

Mishlei 02-02

The Structure of Wisdom (2:5 – 2:6)

Key Concepts

We have spoken of wisdom (*chochmah*) and the fear of Hashem (*yiras Hashem*) as being separate concepts, but they are actually closely related. Basically, wisdom is the knowledge that guides a person in making good choices in life. To acquire that knowledge and to act on it, one must be properly motivated. The source of that motivation is the fear of Hashem. Thus, you cannot expect to acquire wisdom without a basic fear of Hashem.

Navigating Mishlei. For more insight into the relationship between wisdom and the fear of Hashem see Mishlei Segment 01-02 (Motivation).

Exploring Mishlei

PART 1. THE COMPONENTS OF WISDOM. The fear of Hashem can also be understood as a form of knowledge, which encompasses a sense of the awesome greatness of Hashem and an awareness of what He expects of us in terms of *mitzvos* and moral character. That component of the fear of Hashem is also referred to as the knowledge of Hashem (*daas Elokim*). Thus, the fuller scope of the fear of Hashem depends directly upon the wisdom that you acquire. Therefore, wisdom (*chochmah*) and the fear of Hashem (*yiras Hashem*) form a virtuous circle, each enabling the other.

(ה) אִז תְּבִין יִרְאַת ה' וְיָדַעַת אֱלֹקִים תִּמְצָא:

(5) [If you acquire wisdom,] then you will have an understanding of the fear of Hashem. You will also discover the knowledge of G-d.

PART 2. THE TOOLS TO GAIN WISDOM. The wisdom of which we have been speaking is the wisdom of the Torah, which comes from Hashem. The tool that man uses to gain this wisdom is the human intellect (*seichel*), which has the capacity to absorb received truths and gain new insight into them (*binah*) by deriving truths from one another. Under the spirit of Hashem's guidance, you can then develop a conceptual understanding (*tevunah*) which is sufficiently thorough and broad as to enable you to use that knowledge in your life and to teach others. It enables you to internalize what you have heard by reviewing it and thinking it through. This results in new

wisdom and understanding.

(ו) כִּי ה' יִתֵּן חֲכָמָה מִפִּי דַעַת וּתְבוּנָה:

(6) *For Hashem grants wisdom. Knowledge and understanding are from His mouth.*

Learning Mishlei

PART 1. THE COMPONENTS OF WISDOM.

(ה) אִזּוּ תִבִּין יִרְאַת ה'

If you acquire wisdom, **then you will have an understanding of the fear of Hashem** — אִזּוּ תִבִּין יִרְאַת ה'. With wisdom you will become aware of His power to punish and reward your behavior, which is the basic fear of Hashem.

וְדַעַת אֱלֹקִים תִּמְצָא:

You will also discover a higher form of the fear of Hashem, which is the **knowledge of G-d** — וְדַעַת אֱלֹקִים תִּמְצָא. This knowledge encompasses awe of His infinite greatness and understanding of your duty to obey Him as He has directed in the Torah. In this way you will be able to strive for moral perfection and a personal bond with your Creator.

PART 2. THE TOOLS TO GAIN WISDOM.

(ו) כִּי ה' יִתֵּן חֲכָמָה

For because of His love for mankind **Hashem grants wisdom** — כִּי ה' יִתֵּן חֲכָמָה to men. Therefore it is incumbent upon you to accept that great gift. Don't be concerned that the Torah will be too difficult you. He will help You if you apply yourself.

מִפִּי דַעַת וּתְבוּנָה:

It is as though the basic **knowledge** of G-d **and a** thorough, conceptual **understanding** of that knowledge come to you directly **from His mouth** — מִפִּי דַעַת וּתְבוּנָה. That level of understanding will enable you not only to absorb wisdom but to teach it others.

Sources

The primary sources used in the interpretation of the verses of this segment are

listed below.

ה - רש"י, רבינו יונה, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, מלבי"ם
ו - רש"י, המאירי, מצודות, הגר"א

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