

Mishlei 11-10

The Community

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

(י) בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים תִּעֲלֶץ קִרְיָהּ וּבְאַבְדּוֹ רְשָׁעִים רָנָה: (יא) בְּבִרְכַּת יֶשְׁרִים תִּרוֹם קִרְיָהּ וּבְפִי רְשָׁעִים תִּהְרָס:

(10) *The entire city rejoices in the good of the tzadikim and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation. (11) Through the blessing of the fair-minded the city is uplifted but through 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

בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים תִּעְלֶץ קְרִיָּה
וּבְאַבְדֹת רְשָׁעִים רָנָה:

The entire city rejoices in the good of the *tzadikim* — בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים תִּעְלֶץ קְרִיָּה because their good brings well-being to all. **And when the wicked perish, there is jubilation — וּבְאַבְדֹת רְשָׁעִים רָנָה**, because the presence of *resha'im* undermines the moral level and honor of the entire community.

בְּבִרְכַת יִשְׁרָיִם תָּרוּם
קִרְתָּ וּבִפִּי רְשָׁעִים תִּהְרָס:

Through the sincere blessing of the *yesharim* the city is elevated — בְּבִרְכַת יִשְׁרָיִם תָּרוּם, because there is an extra level of sincerity in their good wishes for their fellows. **But through the mouth of the *resha'im* the city is ruined — וּבִפִּי רְשָׁעִים תִּהְרָס.**

Additional Insights

A series of insights illuminating this proverb are presented below. The numbers identifying the insights refer to the listing of sources at the end of the segment.

TZADIKIM (v. 10)

(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 (v. 11)

(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 themselves 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 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 (v. 10-11)

(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* perish.

(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 mouths they bring ruin to the city.

(10) When the *resha'im* are in a position of authority, their mouths 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 imbued implied denigration within the blessing, either of the one they are blessing, or of another person.

Sources

The primary sources used for the additional insights illuminating this segment are

listed below.

- (7) - אבן יחיא
- (8) - שבט מיהודה
- (9) - רבינו יונה
- (10) - מצודות
- (11) - דעת סופרים

- (1) - רבינו יונה, רלב"ג
- (2) - אבן יחיא
- (3) - מלבי"ם
- (4) - מלבי"ם
- (5) - רבינו יונה
- (6) - דעת סופרים

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