

## Mishlei 19-19

### Anger

#### Key Concepts

Anger is a common reaction to a personal offense. The offended person feels that he has been disrespected and that his dignity or self-image has been undermined. His resentment builds up and he strikes out emotionally against what he instinctively perceives as an attack on his very being.

Because intense anger is a deeply emotional and defensive reaction it takes over control of the person's mind and causes him to behave in ways that are ultimately against his true interest. When he calms down, he is likely to regret the aberrant behavior that he was drawn into to relieve his emotional pain.

Mishlei teaches that when a person gives himself over to anger, he is punishing himself with the consequences of his anger. This is because anger is a self-defeating phenomenon. The wise person comes to understand this and allows his rational mind to restrain his anger while he thinks through what he should actually be doing to deal with the situation that led to it.

#### Exploring Mishlei

(יט) גָּדַל חֲמָה נִשָּׂא עֵנֶשׂ כִּי אִם תִּצְלִי וְעוֹד תִּוְסָף:  
 (19) *A person full of anger is afflicted,  
 for if you come to the rescue, it will only grow.*

As evidence of the idea that anger is an unreasonable reaction, the proverb describes what happens when the object of his anger is removed from the scene. Instead of being relieved, the angry person is frustrated. The target of his anger is now no longer there to absorb the force of his rage. Thus, the rage is bottled up and he gets even more angry.

#### Learning Mishlei

(19) A person **full of anger** — גָּדַל חֲמָה  
**is afflicted** — נִשָּׂא עֵנֶשׂ  
 by his own emotion,  
**for if you rescue** — כִּי אִם תִּצְלִי

the object of his anger,  
the rage **will only grow** — וְעוֹד תוֹסֵף.

This proverb refers to anger with the word חֵמָה, which is similar to the word for sun, חֶמֶה. It suggests the burning heat of unthinking emotion that takes control of the angry person's mind. The proverb describes the consequences of anger using the phrase נִשָּׂא עֵינָיו, to suffer punishment. In effect he is afflicted by his own angry emotion.

### **Additional Insights**

[1] Giving in to anger is a great sin, tantamount to idol worship. In effect he has invited the power of evil to reside in his heart. His anger is a greater sin than any offense which might have led to his anger. (שבט מיהודה)

[2] People believe that a person compromises his dignity by keeping silent if he has been insulted. In fact, however, the man who can disregard an offense and control his anger, is sensible. Forgiveness is the mark of nobility. (רשר"ה)

[3] In an alternative interpretation of the proverb, it is referring to the angry person who restrains himself and thereby rescues the target of his anger. By exercising self-control, he has earned a reward of a good life with added years (וְעוֹד תוֹסֵף) of happiness. (רש"י)