

Mishlei 17-06**Continuity****Key Concepts**

It is a natural ambition for every Jew to serve as a secure link in the great chain of Jewish history. He can achieve this great happiness by passing on the Torah way of life to his children and grandchildren. And so the teaching of Torah wisdom to one's children is not only a great mitzvah but a great life fulfillment.

How does a person know that the wisdom he has taught his children is secure and lasting? If he is granted the privilege of seeing them carry the torch of Torah into the next generation by successfully raising their own Torah-true children.

Each child looks to his parents for this essential guidance. And thus each Jew feels a great blessing if his parents have taken their responsibility seriously and have served as a worthy role model and guide to their sons and daughters. Thus, just as the fulfillment of an aged person arises through having worthy grandchildren, there is great gratification for the sons and daughters in having been granted worthy parents.

Exploring Mishlei

(ו) עֲטָרַת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְתִפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם:

The crown of elders is [their] grandchildren, and the glory of children is their parents.

This proverb compares the fulfillment of an elder generation with that of the next generation. The elder generation sees their mission as having been achieved when their grandchildren live their lives in the same spirit as the grandparents have done. When grandparents are rewarded with seeing that, it is deeply gratifying, a true a crowning achievement for their lives.

In comparison each younger generation is gratified when they see their parents working hard to provide them with Torah wisdom. The members of the younger generation view their parents as their glory.

Learning Mishlei

(ו) עֲטָרַת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים
וְתִפְאֳרַת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם:

The crown of elders – עֲטָרַת זְקֵנִים is their worthy grandchildren – בְּנֵי בָנִים, and the glory of children – וְתִפְאֳרַת בָּנִים is their worthy parents – אֲבוֹתָם.

Additional Insights

- (1) A crown (עֲטָרָה) is an indication of high status and so an elderly person becomes deserving of special honor if he has worthy grandchildren. (אבן עזרא)
- (2) Mishlei refers to the reward of having worthy grandchildren using the concept of a crown (עֲטָרָה). This is even better than the reward of the glory (תִּפְאֳרַת) in having worthy parents. Grandparents have the opportunity to exert positive influence upon their offspring that is even greater than the positive influence of children upon their parents. (רבינו בחיי)
- (3) On the other hand the mitzvah that children have in giving honor to their parents is greater than that due to their grandparents. (מצודות)
- (4) The word זְקֵנִים is especially applicable to elderly persons who have acquired the wisdom of Torah learning. Therefore such individuals are gratified to see that Torah learning has found its way to their grandchildren. (מאירי)
- (5) Furthermore, the Chazal teach that if Torah learning continues through three generations, we can be sure that such learning will never depart from their descendants. This offers a special motivation for a man to do his utmost to have learned grandchildren. (חנוך לנער, שבט מיהודה)
- (6) The love between people and their offspring is fueled by similarity of character and appearance. Accordingly a person feels love for his children and grandchildren. The reverse affection is not quite as strong. Although children love their parents, the attachment to one's grandparents is somewhat weaker. (רלב"ג)