

Mishlei 10-10

Deception

Key Concepts

In contrast to the man of integrity, the deceptive person feels unfulfilled if he is not taking personal advantage over every situation through one scheme or another. To gain advantage he looks for an angle in the form of some useful bit of information that will benefit only those who are in on his scheme. The fewer people who are aware of it, the better his advantage will be, for the ones who are not in on the secret will pay the price.

The devious person cannot avoid giving himself away by signaling his sense of superiority in his body language. When he thinks nobody is looking, he expresses his true attitude in his body language, such as in sly winks and facial expressions.

Mishlei tells us that the devious person will ultimately be found out because his body language will give him away. Thus, he will be bringing grief upon himself. And if he is less shrewd, he will give himself away with the smirk of his lips. Such a man of foolish lips will weary himself trying to convince his victims that he bears no malice.

Exploring Mishlei

(י) קִרַּץ עֵינָיו יִתֵּן עֲצָבָת וְאֹיִל שְׂפָתָיו יִלְבֹּט :

**(10) He who winks his eye in the course of deception,
brings grief upon himself,
and the fool who signals with his lips will become weary
trying to convince his victim that he carried no malice.**

In this proverb Mishlei contrasts the instinctive behavior of a devious person who happens to be shrewd with one who is a fool. They both signal their sense of superiority with their body language, but the one who is shrewd limits his indications to the wink of his eye. The fool is less aware of how others are reading him, and unknowingly signals his thoughts with the expression of his lips.

We have previously seen a reference to the power of body language in Mishlei Segment 06-03, where the unprincipled individual is shown to give himself away though

his body language. To maintain his standing in the community the unprincipled individual pretends to accept moral teachings and thoughtful criticism. But all the while he reveals his disrespect in subtle ways. When he thinks nobody is looking he expresses his true attitude in sly winks and facial expressions.

Learning Mishlei

A deceptive person **who winks his eye** – קרץ עין,
brings grief upon himself – יתן עצבת,

once he realizes that he has been discovered.

And the fool who signals with his lips – ואויל שפתים –
will become weary – ילֵבֵט

trying to convince his victim that he carried no malice.

Additional Insights

THE WINK OF THE EYE

(1) A person communicates his feeling of superiority through his body language. When he tries to involve others in illegal schemes he cannot reveal the truth outright, but he shows through his mannerisms that what he is proposing skirts the boundaries of integrity. (רש"י, אבן עזרא)

(2) The wink of an eye is a sly mannerism because the innocent victim will not detect it and will be unable to protect himself from the harm that is being perpetrated against him. (המאירי)

(3) The devious person will ultimately harm himself because his body language is so subtle that he will not be aware when it is detected by those he intended to harm. He won't realize that he has incurred their ill will. (חנוך לנער)

THE FOOL

(4) The fool signals his true motives with the expression of his lips. This is comparatively easy to detect. And the intended victims will immediately catch on. The fool will have a hard time convincing the victim that he means no harm. (אבן עזרא, חנוך) (לנער)