** him by the scales of merit."...

[Kedushat Levi, Deuteronomy, Shoftim 1](#)

The Torah tells us that we ourselves must initiate the process of justice by giving anyone who appears to commit a wrong the benefit of the doubt, i.e. as the Talmud in *Megillah* 12 words it: "man is measured by the yardsticks he applies to others."

***PTC. We need to also judge ourselves favorably and not be so hard on ourselves, and cut ourselves some slack. If we judge ourselves and others favorably, hopefully Hashem will to us as well***

[Shabbat 127a](#)

Rav Yehuda bar Sheila said that Rabbi Asi said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: There are six matters a person enjoys the profits of in this world, and nevertheless the principal exists for him for the World-to-Come, and they are: Hospitality toward guests, and visiting the sick, and consideration during prayer, and rising early to the study hall, and one who raises his sons to engage in Torah study, **and one who judges another favorably, giving him the benefit of the doubt.**

[Orchot Chaim L'HaRosh 7:10](#) ש זי"א:10:7 אורחות חיים להרא"ש

Judge your fellow man as innocent; always give him **the benefit of the doubt.**

[Sefer HaMidot, Money, Part I 66](#) ס"ו:66 חלק ראשון ספר המדות, ממון

The sustenance of a person is diminished when he does not judge others with **the benefit of the doubt**

***PTC. We never lose out by judging others favorably; not only does it help us in this world but it helps us and comes with us in the world to come as well***

## **Points To Carryover**

**PTC. We should do what we can to concoct reasonable stories to judge others favorably, on any small level we can. I.e. “Maybe he couldn’t text me back because he got really busy at home.”**

**PTC. We are commanded to judge those around us to the benefit of the doubt, even if it might seem hard on some level to do so. Try to think about their side, what could have been going on for them in their own lives. The only judging we should do is the judging favorably of others.**

**PTC. One of the ways to obtain real scholarship, real grasp on Torah and life itself is to judge favorably those around us, even when it may seem real difficult to do so.**

**PTC. True compassion means to judge every single person around you, even “enemies” to the side of the benefit of the doubt, which is above and beyond the simple law of the matter**

**PTC. Finding the benefit of the doubt for all people is a real justice to the people around you, even finding any favorable aspect to a story to alleviate the negative knee-jerk reaction serves some helpful justice for people who might not always get it around you**

**PTC. We need to also judge ourselves favorably and not be so hard on ourselves, and cut ourselves some slack. If we judge ourselves and others favorably, hopefully Hashem will to us as well**

**PTC. We never lose out by judging others favorably; not only does it help us in this world but it helps us and comes with us in the world to come as well**