

**Mishlei 04-03****The Wisdom Road  
(4:10 - 13)****Key Concepts**

Mishlei compares the wisdom of the Torah to a road through life. Our mission is to faithfully stay on that road as we continue our journey. No one knows how long he will live but he hopes to accomplish much along the way. The more years he is granted, the more he can accomplish.

**Exploring Mishlei**

**PART 1. LIFE.** Mishlei begins this segment by assuring us that if we stay on the road of wisdom and practice self-discipline, we will be granted more years of life and they will be good years.

(י) שָׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אִמְרֵי וְיִרְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:

*(10) Listen my son and take [to heart] my lessons. They will increase your years of life.*

**PART 2. CHOICES.** However, while traveling along the main wisdom road, we will encounter many side-roads where we will need to make choices of direction, guided by the lessons which Mishlei has taught us. Typically these side-roads or paths involve personal judgment in social relationships.

(יא) בְּדַרְךְ חֻכְמָה הִרְתִּיךָ הַדְרֹכֹתַי בְּמַעֲגְלֵי יֶשָׁר:

*(11) I am instructing you in the way of wisdom. I am also guiding you in the paths of uprightness.*

**PART 3. STEPS.** But what of the rough terrain that we can expect to encounter on the way? Mishlei offers further assurances to those who heed his advice. Our steps will be secure and we will not trip over unseen obstacles because our way will be illuminated by the light of the Torah.

(יב) בְּלֻכְתְּךָ לֹא יִצָּר צַעְדְּךָ וְאִם תָּרוּץ לֹא תִכָּשֶׁל:

*(12) When you walk, your steps will not be constrained, and when you run,*

*you will not stumble.*

**PART 4. PERSEVERANCE.** Mishlei concludes the segment by urging perseverance in maintaining the necessary discipline despite the challenges we encounter. We must be continually on guard and never relax our vigilance.

(יג) הַחֲזִיק בְּמוֹסֵר אֶל תִּרְף נִצְרָה כִּי הִיא חַיִּידָ:

*(13) Hold fast to the discipline [of wisdom]. Don't let go. Guard it for it is your life.*

## Learning Mishlei

### PART 1. LIFE.

(י) שְׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אֲמָרֵי  
וַיִּרְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:

**Listen my son** — שְׁמַע בְּנִי for you are dear to me and I care for your well-being. Therefore, **take** to heart **my lessons** — וְקַח אֲמָרֵי of wisdom and self-discipline. Pay close attention not only to the subject matter but to the words I use. If you do, **they will increase your years of life** — וַיִּרְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים. Your added years will be years in which Hashem eases your way through life and enables you to serve Him in joy.

### PART 2. CHOICES.

(יא) בְּדַרְךְ חֻכְמָה הִרְתִּידָ

**I am instructing you in the way** of Torah that leads to the perfection **of wisdom** — בְּדַרְךְ חֻכְמָה הִרְתִּידָ. Torah is a single way because it is the key to your entire life of serving Hashem.

הַדְרָכֹתֶיךָ בְּמַעַגְלֵי יֵשֶׁר:

**I am also guiding you** — הַדְרָכֹתֶיךָ in the many **paths of uprightness** — בְּמַעַגְלֵי יֵשֶׁר that you must follow in your practice of *mitzvos* and *middos*. For example, there are three essential uses of personal judgment in social relationships and you need to know when to apply each one, depending on the circumstance (see *Mishlei Segment 01-01*):

(1) **righteousness** — צַדִּיק, going beyond the letter of the law.

(2) **justice** — **וּמִשְׁפָּט**, adhering to the exact requirement of the law.

(3) **fairness** — **וּמִישָׁרִים**, acting in an equitable and balanced manner even when the law is not specific.

### PART 3. STEPS.

(יב) בְּלִכְתֶּךָ לֹא יֵצֵר צִעְדְּךָ  
וְאִם תָּרוּץ לֹא תִכָּשֵׁל:

You will be protected when you travel through life along the way of wisdom. **When you walk** — **בְּלִכְתֶּךָ** on that way, **your steps will not be constrained** — **לֹא יֵצֵר** by weariness and weakness. **And when you run** — **וְאִם תָּרוּץ** in your eagerness to do what is right, **you will not stumble** — **לֹא תִכָּשֵׁל**.

### PART 4. PERSEVERANCE.

(יג) הַחֲזִק בְּמוֹסֵר אֶל תְּרֹף  
נִצְרָה כִּי הִיא חַיִּיד:

**Hold fast to the discipline** — **הַחֲזִק בְּמוֹסֵר** of wisdom and continue to work on perfecting your *middos*. **Don't let go** — **אַל תְּרֹף** of your *yiras Hashem* even for a short while, for without it you cannot control your nature. **Guard** the discipline of the Torah and keep it in your heart, **for** in the spiritual sense **it is your life** — **נִצְרָה** — **כִּי הִיא חַיִּיד**. If you have stopped taking control of your bad *middos*, what purpose do you have in living?

## Sources

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

יב - אבן עזרא, רבינו יונה,  
יג - רש"י, המאירי, רלב"ג, הגר"א, מלבי"ם

י - רלב"ג, חנוך לנער  
יא - המאירי, רלב"ג, מצודות, הגר"א

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