

Mishlei 16-30

Crime – Progression

Key Concepts

A serious offense does not happen instantaneously. The offender goes through a sequenced progression of thoughts, speech, and action to result in the harm done to another person. During the course of this progression, the offender is likely to give himself away with subtle body language, including movements of the eyes and lips.

The idea of such a progression is important from the point of view of both the offender and his victim. The offender, realizing that he is in the middle of a process with a catastrophic result can stop himself if he realizes what is happening to him. The victim who recognizes that he is danger can take steps to protect himself.

Exploring Mishlei

(ל) עֵצָה עֵינָיו לְחַשֵּׁב תְּהַפְּכוֹת קִרְץ שִׁפְתָּיו כְּלֵה רָעָה :

(30) He closes his eyes to think of treacheries.

He signals with his lips; the evil is done.

This proverb takes us through the progression of eye movements, facial expressions, and lip movements accompanying thoughts of treachery. By this time, the offense is almost complete. Nothing remains except for the physical action that causes harm. This action may consist of striking the victim or harming him with spoken words.

Learning Mishlei

(30) He closes his eyes – עֵצָה עֵינָיו

to mislead people and

to think of treacheries – לְחַשֵּׁב תְּהַפְּכוֹת

He signals with his lips – קִרְץ שִׁפְתָּיו

and with that, the evil is effectively done – כְּלֵה רָעָה

Additional Insights

(1) The most dangerous person is the one who closes his eyes and purses his lips in a show of piety, when in reality his eyes are closed to scheme evil. (אלשיך, דעת סופרים)

(2) In Segment 06-12 (pasuk 6:13) Mishlei spoke about winking with the eyes to mislead someone. Now he speaks about a similar movement of the lips. (דעת סופרים)

(3) If the movement of the lips involves *Lashon Hara* (evil gossip), the offense has already been committed by the mere speaking of words. (מצודות)

(4) Just as closing the eyes may indicate the person is in deep thought, he can signal this by appearing to bite his lips. (אבן יחיאל)

(5) The word for closing the eyes (עִצָּה) can also be translated as winking, a movement of the eyes associated with advice. The person moves his eyes in a way that suggest he is giving good advice. (מצודות)