

Mishlei 06-24**Applying Wisdom to Life**

[Pesukim 6:24 thru 6:35]

Key Concepts

In previous chapters we have seen how Mishlei has adopted the powerful metaphor of an immoral woman to illustrate the temptations and consequences of sin. Many of the factors affecting immoral behavior are also characteristic of the sins that arise out of yielding to false ideologies and corrupting cultures.

Exploring Mishlei

In the second chapter (segment 02-07), Mishlei spoke of the great strength of Torah wisdom in enabling a person to overcome the seductive power of an immoral woman. He then returned to this metaphor in the fifth chapter (segment 05-03) to illustrate the fraudulence of sin. The sweetness in the way she presents herself is a cover for the destruction that follows in her wake.

In the following segment (05-07) Mishlei used the same metaphor to illustrate the power of curiosity as the first stage in the development of temptation. The individual is admonished to suppress his curiosity and avoid the neighborhood where the “strange woman” plies her trade.

Further on in the same segment (Self-Delusion, posuk 5:20) this metaphor is again employed to attack the sinner’s delusion that he can get away with anything because he is sure that no one is watching.

Now Mishlei uses the power of *mussar* to offer a more extended discussion of the seriousness of immorality, especially when a married woman is involved. The discussion has four parts.

THE METHODS OF IMMORALITY. He begins by stating two fallacies by which the sinner’s judgment is compromised: the use of slick, misleading language and the subterfuge of admiring feminine beauty for its own sake.

(כד) לְשֹׁמֵרֵיךְ מֵאִשֶׁת רָע מִחֲלָקֶת לְשׁוֹן נְכָרִיָּה :

(כה) אֵל תַּחְמוֹד יָפִיָּהּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ וְאַל תִּקְחֶהָ בְּעַפְעָפִיָּהּ :

(24) To protect you from the woman of evil, from the slickness of an alien tongue.

(25) Do not desire her beauty in your heart; do not let her captivate you with her fluttering eyelids.

CONSEQUENCES. He then reminds the sinner about the potential consequences of yielding to temptation: the loss of material security in this world and the loss of a spiritual future in the next world.

(כו) כִּי בַעַד אִשָּׁה זֹנָה עַד כֶּפֶר לֶחֶם וְאַשְׁת אִישׁ נָפֶשׁ יִקָּרֶה תְּצוּד:

(26) For on account of an immoral woman, he may beg for a loaf of bread.

A married woman may ensnare a precious soul.

SELF-DELUSION. Mishlei now uses two additional analogies to point out that the sinner is deluding himself if he thinks he can escape the consequences of his actions. If a person plays with fire, will his clothing not get burnt? If he walks on coals, will his feet not get scorched?

(כז) הֲיִחַתָּה אִישׁ אֵשׁ בְּחִיקוֹ וּבִגְדָיו לֹא תִשְׂרַפְּנָה:

(כח) אִם יִהְלֵךְ אִישׁ עַל הַגְּחָלִים וְרַגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה:

(כט) בֵּן הַבַּא אֶל אִשְׁת רֵעֵהוּ לֹא יִנְקָה כָּל הַנֶּגַע בָּהּ:

(27) Can a man draw fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?

(28) Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?

(29) So it is that one who is intimate with his neighbor's wife, whoever who touches her will not be without guilt.

COMPARING ADULTERY TO THEFT. Finally, Mishlei demonstrates the seriousness of adultery by comparing it with the crime of theft. On the surface these two sins are similar: they both involve taking something that belongs to another person. But then he shows that adultery is much worse for it cannot be excused by the poverty and hunger that motivates the thief. Also, when the thief is discovered, he can make amends by means of financial restitution. In contrast, the emotional harm that the adulterer does to the victimized husband can never be made up. In fact, the adulterer is placing himself at great physical risk if the husband is driven by his rage to become violent.

