

**Mishlei 02-07****The Gift of Wisdom**

[Pesukim 2:7 thru 2:22]

**Key Concepts**

The Torah is Hashem's gift of wisdom to the Jewish people, but it is a conditional gift. The condition is that those who have received the gift commit themselves to studying it and acting in accordance with its directives. In this segment Mishlei speaks of the great benefits which the study of wisdom brings.

**Exploring Mishlei**

**THE PROMISE OF WISDOM.** Hashem promises the recipients of His gift that the Torah will remain eternal. Their efforts will not be wasted, and the Torah will be there for them in the World to Come. He will also repay their devotion to the Torah by shielding them from errors of interpretation and from inadvertent failure to perform the mitzvos correctly.

(ז) יִצְפֹּן לַיֹּשְׁרִים תּוֹשֵׁיָהּ מִגֵּן לְהִלְכֵי תָם:  
(ח) לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מִשֹּׁפֵט וְדָרָךְ חֲסִידָיו יִשְׁמֹר:

*(7) Hashem stores away the eternal Torah for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk in moral purity. (8) He acts to safeguard the paths of justice and He protects the way of His devout ones.*

**THE SWEETNESS OF WISDOM.** The Torah offers man a resource of great sweetness. If he makes the effort to gain its wisdom, he will be able to understand how he should relate to other human beings, balancing their concerns and interests against his own.

Once he has internalized this knowledge, it will give him great satisfaction. He will find that the knowledge of Torah is satisfying in itself. He will also find that it enables him to use his own intelligence to choose the proper course of action in every situation. (Of course, if he is not yet at the level where he can make this judgment on his own, he should turn for guidance to one who has acquired this wisdom.)

(ט) אִזּוֹ תִבְּיִן צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמֵיֹשְׁרִים כָּל מַעְגַּל טוֹב:  
(י) כִּי תִבּוֹא חֲכָמָה בְּלִבְךָ וְדַעַת לְנַפְשְׁךָ יִנְעָם:

**(9) If you acquire wisdom then you will understand, righteousness, justice and fairness. You will know every good course of action. (11) When wisdom enters your heart, you will find that wisdom becomes sweet to your soul**

**THE POWER OF WISDOM.** The wisdom of the Torah offers the individual a powerful tool, which is essential in his travel through life. That tool is the ability to evaluate alternative courses of action and make the right moral choice in each situation that he encounters. In every step of his way he will find that he needs to reject bad choices that may be put into his path by his instinctive wants and desires. Such choices may also originate from the bad influences of individuals and societies around him.

(יא) מִזְמָה תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ תְּבוּנָה תִּנְצֶרְכָּה :  
 (יב) לְהַצִּילְךָ מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע מֵאִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תְּהַפְּכוֹת :  
 (יג) הָעֹזְבִים אֲרָחוֹת יִשָּׂר לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכֵי חֹשֶׁךְ :  
 (יד) הַשְּׂמֵחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע יִגִּילוּ בְּתֵהֶפְכוֹת רָע :  
 (טו) אֲשֶׁר אֲרָחֲתִיהֶם עֲקָשִׁים וְנִלְוִים בְּמַעֲגָלוֹתָם :

**(11) The discretion that you acquire through the wisdom of the Torah will protect you. Conceptual understanding will safeguard you. (12) Wisdom will serve to rescue you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perversions. (13) To save you from those who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, (14) from those who are glad to practice evil. They rejoice in reversals into evil. (15) They are men whose paths are perverted and lead you astray along their courses.**

Earlier in Segment 01-01 (Introduction), Mishlei spoke of the importance of discretion (*mezimah*) in helping the inexperienced youth deal with the temptations that exist in the world (1:4). In Segment 02-02 (The Structure of Wisdom), Mishlei describes the value of conceptual understanding (*tevunah*) as a tool for the use and teaching of knowledge. It enables you to internalize what you have heard by reviewing it and thinking it through. This results in new wisdom and understanding.

**THE STRANGE WOMAN.** Mishlei emphasizes the great power of Torah wisdom in enabling a person to overcome the negative influences of false ideologies and corrupting cultures. He illustrates the insidious attraction of such influences by comparing them to the seductive power of an immoral woman who has betrayed her husband and now seeks to entrap others into the perverted lifestyle into which she has fallen.

