

## Mishlei 22-10

### The Scoffer

#### Key Concepts

The scoffer (לץ) shows his contempt for a person or idea by treating them as an object of humor. This has the effect of justifying an attitude of disrespect towards the target of his scorn. As we have seen in Segment 15:12, a scoffer refuses to take guidance or rebuke seriously, and thereby he attempts to diminish its hold upon him.

A person who has been vilified by a scoffer is likely to feel bitter resentment, which fuels hatred and strife. As a result the presence of a scoffer in a community can trigger conflict, which can lead to litigation and disgrace.

#### Exploring Mishlei

(י) גֵרֵשׁ לֵץ וַיֵּצֵא מִדָּוֶן וַיִּשְׁבֹּת דִּין וְקִלְוֹן:  
 (10) *Cast out a scoffer and conflict departs,  
 and litigation and humiliation come to an end.*

Mishlei illustrates the harmful influence of the scoffer by demonstrating the benefit of removing him from the social circle in which he thrives. The first benefit of such an action is to remove a source of conflict. The quarrels which the scoffer has been setting off are then likely to cease. This will have the effect of reducing court cases in the community and ending the kinds of humiliation that the scoffer has brought about.

#### Learning Mishlei

(10) Cast out a scoffer, — גֵרֵשׁ לֵץ  
 and conflict departs, — וַיֵּצֵא מִדָּוֶן  
 and litigation and humiliation come to an end. — וַיִּשְׁבֹּת דִּין וְקִלְוֹן

## **Additional Insights**

[1] The scoffer described in this proverb is actually the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*) that is present in each person. The message of Mishlei is for each of us to work on improving our character by suppressing this destructive force. (רש"י)

[2] There are actually two types of scoffer. One achieves his harmful effect by causing the target of his hurtful remarks to feel shame. Getting rid of him saves the innocent from being shamed. The other type of scoffer motivates his target to take him to court. Getting rid of him avoids burdening the courts with unnecessary cases. (רבינו יונה)