

Mishlei 12-06

## Deceptive Speech

**Key Concepts**

Hashem gave man the precious power of speech so that he can share wisdom, do kindnesses, and communicate with his Creator. (See Segment 10-11.) However, some people use this wonderful gift as a tool to camouflage evil intentions. In effect they have set up an ambush using a flow of mellifluous words to catch the innocent unaware. Wicked people (*resha'im*) find this opportunity to gain advantage difficult to resist. However fair-minded people (*yesharim*) are saved from falling into this pattern of evil because they cannot bring themselves to utter untruths.

**Exploring Mishlei**

(ו) דְּבַרֵי רְשָׁעִים אֶרְבִּדָּם וּפִי יִשְׂרָיִם יִצִּילֵם:

*(6) The words of the resha'im lie in ambush for blood by deceiving their victims, but the mouth of the yesharim will rescue them from the temptation to deceive.*

In this proverb *resha'im* and *yesharim* are contrasted by the way they use their power of speech. The *resha'im* use it as a means to lay a trap for the unwary and thereby commit serious physical or emotional injury. Either type of injury is referred to as "blood." The *yesharim* are protected from the distortion of the power of speech by their allegiance to the truth. They simply cannot bring themselves to utter falsehood despite the temptation.

**Learning Mishlei**

The wicked often hide their true intentions, which are to defraud and injure. They use deceptive words and lies to trick others into lowering their guard. In effect,

**the very words of the wicked — דְּבַרֵי רְשָׁעִים —  
lie in ambush for blood — אֶרְבִּדָּם.**

In contrast, the fair-minded are unable to utter an untruth because they have trained themselves to always be truthful. Thus,

**the mouth of the fair-minded — וּפִי יִשְׂרָיִם —  
will rescue them — יִצִּילֵם**

from deceptive speech.

## Additional Insights

### RESHA'IM

(1) The *resha'im* often hide their true intentions. They sometimes camouflage their intent so skillfully that their fair-minded victims, who give them the benefit of the doubt, protect them from culpability. Thus, our ancestor Yitzchak was persuaded that Esav was virtuous. (אלשיך)

(2) Some *reshai'm* cause harm to the innocent through extended and repeated patterns of malicious gossip. (מלבי"ם)

(3) Other *reshai'm* promote fraud and larceny with their words by means of their advice to the perpetrators or by false testimony. (רש"י, מצודות)

(4) *Resha'im* sometimes cover up their evil intentions with innocent-sounding words. With these they are able to ambush the innocent person, catching him unawares, unable to properly defend himself. (הגר"א)

### YESHARIM

(5) Fair-mindedness refers to the quality of decency that motivates a person to act in a balanced and equitable manner. A person may be fair-minded from birth or as a result of the way he was brought up. A person with this quality is able to recognize and appreciate fair treatment, even in ambiguous situations. See segments 01-01 and 11-03. (רבינו יונה, מלבי"ם)

(6) The mouth of the fair-minded person is unable to utter an untruth because it goes against his basic character traits. This saves him from the sins of the *reshai'im*. (רשר"ה)

(7) In addition, some of the fair-minded are drawn to investigate and reveal the plots and unjust claims of the *reshai'm* and to testify in favor of the victims. (רש"י, מצודות, רבינו יונה, אבן יחיאל)