

Mishlei 17-03**Control – Privacy****Key Concepts**

Despite the fact that we go to great lengths to preserve our privacy, Mishlei takes care to remind us that privacy is an illusion. Our Creator did not send us out into the world as independent beings, even though we may feel that way.

The world that Hashem created exists today only because He is constantly renewing it. That means He is fully aware at all times of what is going on inside our deepest thoughts. The feeling we have that no one is looking over our shoulder is one of the miracles of human existence and makes it possible for us to exercise free will. Only in this way do we have the freedom to choose what is right, while rejecting what is wrong.

All of this is implied by our proverb. It is especially significant as we approach the Day of Judgement. The message of the proverb is that we need to face the truth about ourselves because we cannot hide it. To the extent we can face this truth we will be able to acknowledge our sins and ask forgiveness.

Exploring Mishlei

(ג) מִצֶּרֶף לְכֶסֶף וְכוּר לְזָהָב וּבִחֵן לְבוֹת ה':

**(3) A smelting pot for silver and a crucible for gold,
but Hashem assesses hearts.**

The proverb illustrates our relationship with Hashem by comparing it with the process of refining precious metals. The goldsmith or silversmith heats up the raw material in a smelting pot or crucible. In this way he brings the gold or silver to such a high temperature that the impurities are burnt away. This leaves the molten metal to take shape as a solid piece of pure silver or gold.

There is no smelting pot or crucible that can be used to access the unworthy thoughts that pass through our hearts and minds from time to time. But those thoughts do not remain hidden. They are completely exposed to our Creator who waits for us to acknowledge and regret them. If we do, He expunges them from our hearts so that we can face the coming year with a clean conscience of pure gold or silver.

Learning Mishlei

(3) We can refine precious metals using
a smelting pot for silver – מִצִּיּוֹר לְכֶסֶף
and a crucible for gold – וְכוּר לְזָהָב

but there is no instrument that can
directly access the human mind and heart.
However, Hashem is always there with us.

And so, **Hashem** identifies and **assesses**
the thoughts in our **hearts** – **וַיִּבְחַן לִבּוֹת ה'**.

He helps us recognize them and if we acknowledge
them he restores our hearts to their pure state.

Additional Insights

[1] A pure heart is one that trusts in Hashem. The lack of trust represents an impurity, which needs to be removed. (רבינו יונה)

[2] A lack of sincerity in dealing openly and honestly with people represents an impurity in the heart. Pretending to be more religious is such an impurity. (מאירי)

[3] Pain or suffering that a person may experience from time to time should be thought of as part of a purification process which is designed to elevate the person and make him better. The focus of the gold refining process is not the impurity but the pure gold which emerges. (כלי יקר)