

Mishlei 10-05

Dedication and Neglect

Key Concepts

In the previous segment we have seen how people impoverish themselves through a misguided attempt to gain riches using deceptive practices. Now Mishlei reminds us that the failure to earn the necessities of life can be based on character flaws that began in childhood. A person whose intelligence was not sufficiently developed to overcome his natural laziness, will be tempted to neglect the work that he needs to do at the time he needs to do it. Mishlei illustrates this concept using the example of two farmers. Farming is a demanding occupation which involves specific seasons for the work that has to be done (planting, harvesting, etc.). If the work is not done at the proper time, the crops will not be available for the long winter ahead and the whole family will suffer the consequences.

Learning Mishlei

Harvest time starts at the beginning of summer, extending from the middle of Nisan until the end of Sivan. In late summer, from Tammuz until mid-Elul, the farmers gather the harvest and store it away for the winter.

(ה) אִגֵּר בְּקִיץ בֶּן מְשָׁכִיל, נִרְדָּם בְּקִצִּיר בֶּן מְבִישׁ:

(4) The intelligent son gathers [his crops, even] in the [late] summer, but the shameful son is [already] asleep at harvest time [in early summer].

Because **the intelligent son** — בֶּן מְשָׁכִיל is dedicated to his mission, he **is** still out in the fields **gathering** — אִגֵּר crops **in the late summer** — בְּקִיץ, as long as there is something left to be taken. But **the shameful son** — בֶּן מְבִישׁ **is** already **fast asleep** — נִרְדָּם **at** the beginning of **the harvest** — בְּקִצִּיר when the crops are plentiful and everyone else is busy doing their job.

TWO SONS

(1) The two individuals are described as sons because their behavior reflects on their father. The first son is aware of his responsibilities and acts on that awareness because he understands the consequences of neglecting his duty. This behavior is a sign of intelligence and so he brings honor to his father. In contrast the second son does not fully appreciate his responsibilities. This

indicates a lack of intelligence and so he shames his father.

(2) The shameful son is not just sleeping. He has allowed himself to fall into a very deep sleep from which he is unlikely to rise when the time comes to work.

RELATED ALLEGORIES

(3) This proverb continues the lesson that Mishlei taught in Segment 06-02, where he advised us to learn from the example of the industrious ant which focuses its energies on doing what is necessary to provide food for the winter. A failure to learn this lesson is an indication of wishful thinking, that is failing to visualize the reality of a situation.

(4) The example of the two sons engaged in farming may be seen as an allegory for other situations in life, such as learning Torah. The intelligent son puts his energies into learning Torah during his youth and continues learning even into his later years when his mind is not as fresh and creative, but he has the ability to "gather" his knowledge and see things in a broader context. The shameful son is too lethargic to get started, even when his mind is strong.

Sources

The primary sources used for the insights illuminating this segment are listed below.

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|---------------------|------------------|
| (3) - המאירי | (1) - רבינו יונה |
| (4) - הגר"א, מלבי"ם | (2) - מצודות |

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