

Mishlei 03-08**Wisdom and Personal Destiny
(3:31-35)****Key Concepts**

Wisdom guides us in making the right choices in life. Mishlei teaches that foolish people make the wrong choices when they ignore the wisdom that is accessible to them. These people prefer to disregard the full consequences of their decisions because of wishful thinking. They only take into account the consequences that appeal to them. Therefore Mishlei advises us to avoid being led into taking such people as role models because of their temporary prosperity.

Exploring Mishlei

In this segment Mishlei shows how the choices that a person makes can have a major impact on his personal destiny and that of his family. Bad things that happen in a person's life are a direct result of ignoring consequences:

PART 1. MEN OF VIOLENCE. People may be impressed by the visible prosperity of an unethical or violent individual but they ignore the long-term consequences of his behavior. Mishlei reminds us that the wrongdoer is a cursed abomination in the eyes of his Creator whereas the righteous man is blessed.

(לא) אֵל תִּקְנָא בְּאִישׁ חָמָס וְאַל תִּבְחַר בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו: (לב) כִּי תוֹעֵבַת ה' נְלוֹז וְאֶת יְשָׁרִים סוּדוֹ: (לג) מְאִרַת ה' בְּבַיִת רָשָׁע וְנֹה צְדִיקִים יִבְרָךְ:

(31) Don't envy a man of violence. Don't choose any of his ways, (32) for one who deviates is an abomination to Hashem. [Hashem's] closeness is with the upright. (33) Hashem's curse is upon the house of the wrongdoer. He blesses the abode of the righteous.

PART 2. SCOFFERS. People may be impressed by the quick wit of the scoffer who undermines respect for *talmidei chachamim*, but they ignore the corrupting effect of such a person on their own character.

(לד) אִם לְלָצִים הוּא יִלְיָץ וְלַעֲנֻנִים יִתֵּן חֵן:

(34) If [one is drawn] to the scoffers, he will become a scoffer, but if [he is

drawn] to the humble, he will find favor.

PART 3. FOOLS. Fools who ignore wisdom because its consequences cramp their behavior will end up being exposed to disgrace, whereas wise men will earn the respect of all who come into contact with them.

(לה) כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנְחָלוּ וְכִסְיִלִים מֵרִים קִלּוֹן:

(35) *The wise will inherit honor, and fools elevate disgrace.*

Learning Mishlei

PART 1. MEN OF VIOLENCE.

(לא) אֶל תִּקְנֵא בְּאִישׁ חָמָס
וְאֵל תִּבְחַר בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו:

Don't envy — אֶל תִּקְנֵא the prosperity of **a man of violence** — בְּאִישׁ חָמָס, whether it be the criminal who commits violence against others or the unethical person who commits violence against his own soul. In either case, don't follow his practices, thinking that they are the secret of his success. **Don't choose any of his ways** — וְאֵל תִּבְחַר בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו, even the ones that seem good to you and even if the choice is only in your thoughts.

(לב) כִּי תוֹעֵבֶת ה' נָלוּז
וְאֶת יְשָׁרִים סוֹדוּ:

For one who deviates from the path of integrity **is an abomination to Hashem** — כִּי תוֹעֵבֶת ה' נָלוּז. He distances himself from Hashem's way and so Hashem distances Himself from him. In contrast, Hashem's **closeness is with the upright** — וְאֶת יְשָׁרִים סוֹדוּ.

(לג) מֵאֵרֶת ה' בְּבֵית רָשָׁע

Don't be misled; even when a wrongdoer flourishes, his success is only temporary for **Hashem's curse is upon the house of the wrongdoer** — מֵאֵרֶת ה' בְּבֵית רָשָׁע, no matter how great is his mansion. And when his end comes it will be sudden. Therefore, it is wise to distance yourself from him.

וַיְנַהֵם צַדִּיקִים יְבָרַךְ:

On the contrary, **Hashem blesses the humble abode of the righteous** — וַיְנַהֵם צַדִּיקִים יְבָרַךְ, even if it not a great house like that of the wrongdoer.

PART 2. SCOFFERS.

(לד) אִם לִלְצִים הוּא יִלְיָץ

וְלַעֲנָוִים יִתֵּן חַן:

If one is drawn **to the scoffers** — אִם לִלְצִים, **he will become a scoffer** — הוּא יִלְיָץ like them and end up being scoffed at himself, **but if one is drawn to the humble** — וְלַעֲנָוִים, he will be humble like them and the result is that **he will find favor** — יִתֵּן חַן in the eyes of men. A scoffer puts down others and his punishment will be that he himself is disgraced; a humble person puts every else above him and his reward will be that everyone will hold him in high esteem.

PART 3. FOOLS.

(לה) כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנְחָלוּ

וּכְסִילִים מְרִים קִלּוֹן:

The wise, who appreciate and practice wisdom, **will inherit honor** — כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנְחָלוּ. Honor will come naturally to them and will belong to them for the world will come to recognize their choices in life as the right ones. **And fools**, who spurn wisdom, **elevate disgrace** — וּכְסִילִים מְרִים קִלּוֹן, because they unthinkingly follow their instincts, and the result is that they will lose the respect of mankind.

Sources

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

לד - רש"י, רלב"ג, מצודות, הגר"א

לה - חנוך לנער

לא - המאירי, אבן יחיאל, הגר"א, מלבי"ם

לב - המאירי

לג - המאירי, אבן יחיאל, חנוך לנער