

Mishlei 15-29

Estrangement

Key Concepts

Hashem very much wants to be close to us for we are His handiwork. It is in our interest to be close to Him, for then he hears our *tefillos* and responds to them. But whether we are in fact close to Hashem depends very much on our attitude towards Him. His behavior responds to human activity. If a person estranges himself from Hashem, then He is in fact distant from him. However, if one moves closer to Him, then He is there, heeding every prayer. This is what David Hamelech meant when he said, **קָרוֹב ה' לְכָל קוֹרְאָיו**, "Hashem is close to all who call upon Him" (*Tehillim* 145:18).

What is Hashem looking for from us? He wants us to turn to Him and emulate His ways of truth and kindness. And so, we may end up being close to him or far from him. It is not that Hashem changes His mind in response to human prayer, but that He simply allows a man to place Him at whatever distance he chooses.

Exploring Mishlei

(כט) רְחוֹק ה' מִרְשָׁעִים וְתִפְלֵת צְדִיקִים יִשְׁמָע:
(29) Hashem remains distant from the wicked,
but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

This proverb contrasts the way Hashem responds to people and their *tefillos*. At one extreme there are the *resha'im* who have chosen to make Hashem irrelevant to their lives. They keep Him at a distance and so He remains distant from them. At the other extreme there are the *tzadikim* who have placed the relationship with the Creator as central to their being. He in turn pays close attention to their every wish and *tefillah*.

Learning Mishlei

(29) Hashem is distant — רְחוֹק ה' —
from the wicked — מִרְשָׁעִים —
 for they have chosen to be distant from him.
 but He hears — יִשְׁמָע

the prayer of the righteous — ותפלת צדיקים
for he is always close to them.

Additional Insights

(1) Whether Hashem pays attention to our *tefillos* depends upon how close we are to Him. In effect, it is we who control the relationship. (מצודות, מלבי"ם)

(2) Hashem loves the *tefillos* of *tzadikim* so much that even when a *tzadik* pleads for the welfare of a *rasha*, Hashem listens to him. (שבט מיהודה)

(3) Hashem is close to the righteous; with their *tefillos* they can gain from Him clarity of thought, purity of intention, and strength for fulfillment of good purposes. (רשר"ה)