

Mishlei 16-15

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 with 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) בְּאֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים וְרָצוֹנוֹ כְּעָב מִלְקוֹשׁ:

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 as 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. Such a 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

(טו) בְּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים
וּרְצוֹנוֹ כְּעָב מִלְקוֹשׁ:

In the light of the king's face there is life — בְּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים, and it is perceived as a sign of **his goodwill**, which is **like the** long awaited **cloud** that carries the **spring rain** — וּרְצוֹנוֹ כְּעָב מִלְקוֹשׁ and portends a bountiful harvest.

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) 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. (Metzudos)
- (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. (Malbim)
- (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. (Shevet)

Sources

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

(3) - שבט מיהודה

(1) - מצודות

(2) - מלבים