

Mishlei 15-26

Deceit

Key Concepts

The ability to speak is the quality that defines a human being. It is Hashem's great gift to mankind. However, speech is only meaningful when it expresses the speaker's thoughts, formed into words and sentences. A person who perverts the gift of speech by disconnecting it from the thoughts behind it, has abused Hashem's kindness.

This is especially true if one considers the intentional deceit that underlies false speech. Hashem has built His world out of kindness and truth. Both of these essential components of Creation are corrupted by deceitful speech.

Exploring Mishlei

(כו) תועֵבַת ה' מְחֻשְׁבוֹת רָע וְטְהוֹרִים אִמְרֵי נְעָם:

(26) Evil intentions accompanying pleasant words are an abomination to Hashem. Purity of thought is what should accompany pleasant words.

This proverb contrasts pleasant words that are spoken deceitfully with pleasant words that represent purity of thought. The harm that can be done by deceitful speech is also explored in Segment 15-08 (Hypocrisy).

Learning Mishlei

(26) Evil intentions— מְחֻשְׁבוֹת רָע are an abomination to Hashem — תועֵבַת ה' especially when they are camouflaged by pleasant words. for purity of thought — וְטְהוֹרִים should accompany the pleasant words — אִמְרֵי נְעָם

Additional Insights

(1) Pure words are like pure silver, which is defined by the absence of contaminants. Evil thoughts are the impurities that contaminate spoken words. (אבן עזרא)

(2) Hashem listens to spoken words and expects them to be pure. (מצודות)

(3) Hashem does not always hold a person accountable for his thoughts. However, when evil thoughts are negated by the person's actions that person has provoked Hashem's anger. (מלבי"ם)