

Midrash Mishle 12

R. Hama bar Hanina said: Anyone who chats with his fellow and eats and drinks with him, yet speaks ill of him, is branded by God as wicked, as it is said, *Deceit is in the minds of those who plot evil* (Prov. 12:20). On the other hand, anyone who neither eats nor drinks with another nor has any dealings with him, yet speaks well of him, is called by God a [counselor of] peace, as it is said, *For the counselors of peace there is joy* (ibid.).

R. Zeira discerned a different implication [in this verse]: Anyone who lies in his bed at night and schemes, saying, "Tomorrow I will get up early and do such-and-such to my colleague," is called wicked by God, as it is said, *Deceit is in the minds of those who plot evil* (ibid.). Another interpretation: *Deceit (mirmah מרמה) is in the minds* (ibid.): R. Levi said: In the future, worms (*rimmah רימה*) will reign over the heart of him who devises evil. But anyone who lies in bed at night and thinks, "Tomorrow I will wake up early and do a good turn for So-and-so," will rejoice with the righteous in the Garden of Eden in the coming future, as it is said, *For the counselors of peace there is joy*.

Rab Huna asked, "Why did Scripture see fit to say, *For the counselors* [in the plural] and not 'for the counselor' [in the singular]?" R. Levi replied, "These are man's two kidneys, which advise him, one to do good and the other to do evil. The right one is for good and the left one is for evil, as it is said, *A wise man's mind tends toward the right hand, a fool's toward the left* (Eccl. 10:2.), and so also does David say, *For the righteous God probes the hearts and kidneys* (Ps. 7:10). But does man also have two hearts? Hence you must conclude that hearts refers to the Inclination to good and the Inclination to evil. *Kidneys* refers to the two kidneys who are the ones that counsel him, hence it is said, *For the counselors of peace there is joy* (Prov. 12:20). Not only that, but they are also called righteous. When? At the time when they advise man to do good. Where [in Scripture] are they called righteous? In the verse, *Rejoice in the Lord and exalt, O you righteous; shout for joy, all upright men* (Ps. 32:11)."

No harm befalls the righteous; but the wicked have their fill of misfortune (Prov. 12:21): *No harm*—at the time when he walks in his innocence; *but the wicked have their fill of misfortune*—this refers to the hypocrite. Not only that, but God calls him an abomination, as it is said, *Lying speech is an abomination to the Lord, but those that act faithfully please Him* (Prov. 12:22), [the latter half of the verse] referring to him who does business in [good] faith.

A clever man conceals what he knows, but the mind of a dullard cries out folly (Prov. 12:23). A clever man conceals what he knows refers to one who is not haughty about his Torah learning; *but the mind of a dullard cries out folly* refers to one who is haughty in his opinions. R. Zeira discerned a different implication from the verse: *Every clever man acts knowledgeably* (Prov. 13:16) refers to one who is not haughty in his wisdom; *but a dullard exposes his stupidity* (ibid.) refers to one who is haughty in his folly.