

Mishlei 16-15

Royal. Greeting

Key Concepts

Many people have achieved a position in society that gives them the power to have a favorable impact upon the lives of others. Nevertheless their decisions are often guided by self-interest or the benefit of the community as a whole and so they may develop a neutral attitude in their relationship with individuals. Such an attitude is evident in the cool way they greet other people, carefully avoiding a show of favoritism or goodwill.

However, powerful people should be aware that a lack of warmth in greeting others, no matter what the circumstance, can be very hurtful, especial for those who are affected by a sense of insecurity. For example, the people who are dependent upon an employer count on his cheerful smile to make their day. The same is true of the unfortunates who depend on the charity of the wealthy. Thus, the person in a position to bring cheer by means of a friendly attitude has an opportunity to perform a great kindness whose value cannot be measured in money.

People who are dependent upon a powerful person are eager to interpret a friendly greeting as a sign of good will. Such a sign is likely to elevate their mood and give them the confidence to deal with their own problems in a more effective manner.

Exploring Mishlei

(טו) בָּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים וְרִצּוֹנוֹ כְּעָב מִלְקוֹשׁ:

(15) *In the light of the king's face there is life,
and his good will is like a cloud portending the spring rain.*

This proverb describes the act of greeting someone with a warm smile in terms of presenting a shining face. Such an act is compared to life itself because it grants a person the energy to deal with the issues of life. A friendly greeting is received as a sign of good will that may lead to good things in the future, the way a rain cloud carries with it the promise of a bountiful harvest.

With this proverb we end a series of six proverbs dealing with the moral lessons to be learned from the behavior of a king. The author of sefer Mishlei was a king and

therefore he was intimately familiar with the challenges that kings face. However, the lessons to be learned are not limited to kings. They apply to anyone in a position of power, including a parent, teacher, or employer. This means that almost anyone learning these pesukim can find principles to guide his own behavior. Thus, the lesson of this last proverb, teaching the importance of greeting others with a smile affects everyone.

Learning Mishlei

(15) **In the light of the king's face — בְּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ —**
there is life — חַיִּים

and it is perceived as a sign of **his goodwill**, — וְרִצּוֹנוֹ
 which is **like the** long-awaited **cloud** — כָּעָב
 that carries the **spring rain** — מִלְקוֹשׁ
 and portends a bountiful harvest.

Additional Insights

- (1) A person is seen as a “king” if he has the potential to do good things for an individual. That individual is then greatly affected by the king’s smile. (מצודות)
- (2) After a period in which the king’s mood is shadowed by anger, if he is pacified and he begins to smile again, it is like the portent of the blessed spring rains. (מלבי"ם)
- (3) When the king smiles at one of his subjects, it is the like the light of the sun that gives life to the world. (שבט מיהודה)