

Mishlei 11-03**Fairness and Integrity****Key Concepts**

This proverb deals with the relationship between two essential qualities (*middos*) of a person's character: fairness (*yashrus*) and integrity (*temimus*). Fairness refers to the quality of decency or fair-mindedness that motivates a person to act in a balanced and equitable manner. (See Segment 01-01, v. 1:3.) A person may be fair-minded from birth or as a result of the way he was brought up. A person with this quality is able to recognize and appreciate fair treatment, even in ambiguous situations.

Integrity refers to an intellectual sense of discipline or conscientiousness that guides the fair-minded person to maintain consistency in his practices so that he is enabled to resist temporary aberrations caused by need or temptation. Because of the many challenges to his character that a person faces in life, this quality is very demanding. Integrity calls for serious self-control to achieve total perfection in one's *middos*. (See Segment 10-09)

Fair-mindedness encourages a person to be grateful for favors. Thus, its opposite is disloyalty or treachery. The opposite of integrity is perversity or irresponsibility, which leads a person to neglect and resist discipline.

Exploring Mishlei

(ג) תַּמְתִּי יְשָׁרִים תִּנְחַם וְסֵלֶף בּוֹגְדִים [וּשְׂדֵים] יִשְׁדֹּם:

(3) *The integrity of the fair-minded will guide them, but the perversity of the ungrateful will rob them.*

The first part of this proverb teaches that a sense of decency is not enough. A person needs to be guided by the discipline of integrity. The second part illuminates the meaning of integrity and fairness by contrasting these attractive qualities with their opposite: perversity and ingratitude. By combining the destructive effects of these hateful qualities a person robs his own soul of the chance for eternal life.

Learning Mishlei

(ג) תִּמְתּוּ יְשָׁרִים תִּנְחָם
וְסָלְףּ בּוֹגְדִים [וּשְׂדֵם]:

The integrity of fair-minded people will guide them – תִּמְתּוּ יְשָׁרִים תִּנְחָם to maintain consistency in their good *middos*. **But the perversity of ungrateful people will rob them – וְסָלְףּ בּוֹגְדִים יְשְׂדֵם** of their very souls.

Additional Insights

A series of insights illuminating this proverb are presented below. The numbers identifying the insights refer to the listing of sources of at the end of the segment.

GOOD MIDDOS

(1) Integrity and fairmindedness are complementary qualities, as it says (*Iyov* 1:1), וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ הַהוּא תָם וְיָשָׁר, "that man was conscientious and fair-minded".

(2) Fairmindness refers to an instinctive quality of recognizing and choosing what is right. It is a quality of the heart, which includes all of the good *middos* that are deeply implanted within a person.

(3) Although fair-mindedness leads a person to follow the good path through life he can be diverted by physical needs and temptations. Thus he has to apply integrity to maintain the perfection of his *middos*.

(4) The integrity of the fair-minded leads them to the achievement of their goals in life.

BAD MIDDOS

(5) Repaying good treatment with bad treatment defines the opposite to fair-mindedness.

(6) The perversity of the unfaithful robs them of their souls.

(7) Just as integrity will guide the fair-minded, the perversity of the treacherous will rob them of their ability to act with fairness, even if they have a passing inspiration to do teshuvah.

Sources

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

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| (5) - רבינו יונה | (1) - רבינו יונה |
| (6) - מצודות | (2) - רבינו יונה, מלבי"ם |
| (7) - דעת סופרים | (3) - רבינו יונה, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה |
| | (4) - רלב"ג, מצודות |

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