(ל) לֹא יְבוֹזוּ לַגָּנָב כִּי יִגְנוֹב לְמַלְא נֶפֶשׁוֹ כִּי יִרְעֵב:

- (לא) וְנִמְצָא יְשׁוּלִים שְׁבַעֲתַיִם אֶת כָּל הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן :
- (לב) נֶאֱפָף אִשָּׁה חֲסֵר לֵב מִשְׁחִית נַפְשׁוֹ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂנָה :
- (לג) נִגַּע וְקִלּוֹן יִמְצָא וְחִרְפָּתוֹ לֹא תִמָּחָה :
- (לד) כִּי קִנְיָה חֲמַת גָּבֵר וְלֹא יַחֲמוֹל בְּיוֹם נִקְמָה :
- (לה) לֹא יִשָּׂא פָּנָיו כָּל כֹּפֵר וְלֹא יֵאָבֵה כִּי תִרְבֶּה שְׂחָד :

(30) They are not contemptuous of a thief because he may be stealing to fill his need, fearing that he will be hungry.

(31) When he is found he will readily pay seven times; he will give all the wealth of his house.

(32) The adulterer is totally lacking in common sense. Only a self-destructive person would do something foolish like this.

(33) He will find harm and public shame. His disgrace will not be erased.

(34) For jealousy ignites a husband's wrath; he will not have mercy on the day of revenge.

(35) He will not be appeased by any ransom. He will not be placated, even when you greatly increase the offered bribe money.

Learning Mishlei

(כד) לְשֹׁמֵרֶךָ מֵאִשֶּׁת רָע מִחֻלְקַת לָשׁוֹן נִכְרִיָּה :

Mussar will protect you from the woman of evil — לְשֹׁמֵרֶךָ מֵאִשֶּׁת רָע, who has adopted destructive patterns of behavior and entices you into them. It will protect you from the slickness of an alien tongue — מִחֻלְקַת לָשׁוֹן נִכְרִיָּה, that misleads you through the use of unfamiliar ways of speaking.

(כה) אַל תַּחְמוֹד יְפִיָּהּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ וְאַל תִּקְחֶהּ בְּעַפְעָפִיָּהּ :

Do not desire her idealized beauty in your heart — אַל תַּחְמוֹד יְפִיָּהּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ.

Don't let yourself be drawn into an aesthetic perspective on the beauty of women, convincing yourself that it is not this particular woman that attracts you but that you admire natural beauty as an ideal and would wish your wife possessed such beauty. This attitude will only lead you into trouble.

Even if the immoral woman uses artificial means to simulate beauty, her glance will overwhelm you.

Don't let her captivate you with fluttering eyelids — וְאַל תִּקְחֶךָ בְּעַפְעָפֶיהָ.

CONSEQUENCES.

(כו) כִּי בָעַד אִשָּׁה זֹנָה עַד כֶּכֶר לֶחֶם

Don't think that you are too smart to fall into her trap and that you will always be in control of your life.

For on account of an immoral woman — כִּי בָעַד אִשָּׁה זֹנָה,

a man may end up sacrificing his happiness in This World.

He may very well be driven to abject poverty, even to the point of having to beg **for a loaf of bread — עַד כֶּכֶר לֶחֶם.**

וְאַשְׁתֵּי אִישׁ נָפֶשׁ יְקָרָה תִּצּוּד:

Furthermore, if the seductress is **a married woman**, the sin is much greater. She **may ensnare** his **precious soul — וְאַשְׁתֵּי אִישׁ נָפֶשׁ יְקָרָה תִּצּוּד.**

Thus, a life that began in purity ends up losing its place in the World to Come.

SELF-DELUSION.

(כז) הִיחַתָּה אִישׁ אֶשׁ בְּחִיקוֹ וּבִגְדָיו לֹא תִשְׂרַפְנָה:

Be realistic! You are playing with fire!

Can a man draw fire into his lap to warm himself — הִיחַתָּה אִישׁ אֶשׁ בְּחִיקוֹ without his clothes being burned — וּבִגְדָיו לֹא תִשְׂרַפְנָה?

So too, if you become involved with an immoral woman you will be driven to poverty and will lose everything.

(כח) אִם יִהְיֶה אִישׁ עַל הַגְּחָלִים וְרַגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה:

Can a man walk on hot coals — אִם יִהְיֶה אִישׁ עַל הַגְּחָלִים without his feet being scorched — וְרַגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה?

