

## Mishlei 11-14

# Anticipation

### Key Concepts

In every area of life and at every level we are faced with challenges and problems to solve. Even if all the factors are known, the solution that seems most likely to be successful may turn out to be too costly or ineffective. The more we plan and think through our intended course of action, the better are the chances of success.

The possibilities of failure become even more severe if we are in a conflict with a business or military opponent. Since we cannot be sure what steps our adversary will take, we need to expand the scope of our planning accordingly, anticipating as many contingencies as we can.

Each contingency represents a possible future circumstance that we may need to deal with. The ability to anticipate every contingency is essential to victory.

In this segment Mishlei is advising us to think ahead and make as many plans as seem appropriate based on what is at stake. The metaphor that he uses to illustrate the importance of planning ahead is the metaphor of war, since the potential losses in wartime can be catastrophic in scale. Furthermore, since one can never be sure what course the enemy will take, war planning is probably more complex than any other.

On a personal level, the enemies we face are the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) and the weakness of our own character. We can never be sure how strong the motivation to behave badly will be in any situation, so we should think ahead and prepare ourselves by visualizing what we may be up against in a moment of stress.

### Exploring Mishlei

(יד) בְּאִין תְּחַבְּלוֹת יִפְלְעִם וְתִשׁוּעָה בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ :

**(14) When there are no strategic plans a nation will fall to the enemy,  
but in much counsel there is victory.**

Mishlei reminds us that not having adequate planning in wartime is likely to result in defeat, despite all the other qualities an army may have. He does not tell us how to conduct the actual planning process, except for one important point. The leader who has the responsibility to make the decision should seek as much counsel as possible.

The more minds he brings to bear on the issue, the more likely it is that he will not miss an important consideration.

## Learning Mishlei

(יד) בְּאֵין תְּחִבֵּלוֹת יִפְלְעִם וְתִשׁוּעָה בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ:

**(14) When there are no strategic plans a nation will fall to the enemy,  
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**(14) When there are no strategic plans — בְּאֵין תְּחִבֵּלוֹת —  
a nation will fall to the enemy, — יִפְלְעִם —  
but victory — וְתִשׁוּעָה —  
depends on much counsel. — בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ**

## Additional Insights

(1) Every person is in a battle to control his physical temptations. His ability to succeed will be enhanced by anticipating the persuasive power of the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*). (רלב"ג)

(2) As in a war many plans or stratagems are needed because the enemy is also making his plans. To win, one must not underestimate his enemy. He may need a string of stratagems that are linked together so that he can choose the one that is best in each contingency. (רבינו יונה מלבי"ם)

(3) The best plan will be produced when there are more opinions expressed during the planning process. (רבינו יונה)

(4) Besides thinking through every possible contingency one must think through all the possible alternatives for action in order to decide which is best course. (המאירי)

(5) Effective conduct of a military contest requires a strong leader who is open to many opinions of expert advisers but who then makes the final decision. If there are too many voices directly involved in the decision, there will be no clear resolution since each will find fault with the counsel of the other. Correspondingly, in issues of personal guidance the individual should look to the Torah for the final decision. (הגר"א)