

## Mishlei 19-10

# Pleasure

### Key Concepts

A key driving force in human behavior is the eagerness to experience pleasure. This includes physical pleasure, emotional pleasure, and spiritual pleasure. A person's instinctive attitude is that pleasure is a good thing and the more pleasure he has, the better.

But Mishlei teaches us that not everything is as good as it sounds, even pleasure. The main point is that the value of pleasure in anyone's life depends on the person. How well-prepared is he for pleasure? How will he react to it?

For example, a foolish person may automatically assume that if he is getting pleasure, he must be doing something right. Therefore, if he keeps doing it, he will get more pleasure. But that is not always the case, as everyone who has overeaten can confirm.

It takes a wise person to put pleasure in perspective. He knows that pleasure in itself cannot be a basis for evaluating whether his actions are good or bad. Admittedly, the experience of pleasure can give a person a positive feeling which gives him the strength to do good things. But the wise person has learned that bad things can also give him pleasure, and so he would have to be very foolish to rely on pleasure as his guide him in determining his course of action.

Similarly, a person who lacks leadership skills may find himself in a position of authority over others. That is a great feeling because people will give him respect and will pay attention to what he tells them. But if he reacts thoughtlessly to the pleasure he gets in having been chosen to lead, he will make critical decisions based on faulty knowledge and lack of understanding. This can end up being destructive for him and the people he cares about.

## Exploring Mishlei

י - לא נאֹה לְכִסִּיל תַעֲנוּג אִף כִּי לְעֶבֶד מְשַׁל בְּשָׂרִים:

*(10) Pleasure is unsuitable for a fool; especially if he is a low level person directing accomplished people.*

This proverb begins with the example of a fool (כִּסִּיל) who has the opportunity to experience pleasure. Mishlei warns him that pleasure is not suitable for him because it can easily mislead him into doing stupid things. If he wants to increase his capacity for pleasure, the first thing he needs to do is to acquire wisdom. Once he has found wisdom he will know how to safely integrate pleasure in his life.

The proverb then moves on to a person without leadership skills and without the experience that it takes to direct others in an important enterprise. This unqualified person is referred to using the word עֶבֶד, which could be translated as a slave or servant, but it could apply to anyone from a low background who has not had the opportunity to build the repertoire of knowledge and insight that leadership requires. This could be a real problem, especially if the people he has been given the opportunity to direct are more qualified than he is and will not take kindly to unwise orders.

Since Mishlei has chosen the word כִּסִּיל to represent the fool in this part of the proverb, he refers to those who are unfortunate enough to fall under his authority as princes (שָׂרִים). We need to remember that the circumstances, which place unqualified persons into authority over qualified ones can happen in every area of life. Accordingly, for a person who wants to be leader (or a teacher, or a parent, etc.) he needs to prepare himself. Wisdom is indispensable in every walk of life.

## Learning Mishlei

**It is unsuitable** – לא נאֹה

**for a fool** – לְכִסִּיל

to experience **pleasure** – תַעֲנוּג;

**especially if he is a low level person** – אִף כִּי לְעֶבֶד

**directing accomplished people** – מְשַׁל בְּשָׂרִים.

### **Additional Insights**

(1) If a person experiences pleasure, he should treat it as a gift that can give him the frame of mind to serve Hashem. He should guard against the danger that it will give him the prideful attitude that drive sin. – רבינו יונה –

(2) A person who has been placed in a position of authority should react with humility rather than pride. He should look for guidance to the wisdom of Torah teachings that have been passed down to him from previous generations. – מאירי, הגר"א –