

## Mishlei 04-01

# Mishlei and Tradition

### Key Concepts

All wisdom originates with the Creator, our universal Father. He gave wisdom as a Divine gift to man and so began the tradition of wisdom being passed down from generation to generation, from father to son and from teacher to *talmid*. In the Book of Mishlei, Shlomo *HaMelech* assumes an active role in this tradition and so he frequently addresses the reader as “my child” or “my son.”

### Exploring Mishlei

In this segment Mishlei calls upon the next generation of “children” to pay careful attention to his words of wisdom and to appreciate them. Although wisdom comes to each generation as a gift, its precious value should not be underestimated.

Mishlei then reminds his readers that he was also once a child and that he benefited greatly by the wisdom lovingly taught to him in his younger years. Since he was destined to be a king and was the only son of a beloved mother, great care was taken in assuring that the young Shlomo would receive true wisdom and especially the moral discipline (*mussar*) that would qualify him to be an honorable man and wise ruler of the Jewish nation during a time of its greatest glory.

Mishlei assures his readers that he is about to impart to them the same wisdom that was granted to him. He encourages them to abide faithfully to the demands of that wisdom and assures them that they will be rewarded with a meaningful and worthy life.

(א) שְׁמַעוּ בָנִים מִיִּסְרָאֵל וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לְדַעַת בִּינָה:

(ב) כִּי לֵקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם תּוֹרַתִי אֶל תַּעֲזָבוּ:

(ג) כִּי בֶן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי רַךְ וַיְחַיֵּד לִפְנֵי אִמִּי:

(ד) וַיְרַנֵּי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי יִתְמָךְ דְּבָרֵי לִבְךָ שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְחַיֶּה:

**(1) Children, listen to the mussar of Hashem, our Father. Pay close attention to gaining an understanding of middos, basic character traits.**

**(2) for I have given to you a good possession. Don't neglect my teaching.**

**(3) For I was a favored son to my father, a tender lad, an only son to him when he was in the presence of my mother.**

**(4) He taught me and he said to me, "Let my words brace your heart. Observe my instructions and you will live."**

## Learning Mishlei

**(א) שְׁמַעוּ בָנִים מוֹסֵר אָב וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לְדַעַת בִּינָה:**

Listen, children, — שְׁמַעוּ בָנִים  
and take to heart the *mussar* — מוֹסֵר  
of Hashem, our universal Father — אָב.

Pay close attention — וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ  
because by learning this moral discipline  
you will gain an understanding — לְדַעַת בִּינָה  
of *middos*, the basic character traits.

**(ב) כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם תּוֹרַתִּי אֶל תַּעֲזֹבוּ:**

For it is a good and precious possession — כִּי לָקַח טוֹב,  
the wisdom that I have given to you — נָתַתִּי לָכֶם  
in this *sefer*. You are receiving it as a gift but you would  
have had to pay a very high price if you had to purchase it.

Therefore, do not neglect my teaching — תּוֹרַתִּי אֶל תַּעֲזֹבוּ  
as though it were something cheap.

**(ג) כִּי בֶן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי רָךְ וַיַּחֲזִיד לִפְנֵי אִמִּי:**

And do not reject my *mussar*, thinking that you don't need  
to be told what to do. Look at my example, for — כִּי  
I was firmly disciplined from my earliest youth even though  
I was a favored son to my father — בֶּן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי.

He expected much from me and demanded it  
because I was the son — בֶּן  
destined to be builder — בּוֹנֵה  
of the Bais HaMikdash. But his discipline was not unkind.  
I was a tender lad — רָךְ  
and he loved my mother deeply.

Because I was her one son my father  
treated me as if I was his **only son** — וַיְחִיד  
when he was **in the presence of my mother** — לְפָנַי אִמִּי .

(ד) וַיְרַנֵּי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי יִתְמַךְ דְּבָרֵי לִבְךָ שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְחַיֶּה :

**He taught me** — וַיְרַנֵּי

words of great wisdom and, because he loved me,  
you can be sure that the wisdom he taught was for my benefit.

And therefore, I confidently pass it on to you:

**he said to me** — וַיֹּאמֶר לִי ,

“**Let my words brace your heart** — יִתְמַךְ דְּבָרֵי לִבְךָ —

to enable you to resist your base instincts.

**Observe my instructions** — שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי

of proper moral and ethical behavior

that I pass on to you

**and you will live** — וְחַיֶּה

a meaningful and rewarding life.”