

Mishlei 10-27

Longevity

Key Concepts

Although everyone wants to live a long life, nobody can be sure how to increase their own life span, or even to know how much time they have left. These things are determined by the Creator Who gave us life and Who will ultimately bring it to an end for reasons that we cannot know.

However, this proverb reminds us that there are things we can do to promote a longer life. These are based on having an attitude of *yiras Hashem* (fear of Hashem), which means being consciously aware of His presence in our lives at all times.

Having *yiras Hashem* leads a person to act and think in a way that pleases the Creator. By demonstrating to Him that he is making proper use of his life, the person is giving Him a reason to want to extend it..

Exploring Mishlei

(כז) יִרְאַת ה' תוֹסִיף יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצְרֶנָּה:

***(27) The fear of Hashem prolongs the days of life,
but the years of resha'im are shortened.***

The proverb contrasts the longevity of a *tzadik* (righteous person having *yiras Hashem*) with that of *resha'im* (wicked people) whose attitude towards life is oriented to pleasing themselves rather than concern for the wishes of their Creator.

The longevity of the *tzadik* is measured in days because the *tzadik* views each new day as a thing in itself, an opportunity to serve Hashem. At the end of each day, he looks back to see if he has done the will of Hashem on that day. If so, he can feel fulfilled.

For the *resha'im*, one day is not that meaningful and can be idled away without a second thought. Thus, they can only measure their life in terms of years, such as the years it will take to acquire wealth and power.

Learning Mishlei

(כז) יִרְאַת ה' תוֹסִיף יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצְרֶנָּה:

(27) The fear of Hashem — יִרְאַת ה'

will increase the number of days — תוֹסִיף יָמִים

of the *tzadik's* life and the value of each day.

But the years of the *reshaim* will be shortened — וְשָׁנוֹת רְשָׁעִים תִּקְצְרֶנָּה,

as measured by a reduced number of years, each of which is of lesser value.

Additional Insights

THE TZADIK

(1) The natural life of a person begins life with an allotment of days that he has to live. That number rises and falls throughout his life, based on natural laws. These laws respond to his behavior. The *tzadik's* life is extended if his thoughts and deeds warrant it. (אבן עזרא)

(2) By nature, people who are anxious and worried lose strength and are subject to early death. But the concern that a person has about his sins and his inadequacies in serving Hashem do not have this effect, rather the opposite. (רבינו יונה, הגר"א)

(3) The life of the *tzadik* is measured in days, which are days of peace and serenity. His faithful compliance with Hashem's *mitzvos*, can be successfully accomplished on each and every day. Each day that has been lived in faithful observance of the Torah is a gain for him. (מלבי"ם, רשר"ה)

(4) By definition, the life of the *tzadik* is prolonged because every minute is valuable to him and so he doesn't waste it. (דעת סופרים)

THE RESHA'IM

(5) The years available to the *resha'im* are automatically reduced according to natural laws that are built into Creation to take accounting of sin. Thus, the *resha'im* will die sooner because of failure to fear Hashem. (אבן עזרא)

(6). By nature, pleasure in life should add to longevity. However, the longevity of *resha'im* is reduced as a result of their behavior in the course of satisfying their desires. (רבינו יונה, מצודות)

(7) The life of the *resha'im* is measured in years and yearly periods are typically periods of distress. The *resha'im* are greedy and have long-term plans to acquire wealth and power. There is never enough time to do everything they want.
(מלבי"ם, רשר"ה)

(8) The life of the *resha'im* is shortened because they waste it on idle self-destructive pastimes. (דעת סופרים)