

Mishlei 05-01

Mishlei in Depth

[Pesukim 5:1 and 5:2]

Key Concepts

Mishlei now begins a discussion of how a well-meaning person can be misled into corrupted morality and false doctrines. The powerful attractions of sinful behavior lie in the unconscious desire to satisfy physical and emotional needs. But ultimately it is the rational mind where the choice is made.

The only true protection against the seductive pull of sin is the wisdom of the Torah. But if the wisdom that a person acquires is only superficial or if it is quickly forgotten, it will be a very weak protection against the challenges that he encounters in life.

Exploring Mishlei

In this first segment of Perek 5 Mishlei instructs us to gain wisdom in depth. It is not enough to have learned. The learning must be clear enough to be articulated and remembered. It is not even enough to know the final conclusions; the person needs to have insight into the considerations and arguments which support it.

(א) בְּנֵי לְחֻמָּתַי הִקְשִׁיבָה לְתַבּוּנָתִי הֵט אָזְנְךָ:

**(1) My son, be attentive to my wisdom.
Incline your ear to my understanding.**

(ב) לְשֹׁמֵר מְזֻמוֹת וְדַעַת שְׁפָתֶיךָ יִנְצְרוּ:

**(2) Learn to retain the underlying considerations
and let your lips keep the knowledge.**

Learning Mishlei

(א) בְּנֵי לְחֻמָּתַי הִקְשִׁיבָה לְתַבּוּנָתִי הֵט אָזְנְךָ:

**My son — בְּנֵי,
be attentive to my wisdom — לְחֻמָּתַי הִקְשִׁיבָה,**

for it is the wisdom of the Torah. When you learn Torah, give it your full attention. And when the subject matter is presented in the form an allegory (*mashal*), take the allegory itself to heart because there is much to learn from the simple meaning. But that is not enough.

Incline your ear — הִט אָזְנְךָ

and listen carefully **to my contemplation — לְתַבּוּנָתִי**.

After learning Torah from your teacher don't turn aside to other things before you reinforce what you have learned. You will quickly forget it. Put in extra effort and listen carefully to the Torah with your mind so that its concepts become clear to you. When the Torah is presented in the form an allegory, think carefully about the implied meaning and the additional lessons you can learn.

(ב) לְשֹׁמֵר מְזִמּוֹת וְדַעַת שְׂפָתָיִךְ יִנְצְרוּ:

As you learn, don't just focus on the conclusions.

Learn **to retain the underlying considerations — לְשֹׁמֵר מְזִמּוֹת**

on which the conclusions are based.

And let your lips keep the knowledge — וְדַעַת שְׂפָתָיִךְ יִנְצְרוּ

by studying until it becomes so clear that you can express it in spoken words and sentences.