

Mishlei 10-06

Blessings for Life

Key Concepts

The instinctive reaction of a righteous man (*tzadik*) is to feel love towards everyone with whom he interacts. He expresses his love through kind words and blessings. Thus, the presence of a *tzadik* in a community creates a general feeling of goodwill which promotes the well-being of the entire community, for people seek to emulate the role model that the *tzadik* presents. They also know that Hashem showers blessings on the entire vicinity when there is a *tzadik* present. Accordingly an enlightened community will join with Hashem in blessing the *tzadik* that they are privileged to have in their midst.

However, the community may also harbor wicked people (*resha'im*), whose instinctive motivation is to take advantage of their fellow man and cause him harm. This gives them a temporary feeling of success, but ultimately leads to resentment and friction. The harm they do undermines and blocks any potential for blessing reaching them.

Exploring Mishlei

(ו) בְּרָכוֹת לְרֹאשׁ צַדִּיק וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יִכָּסֶה חֶמְסָם:

(6) Blessings [will cover] the head of the *tzaddik*, but the harm of the *resha'im* will cover [their] mouth.

In comparing the effect of a *tzadik* upon a community with that of *resha'im*, Mishlei distinguishes between the *tzaddik's* head, which is the seat of his wisdom and the mouth of the *rasha*, which is his instrument of harm through deception, falsehood, and gossip (*lashan hara*). The head of the *tzadik* initiates goodwill and is also the instrument for receiving goodwill in the form of blessings. The mouth of the wicked person causes harm to others and also represents his appetite, which he seeks to satisfy in dishonest ways.

The blessings that the *tzaddik* issues through his wisdom return to him (his head) in the form of blessings. The harm that the *resha'im* do through the workings of their mouth return to them by "covering" that mouth so that their appetite will remain unsatisfied.

Learning Mishlei

(ו) בְּרָכוֹת לְרֹאשׁ צַדִּיק
וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יִכְסֶה חָמָס:

Blessings from Heaven and from the people will descend **upon** and cover **the** loving **head of the tzaddik** – בְּרָכוֹת לְרֹאשׁ צַדִּיק, for his mouth issues a blessing to all, **but** the **harm** – חָמָס done by the evil speech that issues from the mouth **of the resha'im** will cover that mouth and block any blessing to them – וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יִכְסֶה.

Additional Insights

THE TZADIK

- (1) People bless the *tzadik* because he brings fulfillment to their lives. Also, it is as though they are living under his protection because the blessings of Hashem come to them in his *zechus* (merit).
- (2) The head is described as the organ where blessings are received because the source of all blessings is from Hashem, on high. The head is the highest and most prominent part of the body so that it is the first organ to be encountered by the descending blessings.
- (3) The Gemara (*Sotah* 38b) states that a *tzadik* is continually blessing people, as it says (*Mishlei* 22:9), טוֹב עֵין הוּא יְבָרֵךְ, "A person of generous character will bless [others]."
- (4) Because the *tzadik* does good to others it is as though the whole community lays their hands upon his head and blesses him.

THE RESHA'IM

- (5) The *resha'im* harm others through their mouth which curses people and shames them. The harm that they intended to do to others comes back to affect them.
- (6) The *resha'im* try to cover up their wicked behavior, symbolized by covering their mouth, the source of the evil that they do.

CONTRAST

(7) Through the actions of the *tzadik* the whole community gains benefit and honor. The actions of the *rasha*, however, undermine the well-being of the entire community. Therefore a community is glad not only about the happiness of the righteous but also about the downfall of the *resha'im*.

(8) The *tzadik* is described as an individual, using the singular form, because a true *tzadik* is a rarity. In contrast, the *resha'im* are described in the plural form, because they tend to proliferate. Because of the power of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) it takes more effort for a person to be righteous than to be wicked. But this is every man's challenge and his mission.

Sources

The primary sources used for the insights illuminating this segment are listed below.

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| (5) - הגר"א | (1) - המאירי, אבן יחיאל |
| (6) - מלבי"ם | (2) - רבינו יונה |
| (7) - רשר"ה | (3) - הגר"א |
| (8) - דעת סופרים | (4) - מלבי"ם |

© COPYRIGHT NOTICE
All rights to this document are reserved by the author. For further information contact Isaac Kirzner at isaac@kirzner.com