

## Mishlei 01-05

# Wisdom is Calling You (1:20 – 1:33)

### Key Concepts

Don't say that the wisdom of the Torah is too difficult for you or is not available to you in your situation in life. Don't say that such wisdom is suitable only for theoretical discussions in the *Bais Hamedrash* but is not practical for the real world in which you must function every day.

The message of Wisdom is very serious and is critical to your life. Don't neglect it and don't try to evade it. You should visualize Wisdom as a dynamic spirit which is desperately eager to share and adapt its message to everyone in every situation, no matter how much they have studied in the past and no matter what other activity is occupying their attention.

### Exploring Mishlei

**PART 1. INTRODUCTION.** Wisdom is calling out to everyone and is proclaiming its accessibility in every human habitation.

(כ) חִכְמוֹת בַּחוּץ תִּרְנֶה בְּרַחֲבוֹת וַתִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ: (כא) בְּרֹאשׁ הַמַּיּוֹת וַתִּקְרָא בְּפִתְחֵי שְׁעָרִים בְּעִיר אֲמַרְיָה תֹאמַר:

*(20) Wisdom proclaims its message in the street. It raises its voice in the squares. At the head of the noisy markets, at the entrances to the [city] gates, and everywhere in the city, [Wisdom] speaks its words.*

**PART 2. IGNORANCE.** Every baby starts out in life in a state of complete ignorance. Gradually over the years he acquires the knowledge and wisdom to succeed at some level. Under normal conditions, nobody remains an imbecile. However, many Jews fail to achieve the minimal level they will need to serve Hashem properly and experience spiritual growth. What prevents believing Jews from breaking out of their state of ignorance? Unfortunately, many find it very difficult to make the sacrifices that are needed to acquire the wisdom of the Torah. Three major considerations have been identified.

(1) Despite the best of intentions, some lack the strength of character to avoid being influenced by the distractions that abound in our society. And so they waste their time in idle amusement. (2) They may also be affected by the culture of

disrespect and levity which pervades many social circles. Because of their lack of seriousness they cannot commit their minds to thoughtful study over any length of time. (3) Some may have become discouraged by the challenges of the learning process itself. Instead of the sweetness of learning all they see is hard work and so they have given up.

All of these factors are dealt with by the spirit of Wisdom here in Mishlei. In effect, Wisdom advises each person to examine himself and understand what is holding him back from rising further out of the swamp of ignorance. Once a person understands what behavior patterns he has fallen victim to, he needs to work on himself to break those patterns. Here, Wisdom assures him that he will not be alone. If he makes an effort, he will have the benefit of Divine help.

(כב) עַד מָתַי פְּתִים תִּתְאַהֲבוּ פְתִי וְלִצִּים לְצוֹן חֲמָדוֹ לָהֶם וְכִסִּילִים יִשְׁנְאוּ דַעַת: (כג)  
תְּשׁוּבוּ לְתוֹכְחָתִי הִנֵּה אֲבִיעָה לָכֶם רוּחִי אֹדִיעָה דְבָרִי אֶתְכֶם:

(22) [Wisdom says:] **1.** [You] simple-minded people, how long will you be devoted to distractions? **2.** [How long will self-styled] comedians delight in teasing each other? **3.** [How long will] fools hate knowledge? (23) [How long before you] turn back at my rebuke. [Listen] here! I will impart my spirit to you. I will make my words known to you.

**PART 3. REJECTION.** The natural state of a human being is to be a receptacle for the wisdom of the Torah and to live a life that is governed by that wisdom. When a person rejects the opportunity to acquire wisdom, it is a sign that he has been influenced by character weaknesses such as laziness or the attraction of immoral life styles.

In effect there is a voice of Wisdom within each person's soul calling upon him to overcome his human weaknesses and adopt the purpose for which he was created. When the individual consciously ignores that voice he is held accountable.

The voice of Wisdom notifies him that he must be ready to face the consequences of his rejection, as described in subsequent parts of this segment.

(כד) יַעַן קָרָאתִי וְתַמְאֵנוּ נְטִיתִי יָדִי וְאִין מִקְשִׁיב: (כה) וְתַפְרְעוּ כָּל עֲצָתִי וְתוֹכְחָתִי  
לֹא אֲבִיתֶם:

(24) [Wisdom continues:] Because I called you, but you refused, [because] I motioned with my hand and no one paid attention, [because] you rejected my advice and you did not want my rebuke, [you will need to accept the consequences].”

**PART 4. RUDE AWAKENING.** People like to believe that they are right, especially when times are good. Even when things go wrong they naturally assume it is just bad luck or someone else's fault. However, if a person always believes he is doing the right thing he will never change and he will never grow.

