

Mishlei 10-04

Dishonesty

Key Concepts

In their eagerness to gain wealth people may be tempted to take act unethically, such as by using false weights in commerce. Mishlei warns them that they will not achieve the outcome they are hoping for. On the contrary, they will end up impoverishing themselves because there is justice in the world. In contrast, those whose goal is just to meet basic needs through honest dealings, will be surprised to find themselves rewarded with riches.

Exploring Mishlei

(ד) ראש עֲשֶׂה כַף רְמִיָּה וְיָד חֲרוּצִים תַּעֲשִׂיר:

*(4) Having a **deceitful hand** makes the man a pauper, but having a **diligent hand of honest dealings** will enrich him.*

In commerce, a vendor's deceitful hand, which cheats the customer by falsifying weights, ultimately has the opposite effect, causing that vendor to become a pauper. But a vendor's hard working hand, which practices honest dealings, will enrich him.

Learning Mishlei

Having a **deceitful hand** — כַף רְמִיָּה
makes the man a **pauper** — ראש עֲשֶׂה
But having a **diligent hand** — יָד חֲרוּצִים
will enrich him. — תַּעֲשִׂיר

Additional Insights

IRONIC OUTCOME

(1) The dishonest vendor seeks to get rich through deceitful dealings, but will end up poor. In contrast, the righteous person is seeking only to fill his needs but will be blessed with wealth. (מצודות, חנוך לנער, הגר"א)

DECEIT

(2) Alternate Interpretation. Even if he is a **leader** (ראש) in his community, if a person uses devious methods to achieve his goals he will end up as **pauper** (רש). This will happen because Hashem conducts the world with justice. (רבינו יונה, אבן יחיאל)

(3) Alternate Interpretation. An example of the dishonest methods used by the deceitful **hand** (כף) is the use of a fraudulent **weighing dish** (כף) in commerce. (המאירי)

(4) Alternate Interpretation. The deceitful hand in the proverb is actually only the **palm** of the hand (כף). This is because the deceitful individual does not give his full commitment to the work for which he is being paid. In contrast the diligent individual engages all his energies in his full **hand** (יד) of integrity. The hand includes both the palm and the fingers. (מלבי"ם)

(5) The example of commerce given in the proverb is an allegory to other deceitful modes of behavior, such as the student who limits his learning of Torah to an abbreviated summary without delving into the underlying sources. He hopes to achieve recognition by taking a shortcut to knowledge. However, he will soon forget what he has learned and his lack of grounding will leave him without any knowledge of Torah at all. (הגר"א)

HONESTY

(6) To conduct business honestly requires hard work and dedication because this is man's destiny: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread" (*Bereishis* 3:19). (אבן יחיאל)