Mishlei describes this seductress as being strange and alien because people are attracted by experiences that are unfamiliar. When something is unknown it seems to offer unlimited possibilities and becomes easy prey to the imagination.

The unknown seems exciting and therefore preferable to familiar experiences. Furthermore, the intense, but momentary pleasures of immorality become addictive. Once the victim has tasted the forbidden fruit, he is strongly driven to repeat the experience, even after he comes to realize how destructive it is. But then it is too late.

(טז) לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה מִנְכַרְיָה אֲמַרְיָה הַחֲלִיקָה:  
 (יז) הֶעֱזַבְתְּ אֱלוֹף נְעוּרֶיךָ וְאֶת בְּרִית אֱלֹקֶיךָ שָׁכַחָה:  
 (יח) כִּי שָׁחָה אֶל מוֹת בֵּיתָהּ וְאֶל רַפְּאִים מֵעַגְלֹתֶיהָ:  
 (יט) כָּל בָּאִיהָ לֹא יִשׁוּבוֹן וְלֹא יִשְׁיִגּוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים:

***(16) Wisdom will serve to save you from a strange woman, from a smooth-talking alien woman, (17) who abandons the husband of her youth, and she forgets the covenant with her G-d. (18) For her house slopes down toward death. Her ways are toward the lifeless. (19) All who go to her house do not return. They never achieve the ways of life.***

In subsequent segments of Mishlei we will again encounter the powerful metaphor of the strange woman as a symbol for temptation. For example, see segment 05-04 (Curiosity).

**THE WAY OF THE GOOD.** Mishlei takes great pains to emphasize the importance of wisdom. Wisdom can guide a person in finding the right way through life. It can give a person the insight he needs to anticipate the tragic end that bad choices can lead to. If that powerful opportunity is neglected, disaster will be likely to ensue.

(כ) לְמַעַן תֵּלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים וְאַרְחוֹת צְדִיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר:  
 (כא) כִּי יִשְׁרִים יִשְׁכְּנוּ אַרְץ וְיִתְמִימִים יִוָּתְרוּ בָּהּ:  
 (כב) וְרִשְׁעִים מֵאַרְץ יִכָּרְתוּ וּבֹגְדִים יִסָּחוּ מִמֶּנָּה:

***(20) Acquire wisdom so that you may walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. (21) For the upright will dwell securely in the land and those who are perfected will remain in it. (22) But the evildoers will be severed from the land and the betrayers will be uprooted from it.***

## Learning Mishlei

### THE GIFT OF WISDOM.

(ז) יִצְפֹּן לַיֹּשְׁרִים תּוֹשֵׁיָהּ מִגֵּן לְהִלְכֵי תָם :

Those who conscientiously devote themselves to learning Torah can be assured that their efforts will not be wasted. The Torah is eternal and their portion in it is assured by Hashem in the World to Come.

**He stores away — יִצְפֹּן**

and preserves **the eternal Torah — תּוֹשֵׁיָהּ**

**for the upright — לַיֹּשְׁרִים**

who study it.

And in This World, He is **a shield — מִגֵּן**

**to protect from inadvertent sin**

**those who** are committed to the *mitzvos* of the Torah and

**walk in moral purity — לְהִלְכֵי תָם.**

(ח) לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מִשֶּׁפֶט וְדָרֶךְ חֲסִידָיו יִשְׁמֹר :

Since Hashem preserves the Torah for the upright, they are assured of being able **to safeguard the paths of justice — לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מִשֶּׁפֶט,** even the most detailed, and not to fall prey to erroneous interpretations.

And since He acts as their shield,

**He protects the entire way of life of His devout ones — וְדָרֶךְ חֲסִידָיו יִשְׁמֹר**

so that they do not become diverted into mistaken patterns of behavior.

### THE SWEETNESS OF WISDOM.

(ט) אִז תִּבִּין צְדָק וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמִיֹּשְׁרִים

If you succeed in acquiring wisdom (segment 02-01),

**then you will understand — אִז תִּבִּין**

the three essential uses of personal judgment in social relationships (segment 01-01) and you will know when to apply each one, depending on the circumstance:

(1) **righteousness — צְדָק,**

going beyond the letter of the law.

(2) **justice — ומשפט**,  
adhering to the exact requirement of the law.

