

Mishlei 20-02**Recklessness****Key Concepts**

A person may be exposed to a dangerous situation at any time. Life is a precious gift and the Creator expects every person to take reasonable steps to safeguard it. A foolish disregard of danger implies that the person is impudently counting on being rewarded with a life-saving miracle when he is in danger.

There are people who intentionally run risks, in effect daring Hashem to save them. They are looking for the thrill of survival against the odds. However, this is a sinful attitude. If they succumb to a mortal danger, they must know that they have forfeited their own life.

Generally, in every potentially dangerous situation there are warning signs, and a person should at all times be alert to them. He can then take the necessary action to minimize the threat by avoiding the source of danger, fleeing from it, or taking defensive action.

Exploring Mishlei

(ב) נהם כפפיר אימת מלך מתעברו חוטא נפשו:

Like the roar of a young lion, so is the terror of a king; anyone who angers him puts his life at risk.

This proverb offers two vivid examples of danger, each with its own characteristic warning signs. One is a young lion, which may attack at any time and signals its intentions with its thundering roar.

The other source of danger is a moody king who is easily offended and who terrorizes the people around him. Those in his presence can never be sure what will set him off and so they must take extra precaution to choose their words carefully.

As we have seen in the Segment 19-12 the concept of “king” may apply to anyone in a position of power or authority, such as an employer or head of a household. Those who are dependent upon his goodwill must take care to avoid offending him.

Exploring Mishlei

Like the roar of the young lion — נהם כַּפִּיר —
so is the terror induced by a moody king — **אימת מֶלֶךְ.**
Anyone who angers him — **מתעבֵרו** —
by failure to choose his words carefully
puts his life at risk — **חוטא נִפְשׁו.**

Additional Insights

- (1) The expression **חוטא נִפְשׁו** may also be translated “forfeits his life”. The foolish victim has shown disregard for the value of his life, and is therefore to blame if he ends up losing it. — מלבים
- (2) The person who arouses the king’s wrath, cannot justify himself by saying that he could not predict what would provoke the king. Since he knows the king is moody, he must take care to be absolutely certain that his behavior will not upset the king. — רבינו יונה