

Mishlei 16-05

Arrogance

Key Concepts

Every person has been placed on this earth with a mission that is unique to him and his particular circumstance. However, a common characteristic of everyone's mission is to acknowledge his Creator and to act in accordance the Divine will.

The human heart is an obstacle to fulfilling this mission because of the free will that Hashem has granted to each of us. That free will empowers each of us to have the idea that there are no restrictions on what we can think and do. It is a very heady thought and gives us the feeling that we can do as we please.

But such an arrogant attitude goes directly counter to Hashem's plan for mankind. In fact it can spawn a variety of destructive character traits, including selfishness, greed, dishonesty, and cruelty. Any man who is infected by arrogance finds himself unable to humble himself and be a servant to his Creator.

In effect, arrogance is the common denominator of the qualities that cause a person to reject His Creator. Mishlei therefore draws special attention to the dangerous quality of arrogance and describes it as the quality that is detested by Hashem. Hashem did not create this amazing world to be populated by people who reject Him. He demonstrated this idea when he destroyed most of mankind in the Flood during the time of Noach.

Exploring Mishlei

(ה) תוֹעֲבַת ה' כָּל גְבוֹה לֵב יָד לֵד לֹא יִנְקָה:

Anyone who is arrogant of heart is detested by Hashem, he will not be absolved from Divine punishment.

This proverb identifies arrogance as having a high heart (גְבוֹה לֵב). Arrogance gives a person a feeling of superiority because he lives under the illusion that there is nothing that can prevent him from thinking and doing as he pleases. Every person who is a גְבוֹה לֵב is detested by Hashem (תוֹעֲבַת ה') to the extent that the person is infected by this quality.

Ultimately Hashem will not tolerate that which He detests and so the arrogant person will not be absolved. Punishment will come directly from the hand of Hashem to the hand of the the one who is guilty (יָד לֵד) in the way that a payment

is made from hand to hand. The expression יָד לְיָד is also found in the proverb in Mishlei segment 11:20 (verse 11:21).

The relationship between the quality of arrogance (or self-importance) and various sinful behavior patterns is explored in Segment 06-04 (The Anatomy of Sin).

Learning Mishlei

(ה) תוֹעֵבַת ה' כָּל גִּבְהַ לֵב
יָד לְיָד לֹא יִנָּקֶה:

Anyone who is arrogant of heart is revolting to Hashem – תוֹעֵבַת ה' כָּל גִּבְהַ לֵב, he will not be absolved from hand to hand – יָד לְיָד לֹא יִנָּקֶה direct and immediate punishment.

Additional Insights

A series of 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) Hashem does not punish a person for sinful thoughts, only for the deeds he committed as a result of those thoughts. However, there is a special tolerance and consideration that Hashem shows sinners, such as delaying his punishment on the chance he will do teshuvah. This tolerance is reduced for those actions that are a symptom of an arrogant heart

(2). One who develops a self-centered attitude, is unable to evaluate in a true light the correct relationship of himself and his duties towards God and towards those around him. Consequently, he cannot remain innocent of mistakes and wrongdoing.

Sources

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

(1) - מלבים, הגר"א

(2) - רשר"ה