

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 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 רָשָׁעִים 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

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

The heart of a tzadik deliberates before answering – לֵב צַדִּיק יִהְיֶה לְעֲנוּת and therefore he chooses his words carefully, **but the mouth of the wicked transmits evil – וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יַבִּיעַ רָעוּת** because he blurts out whatever comes to mind.

Additional Insights

A series of additional insights illuminating this proverb are presented below. The numbers identifying the insights refer to the listing of sources at the end of the segment.

(1) Because of his humble disposition, the tzadik will not express thoughts without reflection.

(2) The same underlying word (יְהִיָּה) 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.

(3) Besides reflecting upon the truth of what he is about to say, the tzadik is careful not to say anything that cause the listener embarrassment or emotional pain.

Sources

The primary sources used for the additional insights illuminating this segment are listed below.

(3) - שבט מיהודה

(1) - רבינו יונה, רבינו בחיי

(2) - המאירי