

Mishlei 20-06**Generosity – Reliability****Key Concepts**

Most people agree on the importance of acting with kindness and helping their fellow man, especially when the other person is in desperate need. But when it comes to actually doing a good deed, what is it that actually motivates the individual to do the right thing?

Mishlei offers a proverb that suggests the first concern for many people is to be thought of by others as a good person. If a good deed brings recognition, the potential donor is more likely to go through with it. But if the only motivation is the donor's sense of duty, he may readily forego the opportunity to do what should be done.

This means that even though most people pay lip service to the importance of helping the needy, when someone is desperate for help, not every potential helper can be relied upon.

Exploring Mishlei

(ו) רַב אָדָם יִקְרָא אִישׁ חֲסִדוֹ וְאִישׁ אֱמוּנִים מִי יִמָּצֵא:

(6) *Among most people, each man considers himself to be generous, but when help is needed who can find can find a reliable man?*

This posuk analyzes the quality of reliability among potentially generous individuals. The first part of the posuk refers to the large number of well-to-do individuals who should be candidates for helping the needy. The second part of the posuk compares this large number with the few who actually can be relied upon. These few will do the right thing even though no one else knows about it.

Learning Mishlei

**(6) Among most people — רַב אָדָם —
each man considers — יִקְרָא אִישׁ —
himself to be known by his generosity — חֲסִדוֹ,
but a reliable man — וְאִישׁ אֱמוּנִים**

that actually carries out his commitment
who can find him? — **מִי יִמְצָא**.

Additional Insights

[1] A voluntary act of kindness is more likely to draw attention and therefore there is a greater motivation to do the right thing. But when the giver is asked to fulfill an obligation or promise, there is less publicity and so there is less reliability that the good deed will be carried out. (מלבניים)

[2] People are often pleased to announce a donation but when it comes time to pay what one has committed to, there are less people following through. (חנוך לנער)

[3] There are large numbers of people who boast about the kindnesses they claim to have done, but it is rare to find a modest person (**אִישׁ אֲמוּנִים**) who does not wish to advertise himself. (רבינו יונה)