

Mishlei 03-05

Wisdom, the Key to Creation (3:19-20)

Key Concepts

Hashem created the world for mankind to achieve moral and spiritual perfection, as expressed by the wisdom of the Torah. Without that wisdom there would have been no purpose in Creation. Because of that wisdom Creation became possible. In fact, wisdom is the very design of Creation.

The objective of the *sefer* Mishlei is to instruct us in how to acquire and implement the wisdom of Creation so that the intent of Creation will be fulfilled.

In this segment Mishlei touches upon the three major components of that wisdom: **chochmah**, **binah**, and **daas**. (See also segment 02-02, the Structure of Wisdom). *Chochmah* is the underlying truth which establishes the laws of the created universe, incorporating both the laws of nature and the laws of righteous human behavior. Mishlei uses the word **chochmah** to refer to that component of wisdom and also to the entire spiritual framework of wisdom.

Binah (literally: understanding) represents the conceptual understanding of the Torah that the human intellect can develop by absorbing the received truth of wisdom and deriving new insight. With that insight man has the opportunity to refine his moral character to the point where he is worthy of **daas**.

Daas (literally: knowledge) completes the spiritual framework of Creation and provides the means by which the will of Hashem actively controls the universe in response to human behavior. **Daas** encompasses a sense of the awesome greatness of Hashem and an awareness of what He expects of us in terms of *mitzvos* and moral character. Depending on how we fulfill that expectation, Hashem changes the way the physical elements (heaven and earth) interact to meet human needs.

The *Zohar* tells us that just as the wisdom of the Torah is the key to the Creation of the world we live in, every day that a man learns Torah he is effectively building new worlds, which he can expect to see in the World to Come.

Exploring Mishlei

Mishlei relates the three components of wisdom with three domains of the our physical universe. **Chochmah**, the most down-to-earth of the three components, is represented by the inhabited earth. **Binah**, which requires a person to free his mind and let it float up into new conceptual associations, is represented by the skies above. **Daas**, which touches upon the enigma of Hashem's ways, is represented by the mysterious ocean depths. The waters of the world became divided and if mankind is deserving, a portion of those waters rise to form clouds which descend upon our thirsty fields in the form of rain and dew.

(יט) ה' בְּחִכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ כּוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה: (כ) בְּדַעְתּוֹ תְּהוֹמוֹת נִבְקְעוּ וּשְׁחָקִים יִרְעֲפוּ טָל:

(19) Hashem founded the earth with *chochmah*. He established the heavens with *binah*. (20) With His *daas*, the watery depths were split apart and the skies dripped dew.

Learning Mishlei

(יט) ה' בְּחִכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ

Hashem founded the earth with the *chochmah* — ה' בְּחִכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ of the Torah. This wisdom incorporates both the laws of nature and the laws of righteous human behavior. *Chochmah* exists independently of man, who can acquire it but cannot change it.

כוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה:

He established the heavens with *binah* — כּוֹנֵן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָה, which represents the conceptual understanding of the Torah. Man can acquire *binah* by absorbing the received truth of *chochmah* and deriving new understanding.

(כ) בְּדַעְתּוֹ תְּהוֹמוֹת נִבְקְעוּ

וּשְׁחָקִים יִרְעֲפוּ טָל:

With His *daas*, the intellectual knowledge that enables human awareness of Hashem, **the watery depths were split apart** — בְּדַעְתּוֹ תְּהוֹמוֹת נִבְקְעוּ, **and the skies dripped dew** — וּשְׁחָקִים יִרְעֲפוּ טָל. This provided the means by which Hashem causes the universe to respond to human behavior.

Sources

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

כ - רבינו יונה, מצודות, הגר"א,

יט - הזוהר, רש"י, רבינו יונה, המאירי, רלב"ג,
מצודות, מלבי"ם

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