

Mishlei 15-11

Mystery

Key Concepts

There is a certainty about the inevitability of death. But although our spiritual existence continues beyond death, we know very little about it. Death is the great unknown. We expect there will be some kind of judgment, but we can only guess what the Heavenly evaluation will find.

Another great mystery is the heart of man. We readily accept not knowing what other people are thinking because we don't want them to know what we are thinking. But that gives us the illusion that whatever we are thinking is totally private and that we can let our minds wander about at will, totally without concern for any consequences.

Mishlei wants to remind us that what is a mystery to man is not a mystery to our Creator. He is present with us at all times. Furthermore, our thoughts, whether worthy or unworthy are open to him.

We should stop and think about these mysteries from time to time because the awareness of mystery in our lives will help us to live better lives, to think better thoughts, and to act in better ways towards each other and towards our Creator.

Exploring Mishlei

(יא) שְׂאוֹל וְאֶבְדּוֹן נֶגְדַת ה' אֵף כִּי־לְבוֹת בְּנֵי־אָדָם:

The grave and death are before Hashem. Surely also the hearts of men.

This proverb begins with Hashem's certain knowledge of what will happen to us when we die. The proverb compares that knowledge with the mystery of what is going on in our hearts and minds. If death is no mystery to Hashem, the secrets of our private thoughts while we are alive are surely no mystery to Him.

Learning Mishlei

(יא) שְׂאוֹל וְאֶבְדּוֹן נֶגְדַת ה'

אֵף כִּי לְבוֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם:

The knowledge of the grave and everything else that happens to a person after death — שְׂאוֹל וְאֶבְדּוֹן are open before Hashem — נֶגְדַת ה'. If so, it can **surely** be

said that **the hearts of men** — **אֵף כִּי לְבוֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם** are open to Him.

Additional Insight

An insight illuminating this proverb is presented below.

Unthinkingly you might say that Hashem disregards the evil on earth, because otherwise would not tolerate it. Yet, His world-plan allows for bad things to happen and bad people to be bad, because otherwise the good would not be good. (Rav Shamshon Rafael Hirsch)