What does it take to puncture a person's balloon of self-deception? Even a gradual worsening of his situation may not do it. He will continue to come up with rationalizations, desperately hanging on to his illusions because he does not want to change.

If Hashem sends him a sudden misfortune, that may shake him up. But even then he will not be eager to consider the implications.

Mishlei advises him to look into his heart and open himself up to the voice of Wisdom that exists within each person's soul.

If he does so, he will realize that Wisdom is showing him how ridiculous he has become because of his refusal to face the truth. He will see that Wisdom is laughing at him and is mocking him. Perhaps the shock of being an object of humor will break through his veneer of complacency!

(כו) גַּם אֲנִי בְּאִיְדָכֶם אֶשְׁחַק אֶלְעַג בְּבֹא פְחָדְכֶם:

(20) [Wisdom continues:] I, too. When your misfortune [strikes], I will laugh at you .

**PART 5. CONSEQUENCES.** People who make bad choices in life often do so because they fail to think through the consequences of their actions. They react to their current feelings and influences but don't consider that things will not always be the same. Even when they know they are not doing what they should be doing they persuade themselves that the situation is not urgent and they will have opportunities to adjust their behavior later.

In these last pesukim of Perek 1, Mishlei warns the reader that time is running out. Acquiring the wisdom of the Torah is a process that takes time and cannot be done at the last minute. A person who has neglected wisdom will one day be forced to face the consequences. Instead of the happiness that he hoped to achieve with his current life choices he will realize that a life without the guidance of wisdom is doomed to tragedy.

This message is conveyed by the voice of Wisdom within his own soul, which tells him that without Torah he will be at a loss when the inevitable dark day of tragedy arrives. He has made his choice and should will have to face consequences.

But even at this late date Mishlei adds a postscript, reminding the reader that he has an opportunity to listen to the voice of Wisdom and change his life. Then

instead of a tragic consequence he will be blessed with happiness in this world and the next.

(כז) בָּבֵא כְּשֵׂאוֹהָ פְּחָדְכֶם וְאִידְכֶם כְּסוּפָה יֵאָתֶה בָּבֵא עֲלֵיכֶם צָרָה וְצוּקָה;  
 (כח) אִזּוּ יִקְרְאוּנִי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה יִשְׁחַרְנֵנִי וְלֹא יִמְצְאוּנִי: (כט) תַּחַת כִּי שָׁנְאוּ דַעַת וַיִּרְאוּ  
 ה' לֹא בָחֲרוּ: (ל) לֹא אָבוּ לַעֲצוֹתַי נֶאֱצוּ כָּל תּוֹכְחֹתַי: (לא) וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִפְּרֵי דַרְכָּם  
 וַיִּמְמַעְצְתֵיהֶם יִשְׁבְּעוּ: (לב) כִּי מְשׁוּבֵת פְּתִים תִּהְרָגִם וְשִׁלּוֹת כְּסִילִים תִּאֲבָדִם: (לג)  
 וְשִׁמְעֵ לִי יִשְׁכֹּן בְּטַח וְשִׁאֲנֵן מִפְּחַד רָעָה: פ

(27) [Wisdom continues:] When your fear arrives like a sudden darkness and tragedy strikes like a tornado, when trouble and torment come upon you, (28) then they will call me, but I will not answer. They will search for me, but they will not find me, (29) because they hated moral knowledge and they failed to choose the fear of Hashem. (30) They did not want my advice; they spurned all my admonitions. (31) They will eat of the fruit of their path. And they will have their fill of their own counsels. (32) For the unrestrained life of the simple-minded will do them in and the self-satisfaction of fools will destroy them. (33) But whoever listens to me will live in confident serenity, undisturbed by the fear of tragedy.

**Navigating Mishlei.** Posuk 29 speaks of moral knowledge (*daas*). What is moral knowledge? It is knowing how to go about making the right choices in life. The essential first step in gaining moral knowledge is the fear of Hashem. (See segment 01-02.) Fools (*kesilim*) hate moral knowledge because they only do what gives them pleasure. Learning doesn't give them pleasure and so they are not motivated to make the necessary effort, which could make it pleasurable.

## Additional Thoughts

In this segment we see Wisdom as a dynamic spirit calling out to the people of the city, wherever they happen to be — in the streets, the squares, the markets, etc. At first glance this appears to be nice *mashal*. But is it just a *mashal*? HaRav Yerucham Levovitz in *Daas Torah (Vayikra P. 267)* points out that when we learn Torah we are not creating it. The Wisdom of Torah exists independently of us. In fact it is the true existence! When we study and put our efforts into learning, we are effectively persuading the Wisdom of the Torah to reveal itself to us. Without some degree of effort on our part it will remain floating in the air, calling to us, as suggested here in Mishlei.

