Mishlei 15-03

Transparency

Key Concepts

Mankind has been given the ability to appreciate the wonderful world in which we live. However, we often find this difficult to do. There is so much that is hidden from us in terms of the mysteries of the universe and in terms of the balance between fortune and misfortune in human lives.

Because we have a level of insight and intelligence far in excess of any other creature, we are tempted to seek an answer to every difficult question. But Mishlei wants us to recognize and accept the inherent limitations in our situation. We can do so by contemplating the infinite perspective of our Creator.

Before our world was created, there was no distinction between good and evil, because everything was good. There was no separate existence of space and time because nothing existed other than Hashem in the absolute purity of His holiness.

In a sense, that situation continues. There is no existence other than Hashem. However, it has been His choice to create variations in the intensity of His presence and so there is the possibility of a human being existing with some sense of independent will, providing him with the possiblity of choosing to do evil as well as good.

Imagine renting a house in which the owner has installed cameras and microphones in every room. From the owner's point of view there is total transparency, since nothing is hidden from him. The tenant has absolutely no privacy, but because he cannot function if he is in constant awareness of being watched, the tenant has found a way of pretending that the cameras and microphones are switched off.

That is our situation, and it doesn't bother us because we are not even aware that we are pretending. It is only rarely, in moments of contemplation, that we stop and think about what we are doing here in this world. The current proverb is designed to assist us in those moments.

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Exploring Mishlei

(ג) בְּכָל־מָקוֹם עֵינֵי ה׳ צֹפוֹת רָעִים וְטוֹבִים׃

**(3) The eyes of Hashem are everywhere,
observing the bad and the good.**

This proverb draws our attention to the total and unlimited knowledge possessed by our Creator. That knowledge may be compared to eyes in every physical place, eyes that see and remember everything. In spite of being under constant surveillance we go about our daily lives doing good and bad things as we please. However, since the eyes of Hashem see all, we know that there will come a time when we will have to give a reckoning for how we have lived our lives.

Learning Mishlei

(2) **Everywhere — בְּכָל מָקוֹם**
the eyes of Hashem — עֵינֵי ה׳
are observing — צֹפוֹת
the bad and the good — רָעִים וְטוֹבִים

Additional Insights

(1) The “eyes” of Hashem are actually the universal Divine intelligence which has total and complete awareness of every part of Creation. (אבן עזרא)

(2) There is no place in the world in which a person can be hidden from the view of Hashem. We have the illusion that He hides His face from us but that is only a figure of speech because there is total transparency. (מצודות, מלבי״ם)

(3) It is as though all created things are agents of Hashem, seeing and recording what is going on everywhere. (מלבי״ם)

(4) There have been philosophers who try to explain the world in terms of of good and bad powers contending for dominance. But the good and the bad are both in Hashem’s domain. The bad serves the good because it provides mankind with a meaningful choice in exercising his free will. (חנוך לנער)

(5) Because there is a single intelligence watching the world, nothing is left to chance. There are no coincidences. Everything is known. (חבל נחלה, תבונת משלי)

(6) Don't think that that the eyes of Hashem are too pure to see the bad things in the world. Nothing is excluded, neither bad nor good. (הגר״א)

(7) There is a difference between "seeing" and "observer". Seeing refers to a passive activity of things taking place by chance. Observing refers to an active, intelligent analysis of what is observed, supplemented by control that is applied by the will of Hashem. (מלבי״ם)

(8) You might think that Hashem could not be aware of the evil on earth, or else He would not tolerate it. But He is totally aware. It is possible for bad things to happen and for man to be bad. Otherwise, the good would not be good; people would not be "good" if they did not have the choice to be bad. (רשר״ה)