

Mishlei 21-15

Justice

Key Concepts

Justice is not welcomed everywhere, and that is because it puts all people to a test. Those who pass the test are happy to have experienced it, whereas those who fail live in trepidation that their sins or their crimes may be exposed.

A righteous person (*tzadik*) is happy to live in a community where justice rules. Since his conscience is clear the *tzadik* is able to enjoy the benefits of justice without fear. In contrast, evil doers always need to be on guard to avoid being accused of an offense.

Exploring Mishlei

(טו) שְׂמֵחָה לְצַדִּיק עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וּמַחֲתָה לְפֹעֲלֵי אָוֶן :

(15) *The implementation of justice brings joy to the righteous, but it is terrifying to evildoers.*

The *tzadik* finds joy in a world of justice because it is a world that pleases Hashem. Therefore, the *tzadik* takes pleasure in working within the justice system to correct wrongs. In contrast, the evil doer finds a world of justice unpredictable. In such a world his crimes may be exposed, and he can be accused at any time of one crime or another.

Learning Mishlei

(15) *Joy to the tzadik* — שְׂמֵחָה לְצַדִּיק —
is the implementation of justice. — עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט
But it is terrifying — וּמַחֲתָה —
to evil doers — לְפֹעֲלֵי אָוֶן .

Additional Insights

[1] A world of justice gives joy to Hashem because it cleanses the righteous of their sins and enables them to be rewarded. (רש"י)

[2] A world of justice is disturbing to the evildoers of the world because they don't take advantage of the opportunity to do *teshuvah* (repent) and so any suffering that they experience is wasted. (רש"י)