

Mishlei 10-31

Speech and Goodwill

[Pesukim 10:31 and 10:32]

Key Concepts

When used by a righteous person (*tzadik*) the human mouth becomes a source of life (see Segment 10-11). With the power of speech, the *tzadik* can share wisdom, promote goodwill, and communicate with his Creator. In contrast, wicked people (*resha'im*) use their power of speech to instigate controversy and strife.

Exploring Mishlei

(לא) פִּי צַדִּיק יִנּוּב חֵכְמָה וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְּכוֹת תִּפְרֹת:

*(31) The mouth of the tzadik sprouts wisdom,
but a perverse tongue will be severed*

(לב) שִׁפְתֵי צַדִּיק יִדְעוּן רְצוֹן וּפִי רְשָׁעִים תְּהַפְּכוֹת:

*(32) The lips of a tzadik know how to placate,
but the mouth of resha'im speaks perversity.*

In the two proverbs of this segment Mishlei addresses two aspects of the positive use of the power of speech as used by the *tzadik*: (1) sharing wisdom with others, and (2) reducing strife by placating those who have been wronged.

In contrast, the two proverbs tell us that *resha'im* use speech in a perverse way. They antagonize people and foment strife. Since Hashem hates strife and ill will, He will surely bring that ability to an end as suggested in the first proverb (31).

Learning Mishlei

(לא) פִּי צַדִּיק יִנּוּב חֵכְמָה וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְּכוֹת תִּפְרֹת:

(31) The mouth of a tzadik sprouts wisdom — פִּי צַדִּיק יִנּוּב חֵכְמָה,
thereby promoting peace and long life.

But a perverse tongue will be severed — וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְּכוֹת תִּפְרֹת,
because it foments strife. Thus, it must be prevented from bringing its quarrelsome ideas into action.

(לב) שִׁפְתֵי צַדִּיק יִדְעוּן רְצוֹן וּפִי רְשָׁעִים תִּהְפְּכוֹת:**(32) The lips of a tzadik — שִׁפְתֵי צַדִּיק****know how to placate — יִדְעוּן רְצוֹן**

Hashem and people.

But the mouth of *resha'im* speak perversity — וּפִי רְשָׁעִים תִּהְפְּכוֹת

and thereby promote strife.

Additional Insights**THE MOUTH OF THE TZADIK (v. 31)**

(1) The *tzadik* is compared to a blossoming tree (See Mizmor 001, v. 1:3) that produces bountiful fruit. Just as the nature of the tree is to produce fruit and sheltering leaves, so is the nature of the *tzadik* to produce wisdom that enlightens all who have access to his words. (רבינו בחיי)

(2) The *tzadik* is motivated by the welfare of others and so he uses the power of speech to make wisdom palatable to the people. (אבן יחיאל)

(3) The *tzadik* speaks in terms of wisdom and *mussar*, thereby elevating the moral level of the people. (מצודות)

THE LIPS OF THE TZADIK (v. 32)

(4) The *tzadik* uses the power of speech to placate the person who has been wronged. In this way he prevents strife. (חנוך לנער, אבן יחיאל)

(5) The *tzadik* placates the anger of Hashem in *tefillah*, thereby saving the world from harsh judgment. (רש"י)

(6) Although the *tzadik* speaks in terms of truth, he knows how to couch his words in such a way as to maintain peace among contending parties. (רבינו יונה)

THE TONGUE OF PERVERSITY (v. 31)

(7) In their perversity, the *resha'im* speak the opposite of wisdom, that is, the opposite of truth. And just as the the fruit of the *tzadik* is wisdom, the fruit of the *resha'im* is pride, which leads to strife. (רבינו יונה, רבינו בחיי)

(8) The perverse tongue will be prevented from bringing its quarrelsome ideas into action. (המאירי)

THE MOUTH OF RESHA'IM (v. 32)

(9) In their perversity, the *resha'im* do not practice the humility needed to placate their adversaries. On the contrary they falsely insist that they have done no wrong and therefore they don't back down from their antagonistic stance. (חנוד לנער)

(10) When the *resha'im* try to placate someone they do so in a dishonest way, using the power of falsehood to deceive. (הגר"א)