

The JEWISH Spin on Current Events

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

Does befriending a criminal reflect on one's character?

∞ OVERVIEW ∞

1. WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DOES ONE HAVE FOR HIS FRIEND'S ACTIONS?
2. WHY SHOULD ONE AVOID ASSOCIATING WITH EVILDOERS?
3. ON WHAT LEVEL IS IT ENCOURAGED TO BEFRIEND EVILDOERS?
4. SHOULD ONE BE JUDGED BASED ON HIS FAMILY OR FRIENDS BEHAVIOR?
5. WHAT ARE SOME REQUIRED LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS?

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☞ SOURCES ☞

1. What responsibility does one have for his friend's actions?

☞ 1A ☞

GENESIS 6:13

G-d said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with robbery through them; and behold, I am about to destroy them from the earth.

Rashi: Wherever you find promiscuity, catastrophe comes to the world and kills both good and bad.

☞ 1B ☞

GENESIS 18:23-25

Abraham came forward and said, "Will You also stamp out the righteous along with the wicked? What if there should be fifty righteous people in the midst of the city? Would You still stamp it out rather than spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people within it? It would be sacrilege to You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the righteous along with the wicked; so the righteous will be like the wicked...."

☞ 1C ☞

EXODUS CHAPTER 32

...and fashioned it into a molten calf. They said, "This is your god, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt."...Hashem said to Moses, "...Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them...". Moses pleaded before Hashem...He took the calf that they had made and burned it in fire. He ground it to a fine powder and sprinkled it over the water. He made the Children of Israel drink... Moses stood at the gateway of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for Hashem, join me!" – and all the Levites gathered around him. He said to them, "So said Hashem the G-d of Israel, 'Every man, put his sword on his thigh and pass back and forth from gate to gate in the camp. Let every man kill his brother, every man his fellow, and every man his near one.' " The Levites did as Moses said, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day... On the next day, Moses said to the people, "You have committed a grievous sin! and now I shall ascend to Hashem – perhaps I can win atonement in the face of your sin." Moses returned to Hashem and said, "I implore! This people has committed a grievous sin and made themselves a god of gold...". Then Hashem struck the people with a plague, because they had made the calf that Aaron had made.

⌘ 1D ⌘

JOSHUA, CHAPTER 7

The Children of Israel trespassed against the consecrated property: Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the consecrated property, and the wrath of Hashem flared against the Children of Israel... About three thousand men of the people went up there [to the city of Ai]; but they fled before the men of Ai. The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of them... The people's heart melted and became like water. Joshua tore his garments and fell on his face to the ground before the Ark of Hashem until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they placed dirt upon their heads. Joshua said, "Alas, my L-rd, Hashem/Elokim. Why did you bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to make us perish?... Hashem said to Joshua, "Raise yourself up! Why do you fall on your face? Israel has sinned; they have also violated My Covenant that I commanded them; they have also taken from the consecrated property..."

2. Why should one avoid associating with evildoers?

⌘ 2A ⌘

TANYA, CHAPTER 28

He who wrestles with a filthy person is bound to become soiled himself.

⌘ 2B ⌘

ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS, 1:7

Nittai of Arbel said: "Keep away from a bad neighbor; Do not associate with a wicked man..."

⌘ 2C ⌘

ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS, 2:10

He [Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai] said [to his students]: "Go and see which is the good way to which a man should cleave..." Rabbi Yehoshua said: "A good friend". Rabbi Yosai said: "A good neighbor"...

He said to them: "Go and see which is the evil path from which a man should keep far away..." Rabbi Yehoshua said: "A wicked friend". Rabbi Yosai said: "A wicked neighbor"...

⌘ 2D ⌘

TALMUD, SANHEDRIN 23A

It was also taught so in a Baraisa: So would the pure-minded of Jerusalem conduct themselves: They would not sign on a document unless they knew who would be signing with them, they would not sit in judgment unless they knew who would be sitting with

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them, and they would not participate at a banquet unless they knew who would be dining with them.

3. On what level is it encouraged to befriend evildoers?

⌘ A ⌘

SELECTION FROM TANYA CHAPTER 32

As for the Talmudic statement to the effect that one who sees his friend sinning should hate him and should tell his teacher to hate him also, this applies to a companion in Torah and precepts, having already applied to him the injunction, "One must repeatedly rebuke his friend," meaning "Him who is with you in Torah and precepts," and who, nevertheless, has not repented of his sin...

But as for the person who is not one's colleague and is not on intimate terms with him, Hillel the Elder said, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the creatures and drawing them near to the Torah." This means that even in the case of those who are removed from G-d's Torah and His service... one must attract them with strong cords of love, perchance one might succeed in drawing them near to the Torah and Divine service. Even if one fails, one has not forfeited the merit of the precept of neighborly love.

Even with regard to those who are close to him, and whom he has rebuked, yet they had not repented of their sins, when he is enjoined to hate them, there still remains the duty to love them also, and both are right: hatred, because of the wickedness in them; and love on account of the aspect of the hidden good in them, which is the Divine spark in them, which animates their divine soul. He should also awaken pity in his heart for the [the divine soul], for she is held captive, as it were, in the evil of the *sitra achra* that triumphs over her in wicked people. Compassion destroys hatred and awakens love...

4. Should one be judged based on his family or friends behavior?

⌘ A ⌘

TALMUD, BAVA BASRA 110A

Rava said: One who seeks to marry a woman ought first to examine the character of her brothers. For it is stated: "And Aaron took Elisheba daughter of Aminadab, sister of Nachshon, [as a wife]". By implication from the fact that [the verse] says "the daughter of Aminadav", do I not know that she was also the sister of Nachshon? What is Scripture coming to teach us by stating that she was "the sister of Nachshon"? From here we derive that one who seeks to marry a woman ought to examine [the character] of her brothers.

A Baraisa taught: Most sons resemble the brothers of the mother.

⌘ 4B ⌘

ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS, 1:6

Judge every person favorably.

5. What are some required leadership qualifications?

⌘ 5A ⌘

ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS, 1:10

Despise taking high office.

⌘ 5B ⌘

EXODUS 18:21

And you shall discern from among the entire people, men of accomplishment, G-d-fearing people, men of truth, people who despise money, and you shall appoint them leaders...