

Mishlei 15-30

Delight

Key Concepts

What does it mean to feel delight? It's what happens when you are faced with an urgent problem that seems to have no solution. If you suddenly see a way out and a clear solution presents itself you will feel delight. This feeling will be evident in your face because your eyes will be lit up with the joy that you are feeling. Mishlei refers to that experience as **מְאוֹר עֵינַיִם**, the light of the eyes (delight).

Mishlei is concerned with acquiring and using wisdom. Happily, this area of human endeavor offers many opportunities for the experience of delight. The study of wisdom is constantly presenting challenges. For a person who really cares about the wisdom of the Torah, these challenges present a grave concern. However, the committed student will be rewarded with periodic moments of delight and his face will be lit up each time an obstacle to understanding is resolved.

Out of all the five senses, the two that are most involved in acquiring the wisdom of the Torah are seeing and hearing. You need vision to absorb wisdom from the written Torah and the many seforim that have been written over the centuries. You need your sense of hearing to listen to the words of oral Torah that are shared with you by your teachers, colleagues, and students.

Exploring Mishlei

(ל) מְאוֹר עֵינַיִם יְשִׂימַח לֵב שְׁמוּעָה טוֹבָה תִּדְשֶׁן עֵצִים:

The delight of the eyes brings joy to the heart. Hearing something good [and new in the world of Torah] gives marrow to the bones.

This proverb suggests the emotional and physical benefits of acquiring wisdom. The delight that comes about through answering puzzling questions is heartfelt joy. The insight that comes from hearing a good answer to a difficult question energizes and strengthens the student. It feels like having marrow has been injected into his bones.

Learning Mishlei

(ל) מְאֹר עֵינַיִם יִשְׁמַח לֵב
שְׁמוּעָה טוֹבָה תְּדַשֵּׁן עַצְמוֹ:

The light of the eyes reveals the delight that is **bringing joy to the heart** — **מְאֹר עֵינַיִם יִשְׁמַח לֵב**. **Hearing** a good answer to a difficult question energizes and strengthens the student, effectively **restoring marrow to his bones** — **שְׁמוּעָה טוֹבָה תְּדַשֵּׁן עַצְמוֹ**.

Additional Insights

A series of additional 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) The talmid chacham who is asked a question involving Torah wisdom and realizes he has an appropriate answer experiences delight from that knowledge. (rashi)
- (2) A person who sees a beautiful garden can experience delight of the eyes even when wisdom is not directly involved. (Rashi)
- (3) There is no joy in the world as great as that which comes from the removal of ambiguity and doubt. (Metz)
- (4) Learning the Written Torah (**תורה שבכתב**) is associated with the eyes because one visualizes the physical parchment and the writing with which the Torah was first recorded. The experience of learning the Talmud and Midrash is associated with the Oral Torah (**תורה שבעל פה**) because it was originally communicated only by word of mouth.

Sources

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

(3) - מצודות

(4) -הגר"א

(1) - רש"י

(2) - רש"י