

Mishlei 17-22**Attitude****Key Concepts**

It is natural for people to wish for a happy, healthy life, but the things that they do in the pursuit of happiness are often destructive to what they are seeking. This is because they allow their mind to dwell on whatever it is that they think will make them happy rather than on what is good. They haven't thought through the consequences of the choices they make.

A person may think that if he only had money and power, he would surely be happy and healthy, and so he focuses his energies on gaining all the things that he doesn't have. But he fails to realize that the steps he is taking to gain "the good life" are driving him to misery and unhappiness. He fails to appreciate that happiness is not measured by his possessions but by his attitude towards his own possessions and those of others.

Exploring Mishlei

(כב) לֵב שְׂמֵחַ יִיטֵב גְּהֵה וְרוּחַ נִכְאָה תִיבֹשׁ גֶּרֶם :

**(22) A joyful heart promotes physical well-being,
but an unhappy spirit dries out the bone.**

This proverb looks at how a person's well-being is affected by a good attitude and compares it to the effect of having a bad attitude.

A person who is happy with whatever he has, will find that his good attitude helps him avoid conflict. It encourages healthful habits, and he benefits from an improved state of physical well-being. A person whose attitude is wracked by envy will find that his unhappy spirit embitters him and dries out the core of his being.

Learning Mishlei

**(22) A joyful heart — לֵב שְׂמֵחַ
promotes physical well-being — יִיטֵב גְּהֵה
but an unhappy spirit — וְרוּחַ נִכְאָה
dries out the bone — תִיבֹשׁ גֶּרֶם.**

Additional Insights

[1] A person's state of mind can have profound effects on his physical health. A cheerful disposition preserves health and promotes convalescence. (רשר"ה)

[2] Even if joy does not directly heal, it has a positive effect on the mood of a person bearing pain. Joy will allow him to accept his pain and endure it, and this can indirectly affect his health. (דעת סופרים)

[3] Among the negative attitudes to which the proverb is referring to are selfishness, arrogance, and over-emphasis on personal rights or privileges (המאירי).

[4] The unusual word **גְּהָה** can refer to general physical health (תרגום). However, it can also refer to a cure from illness (אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה), or to a radiant face (רש"י, הגר"א)

[5] The proverb may be referring to the effect of a parent on a child, a teacher on a student or the effect of a doctor on his patient. The positive, cheerful attitude of the mentor or caregiver can facilitate the learning process and promote convalescence. (המאירי, רבינו יונה)

.

.