

DA23. Not Slandering or Giving False Testimony Against Our Neighbor.

We are not to slander or give false testimony against our neighbor.

This precept is derived from His Word (blessed is He):

Key New Testament Scriptures

Mark 10:19

You know the mitzvot- 'Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't give false testimony, don't defraud, honor your father and mother..

Luke 3:14

Some soldiers asked him, "What about us? What should we do?" To them he said, "Don't intimidate anyone, don't accuse people falsely, and be satisfied with your pay."

Ephesians 4:31

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness.

Colossians 3:8

.. but now, put them all away- anger, exasperation, meanness, slander and obscene talk.

Additional New Testament Scriptures

Matthew 19:18

Luke 18:20

Romans 1:29-31

2 Corinthians 12:20-21

Ephesians 4:25, 31

1 Timothy 1:9-10

2 Timothy 3:2-3

Titus 2:3, 3:1-2

James 4:11-12

Related New Testament Mitzvot

AA22 Speaking Only That Which is Holy and Beneficial

DA03 Not Harming Our Neighbor

DA28 Not Being a Gossip or Talebearer

DA64 Not Speaking Badly or Critically of Our Brother or Neighbor

Supportive Tanakh Scriptures

Leviticus 19:16

Do not go around spreading slander among your people, but also don't stand idly by when your neighbor's life is at stake; I am ADONAI.

Deuteronomy 19:16-19

If a malicious witness comes forward and gives false testimony against someone, then both the men involved in the controversy are to stand before ADONAI, before the cohanim and the judges in office at the time. The judges are to investigate carefully. If they find that the witness is lying and has given false testimony against his brother, you are to do to him what he intended to do to his brother. In this way, you will put an end to such wickedness among you.

Psalms 15:2-3

Those who live a blameless life, who behave uprightly, who speak truth from their hearts and keep their tongues from slander; who never do harm to others or seek to discredit neighbors;

Proverbs 25:18

Like a club, a sword or a sharp arrow is a person who gives false testimony against a neighbor.

Isaiah 58:9

Then you will call, and ADONAI will answer; you will cry, and he will say, "Here I am." If you will remove the yoke from among you, stop false accusation and slander,

Jeremiah 18:18

Then they said, "Let's develop a plan for dealing with Yirmeyahu. Torah won't be lost from the cohanim, or counsel from the wise, or words from the prophets. So come, let's destroy him with slander; and meanwhile, we won't pay attention to anything he says."

Comment

This *Mitzvah* #DA23 prohibits the conveying of untrue or false information about a person. Such conveyance can damage a person's reputation and sometimes even his freedom or his life if given as false testimony in a court of law.

There are several words often associated with this *Mitzvah*. "Slander" (also "backbiting") as used by Bible translators means saying or writing something derogatory about a person that is untrue. Slander that is knowingly spoken in a court of law is called "perjury," and is itself unlawful. I say "knowingly," because slanderous testimony given in error is not considered "perjury."

A word used in contemporary law but not used in Bible translations is "libel." "Libel" is distinguished from "slander" in today's jurisprudence in that "slander" is derogatory and untrue information about a person that is spoken, whereas "libel" is information of the same character that is written or otherwise conveyed in a form that has greater permanence and is therefore

considered more damaging. “Libel” and “slander” are both “defamation” because both “unjustly” harm a person’s reputation.

“*Lashon hara*” (evil tongue) is a rabbinical *halachahic* term that is different from both “slander” and “libel” in that “*lashon hara*” is the spoken or written conveyance of derogatory information about a person regardless of whether the information is defamatory (i.e. true or untrue) and whether malevolent or innocent. “Gossip” is similar, except the information conveyed need not be derogatory.

All of this is to say that we are not to defame or give false testimony against our neighbor regardless of what it is called.

Related Mitzvot in Volumes 1 & 2

H04 Using Our Speech, Thoughts, Hearts and Actions for that which Is Good and Holy
N02 Wronging One Another through Our Speech