

Mishlei 18-13

Haste

Key Concepts

Time is a most valuable, but highly limited resource. Therefore, a wise person tries to use it efficiently. He takes up every task with a sense of urgency, even when the task itself is not urgent. As long as there is a need for the task to be performed, he tries to complete it in the least time possible so that there will be enough time available to perform the next task.

However, it is well-known that “haste makes waste.” When a person rushes through a task without giving it the necessary time, he runs the risk of failure, so that the task will need to be repeated. Furthermore, when a task fails there is often collateral damage, so that actual harm is done.

Knowing that haste can cause problems doesn't prevent some people from rushing through a task. This character weakness may lie in the unrestrained desire to be admired for having complete a task early. Or it may be the simple impatience in achieving the satisfaction of having completed an assignment.

Exploring Mishlei

מְשִׁיב דָּבָר בְּטָרָם יִשְׁמַע אֲוֶלֶת הִיא לוֹ וּכְלָמָה :

(13) *One who answers before having heard the full question shows his foolishness and shame.*

This proverb offers an important example of the price to paid for unwarranted haste. What happens when an expert is asked to clarify the *halachah* in a particular situation?

Ordinarily, before giving his answer, it is essential for the expert to understand the circumstances in which the question arose. If the expert lacks patience and rushes with his answer before listening to the full details of the question, he may misinterpret what is being asked and his answer will be inappropriate, or even incorrect.

People who jump the gun and fail to show the courtesy of listening to the full question are demonstrating their conceit. They believe their time is so valuable and they are

so smart that they don't need to hear out the full question with all of its fine points. However, they are often mistaken, embarrassingly so.

Learning Mishlei

(13) If one **answers a question – מְשִׁיב דָּבָר**
before hearing the details – בְּטָרָם יִשְׁמָע .
It is a sign of his foolishness – אֹלֶת הִיא
and it is shameful – וּבְלִמָּה

Additional Insights

[1] A student who answers before hearing the full details is demonstrating his own pride. He wants to have given the answer before his teacher does. However, the teacher may have a different answer in mind or have in mind an answer that contradicts what the student is saying. (הגר"א)

[2] One who breaks into the presentation of a question may be so conceited that he wants to show he can read the mind of the questioner. (אבן יחיאל)