

Mishlei 01-07

Motivation

[Posuk 1:7]

Key Concepts

Serious learning takes real effort. That's why people tend to resist any kind of structured learning unless they are motivated. The resistance to learning will be especially high if the material being learned calls for a change in behavior.

What does it take to become motivated? First of all, the student must appreciate the value of what he is learning. Otherwise, he will not overcome his instinctive resistance to learning. He must also have confidence that when he makes the effort, he will be rewarded with a degree of success in understanding what he has studied. The greater his expectation of success, the greater the effort he is willing to put in. If the student keeps in mind that the words he is studying are the very words his Creator has intended for him to know, those words will have great value for him. He will then be motivated to persevere in his efforts. If he does that, he will find success in his learning. The pleasure he gains from that success will motivate him to keep going and the new knowledge he gains will enable him to learn even more.

But the person who lacks reverence for His Creator and who objects to making any changes to serve Him, will lack the motivation to persevere. Rather than accept the blame for his failure he will be tempted to scoff at the knowledge itself, saying it is not relevant to his life or that he is not cut out for learning. That person is a fool for he does not realize that he has contributed to his own failure.

Exploring Mishlei

The motivation to acquire moral knowledge (*Daas*) depends on whether it is trusted and valued by the person who invests his effort in it. That makes the fear of Hashem an essential condition. But skeptics disdain the value of the wisdom that accompanies moral discipline and so they object to its restrictions.

(ז) יִרְאַת ה' רֵאשִׁית דָּעַת חֵכְמָה וּמוֹסָר אֲוִילִים בָּזוּ:

(7) *The fear of Hashem is the essential first step for acquiring moral knowledge.*

But skeptics scorn wisdom and the discipline of mussar.

.Learning Mishlei

**(7) The fear of Hashem — יִרְאַת ה' —
is the essential first step — רֵאשִׁית —
for acquiring moral knowledge — דָּעַת.**

But **wisdom and the discipline of *mussar*** needed to acquire it — חֵכְמָה וּמוֹסָר —
are scorned by skeptics — אֲוִילִים בָּזוּ.

Since these foolish people object to the restrictions of moral discipline, they disdain the wisdom that accompanies it, and so they can achieve neither the wisdom or the discipline.

NOTE: The second segment in the book of Mishlei, which pertains to the subject of Motivation, is identified by the proverb in posuk 1:7 and therefore it is referred to as segment 01-07.