

Mishlei 21-28

Credibility

Key Concepts

A person earns credibility by habituating himself to always speak the truth. Such a person has earned a reputation of faithful adherence to the truth. In contrast a lying witness will be found out and punished accordingly.

Exploring Mishlei

(כח) עַד כְּזָבִים יֵאָבֵד וְאִישׁ שׁוֹמֵעַ לְנֹצַח יְדַבֵּר:

(28) *A lying witness will perish*

but a man who listens will speak his testimony forever.

The proverb contrasts the credibility of a person who obeys the Commandment against bearing false witness (*Shemos* 20:13) with the bitter end of the witness who testifies falsely.

לֹא תַעֲנֶה בְרַעְדָּךְ עַד שֶׁקֶר

“You shall not bear false witness against your fellow”

Learning Mishlei

A lying witness — עַד כְּזָבִים

will perish — יֵאָבֵד

but a listening man — וְאִישׁ שׁוֹמֵעַ

(who is known to observe the Commandment
forbidding the bearing of false witness)

will be permitted to testify forever — לְנֹצַח יְדַבֵּר .

Additional Insights

[1] The death verdict for the false witness is understood to be carried out by the Heavenly Court. (אוצר פירושים)

[2] In an alternate interpretation, the “listening man” refers to all the people who unknowingly hear and repeat the false words of the lying witness. Even though the witness will perish, the consequences of his slander will persist for generations to come. (מצודות)

[3] We can draw an important lesson from the fact that even after the original false witness is dead and buried, his slanderous testimony may be heard and repeated by untold future generations. (אלשיך)