

Go with us and we shall treat you well, for Hashem has spoken good for Yisrael. (10:29)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* asked his father-in-law, Yisro, to join the nation in its journey to *Eretz Yisrael*. "We will treat you well," Moshe says. "Because Hashem has spoken good (He will provide us with His beneficence: you, too, will benefit.) The term *diber tov*, spoken good, is found in only one other place in *Tanach*. In *Megillas Esther* (7:9), when Charvonah tells Achashveirosh that the tree which Haman *ha'rasha* had prepared for Mordechai -- *asher diber tov al ha'Melech*, "who spoke good for the king" -- is standing in Haman's house (and why not put it to good use?). The *Agra d'Kallah* derives from this that whoever speaks well concerning *Am Yisrael* is considered to have spoken well of Hashem -- the *Melech ha'olam*, King of the world. Likewise, the flipside is also something which we should underscore. One who speaks ill of *Klal Yisrael* is viewed as if he has slandered/spoken negative of the *Melech*, Supreme King, *Hashem Yisborach*. In reality, it makes sense that maligning a person is similar to casting aspersion on his monarch/father/family. We are all part of a larger unit, all under the Heavenly reign of Hashem.

To disparage a Jew carries with it enormous and frightening implications. Need we say more?

In 1911, many of the Torah institutions within the *Yishuv Ha'Yashan*, Old *Yishuv*, in Yerushalayim suffered an economic crisis. Among those which sustained losses, the Diskin Orphanage, under the direction of *Horav Yitzchak Yeruchem Diskin*, *zl*, suffered the most. *Rav* Moshe Blau, an *askan*, community activist, took it upon himself to travel to *chutz l'aretz*, the Diaspora, to procure the necessary funds crucial to the survival of the institution. When he visited the city of Pressburg, Hungary, he learned how critical it is to judge everyone favorably. It was *erev Shabbos HaGadol*, and he was running late. He stopped at the home of the *Dayan*, *Horav Leib Rubinstein*, to deposit his money pouch with him. On Sunday morning, he returned to retrieve his money. As he was about to leave, *Rav* Rubinstein asked him if he had already visited the city's *Rav*, *Horav Akiva Schreiber*, *zl*. When he answered in the negative, the *Dayan* asked how one of his stature could visit Pressburg and not pay a visit to the *Rav* (who was a distinguished Torah scholar and grandson of the *Chasam Sofer*).

Rav Blau went to the *Rav's* home and rang the bell -- once, twice, three times, until he decided the *meshareis*, servant, who would answer the door had been instructed not to open for money collectors. He was upset to the point that he was prepared to pen a letter letting the *Rav* know that he had come from Yerushalayim and had not received access to his home. The same afternoon he met the *Dayan*, who asked if he had visited the *Rav*. He replied that he had made the effort to visit, but had not been welcomed into the home. He added, "Perhaps the *Rav* does not answer the door to the likes of me (money collectors)."

The *Dayan* immediately countered, "Impossible. You do not know our *Rav*. I now demand that you do not leave Pressburg until you first meet with the *Rav*."

"On second thought," the *Dayan* continued, "are you certain that you went to the correct address?" "Yes," *Rav Blau* replied, "I even pressed the doorbell three times, and no one answered."

"Which door did you use?" "The middle door (there were two doors)." "The bell on the middle door does not work. You must use the one on the right side."

The reader can probably imagine the story's ending. *Rav Blau* returned that afternoon, and, as soon as he pressed the doorbell on the right side of the house, the servant welcomed him in and brought him to *Rav Schreiber's* study. He spoke for a while with the *Rav* – never once mentioning that he been there earlier. As the *Rav* accompanied his guest to the door, he motioned to him to press the middle doorbell, the one that had earlier not worked. He pressed the bell and heard no sound. "Did you hear a sound?" the *Rav* asked him. "No" replied *Rav Blau*.

"The bell broke a few days ago. Now, you have a better understanding and appreciation of *Chazal's* dictum, *Havei dan es kol ha'adam l'kaf z'chus*. 'Judge all men favorably.' This rule includes even the *Rav*. He, too, must be judged favorably!"

It was this last line which I feel is most important. We make excuses for everyone, except our Torah leaders. Sadly, they are the first ones with whom we take issue. They, too, are human beings who might have a broken bell, oversleep, or have a sick child at home. "Judge all men favorably" – applies to all men.