If she is a married woman, the harm she does to you will extend beyond your possessions and strike at the core of your existence. Even if coals are not visibly burning, they can still burn the flesh. So it is with the married woman. Don't assume that if her state of marriage is concealed, it can't be the cause of your downfall.

(כט) כִּן הִבָּא אֶל אִשְׁתֵּי רֵעֵהוּ לֹא יִנָּקֶה כָּל הַנִּגַּע בָּהּ:

A man who is intimate with his neighbor's wife — כִּן הִבָּא אֶל אִשְׁתֵּי רֵעֵהוּ, will be severely punished. Even if he thinks he will be able to control himself by limiting his interaction with her to superficial contact, he is still making a mistake, as

we have seen in the two examples above. One thing will lead to another. **Whoever who touches her will not be without guilt** — **לֹא יִנָּקָה כָּל הַנִּגַּע בָּהּ**.

COMPARING ADULTERY TO THEFT.

(ל) לֹא יְבוֹזוּ לְגַנָּב כִּי יִגְנוֹב לְמִלְא נֶפֶשׁוֹ כִּי יִרְעֵב:

The disgrace of being an adulterer is much worse than that of an ordinary criminal, such as a thief, even though both are taking that which does not belong to them. People are **not** overly contemptuous of a thief — **לֹא יְבוֹזוּ לְגַנָּב**, **because he may be stealing to fill his need** for food — **כִּי יִגְנוֹב לְמִלְא נֶפֶשׁוֹ**. Even if he has money now, he is afraid **that** when his money runs out, **he will be hungry** — **כִּי יִרְעֵב**.

(לא) וְנִמְצָא יְשָׁלֵם שִׁבְעָתָיִם אֶת כָּל הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן:

Furthermore, **when he is found** — **וְנִמְצָא**, the thief can settle the claim against him by paying the prescribed fine. To avoid public embarrassment **he will** readily **pay seven times** — **יְשָׁלֵם שִׁבְעָתָיִם** the amount of the theft, which the *halachah* requires in certain cases. If necessary, **he will give all the wealth of his house** — **אֶת כָּל הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן** to save himself from disgrace. But even then, his life was never at risk.

(לב) נִאֵף אִשָּׁה חָסֵר לֵב מִשְׁחִית נֶפֶשׁוֹ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂנָּה:

In contrast, **the adulterer is lacking in common sense** — **נִאֵף אִשָּׁה חָסֵר לֵב** for he has no real need such as the thief who is hungry. Furthermore, in contrast to the thief, he earns the derision of society, and he has no way of providing financial recompense for his crime. He even runs the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and bodily injury from a jealous husband.

Only a **self-destructive person would do this** — **מִשְׁחִית נֶפֶשׁוֹ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂנָּה**.

(לג) נִגַּע וְקָלוֹן יִמָּצָא וְחָרְפָתוֹ לֹא תִמָּחָה:

Thus, **he will find** himself subject to **harm and public shame** — **נִגַּע וְקָלוֹן יִמָּצָא**. If he fathers an illegitimate child, extending the dishonor into future generations, **his disgrace will not be erased** — **וְחָרְפָתוֹ לֹא תִמָּחָה**.

The emotional harm that he has perpetrated upon the woman's husband cannot be eased with money.

(לד) כִּי קִנְיָה חֲמַת גָּבֵר וְלֹא יִחְמוֹל בְּיוֹם נִקְמָה:

For jealousy ignites a husband's wrath — **כִּי קִנְיָה חֲמַת גָּבֵר**.

He is angry about the grave personal insult to his dignity and the harm that has

been done to the good name of his family.

He will not have mercy on the day of his revenge — וְלֹא יַחְמוּל בְּיוֹם נִקְמָם.

(לה) לֹא יִשָּׂא פְּנֵי כָּל כֹּפֶר וְלֹא יֵאָבֵה כִּי תִרְבֶּה שְׂחָד:

The husband **will not be appeased by any ransom — לֹא יִשָּׂא פְּנֵי כָּל כֹּפֶר.**

He will not be placated, despite the bribe money — וְלֹא יֵאָבֵה כִּי תִרְבֶּה שְׂחָד.

Because of his anger and hurt he may be unable to control his emotions.

This is in contrast to the ways of Hashem, for He is always ready to forgive our sins when we appeal to Him.