

Mishlei 11-23

Anticipation

Key Concepts

Although the future is unknown to ordinary human beings, it is natural to think about what may happen and what our reaction will be to the possibility of various outcomes. In Mishlei 11-14 we saw the importance of planning ahead to achieve a desirable outcome to the extent that such an outcome can be influenced by our actions.

Mishlei now asks us to consider what outcome we want, how much do we really want it to happen, and what are the chances that events will conform to our hopes and expectations.

For this purpose Mishlei has identified two terms for thinking about favorable future events. There are some that we yearn for and others that we merely hope for. We are more likely to focus our efforts on facilitating events that we yearn for.

Our attitude to these possibilities depends on who we are. A righteous person (*tzadik*) trains himself to enhance desires that are good and suppress desires that are immoral or unethical. In this way he protects himself from the consequences of bad behavior. He orients his desires to the emotions associated with doing *mitzvos* and serving Hashem. In contrast, the concerns of an unethical person (*resha*) are oriented to the degree of physical pleasure he anticipates and how important that is to him.

Hope may be viewed as a judgment of the likelihood a desired event will take place. The hopes of a *tzadik* are fueled by his *bitachon* (trust) that Hashem controls the world. The hopes of *resha'im* are fueled by the possibly unrealistic expectations of a favorable outcome, like winning the lottery. The result of such hopes is likely to be disappointment and anger.

Exploring Mishlei

(כג) תַּאֲוֹת צְדִיקִים אֲדֹטִיב תִּקְוֹת רְשָׁעִים עֲבָרָה :

**(23) *The yearning of tzadikim is only for good;
the hope of resha'im ends up as disappointment.***

This proverb looks at yearning from the point of view of *tzadikim* because these are people who have worked to control their desires and elevate them. They have consciously chosen to emphasize objectives that are inherently good and that will please their Creator.

The proverb looks at hope from the perspective of *resha'im* because these are people who will be dramatically affected by failed hopes. In contrast to the *tzadikim* who reap the benefits that come from controlling their desires, the *resha'im* are often doomed to frustration.

Learning Mishlei

The yearning of *tzadikim* — תַּאֲוֹת צְדִיקִים —
is only for good. — אֲדֹטִיב
the hope of *resha'im* — תִּקְוֹת רְשָׁעִים —
is doomed to disappointment — עֲבָרָה

Additional Insights

TZADIKIM

(1) The expression אֲדֹטִיב (only good) teaches that *tzadikim* suppress all desires that fail to lead to an outcome that is clearly good. The focus of their desires is on being able to do *mitzvos* and serve Hashem. (אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה, מצודות, הגר"א)

(2) Even when *tzadikim* are engaged in material matters, such as eating and drinking, their intent is to serve Hashem and He counts it as such. (המאירי, חנוך לנער, שבט מיהודה)

(3) Because *tzadikim* are drawn to what is good, Hashem sees to it that they achieve their destiny of spiritual good. (רלב"ג)

RESHA'IM

(4) The *resha'im* are drawn to evil. Thus, they hope for it and are eager for it to come about. In this way they earn the disappointment and anger of Hashem.

(רבינו יונה, רלבי"ג)

(5) Even when *resha'im* do something good, their overall framework of behavior is evil and so the hope of a good outcome is never fulfilled. (המאירי)

(6) The concept of desire is independent of fulfillment. However, because the desires of the *tzadikim* are worthy, they are granted fulfillment by Hashem. In contrast, the concept of hope is based on fulfillment. However, because the hopes of the *resha'im* are unworthy they will not be fulfilled and nothing will remain of their hopes but anger. (מלבי"ם)

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