

**Mishlei 13-09****Light and Life****Key Concepts**

We are granted the gift of life anew each day. As the darkness of night draws to a close and we are greeted by daylight, we know that we are alive, and our life force has been restored by our Creator. That life force is our soul, and it is symbolized by the light of the new day.

The soul of a righteous person (*tzadik*) rejoices each day, secure in the knowledge that, just as the light of the sun is totally reliable and will always be there, he can count on his own life continuing beyond the boundaries of this limited world into the infinite World to Come.

In contrast, the future of the wicked person (*rasha*) is uncertain. In contrast to the natural light of day, it is comparable to artificial light, such as the light from an oil lamp. That light can easily flicker out if the oil, which is the source of its energy, is used up or if the wick fails.

**Exploring Mishlei**

**(ט) אור־צַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמַח וְנֵר רְשָׁעִים יִדְעֵד:**

**(9) The light of tzadikim rejoices,  
but the lamp of resha'im flickers out.**

In this proverb, the natural light of the sun is contrasted with the artificial light from an oil lamp. The soul of the *tzadik*, which is identified with natural light, rejoices in its anticipation of immortality. However, the light of *resha'im* is artificial. Their soul exists in sadness, knowing that it can come to an end at any time, and it will be replaced by perpetual darkness.

**Learning Mishlei**

**(9) The light of the righteous, — אור־צַדִּיקִים**  
which corresponds to their soul or life force,

rejoices — **יִשְׂמַח** —

in anticipation of immortality,

but the lamp of the wicked — **נֵר רְשָׁעִים** —

flickers out — **יִדְעָךְ** —

in anticipation of their death.

## Additional Insights

### Wisdom in Words

(1) The word **אור** refers to the essence of light, independently of the means used to generate it, whether it be natural or artificial. However, **נר** refers to a specific mechanism for generating light (the lamp). Because the light of the sun is so strong and pervasive during daytime, we think of it in terms of its essence rather than its method of being generated. (מלב"י"ם)

(2) The soul of the *tzadik* is described by the term **אור**, because it is immortal just as the essence of light is eternal and is not dependent on any artificial mechanism. Even in this limited world, the soul of the *tzadik* rejoices in being able to do *mitzvos*. And even when the body is experiencing pain, the soul is joyful in its continued existence and its continued devotion to Hashem. (רבינו יונה)

(3) When Mishlei speaks of light as smiling, this should be understood as a metaphor because when the sun shines brightly, it creates a joyful mood in mankind. Another example is found in *Tehillim* 19:6 (*Mizmor* 19) where the sun is described as a warrior who rejoices in running his course (**יִשְׂיַח כְּגִבּוֹר**). (אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה)

(4) By the same token, the soul of the *tzadik* can be thought of as smiling since the soul represents the core of the individual's personality in his devotion to Hashem. We find similar terminology in *Yeshayahu* 61:10, "My soul will exult with G-d." - **תִּגַּל נַפְשִׁי בְּאֱלֹהֵי**. (אבן עזרא)

(5) The word **אור** is also associated with success and the natural happiness that success brings. We find this concept in *Esther* 8:16, "The Jews had light and gladness" - **לְיִהוּדִים הִיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה**. (המאירי)

(6) The phenomenon of **אור** is essential to being able to see one's way ahead. Therefore, **אור** is the quality of one who guides others in the right way. Such a

person is instinctively happy knowing that he is doing the will of Hashem and will be rewarded accordingly. (חנוך לנער)

(7) Immortality is associated with the mood of joy and therefore the immortal soul of the *tzadik* is described as eternally joyful. The soul of the *rasha*, which faces the end of its existence is described as sorrowful. (מלבניים)

(8) The word **יִדְעָה**, which refers to the extinguishing of a flame, is based on the concept of jumping, since a flickering flame appears to be jumping away from the wick. (רש"י, מצודות)

### Other Insights

(9) When a *rasha* appears to be experiencing joy, it is a joy that is dependent upon the body, and when the body comes to its end, the joy ceases as well. (רבינו יונה)

(10) The World to Come is represented by the concept of daylight. In contrast This World is represented by the darkness of night. The existence of *tzadikim* is focused on the World to Come, whereas the existence of *resha'im* is focused in This World. (הגר"א)

(11) In segment 06-20 we find that the metaphors of **נֵר** and **אֹר** are used to compare the concepts of "mitzvah" and "Torah," based on their ability to provide protection, **כִּי נֵר מְצַוֶּה וְתוֹרָה אֹר**. The protection of a *mitzvah* is temporary like the flame of a lamp, which ultimately is extinguished. During the time a person is doing a *mitzvah* he is protected from sin. In contrast, light is eternal, and the Torah provides eternal protection. The wisdom of Torah will always be available to a person to protect him from sin. (See the Gemara in *Sotah* 21a). (שבט מיהודה)

(12) The wicked extinguish the light of their own souls through their sins. (הגר"א)

(13) A person who has acquired wealth honestly can use it for good and be joyful, whereas a person who has acquired it dishonestly will remain in fear. His pleasure in the wealth of this world is only temporary. (-רש"י)