

Mishlei 21-04

Cultivation of Sin

Key Concepts

Mishlei compares the growth of sin to a field that has been cultivated so that it can support unrestricted growth of a deadly crop. In effect, the field symbolizes an emotional framework which fosters sin.

A wicked person has two characteristics which provide him with a framework in which he can comfortably lead a sinful existence. The first is intellectual arrogance, which leads him to believe that his own cleverness empowers him to do anything at all. The second is his appetite for physical pleasure which lets his heart's desires roam far and wide.

Exploring Mishlei

(ד) רום עינים ורחב לב נר רשעים חטאת:

(4) *Arrogance and a greedy heart,*

in the cultivated field of the wicked support the growth of sin.

The framework of a sinful life is a cultivated field whose fertile soil has been enhanced to weed out any obstruction to the growth of sin.

The first aspect of this treatment is the development of intellectual arrogance, described as having raised eyes (רום עינים). The second aspect of the cultivation for sin is an insatiable appetite for physical pleasure, described as a greedy heart (רחב לב).

The combination of these two characteristics results in a cultivated field (נר) that enables the unrestricted growth of sin (חטאת).

Learning Mishlei

(4) Raised eyes (arrogance) — רום עינים

and a wide heart (greedy appetite for pleasure) — רחב לב

the cultivated field of the wicked — נר רשעים

support the unrestricted growth of sin — חטאת

Additional Insights

[1] A person who is humble, feels unworthy. He lowers his eyes because he feels unworthy of looking into other people's eyes. In contrast, an arrogant person believes his cleverness and other personal qualities give him the right to look anywhere (אוצר פירושים)

[2] An arrogant person is proud of his abilities. He is confident that he can achieve success precisely where others are afraid to venture, that is the in the violation of sacred commandments. (רשר"ה)