## Learning Mishlei

### PART 1. INTRODUCTION.

(כ) חֲכָמוֹת בַּחוּץ תִּרְנֶה  
בְּרַחְבוֹת תִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ:

The Torah's **Wisdom** — חֲכָמוֹת **proclaims** its message **in the street** — בַּחוּץ תִּרְנֶה so that everyone can hear. **It raises its voice in the town squares** — בְּרַחְבוֹת תִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ where people gather to conduct business.

(כא) בְּרֹאשׁ הַמַּיּוֹת תִּקְרָא  
בְּפִתְחֵי שְׁעָרִים  
בְּעִיר אֲמַרְיָהּ תֹאמֶר:

And **at the head of the noisy markets** — בְּרֹאשׁ הַמַּיּוֹת, that is where Wisdom **calls out** — תִּקְרָא its teachings. Also, **at the entrances to the city gates** — בְּפִתְחֵי שְׁעָרִים, where the elders sit to settle disputes, **and** everywhere else **in the city** — בְּעִיר, Wisdom **speaks its words** — אֲמַרְיָהּ תֹאמֶר to all who will listen.

*What is Wisdom saying to the people who hear its voice? That is the subject of the next part.*

### PART 2. IGNORANCE.

(כב) עַד מַתִּי פְתִים תִּאֱהָבוּ פְתִי

Wisdom is speaking: (1) You **simple-minded** people — פְתִים who are vulnerable to the attractions of "modern" culture, **how long** — עַד מַתִּי, **will you be devoted to your mindless distractions** — תִּאֱהָבוּ פְתִי ?

וְלֵצִים לְצוֹן חֲמָדוֹ לָהֶם

(2) How long will self-styled **comedians** — וְלֵצִים **delight in teasing each other** — לְצוֹן חֲמָדוֹ לָהֶם and finding something to laugh about in every serious situation?

וְכַסִּילִים יִשְׂנְאוּ דַעַת:

(3) How long, will **fools** — וְכַסִּילִים **hate knowledge** — יִשְׂנְאוּ דַעַת because learning Torah doesn't give them the pleasure that others find in it ?

## (כג) תשובו לתוכחתי

To each of you I say: How long will it be before you **turn back** — תשובו from your foolish attitude and pay serious attention **to my rebuke** — לתוכחתי ?

הנה אביעה לכם רוחי  
אודיעה דברי אתכם:

Listen **here** — הנה ! If you will but open your mind to me, **I will impart my spirit to you** — אביעה לכם רוחי. You will then be able to focus your mind on acquiring knowledge. If you do this, **I will make my words known to you** — אודיעה דברי אתכם so that you will be able to remember what you have learned. Once you have gained some knowledge, you can build on that and you will see the sweetness in how it all fits together.

PART 3. REJECTION.

## (כד) יען קראתי ותמאנו

The time has come to remind that you that **because** — יען you rejected me you will have to suffer the cost of your ignorance. Remember that **I called you** — קראתי to listen to my guidance when I was close to you, **but you refused** — ותמאנו. Instead you distanced yourself from me so that you could no longer hear my voice.

נטיתי ידי ואין מקשיב:

Even so you could still see me from the distance and so **I motioned** to you **with my hand** — נטיתי ידי. But tragically, you pretended not to see me **and so there was no one to pay attention** — ואין מקשיב.

(כה) ותפרעו כל עצתי  
ותוכחתי לא אביתם:

**You** actively **rejected all my** helpful **advice** — ותפרעו כל עצתי **and you did not want** to listen to **my rebuke** — ותוכחתי לא אביתם. You treated me like a troublesome stranger interfering with your life.

PART 4. RUDE AWAKENING.

(כו) גַם אֲנִי בְּאַיְדְכֶם אֲשַׁחֵק

You treated me badly and rejected my heartfelt advice because you preferred your illusions. **I, too** — גַם אֲנִי, will act sharply in the hope that you will come to your senses. **When your misfortune strikes** — בְּאַיְדְכֶם, **I will laugh at you** — אֲשַׁחֵק so that you realize how foolish you are.

PART 5. CONSEQUENCES.

