

## Mishlei 01-03

# Positive Influences (1:8 and 1:9)

### Key Concepts

From the very first days of life you are subject to the influences of people around you, both positive and negative. Fortunately, your parents were devoted to your welfare and so they did what they could to exert a positive influence. Then, as you grew older you gained the benefit of constructive influences from teachers and good friends, and even indirectly from the lives of people who have passed on.

In this segment Mishlei emphasizes the importance of seeking out and being receptive to good influences and learning from them. The lessons learned in childhood can have a positive effect throughout your life. Furthermore, the process of seeking good role models and teachers is never-ending. And the challenge of distinguishing good influences from bad ones becomes ever more critical, as we shall see in the next segment (01-04).

### Exploring Mishlei

**PART 1. YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.** Since the first sources of influence to which you were exposed were your father and mother, Mishlei begins with a reminder of the special qualities each brings to the formation of character. A father, through his instruction and through his example is especially suited to guide his child in moral discipline and self-control. Among the essential qualities that a mother gives to her child are sensitivity and consideration for the needs of others.

(ח) שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוֹסֵר אֲבִיךָ וְאַל תִּטְּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ:

(8) *My son, pay attention to the moral discipline of your father and don't lose the training of your mother.*

Because of the power of the first impressions that were made as a child, Mishlei addresses you as “my son.” When it comes to being open to absorbing wisdom, the innocence of childhood is a perfect *mashal* and you are never too old to learn those lessons.

**PART 2. A GOLDEN NECKLACE.** As you go through life you draw on the lessons of character development that you received as a child and you begin to serve as a role model and a source of influence to others. Mishlei reminds you that what you have

learned can give you the graciousness that is like an adornment to enable you to be a positive influence on the next generation.

(ט) כִּי לִוְיַת חֵן הֵם לְרֵאשֶׁף וְעִנְקִים לְגִרְגָּרְתֶּיךָ:

(9) *For they are a wreath of goodwill for your head and a necklace for your throat.*

## Additional Thoughts

This segment is the first one in which Mishlei speaks directly to you the reader. He calls you "my son" because he is now acting as your father and mother, speaking to you in the Name of Hashem, the Father of us all. In this brief first lesson he focuses on the positive influences that you receive throughout your life. Since the positive influences came before you were exposed to negative influences, he postpones his advice on that subject until the next segment (01-04).

In contrast Tehillim begins with instructions to avoid bad people (Mizmor 001) because the mature individual should give priority to rejecting negative influences, as it says "Turn away from evil and do good" (Mizmor 034, posuk 15).

## Learning Mishlei

### PART 1. YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

(ח) שְׁמַע בְּנִי  
מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ

As you go through life **my son, pay attention to** — שְׁמַע בְּנִי the lessons of **fatherly discipline** — מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ and self-control that were taught to you by your father and your teachers when you were young. Although you are now matured, you should continue to draw on the wisdom you gained from those early years, a wisdom which has now been supplemented by the teachings of wise men over the centuries.

וְאַל תִּטֹּשׁ  
תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ:

**And** even if your childhood is long past, **don't lose** — וְאַל תִּטֹּשׁ the sensitivity that you gained through **the gentle training of your mother** — תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ. The lessons of consideration for others that she inculcated in you are an essential characteristic

of the Jewish people.

**PART 2. A GOLDEN NECKLACE.**

(ט) כִּי לְוִיַּת חַן יֵהֱיוּ לְרֵאשִׁי  
וְעֲנָקִים לְגִרְגָּרְתֶּיךָ:

Always remember these treasured lessons, **for they** will be **a wreath of goodwill** — כִּי לְוִיַּת חַן יֵהֱיוּ circling **your head** — לְרֵאשִׁי, inspiring others to be enlightened by your wisdom. **And** they will serve as **a golden necklace for your throat** — וְעֲנָקִים לְגִרְגָּרְתֶּיךָ, which enhances every word you utter.

**Sources**

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

א' ח' - רבינו יונה, רלב"ג, רבינו בחיי, מצודות, המאירי, רשר"ה, מלבי"ם  
א' ט' - רבינו יונה, מלבי"ם

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