

Mishlei 07-02***A Lack of Wisdom***
(7:6 - 7:9)**Key Concepts**

What happens when a person neglects Wisdom? He becomes vulnerable to the forces of temptation. These forces are present in the world around us and also exist within every person.

In this segment Mishlei provides us with a window into the soul to help us see the deterioration of character that can occur under the influence of the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination). The *yetzer hara* is a force that Hashem put into every man as a character-building challenge. When a man is short of wisdom he is unable to withstand that test.

Mishlei visualizes himself looking through that imaginary window to see what happens when a young man, lacking wisdom, puts aside his learning and wanders out into the world.

Exploring Mishlei

The young man decides to take a walk, perhaps thinking that this will clear his head. But his unspoken fantasies are already having an effect, drawing him to the vicinity of the house of prostitution. He strolls around the area, "killing time" until darkness descends. At that point, immoral behavior which would not be tolerated in the light of day enters the realm of possibility.

(ו) כִּי בַחֲלוֹן בֵּיתִי בְעֵד אֲשַׁנְּבִי נִשְׁקַפְתִּי: (ז) וְאֶרְאֶה בַּפִּתְאִים אֲבִינָה בְּבָנִים נֶעֱר חֹסֵר
 לֵב: (ח) עֵבֶר בְּשׁוּק אֶצֶל פֶּנֶה וְדָרָךְ בֵּיתָה יִצְעֵד: (ט) בְּנֹשֶׁף בְּעֶרְב יוֹם בְּאִישׁוֹן לִלְחָה
 וְאַפְלָה:

(6) [It is necessary to guard against temptation] for from the window of my house, through my grilled window, I have been seen. (7) And I observed [moral weakness] among the simple-minded. I discerned among [the good] sons a lad who lacks wisdom, (8) passing through the marketplace, near her corner, in the direction of her house. (9) At twilight in the early evening, [and then later] in the blackness of night and darkness.

However, the young man is sufficiently inhibited by his upbringing to avoid taking any overt action. Such action does not occur until an external force of temptation, in the form of the "strange woman" confronts him. She has picked up on his unspoken signal of "availability" and begins the process of seduction. The process and its tragic consequences are discussed in the coming segment.

Learning Mishlei

(ו) כִּי בַחֲלוֹן בֵּיתִי

When wisdom is lacking, people are vulnerable to the powerful forces of temptation. I know this **for** — כִּי I have seen the world **from the window of my house** — בַּחֲלוֹן בֵּיתִי. One doesn't need to travel far from home to see evidence of human frailty. And that evidence is visible within each person if he takes the effort to look.

בְּעַד אֲשַׁנְבִּי נִשְׁקַפְתִּי:

Thus, **through my grilled window** — בְּעַד אֲשַׁנְבִּי, which provides a focused view of human weaknesses, **I have been seen** — נִשְׁקַפְתִּי by my own mind's eye. [That is, I effectively saw myself and my own vulnerabilities.]

(ז) וְאֶרָא בַּפְתָּאִים

אֲבִינָה בְּבָנִים נְעַר חָסֵר לֵב:

And I observed — וְאֶרָא many examples of moral weakness **among the simple-minded** people — בַּפְתָּאִים of all ages, among men who are not shrewd enough to cover up their inappropriate behavior. But then, upon looking more closely **I discerned** that **among** those who seemed to be the good **sons** — אֲבִינָה **אֲבִינָים**, there is a particular **lad who lacks wisdom** — נְעַר חָסֵר לֵב and is destined for trouble.

(ח) עֹבֵר בְּשׁוּק אֶצֶל פְּנֵה

וְדֹרֵךְ בֵּיתָהּ יִצְעָד:

Instead of devoting himself to learning Torah he decides to take a walk for he is open to "adventure." He is fully aware that the house of the "strange woman" is located in the vicinity. And so he continues nonchalantly **passing through the marketplace** — עֹבֵר בְּשׁוּק, but the path he chooses is **near her corner** — אֶצֶל פְּנֵה. And so, although he seems to be dawdling, his footsteps lead **in the direction of her house** — וְדֹרֵךְ בֵּיתָהּ יִצְעָד. He walks slowly, enjoying every footstep,

because he secretly hopes to catch a glimpse of her, having convinced himself that he is in control of himself and therefore is not at risk. But by his actions, which are innocent on the surface, he inadvertently signals to her that he might be responsive if she approached him.

(ט) בְּנֶשֶׁף בְּעֶרְבַּיּוֹם
בְּאִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה וְאֶפְלָה:

All this happens **at twilight** — בְּנֶשֶׁף — **in the early evening** — בְּעֶרְבַּיּוֹם, when there are still people about so that his foolishness does not result in tragedy. But he is caught up in his fantasies and so he continues to stroll about. Thus, at nightfall he is still in the vicinity **in the blackness of night and darkness** — בְּאִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה — **וְאֶפְלָה**.

- ו - אבן עזרא, אלשיך, אבן יחייא, מצודות, מלבי"ם, ח - אלשיך, אבן יחייא, תבונת משלי
דבר ירושלים ט - אלשיך, מלבי"ם
ז - רש"י, אלשיך, אבן יחייא, מלבי"ם, תבונת משלי

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