

Mishlei 17-15

Falsification

Key Concepts

In politics or law there are times when one is inclined to pervert the truth to achieve a special purpose. For example, one may favor a wicked person, speaking highly of him or giving in to his wishes. Correspondingly there are times when one is inclined to speak in demeaning terms about a righteous person or deny him the benefit the doubt in dispute.

The person who falsifies a concept to achieve a specific purpose may believe he is fully justified in this behavior. He may think he can thereby persuade the wicked person to do something good or persuade the righteous person that he is not good enough and that he needs to have more humility.

In either case, the favoring of the wicked and the demeaning of the righteous are acts that reverse the wishes of the Creator. In fact, He looks upon them as hateful abominations for they go against His plan for the world. It is wrong to give the wicked person the idea that you are looking at his way of life with approval because he is eager to find some vindication that will clear his conscience. Similarly, it is wrong to give the righteous person the feeling that you disapprove of him.

Exploring Mishlei

(טו) מִצְדִּיק רָשָׁע וּמִרְשִׁיעַ צְדִיק תּוֹעֵבַת ה' גַּם שְׁנֵיהֶם :

(15) Justifying a wicked person and condemning a righteous person, both are an abomination to Hashem.

This proverb sets a wicked person in opposition to a righteous person. It is important that people don't get misled into thinking that it is not so bad to be wicked or not so good to be righteous. Such falseness in either direction violates Hashem's plan for the world that He created.

Learning Mishlei

(15) **Justifying a wicked person — מְצַדִּיק רָשָׁע**

by praising him or showing him
favor is the wrong thing to do.

Likewise, **demeaning a righteous person — וּמְרַשֵּׁיעַ צַדִּיק**.

Both are an abomination to Hashem — תוֹעֵבַת ה' גַּם שְׁנֵיהֶם

because He wants the world to be clearly aware
of the difference between right and wrong,

Additional Insights

[1] When a righteous man and a wicked man are engaged in a dispute, favoring the wicked one automatically implies a disfavor to his righteous opponent. And so, the one act of false judgement becomes a doubled abomination. (אלשיך)

[2] Once a judge has reached his verdict, then to try to urge a compromise would be unjust to both litigants since the wicked man would feel partially vindicated and the righteous man would feel partially condemned. (מלבי"ם)

[3] It is wrong to minimize the severity of a wicked person's offense in order to gain his friendship or good will. If a righteous person has been harmed by a wicked person, it is wrong to tell him not to be so self-righteous and thereby minimize his good opinion of himself. (מלבי"ם)

[4] Hashem hates those who find fault with a righteous leader and those who praise the good qualities of a wicked leader because both have the effect of influencing people in the wrong direction. (רלב"ג)