

Mishlei 11-10

Community

[11:10 – 11]

Key Concepts

The well-being of a community depends on the kind of people who live in it. For example, the presence of *tzadikim* (righteous people) in a community brings a blessing from Hashem, which results in benefit and honor for the entire community. However, if a community includes *resha'im* (wicked people) they have a negative effect, undermining the well-being of the community by spreading their opinions, principles and viewpoints. Therefore, an enlightened community is glad not only about the happiness of the *tzadikim* but also about the downfall of the *resha'im*.

Exploring Mishlei

בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים תִּעֲלֶץ קְרִיָה, וּבְאַבְדּוֹ רְשָׁעִים רִנָּה:

**(10) The city rejoices when all is well with the tzadikim.
When the wicked perish, there is jubilation.**

בְּבִרְכַת יְשָׁרִים תִּרוֹם קִרְת, וּבִפִּי רְשָׁעִים תִּהְרָס:

**(11) By the blessing of the upright the city is uplifted.
But by the mouth of the resha'im it is ruined.**

This segment consists of two proverbs, which contrast the people who are of value to the health of a community with those who degrade the community. The good people are described in terms of two related characteristics, *tzidkus* and *yashrus*. *Tzidkus* is the quality of righteous people (*tzadikim*) who are motivated by their intense desire to please Hashem and to help their fellow man. *Yashrus* is the quality of fair-minded people (*yesharim*), who are motivated by their deeply felt sense of right and wrong. Of course, any one person is likely to have both *tzidkus* and *yashrus* in varying degrees.

The wicked people who are destructive of a community are referred to in both proverbs as *resha'im*. Their presence in the city undermines its peace and welfare.

Mishlei implies that a person should seek to live in a city where *resha'im* are not to be found.

Learning Mishlei

(10) **When all is well with the tzadikim — בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים**

the entire city rejoices, — תִּעְלֶץ קְרִיהָ

And when the wicked perish — וּבְאַבְדֹת רְשָׁעִים

there is jubilation, — רָנָה

because the presence of *resha'im* undermines the moral level and honor of the entire community.

(11) **By the blessing of the upright — בְּבִרְכַת יְשָׁרִים**

the city is uplifted. — תְּרוֹם קִרְתָּ

because there is an extra level of sincerity in their good wishes for their fellows.

But by the mouth of the resha'im — וּבִפִּי רְשָׁעִים

it is ruined. — תִּהְרָס

Additional Insights

TZADIKIM

(1) *Tzadikim* are loved by the entire community because they actively seek the welfare of all. Thus, everyone rejoices in their well-being.

(2) People are grateful for *tzadikim* for their very presence in the city is a great *zechus* (merit). The people are also grateful to the *tzadikim* for promoting the spiritual growth to help everyone gain a place in the World to Come.

(3) The quality of *tzidkus* is oriented towards active benevolence, doing good deeds towards others. This promotes gratitude and so everyone rejoices when the *tzadikim* are successful.

YESHARIM

(4) The quality of *yashrus* is oriented towards a deep understanding of right and wrong. Thus, people who are *yesharim* have an innate *kedushah* (holiness) which overflows to all in their vicinity. This is expressed as a blessing to the community, elevating it in every dimension.

(5) When the *yesharim* are blessed with prosperity, everyone feels good about the values that they represent and is encouraged to follow their example. Thus, the entire community is elevated.

(6) When people meet each other, they typically express their good wishes in the form of a blessing. Frequently, though, such blessings are mechanical, lacking any heartfelt emotion. The blessings of *yesharim*, however, are sincere and create an atmosphere of goodwill that elevates the entire city.

RESHA'IM

(7) People tend to be unhappy about the presence of *resha'im* in the city for they are a bad influence on everyone. They lower the standards of religious observance and encourage people to be lax about their obligations. This results in a bad outcome for the entire community. Thus, the people are relieved when the *resha'im* are gone.

(8) Through their evil deeds *resha'im* draw forth the anger of Hashem which can result in widespread suffering for the entire world. Therefore, people are happy to see them gone.

(9) *Resha'im* cause contention and strife by means of the gossip and slander that they practice. Thus, through their evil speech they bring ruin to the city.

(10) When the *resha'im* are in a position of authority, telling others what to do, their corrupt administration will bring the city to ruin. This is in contrast to the *yesharim* who, when they are blessed with authority, will cause the city to be elevated.

(11) The *resha'im* destroy, even when they bless others. They imbed implied denigration within the blessing, either of the one they are blessing, or of another person.