

## Mishlei 21-09

### Sociability

#### Key Concepts

Sociability is a quality of temperament that is essential to happy home. This quality enables harmony between husband and wife, but its absence can make home life unbearable for either party. When the husband or wife maintains a quarrelsome nature, no amount of friendship or companionship can overcome the painfulness that both must endure.

A quarrelsome partner who always wishes to be in the right, who provokes retorts and yet cannot endure them is a direct danger to the harmonious unity of man wife.

Consistent with rest of Mishlei, the proverb which expresses these concerns about sociability is presented from the point of view of the male partner, but the same issues are applicable from the perspective of his wife. The bottom line is that no sociability or companionship which other friends or members of the family might be able to offer can compensate for disharmony between man and wife.

#### Exploring Mishlei

**(ט) טוֹב לְשֹׁבֵת עַל פְּנֵית גֹּגַל מֵאַשְׁתּוֹ מִדִּיְנָיִם וּבֵית חֶבֶר :**

**(9) *It is better to dwell on a corner of the roof, than in a house of friendship with a quarrelsome woman***

The image of a man living on a roof describes a person willing to expose himself to the elements, such as wind and rain, rather than face his marriage partner on a daily basis. It means a total absence of sociability or companionship, which is so essential to normal life.

Ordinarily, a man might be able to maintain the satisfaction of other social relationships, even with a contentious wife. But the disharmony and bitterness which has resulted from her presence in the home prevents that from happening.

## Learning Mishlei

(9) It is better to dwell — טוב לְשֹׁבֵת  
on a corner of the roof, — על פְּנֵת גָּג  
than with a quarrelsome woman — מֵאִשָּׁת מְדִינִים  
in a house of friendship. — וּבֵית חֵבֶר.

## Additional Insights

[1] At the beginning of Creation, the Torah says, “it is not good that man be alone” (*Bereishis* 2:18), but times a particular woman’s constant quarreling can grow so difficult to bear that a man will be unable to obtain the benefits of which the Torah is speaking. (דעת סופרים).

[2] Even when perched precariously on the corner of a roof, a man can watch himself to avoid falling. However, with a quarrelsome wife, it may be impossible to avoid being drawn into a quarrel. (חבל נחלה)

[3] This proverb can also be applied to studying Torah with a partner who is more interested in provoking arguments than in the actual learning. In that case it is better to learn alone. (הגר"א)