

Mishlei 20-08**Moral Purification
(20:08 and 20:09)****Key Concepts**

Purification is a process of cleansing, that is removing impurities. In the case of moral purification it means removing sin, both in the form of sinful behavior and sinful thoughts. Mishlei now speaks to the people as their spiritual leader or Navi (prophet), calling upon them to purify themselves. He tells them that they need to start by examining their thoughts and removing the kind of thinking that leads to sin in practice. They then need to apply their thoughts to past sins and do teshuvah (repentance).

Exploring Mishlei

The message of Mishlei is conveyed to the nation in two pesukim, first from his own perspective as their king and the second from the perspective of the people that he leads.

(ח) מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא דִין מְזַרְהוּ בְּעֵינָיו כָּל רָע

(8) *A king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters all evil with his eyes.*

When a king or spiritual leader is called upon to act as a judge, his throne becomes a throne of justice. In that capacity he inspires awe in the community. People are impressed by their leader's ability to understand them and to see through their pretenses. In effect his eyes scatter immoral thoughts by focusing upon each individual being judged.

(ט) מִי יֹאמֶר זָכִיתִי לְבִי טָהַרְתִּי מִחַטָּאתַי

(9) *Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I have purified myself from my sins.*

The spiritual leader calls out to the assembled community, asking whether there is anyone who can honestly claim he has examined himself and is sure that he has cleansed his heart from sinful thoughts and has thereby purified himself from sinful acts that he may have committed.

Learning Mishlei

(8) A king who sits — מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב
on the throne of judgment — עַל כִּסֵּא דִין
disperses with his eyes — מְזַרְהָ בְעֵינָיו
all evil thoughts and deeds — כָּל רָע.

(9) Who can say — מִי יֹאמֶר
“I have cleansed my heart, — זָכִיתִי לְבָי
I have purified myself — טָהַרְתִּי
from my sins” — מִחַטָּאתַי.

Additional Insights

(1) If a person is in awe of a mortal king, how can he not tremble at the thought of standing in judgment before Hashem. — (רבינו יונה)

(2) The first posuk could be referring to Hashem. He surely knows what is in the heart of each person and what every person has done. In effect, all a person's sins are spread out before Him. — (מצודות)