

## Mishlei 13-17

# Faithfulness

### Key Concepts

When a person takes on an assignment, the attitude that he brings to his mission will determine how effective he will be. If he respects the one who charged him with the mission and is faithful to its purpose, he will do more than just perform the expected activity. He will monitor his own progress and compare it with the anticipated result. If he suspects that the result may be unsatisfactory because of unforeseen complications, he will expend additional effort to improve the mission's likelihood of success.

In contrast, if he is not a faithful messenger, but is only concerned with the specific actions to which he has committed himself, than he will not trouble himself to verify that the purpose of the project is being met. In such a case, the mission may very well fail, and he will suffer the consequences of failure.

### Exploring Mishlei

(יז) מְלַאֲךְ רָשָׁע יִפֹּל בְּרָע וְצִיר אֱמוּנִים מְרַפָּא:

(17) *A wicked messenger falls into trouble,  
but a faithful emissary brings healing.*

This proverb refers to the person who has taken on an assignment as a messenger or agent. A person who takes on such a responsibility without intending to be faithful in executing it is described as wicked even if he presents himself to be like an angel.

That wicked messenger is destined to fall into trouble if he allows the project to move ahead without sufficient attention. But if he is a faithful emissary he will make it his business to bring healing to bear so that the quality of the result is as good as it can be.

### Learning Mishlei

(17) A wicked messenger — מְלַאֲךְ רָשָׁע  
who is not loyal to the one who sent him,

distorts his mission and  
**falls into trouble** — **יִפֹּל בְּרָע**  
through his own carelessness,  
**but a faithful emissary** — **וְצִיר אֱמוּנִים**  
**brings healing** — **מְרַפֵּא**  
to the sender by straightening out  
any problems along the way.

## Additional Insights

### Wisdom in Words

(1) A person who wishes to engage someone to take care of an important matter should be careful to choose only someone of high integrity and responsibility. If he is known to be a wicked person (**רָשָׁע**) he should not be relied upon, even if in the past he has proven himself to be trustworthy and seems like an angel (**מִלְאָךְ**). In contrast, an ordinary person (**צִיר**) who is faithful (**אֱמוּנִים**) is a better choice. (המאירי, שבט)

### Other Insights

(2) The wicked messenger who distorts the instructions he was given will likely cause the project to fail and he will end up suffering because of his own wickedness. (מצודות)

(3) A faithful messenger can bring healing to his mission by the choice of language that he uses and the manner in which he expresses himself. (מצודות)

(4) A wicked messenger may be tempted to reveal information about his mission to disreputable individuals who may use the information to sabotage the mission or cause other harm to the sender. (רבינו יונה)

(5) The spies that Moshe Rabbeinu sent out to scout the Land of Canaan were wicked messengers because they were not motivated by the purity of purpose that was in the mind of Moshe. They caused a great calamity for Yisrael. However, Yehoshua and Calev were faithful messengers who managed to bring some degree of healing to the wound that the other ten spies had opened. (הגר"א)