

Mishlei 11-02

Malice

Key Concepts

A person of low character allows his natural selfishness to dominate his personality. (See [03-07](#).) As a result, he becomes inconsiderate to others and aggressively exploits his relationship with them. This malicious tendency inevitably leads to shame and disgrace.

The quality of malice may be contrasted with the quality of modesty, which is practised by unselfish people who want to avoid drawing attention to themselves. By developing their natural reserve, they live a life that is conducive to wisdom, which they gain by listening and learning.

Exploring Mishlei

(ב) בַּאֲזָדוֹן וַיָּבֵא קִלְוֹן וְאֶת־צְנוּעִים חֲכָמָה :

(2) *When malice comes, disgrace follows,
but with modesty, there is wisdom.*

This proverb associates two contrasting character attributes (malice and modesty) with their consequences (disgrace and wisdom). To avoid disgrace and acquire wisdom the listener is urged to suppress any malicious tendencies and practice modesty in his behavior.

Learning Mishlei

When malice comes, — בַּאֲזָדוֹן —
disgrace follows. — וַיָּבֵא קִלְוֹן —
But with modesty, — וְאֶת־צְנוּעִים —
there is wisdom. — חֲכָמָה —

Additional Insights

MALICE

(1) The malicious person gets pleasure from humiliating others. Thus, humiliation and embarrassment follow in his wake. (רבינו יונה, מצודות)

- (2) The malicious person vents his anger when a situation bothers him. The object of his anger is humiliated. (רבינו יונה)
- (3) The malicious person has no patience and doesn't respect the opinions of others. He lacks caution and when this leads to failure, he suffers shame. (רלב"ג)
- (4) The malicious person associates with others of bad character. He brings shame upon himself. (המאירי)
- (5) The malicious person cheats and deceives. He then curses the victim who accuses him of deception. The two parties raise their voices in anger, resulting in disgrace for both. (אבן יחיאל, חנוך לנער)
- (6) The malicious person is not interested in the truth. He uses knowledge only for personal advantage, to make himself look good. Shame follows because he humiliates others. (הגר"א)
- (7) The malicious person is a skeptic who scoffs at the Torah and men of wisdom. He chooses a life of disgrace, bereft of moral and ethical standards. (מלבי"ם)

MODESTY

- (8) The modest person restrains himself from aggressively speaking his mind. He keeps a low profile out of humility but focuses on listening and learning from others. Therefore, he is likely to acquire wisdom. (רבינו יונה, מצודות, הגר"א)
- (9) The modest person associates with people of wisdom who have the habits of reserve. (המאירי)
- (10) The modest person is careful not to embark on any venture without careful investigation. His activities are associated with wisdom. (רלב"ג)
- (11) The modest person humbly accepts the teachings of morality and ethics. Therefore, his life is accompanied by wisdom. (מלבי"ם)