

Mishlei 14-09

## Thoughtlessness

**Key Concepts**

Some people go through life expressing the first thought that comes into their mind. This often results in embarrassment because they have unintentionally insulted someone, hurt someone, or brought up an awkward memory. As a result, such people often have to excuse their inappropriate choice of words. However, once the damage is done it can never be undone and these thoughtless people leave a trail of hurt wherever they go.

The upright person with a well-developed sense of morality is always careful about what he says and how he says it. Before speaking he thinks about why is saying what he is about to say and what its effects might be. He asks himself whether his anticipated words are suited to the situation and the listener. Will they promote goodwill or strife?

**Exploring Mishlei**

(ט) אָוֹלִים יְלִיץ אָשָׁם וּבֵין יִשְׁרָיִם רָצוֹן:

**(9) Fools excuse an offense, but among the upright there is goodwill.**

This proverb contrasts the behavior of fools who are constantly having to make excuses for thoughtless remarks with that of upright people who choose their words carefully and always leave an impression of goodwill.

**Learning Mishlei**

(9) Among **fools** who talk without thinking — אָוֹלִים,  
there is a need to **excuse the offense** — יְלִיץ אָשָׁם  
of inappropriate speech

**but the foolishness of fools is** — וְאִוְלַת כְּסִילִים,  
**but among the upright** — וּבֵין יִשְׁרָיִם  
there is always **goodwill** — רָצוֹן  
because they choose their words carefully.

## Additional Insights

### Wisdom in Words

(1) The word **אֱוֹלָיִם** (fools) refers to foolish people whose behavior shows a weakness in distinguishing right from wrong. This may be due to an inherent skepticism which causes them to question received wisdom. (מלב"ים)

(2) The word **יְלִיץ** refers to the act of communicating through speech, especially speech that interprets or sweetens (softens) what is being communicated. The **מְלִיץ** can refer to an interpreter. In the sense of sweetening, we find it in *Tehillim* 119:103 **מֵה נִמְלְצוּ לְחִפּי אִמְרָתֶךָ** ("How sweet to my palate is Your word"). In the present proverb it is being used in the sense of an excuse, which softens the effect of a previous action or word. (המאירי, מלב"ים)

(3) The word **אָשָׁם** refers a sense of guilt for an offense committed against another person or against Hashem. In the latter sense it refers to the guilt-offering that a person was able to bring to atone for certain types of offenses. In the present proverb it is being used in the sense of an offense against another person committed thoughtlessly, such as an inconsiderate remark. (מצודות, הגר"א)

(4) The word **יְשָׁרִים** refers to people who are upright and fair-minded. They have an inherent confidence in their sense of right and wrong, which puts them at peace with the will of their Creator. (מלב"ים)

(5) The word **רְצוֹן** (goodwill) refers to whatever someone wants, which is what pleases him. (מלב"ים)

### Other Insights

(6) There is continual conflict among the **אֱוֹלָיִם** because they are constantly communicating through intemperate and crude language. In contrast, the **יְשָׁרִים** are considerate with each other and so there is a spirit of goodwill among them. (אבן יחי"א)

(7) Among foolish **אֱוֹלָיִם** there is an awareness that they are guilty of offenses against Hashem and they communicate this sense to one another even though they maintain an outward skepticism. In contrast the upright communicate a

sense of serenity and harmony, confident in the knowledge that their lives are pleasing to the Creator. (מלבניים)

(8) Those who have been foolish enough to stray from the right path need a guilt-offering (אָפֶטָם) to be restored to Hashem's favor. However, for those who have remained יִשְׁרָיִם, such a sacrifice is not needed. Hashem's goodwill is with them at all times. (רשרייה)