

**Mishlei 19-22****Pretension****Key Concepts**

A person who wants to be popular may go out of his way to create the impression of having wealth so that he can be admired for his generosity. He leads people to believe that they will benefit financially if they are on good terms with him.

However, anyone who is tempted to indulge in such pretension with the hope of gaining admirers is being foolish. Bluffing others and raising false hopes is not the way to win friends. Such empty promises will only result in disappointment and bitterness.

**Exploring Mishlei**

**(כב) תִּאֲוֹת אָדָם חֲסִדוֹ וְטוֹב רֶשׁ מֵאִישׁ כְּזָב:**  
**(22) An appealing quality of a person is his generosity;**  
**but it is better to be known as a pauper**  
**than a man who deceives with empty promises.**

This proverb begins by describing the human quality that draws people to those who are known for their generosity. That is, **תִּאֲוֹת אָדָם חֲסִדוֹ**, an attraction that draws people to a man is his reputation for generosity.

To discourage a person from deceitfully taking advantage of this attraction, the proverb continues by advising the reader that it would be even better to be poor than to be rich and deceive others with empty promises.

Such a deceiver is a prominent man (**אִישׁ**) who is reputed to be wealthy. He has achieved good will under false pretenses and will ultimately be held accountable.

**Learning Mishlei**

**(22) An appealing quality of a person — תִּאֲוֹת אָדָם —**  
 is his reputation for **generosity — חֲסִדוֹ;**  
**but it is better — וְטוֹב**  
 to be known as a **pauper — רֶשׁ**  
 that cannot give to others,

than to be a **prominent man** — **מְאִישׁ**  
who **deceives** — **פֶּזֶב**  
people with empty promises.

### **Additional Insights**

[1]. The word **תְּאֵוָה** means desire, but it can also mean a desirable quality, such as generosity, which people admire. A person may wish to be able to exercise such a quality by having the resources to make gifts to worthy causes. However, his desire to be known as a generous man can tempt him to deceive others.

(אבן עזרא)

[2] A person may seek wealth so as to be able to give to charity, but if he does not carry out his dream, he would have been better off remaining poor. (שבט מיהודה)

[3] A person may desire to be known as generous and makes promises accordingly, but when the time comes to make good on his commitments, he is reluctant and gives without heart. This is not true giving and he would have been better off remaining poor. (חנוך חנער).