

Mishlei 20-03**Forbearance – Restraint****Key Concepts**

If someone insults you or fails to treat you with the consideration that you feel you deserve, you may be resentful and if you are really hurt you might be tempted to strike back with a sharp remark or a corresponding action. Even though such a response may seem justified in the heat of the moment, you should realize that such behavior is unproductive and can only diminish you. In fact, you may be inadvertently starting or extending a quarrel that has long-term consequences.

Mishlei calls upon you to realize what you are getting into, and practise restraint to avoid making a fool of yourself. Don't think you are made stronger by winning an argument. On the contrary, getting into the argument will only diminish you. Your best recourse is silence.

Exploring Mishlei

(ג) כְּבוֹד לְאִישׁ שְׁבֶת מְרִיב וְכֹל אָוִיל יִתְגַּלֵּעַ:

(3) *A man who restrains himself from getting into quarrels deserves respect, but anyone who fails to restrain himself shows what a fool he is.*

Situations may arise where a person is tempted to get into a quarrel, but he should realize that doing so is a mark of foolishness. The honorable thing to do is avoid actions or speech that initiate or extend quarrels. A person who practices self-restraint is doing the honorable thing.

Learning Mishlei

(3) Honor is fitting to the man — כְּבוֹד לְאִישׁ
who restrains himself — שְׁבֶת
from a quarrel — מְרִיב.

In contrast, every fool — וְכֹל אָוִיל
who gets into a quarrel reveals himself — יִתְגַּלֵּעַ
for the fool that he is.

Additional Insights

[1] A quarrel that is visible to other people reveals the presence of fools in the community, whereas the absence of quarrels is a mark of honor to the entire community. (מצודות)

[2] If two people are quarreling and one becomes silent and withdraws from the discussion, that person has identified himself as the honorable one. (רבינו יונה)

[3] If a person changes his location frequently, it is a sign that the only way he is able to avoid a dispute is to leave the scene. It is a greater mark of dignity if he stays where he is and remains silent. (מעם לועז)

[4] If someone is publicly insulted, he is advised to remain silent. Anything he says in his own defense is likely to be misinterpreted and work against him. (מלבי"ם)

[5] If two fools shout insults at each other, the shame of both will be exposed. (הגר"א)