

Mishlei 18-01

Living Apart

Key Concepts

At the very beginning of Creation, Hashem said, "It is not good that man should be alone." (*Bereishis 2:18*). Life becomes truly meaningful only when shared with a spouse, a family, and a community.

A man may be motivated to live apart because he thinks it allows him the freedom of doing as he pleases to satisfy his whims and his appetites. He would like not having to justify his behavior to others. But that apparent "freedom" is likely to end up in his own self-destruction. A man needs to see himself through the eyes of others and when he does so, he becomes motivated to live a good life.

The mechanism by which the presence of others acts on a man's behavior is his instinct of shame. If the people with whom he comes in contact are of a refined and noble character, he will be all the more vulnerable to shame when he behaves badly in their presence.

However, for every man the ultimate universal presence is the awareness of his Creator. Man may be driven by his willfulness and his appetites to hide from Hashem, but as the first man soon came to realize, that is a foolish wish. Man cannot live at odds with his Creator. In fact, his sense of having done something shameful is the ultimate emotion that will bring him to correct his ways.

Exploring Mishlei

(א) לְתַאֲוָה יִבְקֹשׁ נִפְרָד, בְּכָל תּוֹשֵׁיָהּ יִתְגַּלֵּעַ:

(1) Seeking to satisfy his desires, a person may set himself apart; he will be exposed in every moral community.

If a person's whose priority in life is to do as he pleases, he may choose to live apart from the kind of people who will "cramp his style." But he must know that he has cut off his connection to his roots. He will be exposed and shamed in every moral community.

Learning Mishlei

If in **seeking to satisfy his desires** — **לְתַאֲוֶה יִבְקֵשׁ**
 a person **lives apart** — **נִפְרָד**
 from his family and community
he will be exposed and shamed — **יִתְגַּלֵּעַ**
 in every moral community — **בְּכָל תּוֹשְׁבֵיהָ**

Additional Insights

[1] A person who is primarily seeking to satisfy his own desires puts himself apart from other people. He is not sensitive to their needs and concerns because he is focusing on his own. He is not ashamed when others see his bad behavior because he does not recognize his own faults, and so he exposes himself foolishly before worthy men. (רבינו יונה)

[2] An alternate interpretation of this proverb focuses on the individual who abandons loyalty to Hashem for selfish reasons: (רש"י, מצודות):

If in **seeking to satisfy his desires** — **לְתַאֲוֶה יִבְקֵשׁ**
 a person **lives apart** — **נִפְרָד**
 from Hashem and forsakes His *mitzvos*
 that person's shame **will ultimately be exposed** — **יִתְגַּלֵּעַ**
in every community of Torah scholars — **בְּכָל תּוֹשְׁבֵיהָ**.

[3] When a person separates himself from the influence of the Torah he immediately comes under the influence of his appetites and desires, because the Torah gives a person the ability to control them. (הגר"א)

[4] Our thinking is shaped through the exchange of thoughts with others. An intellect which depends entirely upon itself is prone to stagnation, or to fantasies and erroneous ideas. (רשר"ה)