(3) **fairness — ומישורים**,  
acting in an equitable and balanced manner even when the law is not specific.  
Such behavior generally calls for finding the right balance between generosity and stinginess. Stinginess is not a good trait, but generosity can also be harmful if carried to an extreme.

### כָּל מַעְגַּל טוֹב:

You will even get to know **every good course** of action — **כָּל מַעְגַּל טוֹב**,  
when fairness requires you to behave in a manner that veers from the emphasis on the “good” trait. Cruelty and pride are negative qualities in themselves; but are occasionally necessary, for instance, in dealing with wicked people.

### (י) כִּי תִבּוֹא חֵכְמָה בְּלִבְךָ וְדַעַת לִנְפְשְׁךָ יִנְעָם:

You will achieve all this **when wisdom enters your heart** — **כִּי תִבּוֹא חֵכְמָה בְּלִבְךָ**.  
That is when you can use your intellect to gain understanding and derive Torah truths from one another.

Then, because of the pleasure you will have from the Torah knowledge that you have absorbed and the insights you have gained, you will find that **wisdom becomes sweet to your soul** — **וְדַעַת לִנְפְשְׁךָ יִנְעָם**.

### THE POWER OF WISDOM.

### (יא) מְזִמָּה תִשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ תִּבּוֹנָה תִּנְצָרְכָה:

Those who acquire the wisdom of the Torah are granted a special benefit, the power of **discretion** — **מְזִמָּה**.  
This is the ability to evaluate the available courses of action and anticipate outcomes.  
Whenever you are faced with a decision, this power **will protect you** — **תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ**  
from foolish behavior by helping you analyze your motivations.

When you are faced with the challenge of distinguishing truth from falsehood, the power of **conceptual understanding** — **תְּבוּנָה** that comes with the wisdom of the Torah **will safeguard you** — **תִּנְצְרָכָה** by enabling you to recognize false ideologies and the misleading talk of the wicked.

**(יב) לְהַצִּילְךָ מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע מֵאִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תְּהַפְּכוֹת:**

If you occupy your time acquiring wisdom, you will diminish the effect of any potential bad influence. The wisdom that you gain will serve **to rescue you from the way of evil** tendencies — **לְהַצִּילְךָ מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע** that are within you. It will also save you **from the man who speaks perversions** — **מֵאִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תְּהַפְּכוֹת**, distorting the truth of the Torah to draw you away from your *emunah*.

**(יג) הָעֹזְבִים אֲרוּחוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל לִלְכֹת בְּדַרְכֵי חֲשָׁךְ:**

You will then be saved from the influence of those men **who forsake the demanding paths of uprightness** — **הָעֹזְבִים אֲרוּחוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל** **to walk in the easy-going ways of moral darkness** — **לִלְכֹת בְּדַרְכֵי חֲשָׁךְ**. Their main concern is to enjoy themselves and so they choose a way of life that gives them the freedom to do as they please, but they fail to appreciate that there is no light of wisdom on that dark road. The pleasures that seemed at first to offer glitz and sparkle are an illusion, and they end up in darkness.

**(יד) הַשְּׂמֵחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע יִגִּילוּ בְּתַהֲפֻכוֹת רָע:**

Don't be fooled by their apparent sincerity and persuasiveness. These are men **who are glad to practice evil** — **הַשְּׂמֵחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע** and they are happy to get others to join them. They readily follow their animal instincts without any anxiety about the punishment that is in store for them.

Such men get pleasure by destroying what others have built. **They** especially **rejoice** — **יִגִּילוּ** **in promoting spiritual reversals** — **בְּתַהֲפֻכוֹת**, steering good people into **evil** paths — **רָע**.

**(טו) אֲשֶׁר אֶרְחֹתֵיהֶם עֶקְשִׁים וְנִלְוִים בְּמַעְגְּלוֹתָם:**

Don't be misled by men whose paths — **אֲשֶׁר אֶרְחֹתֵיהֶם**  
 appear straight but lead to perverted — **עֶקְשִׁים**  
 destinations. And stay away from those  
 who will lead you completely astray  
 along their devious courses — **וְנִלְוִים בְּמַעְגְּלוֹתָם**,  
 which appear at first to be only minor detours.

