

## Mishlei 13-04

# Idleness and Frustration

### Key Concepts

Mishlei teaches that to achieve any objective in life, whether physical or spiritual, a person must be prepared to expend a degree of effort. This becomes a challenge for any individual who is inclined to be lazy and enjoys being idle. He will find himself frustrated by his unfulfilled desires. If he really wants to satisfy his yearnings, he must learn to overcome his preference for idleness.

### Exploring Mishlei

(ד) מִתְאַוֶּה וְאֵין נִפְשׁוֹ עֲצִיל וְנִפְשׁ חֲרָצִים תִּדְשֹׁן:

(4) *He yearns but finds nothing; his true desire is idleness.  
But the person of diligence will be gratified.*

This proverb contrasts the frustration of unfulfilled desires and failed projects with the feeling of gratification that comes from objectives being satisfied. The key to these opposing situations lies in the nature of the individual. Does he prefer idleness more than the reward of fulfilled desires or is he sufficiently motivated to work for his objective.

### Learning Mishlei

(4) He yearns — מִתְאַוֶּה  
but finds nothing — וְאֵין.

This is because he is too lazy  
to expend any effort.

His true self — נִפְשׁוֹ  
wishes to be idle — עֲצִיל.

He can't have it both ways.

But the person — וְנִפְשׁוֹ  
of diligence — חֲרָצִים  
will be gratified — תִּדְשֹׁן  
by having accomplished his goal.

## Additional Insights

### Wisdom in Words

(1) The word **מְתַאֲנֶה** (yearns) indicates intensely wanting or desiring some outcome either physical, intellectual, or spiritual. Whatever a person may desire, he will be frustrated if he is not prepared to work for it. (רש"י)

(2). In this context the word **נַפְשׁוֹ** (soul) refers to the deep inner desires and yearnings of a person. The intensity of those desires relative to what he needs to do to satisfy them will determine if he is successful. We also find this usage in *Tehillim* 27:12: **אַל תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנַפְשׁ צָרִי**, "Don't give me over to the desires of my tormentors." However, the word **וְנַפְשׁ** in the second part of the verse refers to the actual person or individual whose desires are satisfied. (חנוך לנער)

(3) The word **תְּרַצִּים** (diligent doers) refers to the personality type of an individual who energetically applies himself to an objective. An example would be an upright person who earns his livelihood through honest effort. It could also refer to a *talmid chacham* who studies the Torah diligently and energetically. (רש"י)

(4) The word **תִּדְשָׁן** (gratified) can refer to the satisfaction a person has from consuming a full measure of food. It can also refer to emotional and spiritual gratification. (אבן עזרא)

### Other Insights

(5) A person who seeks a goal in life but finds that he is unsuccessful should ask himself whether he is putting in enough effort. (רבינו יונה)

(6) A person may yearn for spiritual growth but still accomplishes nothing. He should avoid blaming Hashem or some external factor. He needs to recognize that that it is his lazy attitude that is preventing him from fulfilling the desires of his soul. (אלשיך)

(7) A person who works hard for a living will find that his physical desires and appetites are fully satisfied, whereas a person who resists hard work will find that his appetites become more and more difficult to satisfy. (מלבי"ם)

(8) Sometimes a person may have ambitious goals, but once he realizes how much comfort he will have to sacrifice and how many short-term pleasures he will have to give up, he changes his mind. Such a person should rethink his aspirations

and think about whether his goals are really worthwhile. If they are, he should focus on the value of what he wants to achieve so that he will be ready to make the necessary sacrifices. (המאירי)