

Proverbs Week #140 (13:13-14)

"The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, but the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn aside from the snares of death." (Proverbs 13:13–14 NAS95)"

On the TorahResource blog we recently posted an article that Tim wrote entitled "Trembling at the Word." Tim wrote about what Isaiah said in relation to those who respond properly at the hearing of God's words. Listen to these words and ask yourself, "How should I respond to them?"

"Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? "For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:1–2 NAS95)

What is required to hear God when He is speaking? What does it mean to tremble when we hear His word? In our proverb it says the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded. What kind of reward might he expect? As we add the verses from Isaiah above, we understand that those who are humble can expect to have a place in God's house. Is this part of the reward they can expect? To hear what God is saying in His word we also need to "make room" for Him. In reality we need to empty ourselves of our wrong thoughts and ways and allow God to do some "house cleaning." Paul teaches that those who have joined themselves to the Lord through the Messiah are like a house that God will live in.

We all know what it means to live in a house. For most of us, the place where we live is our home. Many of us have rooms in our houses that we call our own – some rooms we share with others. A home is a place where we feel some measure of safety (or at least we should). A godly home will have love, discipline, teaching, rejoicing, and fellowship not only with family members but also with guests who are invited on a regular basis. How often do we think of God as a guest? Do we think of Him that way? Wouldn't it be better to see Him for who He is – a permanent member of the household? This next verse speaks of our bodies as a house where God lives and how we should live our lives based upon a fuller understanding of this truth.

"But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:17–20 NAS95)

Our verses today compare one who despises the word to one who fears the commandments. As in other proverbs, the verse emphasizes the outcome or the result of each person's actions. We might soften the verse a bit and say, "If one continues to despise the word they will be in debt to it, but one who learns to fear the commandment will be rewarded." In this softening of the wording, we hope that the hearer would learn from these words and not neglect or despise them. Too often in life we run away from the very help that God is trying to send us. For whatever reason, sometimes we just don't want to let go of our "stuff" and receive what God wants for us. Our "stuff" may be a favorite pastime or a thought or belief we hold about ourselves or others (like I'm just no good – no one cares about me or "no body likes me, everybody hates me I guess I'll go eat worms").

The final proverb says, "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life..." These words should speak to us both as teachers and as learners. Each one of us needs to learn God's truth. We don't know everything we need to know. That means, each and every one of us needs to be humble in relationship to God and be careful not to become complacent (thinking we know everything we need to know). When I am thirsty a cold glass of water is a delightful thing. God's Torah (His teaching and instruction) in the mouths of godly teachers and in the ears of godly students should have the same effect. It is a delight!