

## Mishlei 18-08

### Attitude – Resentment

#### Key Concepts

People who suffer from an attitude of resentment are continually overwhelmed by disappointment. They view themselves as victims who have been treated unfairly. Instead of appreciating the good things of life they focus on what they are missing. Instead of feeling gratitude for the benefits they have been granted they are embittered at being denied what they don't have.

The resentment that such people feel leads them to blame others, especially those who are close to them. They are inclined to take revenge upon the perceived source of their misery and they do this by hurtful remarks and malicious gossip (*lashon hara*). They may also act as instigators to encourage others to join them in their attitude of resentment.

Anyone who is responsible for promoting a constructive initiative has to contend with people who are resentful at not having been treated as they would have liked. Someone who feels slighted may take out his resentment by instigating an attitude of resistance or opposition among those of like mind.

In the Torah we find many instances where *Klal Yisrael*, having been freed from harsh slavery in *Mitzrayim*, were resentful at not having everything that they imagined would be associated with freedom. The Torah describes many such instances to remind us that the attitude of resentment is ultimately self-destructive and a source of misery.

#### Exploring Mishlei

**(ח) דְּבַרֵי נִרְגָן כְּמַתְלֵה־מַיִם וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן:**  
***The words of a grumbler are like self-destructive blows***  
***and they descend to the chambers of one's innards.***

This proverb comments on the behavior of a person who is driven by resentment. Such a person is referred to as a **נִרְגָן**. This term is often translated as a complainer or grumbler, because resentment makes a person dissatisfied with his lot. It is also translated as a troublemaker or instigator because the **נִרְגָן** encourages other people to share the resentment that he feels. In addition, **נִרְגָן** is translated as a

talebearer because he is drawn to practice malicious gossip against whoever he blames for what is lacking in his life.

The נִרְגָּן is also spoken of in Mishlei Segment 16-28, where he is referred to as a fault-finder or instigator. Ultimately, however, the attitude that drives this behavior is resentment.

The נִרְגָּן uses his power of speech to punish whoever he blames. His words ( דְּבָרֵי ) ( נִרְגָּן ) are like self-destructive blows ( כְּמַתְלֵה־מִיָּם ) because he is ultimately hurting himself with his underhanded behavior. That doesn't lessen the impact of his words on the one he resents. The נִרְגָּן chooses his words carefully to be especially painful, piercing the chambers of his very innards ( וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן ).

## Learning Mishlei

(8) **The words of a grumbler – דְּבָרֵי נִרְגָּן**  
**are like self-destructive blows – כְּמַתְלֵה־מִיָּם**  
**and they descend – וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ**  
**to the very chambers of the innards – חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן**  
 of the one he resents.

## Additional Insights

[1] The נִרְגָּן fears that the actions of other people are designed to offend him. Even when someone is trying to help him, he misinterprets the effort as unfair treatment. (רבינו יונה)

[2] The נִרְגָּן instigates arguments by making hurtful remarks. Such attacks are worse than physical blows because they penetrate the person's inner being and cannot easily be healed. (הגר"א)

[3] The נִרְגָּן complains about the circumstances of his life and blames the Creator, overlooking all the blessings which life offers him. But the source of his troubles lies in his own attitude, deep within חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן , the chambers of his innards. (מלבי"ם)