

Mishlei 18-09**Learning – Energy****Key Concepts**

Acquiring the wisdom of the Torah is a very demanding activity. Despite the fact that we think of the Torah as a parchment scroll on which its words are written, the essence of Torah is the knowledge that exists in the mind of each Jew who keeps the Torah. This knowledge is far more voluminous and complex than can possibly be contained in the words on a scroll. It is referred to as the Oral Torah because it is meant to be studied and taught through the power of speech.

Tremendous vitality and energy are required to fuel the process of acquiring and preserving the knowledge of the Oral Torah throughout a person's lifetime. This means that one cannot be relaxed about one's approach to Torah learning. A person whose attitude in life is shaped by general lassitude will fail to measure up.

What about a person who is not ready to approach Torah energetically. Is that so bad? Mishlei argues that the failure to build some degree of Torah knowledge is tantamount to destroying it, for Torah cannot exist in the mind without energy and commitment.

Exploring Mishlei

(ט) גַּם מִתְרַפֵּה בְּמִלְאֲכָתוֹ אֶחָ הוּא לְבַעַל מִשְׁחִית:

**(9) *Even one who merely eases up in his work
is a brother to the one who destroys it.***

This proverb addresses the person who hopes to go through life without effort. Mishlei tells him that failure to build Torah knowledge is equivalent to destroying it. This is like a person who has contracted to build a house, but he neglects his work. In the end the house is not built, so it is as if he has begun by building the house and has then proceeded to destroy it. In the end the result is the same; there is no house.

Learning Mishlei

(9) Even one who merely eases up — גם מתרפה
in his work — במלאכתו,
he is a brother — אח הוא
to the one who destroys it — לבעל משחית.

Additional Insights

[1] A person who does not want to use his time productively may argue that it is his own time, and he is willing to forego the benefit of what he would have earned with it. But his time is a resource that was granted to him for a purpose. If he neglects to use it properly, he has squandered that which does not really belong to him. (רבינו יונה)

[2] When a Rebbi is lax about his teaching efforts, he has to take responsibility not only for his own time, but for the time of his students that has been wasted. (לב אליהו)