

Mishlei 03-02

Connecting to the Source of Wisdom (3:5 – 3:10)

Key Concepts

In Gan Eden when man gained the power of *bechirah* (free will), he lost something precious. He lost the fullness of his bond to Hashem and the instinctive sense of having been created by Him. His mind became clouded with the illusion that he was an independent being who could choose to do as he wished. It was no longer obvious to him that everything which happened in the world was Hashem's will. He no longer knew in his heart that even when he made a choice, the physical outcome would be determined by the Creator.

The challenge that man now had was to overcome the illusion that he was the owner of his wisdom. His task was to use that wisdom to connect back to the Source of wisdom. This was extremely difficult for him to do and it took many generations before Avraham Avinu came on the scene and fully re-established the bond between man and his Creator.

Exploring Mishlei

We, who are Avraham's descendants, have the benefit of his spiritual legacy and the teachings of the Torah. We need to make use of these resources to make the connection with the Creator that is so important to our avodas Hashem. In this segment Mishlei offers us four basic guidelines to help us implement these teachings.

PART 1. AUTHENTICITY. Act only on authentic wisdom – the wisdom of Torah.

(ה) בְּטַח אֵל ה' בְּכָל לִבְךָ וְאַל בִּינְתָה אֶל תַּשְׁעֵן:

(5) *Trust in Hashem with all your heart and don't rely on your understanding.*

PART 2. AWARENESS. Always be aware of Hashem – the Source of Wisdom.

(ו) בְּכָל דְרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ וְהוּא יִישַׁר אֲרָחוֹתֶיךָ:

(6) *Know Him in all your ways and He will smooth your paths.*

PART 3. HUMILITY. Don't take pride in your wisdom.

(ז) אֵל תִּהְיֶה חָכָם בְּעֵינֶיךָ יִרְא אֶת ה' וְסוּר מִרָע: (ח) רַפְאוֹת תִּהְיֶה לְשָׁרְךָ וְשָׁקוּי לְעֲצָמוֹתֶיךָ:

(7) *Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear Hashem and turn away from evil.*
(8) *It will be health to your navel and the marrow of your bones.*

PART 4. GRATITUDE. Be grateful for your wisdom.

(ט) כִּבֵּד אֶת ה' מֵהוֹנֶךָ וּמֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל תְּבוּאָתֶךָ: (י) וְיִמְלֵאוּ אֲסַמְיָךְ שְׂבַע וְתִירוֹשׁ יִקְבְּיוּ יִפְרָצוּ:

(9) *Honor Hashem with your wealth and the first of all your produce. (10) [Then] your storehouses will be filled with plenty and the wine of your vats will burst forth.*

Learning Mishlei

PART 1. AUTHENTICITY.

(ה) בְּטַח אֶל ה' בְּכָל לִבְךָ

Trust in Hashem — בְּטַח אֶל ה' and His wisdom, as revealed in the Torah — **with all your heart** — בְּכָל לִבְךָ. Let your decisions in life be based on that wisdom. It would be foolish arrogance to think that you can achieve your selfish objectives by following your own thoughts when they go against Hashem's will.

וְאַל בִּינְתֶךָ אֶל תִּשְׁעוֹן:

Let Hashem's wisdom be your only guide **and don't rely on your understanding** — וְאַל בִּינְתֶךָ אֶל תִּשְׁעוֹן which may be self-serving. Accordingly, don't put your trust in the illusory power of your wealth and in promises that people have made to you. If you do, you are really placing your trust in yourself, and the assessment you have personally made. Instead, place your trust in Hashem, and you can be assured of a satisfactory outcome, for the power to determine the outcome is really in His hands, not yours.

PART 2. AWARENESS.

(ו) בְּכֹל דְרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ

Don't limit your commitment to Hashem to the major issues in life. Be aware of His presence and apply His wisdom in everything you do, no matter how small. Always consider whether you are pleasing Him by your action. This means that **you should know Him in all your ways** — בְּכֹל דְרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ. Remember, that everything in your life depends on Him.

וְהוּא יַיִשֵּׁר אַרְחֻתֶיךָ:

If you make a sincere effort to involve the wisdom of Hashem in your every action, He will be there to help you every step of the way **and He will smooth your paths** — וְהוּא יַיִשֵּׁר אַרְחֻתֶיךָ so that you will succeed in what you do.

PART 3. HUMILITY.

(ז) אַל תְּהִי חָכָם בְּעֵינֶיךָ

Remember that wisdom is a gift from Hashem and should not be misused. When you are being admonished, **don't be wise in your own eyes** — אַל תְּהִי חָכָם בְּעֵינֶיךָ and say you know better. And when you achieve success don't pat yourself on the back for your shrewdness. Your success came from Hashem.

יִרְא אֶת ה' וְסוּר מִרָע:

Don't be misled by your pride. **Fear Hashem** — יִרְא אֶת ה', Who created you and watches over you. It is only with His help that you will be able to overcome your bad *middos* **and turn away from evil** — וְסוּר מִרָע.

(ח) רַפְּאוֹת תְּהִי לְשֶׁרֶךְ

וְשִׁקּוּי לְעֲצְמוֹתֶיךָ:

By turning way from what is bad you will be pleasing your Creator. It will also make you a better person, morally and physically. Thus, **it will be a source of health to your navel** — רַפְּאוֹת תְּהִי לְשֶׁרֶךְ which symbolizes the flow of nutrients to your body when you were an embryo in your mother's womb. **And** it will infuse strength to the structure of your body as symbolized by **the marrow of your bones** — וְשִׁקּוּי לְעֲצְמוֹתֶיךָ.

PART 4. GRATITUDE.**(ט) כִּבֵּד אֶת ה' מִהוֹנֶךָ**

You are indebted to your Creator for giving you wisdom. **Honor Hashem — כִּבֵּד** 'את ה' by serving Him with everything that He has given you. Honor him **with your wealth — מִהוֹנֶךָ** and everything you possess, including your wisdom and all your talents. If you are blessed with a good voice, honor Hashem with it by singing beautiful *zemiros* and *tefillos* to inspire others.

וּמֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל תְּבוּאֹתֶיךָ:

And give the first of all your produce — וּמֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל תְּבוּאֹתֶיךָ to the Kohanim and Leviim, so that they can devote themselves to guiding the people. Then they can serve as a conduit for the blessings of Hashem to His nation. If you have been blessed with wisdom, devote the best of your abilities to learning and teaching Torah.

(י) וַיִּמְלְאוּ אֶסְמִיךָ שָׁבַע**וְתִירוֹשׁ יִקְבֵּיךָ יִפְרֹצוּ:**

Don't let your devotion be inhibited by the cost of doing *mitzvos* and giving *tzedakah*. The blessings of Hashem's bounty will come back to you. **Your storehouses will be filled with plenty — וַיִּמְלְאוּ אֶסְמִיךָ שָׁבַע** and the wine of your vats will burst forth — **וְתִירוֹשׁ יִקְבֵּיךָ יִפְרֹצוּ** with fullness. Just as your material assets will be blessed so will your spiritual endeavors, such as building institutions of learning and kindness, for you have devoted the best of your intellectual powers to serving Hashem.

Sources

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

ח - מצודות	ה - רבינו יונה, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, מצודות,
ט - רש"י, רבינו יונה, רלב"ג, חנוך לנער	מלבי"ם
י - אבן עזרא, המאירי, מלבי"ם	ו - רבינו יונה, מצודות
	ז - רש"י, אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה, מלבי"ם

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