

Who's to Judge: Five Steps Towards Improving the People Around You

Rabbi Yitzhak ben Yosef of Corveille (died 1280), Sefer HaMitzvot HaKatan,
commandment 225

When one will judge others favorably, he will think to himself that there are no transgressors other than himself, and will repent before his Creator, lest he weigh all the world down with his guilt.

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi, 1040-1105), commentary to the Talmud, tractate
Shabat, page 127a

In judging the other favorably and saying to oneself: 'He did me no wrong in this, or he was under duress, or his intentions were for the best', peace is established between them.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Shmuel of Regensburg (Yehudah the Pious, 12th & 13th
centuries), The Book of the Pious, clause 77

Do not judge your fellow negatively, for man sees only outward appearances, while God sees into the heart, and you cannot know what is in a person's mind or heart. Therefore judge all persons favorably.

Rabbi Menachem haMeiri (1249-c. 1310), commentary on Ethics of the Fathers,
chapter 2, mishna 5

"Do not judge your fellow until you find yourself in his place" That means that if you have seen someone succumb to transgression because he was placed in a very difficult and tempting position, do not judge him unfavorably, do not write him off as an evil person. Under certain circumstances there is no way to be sure of resisting temptation, and perhaps even you, were you to find yourself in similar circumstances, would not be able to control yourself.

Rabbi Yonah of Gerona (13th century), commentary to Ethics of the Fathers, chapter
1, mishna 6

Judge him favorably, saying to yourself: 'It was an error which issued forth from the ruler, and he saw and took notice and asked forgiveness'. This is as our rabbis have said, may their memory be a blessing: "If you have seen a Torah scholar who transgressed at night, don't suspect him the next day, for perhaps he has repented. Perhaps you say?, rather - certainly, he has repented".

Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847-1905), Sfat Emet on Ethics of the Fathers,
chapter 1, mishna 6

"Judge all persons favorably". That means that one should look at all of the person, the person in his entirety. Even though concerning a certain matter he does not conduct himself properly, it is possible that he has other redeeming features and positive traits which outweigh the bad that you have seen.