

Mishlei 16-10

Charisma

Key Concepts

Some individuals are blessed with a charisma or charm that causes people to pay attention to every word they have to say. Such individuals are born leaders because they attract followers who are eager to accept their guidance and direction.

A person with charisma may be a king or other highly placed person in society. In any case, people listening to him are likely to study every word that passes his lips, looking for hidden meanings. The listeners make an effort to interpret the significance of his words, even beyond whatever the speaker had in mind. In that sense the people treat the utterances of the charismatic individual as if they were magical.

All of this places a special responsibility on the such an individual, especially when he has been granted authority to sit in judgement or make important political decisions.

Exploring Mishlei

(י) קָסָם עַל שְׁפָתַי מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא יִמְעַל פִּיו:

There is a magical charm on the lips of a king; let his mouth not betray him in judgment.

This proverb draws attention to the charismatic power that may be possessed by a king or other highly placed individual. He has a responsibility to choose his words carefully because whatever issues from his lips, even in superficial talk, may be regarded as magical, having significance beyond his intent. And so he must speak clearly and truly; his mouth must never betray him.

Learning Mishlei

(י) קָסָם עַל שְׁפָתַי מֶלֶךְ
בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא יִמְעַל פִּיו:

There is a magical charm on the lips of a king — קָסָם עַל שְׁפָתַי מֶלֶךְ so that

his chance words may be easily misinterpreted. **Let his mouth not betray him in times of judgment** — בְּמִשְׁפֵּט לֹא יִמְעַל פִּיו .

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) Alternately the proverb refers to Rabbis who lead their congregation. Even when important facts concerning a particular issue are withheld from them, Hashem helps them issue a true verdict. This may also be true of righteous kings whose words and judgements are guided by Hashem.

(2) The words of the king are like magic in their authority. He has the benefit of information that is not available to ordinary people and so this gives added weight to his words. Accordingly, it is important for the king to take care in his judgements and to speak very clearly so that he is not misunderstood.

(3) The lips are external organ of speech and therefore superficial talk is associated with lips. The mouth is the internal organ of speech and therefore it is associated more meaningful expression.

Sources

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

(3) - מלבים

(1) - רש"י, רלב"ג, הגר"א

(2) - אבן עזרא, רלב"ג, מצודות, רבינו יונה