

## Mishlei 13-06

# Stability and Mitzvos

## Key Concepts

As we have seen in Segment 04-03, Mishlei compares the wisdom of the Torah to a road through life. Our mission is to faithfully stay on that road as we continue our journey of personal development and spiritual fulfillment. Furthermore, as we have seen in Segment 04-05, once we have chosen the right road we must be continually alert to make sure we are not getting side-tracked.

In the current proverb Mishlei teaches the value of doing *mitzvos* (acts of righteousness) as an essential means to help a person stay on the right road. In contrast, a person who commits *aveiros* (evil acts) will find that they corrupt him and he will be unable to stay on the road that leads to a worthy life.

A person's deeds have a direct effect on his character. By doing good, his character will be elevated and he will find joy in continuing to do good. A person who commits *aveiros* is his own worst enemy. By doing evil, he will lose his ability to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. The result will be a ruined life.

## Exploring Mishlei

(ו) צְדָקָה תִּצַּר תִּסְדֵּךְ וְרָשָׁעָה תִּסְלֵף חַטָּאת:

(6) *[Acts of] righteousness will guard the person [who is] on the path of sincere integrity, but [acts of] evil will corrupt the sinner.*

This proverb compares a person on the right path with the sinner who has already been diverted to the wrong path. The person who has worked to put himself on the right path will continue to be supported in his efforts by the *mitzvos* that he does. These good deeds have the effect of strengthening his character and thereby resisting the forces that might pull him away. The sinner, on the other hand, will find that with each evil act his character is corrupted further and he becomes more and more committed to his corrupted way of life.

## Learning Mishlei

(ו) צְדָקָה תִּצַּר תִּסְדֹּרָךְ  
וְרָשָׁעָה תִּסְלַף חַטָּאת:

Acts of **righteousness will guard** the person who is **on the path of sincere integrity** – צְדָקָה תִּצַּר תִּסְדֹּרָךְ, and keep him from straying from that path. **But acts of evil will corrupt the sinner** – וְרָשָׁעָה תִּסְלַף חַטָּאת – and he will have difficulty getting on the right path again.

## 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.

### Wisdom in Words

(1) The word צְדָקָה commonly refers to the act of giving charity, which falls within the framework of צְדָק, doing the right thing. However, in the present context and elsewhere in Mishlei, צְדָקָה is used to refer to any act of righteousness whereby a person sacrifices his own selfish concerns for the benefit of another, whether it be another person or his Creator.

(2) The expression תִּסְדֹּרָךְ, refers to an individual who is on the right road (דֶּרֶךְ) and who adheres to that road with sincere integrity (תְּמִימוּת). Such a person can be recognized by the sincerity with which he donates to charity, with no consideration of personal benefit or pride. His sincerity is characterized by being complete in his commitment to doing the *mitzvah* in dedication to the will of his Creator. Such commitment is not marred by a personal agenda.

(3) The concept of תְּמִימוּת also conveys the idea of a person who obeys the direction of his Master with total devotion, that is, without subjecting it to excessive analysis. Such over-analysis is characteristic of a person who is seeking to find exceptions and loop-holes so that he can change the apparent direction of the *halachah*.

(4) The word רָשָׁעָה, refers to an evil act or sin, which has the effect of drawing the sinner into a perverted path where he is subject to further failure

of character.

(5) The word **תַּסְלִיף** refers to the process of being morally corrupted, as we find in Mishlei 19:3, "a man's foolishness corrupts his way" - **אוֹלַת אָדָם - תַּסְלִיף דְרָכּוֹ**. We have also seen a version of this word in Segment 11-03, **וְסִלְף בּוֹגְדִים יִשְׂדָּם** - "the perversity (corruption) of the ungrateful" will rob them [of their very souls].

(6) The word **חַטָּאת** is generally understood as referring to sin, as in a sin offering. However, in the present context it is the sinner himself who is characterized by this term. That is because he is already so deeply attached to the sinful path that he becomes defined by the sins he commits.

(7) Mishlei contrasts the individual who is **תָּם דָּרֵךְ**, with the individual who is a **חַטָּאת**, sinner, and contrasts the action of the first (**צְדָקָה**) with that of the second (**רַשְׁעָה**).

### Other Insights

(8) This proverb may be understood as a demonstration of the principle that "one *mitzvah* leads to another *mitzvah* and one sin leads to another sin" - **מִצְוָה גּוֹרֶרֶת מִצְוָה, וְעֵבֶרָה גּוֹרֶרֶת עֵבֶרָה**. (*Mishnah Avos 4,2*).

(9) The relationship between integrity and the right way through life is also found in Segment 10-29: "The way of Hashem is a stronghold to persons of integrity" - **מְעוֹז לְתָם דְרָךְ ה'**. There we see how the way of Hashem and the *mitzvos* that fill that way provide the very stability that will keep a person on the right way.

(10) The *mitzvos* that a person performs serve to protect him from any harm that may inadvertently occur in the course of seeking to follow the right path.

## Sources

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

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|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| (5) - רש"י, מצודות | (1) - מלבי"ם, רשר"ה, דעת סופרים |
| (6) - רש"י         | (2) - מצודות, מלבי"ם            |
| (7) - מלבי"ם       | (3) - שבט מיהודה                |
| (8) - רבינו יונה   | (4) - מצודות                    |

(10) - חנוך לנער

(9) - המאירי

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