

Mishlei 19-29**Suffering****Key Concepts**

This last proverb of our chapter corresponds to the the parshah of Ki Savo which we read as each year draws to a close. The parshah opens with an expression of gratitude for Hashem's blessings and a plea for future blessings in the year to come. However, the parshah also reminds us that there is a balance in the choices we make throughout our lives. These choices are often difficult because there are options we would instinctively prefer because they are the easy way out or they are attractive even though we know they are wrong.

And so, we tend to suppress from our conscious thought the negative consequences of bad choices, hoping we won't have to face them if we don't think about them. But the curses that appear towards the end of Ki Savo are there for a reason. It behooves us to be aware that for the choices we make to be real, they cannot reflect only desirable alternatives. The proverb reminds us that just as blessings have been prepared for us, there are also potential tragedies, and we need to be aware of them so that we can avoid them.

Exploring Mishlei

(כט) נְכוֹנוּ לְלִצִּים שְׁפָטִים וּמַהֲלָמוֹת לְגוֹ כְּסִילִים :
(29) *Judgments have been prepared for the scoffers,*
and beatings [have been prepared] for the backs of fools.

This proverb refers to the people who are inclined to make wrong choices as either scoffers or fools. The scoffers consciously avoid having to face reality by suppressing in their mind the possibility of negative consequences. They do this by deriding the validity of the choices.

The fools allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the superficial desirability of the bad choices and so they rarely think of the consequences as a serious possibility.

The proverb comes to restore awareness that bad outcomes can happen and it is worthwhile making an effort to face the hard choices in life.

Learning Mishlei

(29) There **have been prepared** — נְכוֹנֵי
for the scoffers, — לְלֹצְיִם
judgments. — שְׁפָטִים

And beatings — וּמַהֲלָמוֹת
have been prepared
for the backs — לְגֵוֹ
of fools — בְּסִילִים.

Additional Insights

[1] The word נְכוֹנֵי (have been prepared) is in the past tense to remind everyone that although the harsh consequences of foolish choices are hidden, they have already been prepared and therefore they are real. (מדרש רבה)

[2] A person who takes the possibility seriously of having to suffer for his sins, will have experienced that suffering in his mind, and so there may be no need for his body to have to endure the pain. (מסילת ישרים)