

Mishlei 10-09

Integrity

Key Concepts

A person who lives his life with integrity has no need of lies or subterfuge because he is confident that no matter what happens, he will not be at a disadvantage if he stays with the truth. He trusts the good will of Hashem to ensure the best possible outcome.

To live with integrity as a guiding principle takes a great deal of self-control because a person is constantly beset with temptations. These options seem to offer an easy way out of his current difficulties or frustrations if he is willing to pervert the truth.

Noach was the first person to be described as a man of integrity, as it says, “**Noach was a righteous man. He was man of integrity in his times,**” נח איש צדיק תמים (Bereishis 6:9). As a man of integrity Noach displayed the quality of wholeness or blamelessness because he observed the *mitzvos* of Hashem wholeheartedly without consciously interpreting their meaning to suit his own convenience.

Because integrity requires great deal of effort, it is seen as a path through life, a road that must be followed. Noach followed that road, as it says (ibid.), “**Noach walked with G-d,**” את האלקים התהלך נח.

Exploring Mishlei

(ט) הולך בתם ילך בטח ומעקש דרכיו יודע:

**(9) He who walks with integrity, will go forward securely,
but he who perverts his ways will be found out.**

The man of integrity lives his life on the road of self-improvement, constantly working to develop his moral strength.

As long as such a man is on the road of integrity, he trusts in Hashem to protect him from dangers, and to do whatever is best for him. He has no need to keep his life a secret because he knows that he is always trying to do what is right.

Mishlei contrasts the man of integrity with the devious man who is seeking to gain advantage by falsehood. Mishlei reminds him that his schemes are doomed to fail and he will surely be found out.

Learning Mishlei

He who walks in integrity – הוֹלֵךְ בְּתָם,

trusting Hashem to take care of him

will go forward through life confidently and **securely** – יֵלֵךְ בְּטָח,

but he who perverts his ways – וּמַעֲקֵשׁ דְּרָכָיו,

seeking to take advantage and hide his motivations,

will be found out – יִנָּדַע.

Additional Insights

INTEGRITY

(1) The sincerely trusting person does not let fear of others make him compromise on his principles. (רבינו יונה)

(2) The person who has *bitachon* (trust in Hashem) has no fear of threats because he knows that Hashem is watching him. (אבן עזרא, רלב"ג)

(3) A person who lives his life in whole-hearted sincerity like Noach, is constantly working on himself to improve his moral strength and his-discipline. (רשר"ה)

THE DEVIIOUS

(4) A person who practices deception to take advantage of another person, has to use subterfuge to keep his friend from knowing the truth. But the one who practices integrity with no intent of harming his fellow has no fear of being found out. (הגר"א)

(5) The devious person lacks sincere *bitachon* in Hashem. Therefore, he tries to manipulate events to his own advantage. His motivations are hidden, and he is in constant fear of being found out. (הגר"א)

(6) The devious person thinks he can keep secrets, but his machinations will be ultimately known to all when his schemes fail, for Hashem will see to it that they fail. (אבן עזרא, הגר"א)

(7) The person who leaves the straight road to gain advantage will be found out because people will question why he changed his behavior. (רבינו יונה)

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