

Mishlei 11-31

Accountability

Key Concepts

It is human nature to assume that when things go well they will continue to go well. A person who knows he is doing what is morally or ethically wrong, but sees that life is good, may find it easy to convince himself that he will not be held to account for his sins. Mishlei reminds him in this segment that in the end he will have to pay for every offense against his Creator.

Exploring Mishlei

(לא) הֵן צְדִיק בְּאֶרֶץ יְשׁוּלָם אֶף כִּי־רָשָׁע וְחוֹטֵא:

**(31) If the tzadik is repaid while yet on earth;
how much more so will the rasha and the sinner!**

This proverb suggests that the sinner learn a lesson from the life of the the *tzadik*. Even though the *tzadik* is on a high spiritual plane, he is held to account for every sinful act. Even though David *HaMelech* was a very righteous king, he had to endure severe torment because of the few sins of which he was guilty. He was only forgiven after undergoing an intense period of *teshuvah* (repentance).

Thus, the *tzadik* is repaid on earth for every sin. Accordingly, the *rasha* (wicked person) who is guilty of a pattern of sinful behavior, whether intentional or through carelessness, must come to the conclusion that he will ultimately have to pay for his offense, either in this life or in the World to Come.

Learning Mishlei

(31) If the *tzadik*, — הֵן צְדִיק —
while yet on earth, is repaid — בְּאֶרֶץ יְשׁוּלָם —
how much more so — אֶף כִּי —
will the *rasha* and the sinner — רָשָׁע וְחוֹטֵא —

Additional Insights

(1) If the *tzadik* is punished in this world for his sins, a *rasha* will surely be punished, either in this world or the world to come.

(רש"י, אלשיך, מצודות, שבט מיהודה, רשר"ה)

(2) If the *tzadik* is rewarded in this world for his good deeds, the *rasha* will surely be punished for his bad deeds, either in this world or the world to come. (אבן עזרא)

(3) Even when the *tzadik* is suffering for his bad deeds in this world while the *rasha* is benefiting from his good deeds, the payment for the bad deeds of the *rasha* and good deeds of the *tzadik* will surely come in the next world. (רבינו יונה, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, הגר"א)

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