

Mishlei 14-17

Impatience

Key Concepts

A short-tempered man is quickly frustrated if his expectations are not met. Because he is impatient to have things his way, he will try to force the issue and behave in a way that strikes most people as foolish.

If he wants to be treated with respect, he should be patient and thoughtful. But he should be careful not to overdo it. If his deliberations are excessive the people with whom he is dealing will come to hate him for they will be frustrated in waiting for him to make up his mind.

Exploring Mishlei

(יז) קָצַר אַפַּיִם יַעֲשֶׂה אֲוֵלֶת וְאִישׁ מְזַמּוֹת יִשָּׂנֵא:

**An impatient man acts foolishly,
but a man of excessive deliberations is hated.**

This proverb contrasts the two extremes of the decision-making process. If he is impatient, he may be too hasty in deciding what to do or say. People will perceive the resulting behavior as foolish. However, if he indulges in excessive deliberations so that it seems he can't make up his mind, people will grow to hate him, especially if those deliberations involve schemes for taking unfair advantage over others.

Learning Mishlei

An impatient person — קָצַר אַפַּיִם — acts hastily and therefore foolishly — יַעֲשֶׂה אֲוֵלֶת, but a man of excessive deliberations — וְאִישׁ מְזַמּוֹת — is hated — יִשָּׂנֵא — by the people he deals with.

Additional Insights

(1) A person who is impatient doesn't take the time to gain an understanding of what is bothering him. If he took the time, he would realize how to deal with the problem instead of displaying anger. (רלב"ג)

(2) A person who is quick to anger will be seen as a fool because he will behave in a way that people recognize as foolish. (מצודות)

(3) A person who is quick to experience anger will be unable to prevent his emotions from affecting his actions and his speech. In this way he will reveal to the world the weakness of his character and he will be viewed as a fool by other people. (רבינו יונה)

(4) A person who engages in overly elaborate deliberations will upset people who need his cooperation in solving a problem. If his deliberations have the intention of causing harm, he will incur the hatred of Hashem as well. (אבן עזר, מצודות)

(5) The crafty person does not rush to get angry. He hides it because he knows how to control himself. This coldness distances people from him. (דעת סופרים)

(6) It is best to avoid a person who seems to never end his protracted deliberations and never arrives at a conclusion. Not only will such a person never get anywhere himself, he is useless also for others. (רש"י)