

Mishlei 20-07

Righteousness – Integrity

Key Concepts

Righteousness is the quality achieved by a person who is eager to do the right thing, even in an ambiguous situation. We refer to such a person as a *tzadik*. *Integrity*, which is a quality of self-discipline that the *tzadik* needs to master to ensure consistent perfection in his behavior is called *temimus* (integrity). This is also referred to as innocence because the objective is to be innocent of character deviations, such as personal ambition for fame or honor. If he has *temimus*, we refer to him as a *tam*.

Exploring Mishlei

(ז) מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתַמּוֹ צַדִּיק אֲשֶׁרִי בְּנָיו אַחֲרָיו
 (7) *One who walks in his innocence is a tzadik.
 Fortunate are his sons who follow him.*

The *tam* has achieved the state of perfection in self-control through a process of refining his *middos*, which are the qualities that define a person's character. The process of character refinement is spoken of here as walking on the path of becoming a *tam*.

This posuk talks about the special reward granted to the *tam* for the combination of *tzidkus* and *temimus* that he has achieved. This reward is in the form of a blessing upon his offspring for many generations to come, a blessing which enables them to walk in his footsteps.

Learning Mishlei

One who walks — מִתְהַלֵּךְ
 in his innocence — בְּתַמּוֹ
 is a *tzadik* — צַדִּיק
 who is driven by the will of Hashem.
 Fortunate are his sons — אֲשֶׁרִי בְּנָיו
 who follow after him — אַחֲרָיו.

Additional Insights

If a person finds philosophical concepts too abstract for a basic understanding, it is better not to delve into areas of theoretical analysis that are beyond him. He will only be frustrated and is likely to end up with erroneous thinking. In such cases it is better to rely on traditional beliefs that can be expressed in basic terms.

(חינוך לנער)