**THE STRANGE WOMAN.****(טז) לְהִצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה מִנְּכֹרֶת אֲמֶרֶת הַחֲלִיקָה:**

The wisdom that you gain will also  
 help **to save you** — **לְהִצִּילְךָ**  
**from** being attracted by false  
 ideologies and corrupt cultures, which are like  
**a strange woman** — **מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה**  
 who has become estranged from her husband.  
 She has suppressed her own conscience and  
 now gets gratification by drawing you to the sin of adultery.

Being saved from such ideologies and cultures is like being saved  
**from a smooth-talking alien woman** — **מִנְּכֹרֶת אֲמֶרֶת הַחֲלִיקָה**  
 who has become alienated from her duties. She traps you into sin  
 with false endearments and misleading promises.

**(יז) הִעֲזֹבֶת אֱלוֹף נְעוּרֶיהָ וְאֶת בְּרִית אֱלֹקֶיהָ שְׂכָחָה:**

Avoid that woman who abandons the husband  
 of her youth — **הִעֲזֹבֶת אֱלוֹף נְעוּרֶיהָ**.  
 She has betrayed his trust and his love for her.  
 And she consciously forgets the covenant  
 she has made with her G-d — **וְאֶת בְּרִית אֱלֹקֶיהָ שְׂכָחָה**.  
 She readily violates His commandment against adultery.

**(יח) כִּי שָׁחָה אֶל מוֹת בֵּיתָהּ וְאֶל רְפָאִים מֵעֲגֹלְתֶיהָ :**

Such a woman will bring you nothing but  
grief, **for** — **כִּי**  
anyone that enters **her house** — **בֵּיתָהּ**  
will find that it is not the solid place  
it appears to be. It **slopes** — **שָׁחָה**  
imperceptibly down **toward death** — **אֶל מוֹת**.

The murderous passions which she arouses through her betrayals can lead to terrible violence. Thus, **her ways** — **מֵעֲגֹלְתֶיהָ**  
which seem at first to be oriented  
to pleasure, **are actually directed**  
**towards the place of the lifeless Gehinnom** — **וְאֶל רְפָאִים**.

**(יט) כָּל בָּאֵיהָ לֹא יָשׁוּבוֹן וְלֹא יִשְׁיִגּוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים :**

**All who go to her house** — **כָּל בָּאֵיהָ**  
are so affected by their corrupting  
experience that they **do not return** — **לֹא יָשׁוּבוֹן**  
unscathed, even when they make a serious  
attempt to restart their lives.

And after vainly following roads that promise gratification,  
**they never achieve the ways of a happy life** — **וְלֹא יִשְׁיִגּוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים**.

**THE WAY OF THE GOOD.**

**(כ) לְמַעַן תֵּלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים וְאַרְחוֹת צְדִיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר :**

The wisdom of the Torah will keep you from the way of evil  
**so that you may walk in the way of the good people** — **לְמַעַן תֵּלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים** ,  
who are kind to others and considerate of them.

**And** by adhering to the Torah, you will merit to  
**keep to the paths of the righteous** — **וְאַרְחוֹת צְדִיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר** ,  
who give of their own funds to help others in difficult straits.

**(כא) כִּי יִשְׁרִים יִשְׁכְּנוּ אֶרֶץ וְתַמִּימִים יִוְתְּרוּ בָּהּ :**

It will be a great blessing to you to be counted among the upright, who instinctively follow the way of wisdom.

**For the upright will dwell securely in the land — כִּי יִשְׁרִים יִשְׁכְּנוּ אֶרֶץ .**

But even greater than than the naturally upright are those who work on themselves to perfect their character and hold to the way of wisdom despite changing circumstances. **And so,**

**those who are perfected — וַתְּמַיְמֵי**

in character, having achieved wisdom through conscious effort and commitment, **will always remain in the land — יִנְתְּרוּ בָּהּ ,** even when others are severed as the result of giving in to unexpected temptation.

**(כב) וַיִּשְׁעִים מֵאֶרֶץ יִכְרְתוּ וּבֹגְדִים יִסָּחוּ מִמֶּנֶּה :**

But the evildoers who reject the Torah will be severed from the land — **וַיִּשְׁעִים מֵאֶרֶץ יִכְרְתוּ—** until they repent, and the betrayers, who reject the basic values of wisdom that are common to humanity will be permanently uprooted from it — **וּבֹגְדִים יִסָּחוּ מִמֶּנֶּה .**