

Mishlei 18-03

Dishonor

Key Concepts

The way a person treats others has a direct effect on his own character. Thus, the Mishnah teaches that one who honors others is himself worthy of honor (Avos 4, 1). The reverse effect is also true. A person who disrespects others stamps himself with dishonor and reveals himself to be a wicked person (Rasha).

Inevitably, when such a dishonorable person looks at other people he sees their faults and is quick to insult them, diminishing further their self-worth. In effect, his own faults are mirrored by the way he judges others. And so the person who insults others is unwittingly reacting to his own faults.

Unfortunately, the effect of showering another person with insults is often to make that second person feel degraded and unworthy. The tragic result is that the victim begins to think of himself as shameful. And so the bad character of the Rasha has had the effect of transmitting his bad character to another person.

Exploring Mishlei

(ג) בָּבוֹא רָשָׁע בָּא גַם בּוֹז וְעַם קְלוֹן חֲרָפָה :

***(3) With the arrival of a wicked person, insult also comes;
and with dishonor, [comes] shame.***

The first part of this proverb describes how the character of a Rasha results in him unfairly insulting an innocent victim. The second part shows how this cruel treatment can corrupt the second person and result in having that newly dishonorable person adopt the shameful qualities of the first.

Learning Mishlei

(3) **With the arrival of the Rasha — בָּבוֹא רָשָׁע**
there **also comes insult — בָּא גַם בּוֹז**
and with this dishonor brought by the Rasha. — **וְעַם קִלְיוֹן**
there follows the **shame — חֲרָפָה**
of the victim emulating his attacker.

Additional Insights

(1) The various forms of insult, dishonor, and shame are interconnected. Each leads to the next, based on the general principle of “one sin leads to another.”
(אבן עזרא)

(2) The Rasha should be ashamed of his sins, but because of his wicked character, not only is he unashamed, he goes one step further by insulting another person, projecting what should be his own shame into another. (רבינו יונה)