

Mishlei 12-25

Anxiety

Key Concepts

Although people tend to lead a structured existence, no one can be certain of the future. Thus, we all live with uncertainty and this can affect our mood. The problem is that moods induced by thoughts of the future have a direct effect on our ability to function in the present. These moods can range from a serene trust in Hashem to deep anxiety about what the future may hold in regard to health, family, and livelihood.

When a person's heart is filled with worry about the future, he finds it difficult to focus his thoughts on the task at hand. Thus, he finds it impossible to give the needed attention to his ongoing relationship with his Creator.

For this reason, Mishlei teaches every person to try and subdue any worry to which he may be subject. He recommends the most direct means to overcoming worrisome thoughts, which is to replace them with positive, happy thoughts. Torah wisdom can be the ideal source of such thoughts.

Exploring Mishlei

(כה) דְאָגָה בְּלִב־אִישׁ יִשְׁחָנָה וְדָבָר טוֹב יִשְׁמְחָנָה:

***(25) Worry in a man's heart? Let him subdue it.
Let a good word convert it to joy.***

This proverb contrasts the instinctive mood of anxiety and worry with the mood of joy and serenity that is called upon to replace it.

Learning Mishlei

**(25) When there is worry — דְאָגָה
in a man's heart — בְּלִב־אִישׁ,
let him subdue it — יִשְׁחָנָה
by turning his attention to positive thoughts.
Let a good word of Torah — וְדָבָר טוֹב
convert it to joy — יִשְׁמְחָנָה.**

Additional Insights

(1) All the possible moods a person may have are already present deep within his psyche. He has the power to elevate any mood and let it dominate his heart. He also can subdue whatever mood happens to be dominant at any time. One of these moods is anxiety or worry about the future. He can subdue it by replacing the negative thoughts with positive thoughts, that is, thoughts of good things happening. (מלב"ם)

(2) One can subdue anxiety about the future by considering whatever happens as being all for the best because it is Hashem's will. (מצודות)

(3) By delving into Torah wisdom, a person can replace worry with joy, as it says, *"Enlightened eyes will gladden the heart"* (Mishlei 15:30). (רבינו יונה)

(4) A person should keep in mind that we only live in this world for a short time. Since this is a transient existence, he should not be overly delighted with his successes or overly anxious about what may go wrong in his daily life. (מאירי)

(5) A thinking person should seek to overcome his worries because worrying serves no purpose other than to weaken him. From a big picture perspective, worrying about something that is only temporary is foolish. Furthermore, a person should aspire to have complete trust in Hashem. If he does, he will have no cause for worry about the future for everything that happens is in His hands. (רלב"ג)

(6) A person who sees his friend suffering from anxiety should help him drive his worries away by talking to him about ideas that will cheer him up. The most positive topic that he can employ is the wisdom of the Torah. (הגר"א)