

Mishlei 20-10**Commerce – Deception****Key Concepts**

People who practice deception are using underhanded methods to take advantage of others. The deceivers are demonstrating a conviction that they are justified in what they do because of their superiority. Such an attitude is hated by Hashem and is considered by Him as an abomination.

A common method of deception treated specifically in the Torah (*Devarim* 25:13—16) is the use of false weights and measures in commerce. It is also the subject of a previous proverb in Mishlei (11-01) and is restated here in a different form for emphasis.

In the proverb below, Mishlei reminds us that it is not only forbidden to use false weights and measures, it is even forbidden to possess such devices. This is because of the seriousness of the offense.

Exploring Mishlei

To make it absolutely clear, Mishlei describes the sin of having a false weighing stone by simply repeating the word. Thus, when one possesses two weighing stones that purport to be the same, but one is heavier than the other, that person has committed a sin. Mishlei refers to this sin as **אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן**, a stone and a stone.

(י) אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן אֵיפָה וְאֵיפָה תוֹעֵבַת ה' גַּם שְׁנֵיהֶם :
 (10) ***A stone and a stone, a measure and a measure,***
even both are an abomination to Hashem.

Similarly, if one possesses two size measures that are different, although they purport to be the same, he has committed the sin of **אֵיפָה וְאֵיפָה**, a measure and a measure.

In either case, he has performed an act that is hated by Hashem, even if the perpetrator does not actually use them in commerce.

Learning Mishlei

(10) A stone and a stone — אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן
or a measure and a measure — אִיפָּה וְאִיפָּה
are an abomination to Hashem — תוֹעֵבַת ה'—
even both — גַּם שְׁנֵיהֶם.

Additional Insights

[1] If a person possesses two measures, one of which is accurate and one of which is inaccurate, even when he uses the accurate measure, he is committing a sin, because it makes people think that this merchant is honest, thereby enabling him to cheat by using the inaccurate measure. (מצודות)

[2] If a person has two accurate measures, but of different sizes, they are forbidden if the sizes are close to each other, because they can easily be confused and thereby used to perpetrate a fraud. (שבט מיהודה)

[3] This proverb teaches us a general rule: if a person maintains facilities that enable him to perpetrate a fraud, he is committing an abomination even if he does not use them. (ליקוטי משלי)