

Mishlei 17-07**Self-Importance****Key Concepts**

When an unaccomplished person acts with foolish self-importance, he is likely to give himself away by his pompous, lofty manner of speaking. His choice of language brands him as a faker. If he pretends to be a generous giver to worthy causes people will see through his pretentiousness. Even if he makes a large pledge to charity he will not be believed.

But what if he is a true man of distinction, the same high-flown choice of words may be quite appropriate and people will give him the benefit of the doubt. For such a person to arouse suspicion he would have to go far beyond pompous language or an extravagant pledge. It is only when he speaks a language of obvious lies and deception that people will begin to realize with whom they are dealing.

Exploring Mishlei

(ז) לֹא נְאוּה לְנֹבֵל שְׂפִית יִתֵּר אֶף כִּי לְנֹדִיב שְׂפִית שְׂקָר:

Grandiloquent speech is unfitting in an unworthy person [but may be fitting for a man of nobility]. It is only lying speech [that would be similarly unfitting] in a man of nobility.

This proverb identifies the kind of grandiloquent speech that is appropriate to a man of nobility but would be recognized as being inappropriate to an unworthy scoundrel. A man of nobility with a reputation as a philanthropist would have to go far beyond grandiloquent choice of words to be challenged. He would have to stoop to lies and deception.

The proverb teaches that a person should realize how the way he speaks will affect the opinion that others have of him. To be believable his language should be suited to his behavior.

Learning Mishlei

(ז) לֹא נְאוּה לְנֹבֵל שְׁפַת יִתְר
אֶף כִּי לְנֹדִיב שְׁפַת שְׁקָר:

It is **out of place** – לֹא נְאוּה **for an unworthy person** – לְנֹבֵל to use **grandiloquent speech** – שְׁפַת יִתְר. **But for a man of nobility** – אֶף כִּי – לְנֹדִיב - only **lying speech** – שְׁפַת שְׁקָר would be similarly unfitting.

Additional Insights

(1) In an alternate interpretation of the proverb, an unworthy person would feel uncomfortable using grandiloquent speech because it is too lofty for him. To even a greater extent, a man of nobility would detest lying speech .

(מצודות)

(2) In another alternate interpretation of the proverb it is referring to how people react to the words from the lips (שְׁפַת) of others. The unworthy person resists guidance that would elevate him (שְׁפַת יִתְר). The man of nobility is pleased with such advice, but would resist deceptive speech (שְׁפַת שְׁקָר). (אבן עזרא).

(3) In another alternate interpretation of the proverb, the נֹבֵל is miserly and avoids generous commitments to charity (שְׁפַת יִתְר), but when he does make such a commitment he needs to be careful to keep his promise. All the more, a generous man (נֹדִיב), who is likely to make such a commitment needs to be careful to keep it so that it is not a false commitment (שְׁפַת שְׁקָר). (מלבים).

(4). In another alternate interpretation of the proverb, the נֹבֵל is miserly with regard to his wisdom and avoids sharing it. Therefore wisdom is not appropriate for him (לֹא נְאוּה), because he does not deserve it. In contrast, a נֹדִיב is generous with his wisdom, but needs to avoid distorting what he shares (שְׁפַת שְׁקָר). (מאירי).

(5) In another alternate interpretation of the proverb, the miserly **נָבֵל** avoids the generous commitments (**שְׁפֵת יָתָר**) that he is being asked to make, but if he gives in and plays the role of a philanthropist (**נְדִיב**) he fails to follow through and thus it becomes a false commitment (**שְׁפֵת שְׁקָר**). Therefore it is a mistake to try to get the **נָבֵל** to make such a commitment. (חנוך לנער)