

Mishlei 06-16

The Anatomy of Sin

[Pesukim 6:16 thru 6:19]

Key Concepts

In the previous segment (06-16) Mishlei described the consequences of being an unprincipled person who operates without moral or ethical restraints. The sinful behaviors of such a person were presented in a list that concluded with the sin of slandering to provoke discord. At various points in the course of his lesson Mishlei referred to parts of the human body that are associated with specific sins, i.e. mouth, eyes, feet, fingers, and heart.

Now Mishlei presents a more structured list of sinful behaviors by following a top-down sequence from the eyes to the tongue, hands, heart, and feet. In this anatomical exercise he begins with a behavioral attitude that is the source of an entire sequence of bad behaviors. That is the attitude of self-importance, which leads a person to believe that respect or consideration for others is superfluous if it prevents him from satisfying his curiosity or his desires.

Exploring Mishlei

There are seven sinful behaviors in the structured list, of which the first, self-importance, is especially significant. Besides being the cause of sin, this attitude represents a direct challenge to the supremacy of Hashem in the world. For that reason, it is distinguished from the other six, which are described as the objects of Hashem's hatred. In contrast, self-importance is introduced as the object of Hashem's disgust.

Mishlei then goes on to the remainder of the list, concluding with the seventh, which is slandering to promote discord. This happens to be the same one with which he ended the list in the previous segment. By repeating the example of slander, Mishlei demonstrates its seriousness, which can be understood in terms of the grave harm that it does to the entire community. Accordingly, depending upon one's perspective, this last behavior may also be considered the seventh, the one that earns Hashem's disgust.

(טז) שֶׁשׁ הֵנָּה שֵׁנָא ה' וְשִׁבַע תּוֹעֲבֹת נִפְשׁוֹ:

(יז) [1] עֵינַיִם רְמוֹת [2] לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֵר [3] וַיְדָיִם שִׁפְכוֹת דָּם נָקִי:

(יח) [4] לֵב חָרַשׁ מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָוֶן [5] רַגְלַיִם מְמַהְרֹת לְרוֹץ לְרָעָה:

(יט) [6] יָפִיחַ כְּזָבִים עַד שָׁקֵר [7] וּמְשַׁלַּח מִדְּנִים בֵּין אֲחֵים:

(16) *There are six behaviors that Hashem hates, but He is especially revolted by the seventh:*
 (17) [1] *haughty eyes*, [2] *a lying tongue*, [3] *hands [that] shed innocent blood*, (18) [4] *a heart [that] plots iniquitous thoughts*, [5] *feet hastening to run to evil*. (19) [6] *a false witness spreading lies*, and [7] *stirring up strife among brothers*.

Learning Mishlei

(טז) שֶׁשׁ הֵנָּה שֵׁנָא ה' וְשִׁבַע תּוֹעֲבֹת נִפְשׁוֹ:

There are six — שֶׁשׁ הֵנָּה —

examples of sinful behavior

that Hashem especially hates — שֵׁנָא ה',

but even worse, He is revolted by

a specific one that brings the count to seven — וְשִׁבַע תּוֹעֲבֹת נִפְשׁוֹ.

That seventh behavior is an attitude of self-importance,

which is the basis of the other six.

(יז) עֵינַיִם רְמוֹת

The attitude of self-importance is symbolized by [1] **haughty eyes** — עֵינַיִם רְמוֹת because such a person feels he has a right to look at anything to satisfy his curiosity and his desire. There is nothing too holy or too noble that causes him to restrain his sense of entitlement. Such an attitude is a direct challenge to the supremacy of Hashem.

לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֵר

For a self-important person nothing is worthy of standing in his way. And so he sacrifices the truth when it is advantageous. He is ready to deceive others with a [2] **lying tongue** — לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֵר. In so doing he disdains truth, which is an essential attribute of Hashem. Thus, he has earned Hashem's severe displeasure.

וַיְדָיִם שִׁפְכוֹת דָּם נָקִי:

Once a self-important person has lost the sense of his listener's right to hear the truth, he may even disregard another human being's right to life. As a result, he has [3] **hands that shed innocent blood** — וַיְדָיִם שִׁפְכוֹת דָּם נָקִי.

יח) לֵב חַרֵּשׁ מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָוֶן

The self-important person disregards the rights of others in order to satisfy his immediate wants. But after a time, he realizes that he can gain greater benefits by developing schemes that will cheat others over time. And so his **[4] heart plots iniquitous thoughts** of thievery — **לֵב חַרֵּשׁ מַחְשְׁבוֹת אָוֶן** .

רַגְלַיִם מְמַהְרוֹת לְרוּץ לְרָעָה :

Such thoughts and schemes quickly lead to action as he feels the excitement of **[5] feet hastening to run to evil** — **רַגְלַיִם מְמַהְרוֹת לְרוּץ לְרָעָה** .

יט) יָפִיחַ כְּזָבִים עַד שֶׁקֶר

These criminal activities lead to the need to defend himself and cover his tracks. And so he becomes **[6] a false witness spreading lies** — **יָפִיחַ כְּזָבִים עַד שֶׁקֶר** .

וּמְשַׁלַּח מְדֻנִים בֵּין אֲחֵים :

In his efforts to escape the consequences of his actions he seeks allies in the community and he does so by slandering those who seek justice.

In the end **[7] he stirs up strife among brothers** — **וּמְשַׁלַּח מְדֻנִים בֵּין אֲחֵים** .

In this way he has destroyed the social fabric of the community and has earned the disgust of Hashem.