

Mishlei 14-11

Endurance

Key Concepts

People who sacrifice their principles to gain personal advantage should realize that there is a high price to be paid for their momentary pleasures. They have put their hopes for security and peace of mind at risk. Their good fortune is not destined to endure.

In the first chapter of Tehillim, King David compared such people to straw, which is vulnerable to every passing wind and to ultimate destruction. In contrast, righteous people are like the lush greenery of a growing tree. A tree is imbued with the miracle of life and so it has the prospect of being able to endure and flourish.

Mishlei conveys this thought using another analogy. He reminds the wicked that although they have put their energy and resources into building houses that seem secure, their efforts are doomed because houses can be destroyed, no matter how strong they seem. Without the spiritual strength that comes from living a Torah life, their life has no permanence. In contrast, even though virtuous people may seem to be living in a flimsy tent, their life is blessed with spiritual meaning and as a result, they will not only endure, they will flourish.

Exploring Mishlei

(יא) בֵּית רְשָׁעִים יִשָּׂמַד וְאֶהָל יִשְׁרָיִם יִפְרֹיחַ:

***The house of the wicked will be destroyed,
but the tent of the upright will blossom.***

This proverb associates destiny with the homes that people live in. Even when the wicked invest in a palatial edifice, it is not destined to endure. They may mock the seemingly difficult life of the upright, comparing it to a windblown tent, but they are mistaken. That tent is more than it seems. It will endure and flourish. And its fruits will be enjoyed by many future generations.

Learning Mishlei

(11) **The house of the wicked — בֵּית רְשָׁעִים**
no matter how solid it appears
it will not last, and ultimately
it **will be destroyed — יִשָּׂמַד**
but the tent of the upright — וְאֶהַל יִשְׁרָיִם
will flourish and endure — יִפְרֹיחַ.

Additional Insights

(1) Even though the “house” of the wicked seems structurally sound, Hashem will not protect it from tragic events. In fact, the one who lives in it will introduce misfortune and bring destruction down upon himself through his own behavior. (רלב"ג)

(2) The righteous may reasonably expect to be nourished by their peace of mind in this life, but their ultimate gratification will be the blessings of the World to Come. (אלשיך)

(3) Anything which centers on mere external gratification collapses and crumbles, just as external prosperity itself is transitory. The contentment of the righteous man, however, grows from inner divinely-blessed roots. (רשר"ה)

(4) Righteous people draw strength from their virtuous ideals which are shared by the entire nation. Thus, they are strengthened by the unity of the people and so they are destined to endure. In contrast, each wicked person lives for himself and ultimately dies alone. (תבונת משלי)