

Mishlei 10-18

Reacting

Key Concepts

When a person is treated unfairly his natural instinct is to express his resentment to others. To give in to this instinct is a foolish mistake because the words he uses against the offender are likely to promote further contention and strife. They are also likely to result in the serious sin of *lashon hara* (slander and gossip). But keeping quiet and hiding his resentment is also no solution, because his related words of insincerity are a falsehood. The ill-will he continues to harbor in his heart is also a great sin. A better solution is to confront the offender privately and resolve his differences.

Exploring Mishlei

(יח) מְכַסֶּה שִׁנְאָה שִׁפְתָי שֶׁקֶר וּמוֹצֵא דָבָר הוּא כָסִיל:

(18) One who covers up hatred has lips of falsehood, but the one who speaks out the words of his resentment is a fool.

The first person to be addressed in this proverb is the one who bottles up his hatred and pretends not to be offended. He is guilty of falsehood because his conversations with the offender are tainted by lies. But even worse is the second person who takes revenge by telling others what has been done to him. He is a fool, because in his self-righteous indignation he is doing damage that cannot be repaired.

Learning Mishlei

The offended person who covers up his hatred — מְכַסֶּה שִׁנְאָה — has lips of falsehood — שִׁפְתָי שֶׁקֶר. He must lie about his true feelings and so he is guilty of falsehood but at least he has not fanned the fires of strife.

But if he tells his complaint to others — וּמוֹצֵא דָבָר — he is a fool — הוּא כָסִיל

because his hatred has brought him to the sin of *lashon hara*. What he should have done is rebuke the offender privately and work to resolve his differences with him.

Additional Insights

THE COVER-UP

- (1) It is shameful to cover up hatred because the sin of hating another has not been resolved. The proper solution is to confront the offender. (רבינו יונה)
- (2) The one who lies to cover up his hatred has committed a falsehood but there is hope that he will mend his ways. This is not true of the fool. (אלשיך)

THE FOOL

- (3) The fool who tells others about his resentment has committed a grave sin which can never be repaired. The impressions left in the minds of those who listened to him can never be erased. (אלשיך)
- (4) By taking his revenge against the offender, the fool risks antagonizing him, who now feels justified in harming the fool even further. (חנוך לנער)
- (5) By accusing someone of committing an offense, the fool risks creating a bad impression about himself. People will say he is accusing someone of the kind of behavior of which he himself is guilty. (מצודות)
- (6) It is typical when accusing someone else of committing an offense to begin with a few positive words about the offender. The result is likely to be that his listeners won't believe his negative remarks and his stature in the community will be diminished. (שבט מיהודה)