

Mishlei 11-24

Wealth and Life

Key Concepts

People accumulate wealth to give them a sense of security and freedom. They think that as long as they have wealth anything is possible for them because they see wealth as power. They fail to realize that their wealth is temporary and when they lose it they will lose the sense of power that gives meaning to their lives.

A person is foolish to put his whole trust in something evanescent like wealth. The *tzadikim* (righteous) on the other put their trust in their relationship with Hashem. Since He is eternal, that relationship extends beyond life in this world into the eternity of the World to Come.

Exploring Mishlei

(כח) בוֹטֵחַ בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ הוּא יִפֹּל וְכַעֲלֵה צַדִּיקִים יִפְרָחוּ:

(28) [The one] who trusts in his wealth will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a leaf.

Somebody who treats his wealth as the most important thing in his life will suffer an emotional collapse when he loses it. In contrast the trust of *tzadikim* causes them to be like the leaf of a tree which blooms with new life with each new season.

Navigating Mishlei. There are many other proverbs in Mishlei that offer guidance for those who have wealth or seek it. See the Concepts Index under the listing "Wealth."

The primary message of this proverb concerning wealth is equally applicable to the person who places the focus of his life upon anything that is limited to this world, such as health or physical strength. When he loses that he has no more reason to go on living.

Learning Mishlei

(כח) בוֹטֵחַ בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ הוּא יִפֹּל

וְכַעֲלֵה צַדִּיקִים יִפְרָחוּ:

The person who **trusts in his wealth** — בוֹטֵחַ בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ, **will fall** — הוּא יִפֹּל when

he encounters misfortune, **but the *tzadikim* will flourish like a leaf** — וְכַעֲלֵה וְצַדִּיקִים יִפְרְחוּ that appears again each spring and offers protection to the fruit that grows in its shade.

Additional Insights

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

THE DOWNFALL OF WEALTH

- (1) Besides being inadequate as lifelong security, a person's wealth may actually be the cause of his downfall, as when his robbers and kidnappers are attracted by his wealth.
- (2) A person who puts his trust in his wealth may be brought low by Hashem in the course of being punished for his misplaced trust.
- (3) A person who possesses wealth must take extra precautions to prevent it from distracting him from his *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem.
- (4) A person who takes pride in his wealth, thinking that this will make him superior to others, will be brought down in punishment for his misplaced arrogance.
- (5) It is in the nature of a person's fortune to grow and diminish in a cyclical manner. When he sees his fortune on the downswing it will cause him great emotional pain if that is what is most important to him.
- (6) A person who is focused on his wealth will find that his wealth corrupts him so that he does not take pity on the needy and does not fear Hashem. This will cause his downfall.
- (7) Just as the leaf protects the growing fruit, it is the responsibility of those with wealth to support those who are immersed in learning. If they do not do so, they will experience their own downfall.
- (8) A wealthy person is tempted to think he is worthy of such an achievement and that he does not have to work on any further improvement. This will contribute to his downfall.

THE FLOURISHING LEAF

- (9) Tzadikim who trust in Hashem will see their *yeshuah* come quickly like a leaf that sprouts forth from the tree in the springtime. Although they give away much money for *tzedakah*, their possessions are blessed and continue

to increase.

(10) Once it sprouts the leaf continues to grow day by day, serving as a model for the flourishing *tzadikim*.

(11) The leaf serves as a protection for the growing fruit. In the same way the *tzadikim* provide a protective setting to enable the fruits of their labors.

(12) Although the leaf may fall in the wintertime it always come back and grows again in the spring. Likewise when *tzadikim* encounter difficult times they have *bitachon* that they will rise again.

(13) If a person focuses only on his wealth it is like leaves without fruit, and when it withers there is nothing. In contrast, the wealth of *tzadikim* serves as a protection from the distractions of life, so that they can produce their "fruit" of Torah learning and *avodah*.

Sources

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

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| (8) - דעת סופרים | (1) - אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה |
| (9) - רבינו יונה, אבן יחייא | (2) - רבינו יונה |
| (10) - המאירי | (3) - המאירי |
| (11) - רלב"ג | (4) - רלב"ג |
| (12) - הגר"א | (5) - הגר"א |
| (13) - מלבי"ם | (6) - אבן יחייא |
| | (7) - שבט מיהודה |

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