

Mishlei 06-20**Applying Wisdom to Life**

[Pesukim 6:20 thru 6:23]

Key Concepts

In the first chapter (Segment 01-08), Mishlei explained to his student the importance of being receptive to the wisdom that he has been taught by his father and mother “*My son, pay attention to the moral discipline of your father and don’t abandon the training of your mother.*”

Mishlei now picks up this thread and carries it forward with a renewed emphasis on preserving that received wisdom and applying it to life.

Exploring Mishlei

SPECIFICS. The student that Mishlei addressed in the first chapter has now matured and his perspective has shifted. Whereas the father’s teachings originally focused on the discipline needed to train a child, they now focus on the details of the *mitzvos* themselves as we see in the first verse of the current segment (6:20), “*My son, keep your father’s instruction.*” These *halachic* guidelines for the *mitzvos* must be remembered and applied throughout life.

(כ) נֹצֵר בְּנֵי מִצְוֹת אָבִיךָ וְאַל תִּטְּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ:

**(20) My son, keep your father’s instruction,
but don’t neglect your mother’s teaching.**

At the same time the positive attitude of *middos*, such as humility and kindness which are a mother’s special legacy must never be neglected, “*don’t neglect your mother’s teaching,*” for without them, the *mitzvos* will lack meaning.

INTERNALIZE. In the second verse (6:21), Mishlei reminds his student that the elements of wisdom need to be internalized (“bind them upon your heart”) and displayed to the world as well (“tie them around your throat”). Then, in the third verse (6:22), Mishlei shows how wisdom relates to every part of a person’s’ daily routine: moving about, resting and arising.

(כא) קִשְׂרִים עַל לִבְךָ תְּמִיד עֲנִדֵם עַל גְּרִגְרֹתֶךָ:

(21) Bind them upon your heart always. Tie them around your throat.

(כב) בְּהִתְהַלֵּךְ תִּנְחָה אֹתָם
בְּשֹׁכְבְךָ תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֵיךָ
וְהִקְיֹצוֹת הֵיא תִשְׁיַחֵד:

(22) When you are moving about, their wisdom will guide you;
when you lie down, it will watch over you;
and when you are awake it will interact with you.

WAY OF LIFE. Finally, in the last verse of the segment, Mishlei invokes the memorable image of the oil lamp to visualize the *mitzvos* which apply focused illumination to each part of the day. In contrast the wisdom of the Torah is symbolized by the light of the sun which pervades life and is always present. Both the Torah and *mitzvos* originate as a gift to each of us.

Finally, Mishlei returns to the idea of *mussar*, the discipline of self-control, which a person needs to apply to himself as he continually works to improve his *middos* through his life. Without *mussar* he will be unable to find his way through life.

(כג) כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר וְדָרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכַחוֹת מוֹסֵר:

(23) For the *mitzvah* is like a lamp and the Torah is light.
And the *mussar* of self-control is the way of life.

Learning Mishlei

SPECIFICS.

(כ) נֹצֵר בְּנֵי מִצְוֹת אָבִיךָ וְאֵל תִּטֹּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ:

Even if your father is no longer with you,
keep alive my son, all your father's instructions — נֹצֵר בְּנֵי מִצְוֹת אָבִיךָ —
and continue to observe them faithfully, even when
they go against your instinctive inclination.

But at the same time don't neglect — וְאֵל תִּטֹּשׁ —
even for a moment the positive attitudes
of humility and kindness that were conveyed
to you in **your mother's teaching** — תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ.

INTERNALIZE.

(כא) קִשְׁרִים עַל לִבְךָ תְּמִיד עֲנִדֵם עַל גְּרִגְרֹתֶיךָ:

Bind them upon your heart to be there always — קשרם על לבך תמיד —
so that you will never forget them and so that
even if you have to fight your instincts you
will be able to exert self-control.

Tie them around your throat — ענדם על גרגרתך
so that they will always be visible
to you and so that you will speak of them.
By articulating them you will be continually
think of them and they will guide
your actions.

(כב) בַּהֲתַהֲלֶכְךָ תִּנְחָה אִתְּךָ

The wisdom that you safeguard will be with
you in every situation and in every circumstance.

When you are going to a new place or activity, — בַּהֲתַהֲלֶכְךָ
it will guide you — תִּנְחָה אִתְּךָ.

בְּשָׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמַר עָלֶיךָ

when you lie down, — בְּשָׁכְבְּךָ
it will watch over you — תִּשְׁמַר עָלֶיךָ
so that you can have peace of mind;

וְהִקְיֹצוֹת הִיא תִּשְׁיַחֲךָ:

and when you awake, — וְהִקְיֹצוֹת
it will interact with with you — הִיא תִּשְׁיַחֲךָ
to stimulate your thinking.

WAY OF LIFE.

(כג) כִּי נֵר מְצוּהָ וְתוֹרָה אֹר

For the *mitzvah* that was taught by your father is like a lamp — כִּי נֵר מְצוּהָ
that is specifically focused to illuminate each step of your life;
and the Torah attitude taught by your mother is like the light — וְתוֹרָה אֹר
of the sun that pervades your life and affects everything you do.

וְדָרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכְחוֹת מוֹסֵר:

And the *mussar* of self-control is the way of life — וְדָרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכְחוֹת מוֹסֵר
that enables you to implement the Torah and *mitzvos*.

Only through energetic self-control of your *middos* will you be able to properly apply what you have been taught.