

Mishlei 04-10

The Wisdom Road

Key Concepts

Mishlei compares the wisdom of the Torah to a road through life. Our mission is to faithfully stay on that road as we continue our journey. No one knows how long he will live but he hopes to accomplish much along the way. The more years he is granted, the more he can accomplish.

Exploring Mishlei

LIFE. Mishlei begins this segment by assuring us that if we stay on the wisdom road and practice self-discipline, we will be granted more years of life and they will be good years.

(י) שְׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אִמְרֵי וְיִרְבּוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:

(10) Listen my son and take my lessons to heart. They will increase your years of life.

CHOICES. However, while traveling along the main wisdom road, we will encounter many side-roads where we will need to make choices of direction, guided by the lessons which Mishlei has taught us. Typically, these side-roads or paths involve personal judgment in social relationships.

(יא) בְּדַרְךְ חֲכָמָה הִרְתִּיךָ הַדְרֹכֹתַי בְּמַעְגְלֵי יֶשֶׁר:

(11) I am instructing you in the way of wisdom. I am also guiding you in the paths of uprightness.

STEPS. But what of the rough terrain that we can expect to encounter on the way? Mishlei offers further assurances to those who heed his advice. Our steps will be secure, and we will not trip over unseen obstacles because our way will be illuminated by the light of the Torah.

(יב) בְּלִכְתְּךָ לֹא יֵצֵר צַעְדְּךָ וְאִם תְּרוּץ לֹא תִכָּשֵׁל:

(12) When you walk, your steps will not be constrained, and when you run, you will not stumble.

PERSEVERANCE. Mishlei concludes the segment by urging perseverance in maintaining the necessary discipline despite the challenges we encounter. We must be continually on guard and never relax our vigilance.

(יג) הַחֲזִק בַּמוֹסָר אֶל תִּרְוַח נִצְרָה כִּי הִיא חַיִּיךָ:

(13) Hold fast to the discipline of wisdom. Don't let go. Guard it for it is your life.

Learning Mishlei

LIFE.

(י) שְׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אֶמְרֵי וַיִּרְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:

(10) Listen my son — שְׁמַע בְּנִי

for you are dear to me and I care for your well-being.

Therefore, **take to heart my lessons — וְקַח אֶמְרֵי**

of wisdom and self-discipline. Pay close attention

not only to the subject matter but to the words I use.

They will increase your years of life — וַיִּרְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים.

Your added years will be years in which Hashem eases

your way through life and enables you to serve Him in joy.

CHOICES.

(יא) בְּדַרְךְ חֲכָמָה הִרְתִּיךָ הַדְרָכְתִּיךָ בְּמַעְגְלֵי יֵשׁוּ:

(11) I am instructing you in the way of wisdom — בְּדַרְךְ חֲכָמָה הִרְתִּיךָ

This is the way of Torah. It is the key to your entire life of serving Hashem.

I am also guiding you — הַדְרָכְתִּיךָ

in the many paths of uprightness — יֵשׁוּ בְּמַעְגְלֵי

that you must follow in your practice of *mitzvos* and *middos*.

For example, there are three essential uses of personal judgment in social relationships and you need to know when to apply each one, depending on the circumstance (see *Mishlei Segment 01-01*):

(1) righteousness — **צִדְקָה**, going beyond the letter of the law.

(2) justice — **וּמִשְׁפָּט**, adhering to the exact requirement of the law.

(3) fairness — **וּמִיִּשְׁרָיִם**, acting in an equitable and balanced manner even when the law is not specific.

STEPS.

(יב) בְּלִכְתּוֹךָ לֹא יֵצֵר צְעָדְךָ וְאַם תְּרוּץ לֹא תִכָּשֵׁל:

You will be protected when you travel through life along the way of wisdom.

When you walk — בְּלִכְתּוֹךָ

your steps will not be constrained — לֹא יֵצֵר צְעָדְךָ

by weariness and weakness.

And when you run — וְאַם תְּרוּץ

in your eagerness to do what is right,

you will not stumble — לֹא תִכָּשֵׁל.

PERSEVERANCE.

(יג) הִחֲזֵק בְּמוֹסֵר אֶל תֶּרֶף נִצְרָה כִּי הִיא חַיִּיךָ:

Hold fast to the discipline — הִחֲזֵק בְּמוֹסֵר

of Torah and continue to work on perfecting your *middos*.

Don't let go — אֶל תֶּרֶף

of your fear of *Hashem* even for a short while,

for without it you cannot control your nature.

Guard it — נִצְרָה

and keep it in your heart,

for it is your life — כִּי הִיא חַיִּיךָ.

If you have stopped taking control of your character,
what is your purpose in life?