(כז) בָּבֹא כְּשׁוֹאָה פִּחְדְּכֶם

וְאַיְדְכֶם כְּסוּפָה יֵאָתֶה

בָּבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם צָרָה וְצוּקָה:

As long as things continue to go well for you, you enjoy your pleasures and disregard the need for the wisdom of Torah in your life. But you must know that there will come a time when things go wrong. **When your unseen fear arrives like a sudden darkness** — בָּבֹא כְּשׁוֹאָה פִּחְדְּכֶם and **tragedy strikes you like a tornado** — וְאַיְדְכֶם כְּסוּפָה יֵאָתֶה; **when trouble and torment come upon you** — בָּבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם צָרָה וְצוּקָה, then you will be forced to pay the consequences of your foolishness.

(כח) אִזּוּ יִקְרְאוּנִי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה

יִשְׁחַרְנֵנִי וְלֹא יִמְצְאוּנִי:

When that tragic day comes, all those who have neglected wisdom will know that they waited too long. **Then they will call me** — אִזּוּ יִקְרְאוּנִי to help them with advice and sympathy, hoping that I am still nearby and can hear them, **but I will not** be able to **answer** — וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה because they have moved too far from me. When they realize I am out of hearing range, **they will** start to **search for me** — יִשְׁחַרְנֵנִי, **but they will not find me** — וְלֹא יִמְצְאוּנִי.

(כט) תַּחַת כִּי שָׂנְאוּ דַעַת

וַיִּרְאֵת ה' לֹא בָחֲרוּ:

They forfeited my help **because they hated moral knowledge** — תַּחַת כִּי שָׂנְאוּ **and they failed to choose the fear of Hashem** — וַיִּרְאֵת ה' לֹא בָחֲרוּ even though they had every opportunity to do so.

(ל) לא אָבוּ לְעֵצָתִי  
נֶאֱצוּ כָּל תּוֹכַחְתִּי:

**They did not want my advice** – לא אָבוּ לְעֵצָתִי about avoiding bad influences;  
**they spurned all my admonitions** – נֶאֱצוּ כָּל תּוֹכַחְתִּי about their failure to  
acquire wisdom.

(לא) וְיֹאכְלוּ מִפְּרֵי דֶרֶכָם  
וּמִמַּעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׁבְּעוּ:

**They will eat of the bitter fruit of their path** in life – וְיֹאכְלוּ מִפְּרֵי דֶרֶכָם, a path  
which they thought would give them only pleasure. Instead of the sweetness of  
Torah wisdom they will have the bitterness of fear. **And they will have their fill** of  
the bitter fruit **of their own counsels** – וּמִמַּעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׁבְּעוּ since they refused to  
listen to my advice. Instead they acted upon their own twisted thinking and this will  
lead to ultimate tragedy.

(לב) כִּי מְשׁוֹבֵת פְּתִים תַּהְרִגֶם  
וְשִׁלּוֹת כְּסִילִים תִּאֲבֹדֶם:

**For the unrestrained life of the simple-minded will do them in** – כִּי מְשׁוֹבֵת  
פְּתִים תַּהְרִגֶם. Their disregard of consequences will lead them along the path of  
destructive influences. **And the complacent self-satisfaction of fools**, who are  
misled by their initial success, **will ultimately destroy them** – וְשִׁלּוֹת כְּסִילִים  
וְשִׁלּוֹת כְּסִילִים because their apparent prosperity will turn to tragedy.

(לג) וְשִׁמְעֵ לִי יִשְׁכֵּן בְּטַח  
וְשִׁאֲנָן מִפַּחַד רָעָה: פ

**But whoever listens to me** – וְשִׁמְעֵ לִי to follow the path of the Torah and accept  
its wisdom **will live in confident serenity** – יִשְׁכֵּן בְּטַח, **undisturbed by the**  
paralyzing **fear of impending tragedy** – וְשִׁאֲנָן מִפַּחַד רָעָה, even when he sees  
disaster striking elsewhere in the world.



## Sources

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

א' כז - רש"י, המאירי, מצודות, הגר"א, מלבי"ם	א' כ' - אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה, מצודות, רשר"ה
א' כח - רש"י, אבן יחיאל, מלבי"ם	א' כא - רש"י, המאירי, מצודות, רשר"ה, מלבי"ם,
א' כט - המאירי, הגר"א, מלבי"ם	א' כב - רבינו יונה, רלב"ג, הגר"א, מלבי"ם
א' ל - המאירי, הגר"א	א' כג - אבן עזרא, המאירי, הגר"א
א' לא - המאירי, הגר"א	א' כד - רש"י, מצודות, הגר"א, מלבי"ם
א' לב - רש"י, רלב"ג, הגר"א	א' כה - רש"י, אבן יחיאל, הגר"א
א' לג - מצודות, הגר"א	א' כו - מצודות, רשר"ה

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