

## Mishlei 15-28

# Deliberation

### Key Concepts

The way in which a person answers a question reveals his character. If he is a *tzadik*, his character will be shaped by humility and therefore he will not speak until he has carefully thought through what he is about to say. His humility has taught him that he can never be too sure that he is not giving a misleading or incorrect answer.

On the other hand, when *resha'im* are asked a question, they are quick to blurt out whatever comes to mind. Their conceit convinces them that whatever they say will be more than satisfactory and there is no need to waste time deliberating about it. Unfortunately, they may very well be wrong and the answer they give is likely to cause great harm.

Humility is a human character trait especially loved by Hashem. A person who lacks humility is carried away by the intellectual and spiritual qualities that make him superior to other creatures. He thinks that if he is so smart, he can also never be wrong and so he will feel himself free to do whatever he pleases, without regard to the will of His Creator. That means he foolishly thinks he is also free to say anything and will never face regret.

### Exploring Mishlei

(כח) לֵב צַדִּיק יִהְיֶה לְעֲנוּת וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יִבְיַע רָעוֹת:

**(28) *The heart of a tzadik thinks through what he is about to declare, but the mouth of the wicked transmits evil.***

This proverb contrasts the way people respond to questions. The *tzadik* is motivated by humility and so his heart patiently considers what he is about to say. The *resha'im*, despite their ignorance, are self-confident that whatever they happen to say will surely be valid and appropriate. Through the words they thoughtlessly blurt out, they are transmitting evil or harmful thoughts.

### Learning Mishlei

(28) The heart of a *tzadik* — **לֵב צַדִּיק**  
deliberates before answering — **יְהַגֵּה לְעֲנוֹת**  
and therefore he chooses his words carefully,

But the mouth of the wicked — **וּפִי רְשָׁעִים**  
transmits evil — **יַבִּיעַ רָעוֹת**.  
because he blurts out whatever comes to mind.

### **Additional Insights**

- (1) Because of his humble disposition, the *tzadik* will not express thoughts without reflection. (רבינו יונה, רבינו בחיי)
- (2) The same underlying word (**יְהַגֵּה**) is used in Hebrew for both contemplative thought and speech because the words that are formed in the heart are expressed by the mouth of the *tzadik*. (המאירי)
- (3) Besides reflecting upon the truth of what he is about to say, the *tzadik* is careful not to say anything that may cause the listener embarrassment or emotional pain. (שבט מיהודה)