

Mishlei 13-24

Appetite

Key Concepts

As an essential condition of life, Hashem has given all creatures an appetite for food. The act of satisfying that appetite gives each creature a sense of pleasure. However, animals instinctively limit the amount of food they eat because the purpose of consuming food is self-preservation, not pleasure. Thus, the drive of appetite naturally diminishes as they become sated.

Human beings have been given the opportunity to develop a more noble attitude towards food. A *tzadik* (righteous person) is consciously aware that food is necessary for him to fulfill his spiritual mission in life. Therefore his motivation to eat is not controlled by his appetite. On the contrary, the *tzadik* is motivated by the knowledge that his purpose in eating is primarily to satisfy the needs of his soul. Nevertheless, he may consciously appreciate the pleasure that comes with eating, seeing it as a kindness of Hashem.

A *rasha* (wicked person) is not interested in his spiritual life. His existence is dominated by the pleasures afforded by food and by other physical cravings. Thus, he continues to eat, hoping to recapture the pleasurable experience even when it eludes him. His concern with the pleasure of eating is so intense that he fails to sense when his hunger eases, and so he is driven to an endless cycle of self-satisfaction and overeating. Thus, he never really gets the satisfaction which he craves.

Exploring Mishlei

(כה) צַדִּיק אֵכֵל לְשִׁבְעַת נַפְשׁוֹ וּבֶטֶן רָשָׁעִים תִּתְחַסֵּר:

A tzadik eats primarily to satisfy his soul but the stomach of the rasha will be wanting.

This proverb contrasts the attitude of the *tzadik* and the *rasha* to the food they eat. The *tzadik* sees the act of eating from the point of view of his soul, which is concerned with his spiritual life. The soul is satisfied when a lack of food does not interfere with his ability to serve Hashem. The *rasha* sees the act of eating from the point of view of his body. Since physical cravings are never satisfied, the stomach always feels it could do with more.

Learning Mishlei

(כה) צַדִּיק אֵכֵל לְשִׁבְעַת נַפְשׁוֹ
וּבֶטֶן רָשָׁעִים תִּתְחַסֵּר:

A tzadik eats primarily to satisfy his soul – צַדִּיק אֵכֵל לְשִׁבְעַת נַפְשׁוֹ rather than his body because his motivation to eat is not the pleasure he gets from food. His soul is satisfied if he is able to serve *Hashem*. **However, the stomach of the rasha will always be wanting** – וּבֶטֶן רָשָׁעִים תִּתְחַסֵּר because there is no limit to sensual cravings.

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.

- (1) When the *tzadik* sits down to eat he thinks of himself as satisfied because satisfaction for him is defined by the serenity of his soul. But when the *rasha* sits down to eat, thinks of himself as so hungry that he will never be satisfied no matter how much he consumes.
- (2) The appetite of the *rasha* is never satisfied because he always hopes that the next mouthful will give him pleasure. In contrast, worldly pleasure means nothing to the *tzadik*. For him true pleasure is spiritual.
- (3) The *tzadik* views the earning of his livelihood within the the framework of doing *mitzvos*. Thus, he always does it prudently and in a fitting manner. In contrast, the *rasha's* actions are unconstrained by the rules of appropriate behavior and so he always feels he could do more. A sensual person knows neither limit nor satiety in the gratification of his senses.
- (4) The stomach of the *rasha* is too small to contain all the food he would like to eat. Therefore, he is never able to consume as much as his appetite calls for and his stomach is always lacking.
- (5) When a *rasha* learns Torah, his motivation is too impress other people and gain recognition. Therefore, his pride drives him on an on. He doesn't know when to stop. In contrast, the *tzadik* is motivated by the need to understand the particular topic. When he has achieved an appropriate level of knowledge he is satisfied. He is not concerned with how long this takes.

Sources

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

הגר"א - (4)

הגר"א - (5)

(1) - רש"י, שבט מיהודה

(2) - מלבי"ם

(3) - רלב"ג, רשר"ה

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