

Mishlei 10-12

Love and Hate

Key Concepts

We are instructed by the Torah to resist feelings of hatred (*Vayikra* 19:17), but the inclination to resent others is always lurking beneath the surface as the result of our jealousy, pride, and selfishness. Mishlei teaches us to actively work to overcome such feelings and strengthen our feelings of love. He reminds us that hatred is closely tied to the destruction that comes about because of quarreling and strife. In fact, it may be said that hatred is not the outcome of a quarrel; it is the cause of it.

Exploring Mishlei

(יב) שְׂנֵאָה תְּעוֹרֵר מְדֻנִים וְעַל כָּל פְּשָׁעִים תִּכְסֶּה אֲהָבָה:

(12) Hatred provokes strife, but love covers all offenses.

We need to be aware that the potential for strife is always present. The ill-will that one person may feel at times towards another will arouse memories of past offenses and stimulate resentment. This can result in endless quarreling and bickering. Thus, the antidote for strife is love. When a person's emotions are dominated by love he will seek to view perceived offenses in a larger context and find ways to forgive them.

Learning Mishlei

Hatred provokes strife — שְׂנֵאָה תְּעוֹרֵר מְדֻנִים

because if a person harbors ill-will against another he will take offense at even a minor fault and there will be much bickering. And even if he overlooks a minor offense he will remember it the next time there is a similar incident.

but all offenses — וְעַל כָּל פְּשָׁעִים

can be covered by love — תִּכְסֶּה אֲהָבָה

If a person loves another he will be inclined to quickly forgive a minor offense and find a way to resolve a major offense.

Additional Insights

HATE

- (1) Avoid having dealings with a person who harbors ill-will toward you for he will be unbending in minor differences of opinion. (רבינו יונה)
- (2) A person who harbors ill-will against another will tend to suspect him of an offense even when there are no grounds for suspicion. He will misinterpret his motives and assume the other had bad intentions even when it was an innocent misunderstanding. The result will be false accusations and resentment. (המאירי, רלב"ג)
- (3) A person may be inclined to overlook a minor offense, but if he harbors ill-will towards the offender he will keep it mind and when the opportunity arises the memory of the previous incident will aggravate the severity of the present offense. (הגר"א)
- (4) When there is hatred between two people, even the most insignificant fault can provoke a heated quarrel. Each proceeds to interpret events in the light of his own hostility. (מצודות, רשר"ה, מלבי"ם)
- (5) Hatred tends to arise independently of any real cause. (רשר"ה, מלבי"ם)
- (6) There is a clear prohibition against hatred, but a person should also be motivated to overcome hatred because of the harm he is doing to himself. (דעת סופרים)

LOVE

- (7) A person who harbors good-will towards another will forgive a minor offense because he will want to assume it was his own misunderstanding of the situation. (המאירי, רלב"ג)
- (8) If a person loves another, he will truly forgive his offenses, even serious faults, and not hold them against him to use in future disputes. (הגר"א, מצודות)
- (9) In order to protect the existing love between two people, both sides are likely to overlook the other's faults in the hope that this was just a temporary misunderstanding. However, although this is sometimes the right thing to do, one should seek to resolve arguments, not just blindly forgive. (דעת סופרים)
- (10) The *tzadik* resists feelings of hatred, even toward *resha'im*. He focuses on their potential and seeks to bring them to the Torah. (אלשיך)

(11) If a person has developed a loving relationship with Hashem, Hashem will be inclined to forgive his minor offenses. And even if his sin is serious, if he does *teshuvah* out of love for Hashem, his offenses will be wiped clean. But if a person shows a repeated lack of consideration for the will of Hashem, Hashem will be inclined to hold him accountable for every offense. (רש"י, אבן עזרא, הגר"א)