

Mishlei 01-02

Motivation (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 out.

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

Moral knowledge becomes true moral knowledge when it is trusted and valued by the person who knows it. That makes the fear of Hashem an essential condition. But skeptics disdain the wisdom that accompanies moral discipline and so they object its restrictions.

(ז) יִרְאַת ה' רֵאשִׁית דְּעֵת חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסָר אֲוִילִים בָּזוּ:

(7) The fear of Hashem is the first step for moral knowledge. Skeptics scorn wisdom and discipline.

Learning Mishlei

(ז) יִרְאַת ה'
רֵאשִׁית דָּעַת

Having the **fear of Hashem** — 'יִרְאַת ה' is the essential **first step** — רֵאשִׁית for the acquisition of **moral knowledge** — דָּעַת.

Moral knowledge is knowing how to go about making the right choices in life. It effectively becomes true moral knowledge when it is trusted and valued by the person who knows it. Only then will he be able to acquire it.

חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסָר
אֲוִילִים בָּזוּ:

You can demonstrate the validity of this statement by observing that foolish **skeptics** — אֲוִילִים, have always **scorned wisdom and discipline** — חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסָר, which are the components of true moral knowledge — דָּעַת.

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.

Sources

The primary sources used in the interpretation of this segment are listed below.

רש"י, רבינו יונה, רלב"ג, המאירי, מלבי"ם, הגר"א

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