

Mishlei 15-01

Forbearance

Key Concepts

A person with forbearance doesn't let himself get provoked into anger. This concept was introduced in Segment 14-16. But what do you do when faced with verbal abuse by an angry person?

Mishlei encourages you to respond with a gentle reply. He suggests that this approach will even help dispell the kind of burning, inner anger that otherwise tends to be long-lasting.

In contrast, Mishlei strongly advises against a provocative, distressful remark for it may incite the kind of rage that leads to immediate, vengeful action on the part of the other person. Even though such rage is often superficial and temporary, it can trigger continued strife.

Exploring Mishlei

(א) מַעֲנֶה רַךְ יְשִׁיב חֵמָה וְדָבַר עֶצֶב יַעֲלֶה אָף:

*(1) A gentle answer dispells anger,
but a distressing word stirs up rage.*

This proverb observes how a gentle answer calms anger in comparison with a provocative remark that stokes the fire of continued strife.

Learning Mishlei

(1) **A gentle answer** — מַעֲנֶה רַךְ

is so calming that it even

dispells intense inner **anger** — יְשִׁיב חֵמָה

but a distressing and provocative **word** — דָבַר עֶצֶב

stirs up a rage — יַעֲלֶה אָף

that is accompanied by the

desire for immediate revenge.

Additional Insights

- (1) The term **חמה** denotes intense inner anger, concealed from others, while **אף** means a superficial rage, quickly expressed and dissipated. (מלבי"ם)
- (2) A gentle answer is effective in dealing with intense, inner anger (**חמה**), but when faced with visible rage (**אף**), it is best to follow the advice of the Gemara (Berachos 7a) and say nothing. (שבט מיהודה)
- (3) A gentle answer involves admitting one's mistakes or taking the blame for a difficult situation. (דעת סופרים)
- (4) A *tzadik* finds favor with Hashem by placating and pleasing Him with gentle and humble tefillos. (אלשיך)