

Mishlei 10-08

Heart

Key Concepts

The heart represents the part of the human personality that impels a person to action, but at the same time it resists discipline. Without the involvement of the heart his actions lack emotional drive and passion. But if his heart is given free reign he is at risk of making unwise choices. When the opportunity to do a *mitzvah* arises, his heart may cause him to waver, as he tries to discern what it really wants him to do.

For a person to consistently do what is right he needs to train his heart to work closely with his intelligence, the seat of his wisdom.

A person who fails to do so reveals his uncertainty in his manner of speech, which expresses the skepticism of a confused personality.

Exploring Mishlei

(ח) חֵכֶם לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת וְאָוִיל שְׁפָתַיִם יִלְבֹּט :

***(8) The wise of heart will seize mitzvos,
but the foolish man of skeptical lips will be confused.***

A person who is wise of heart is characterized by his readiness to seize *mitzvos* and perform them whenever the opportunity arises. He is not held back by the confusion in his heart as he decides if he really wants to do a particular *mitzvah* that comes his way. In contrast, the person whose heart remains unfettered can never be sure how he will react. This confusion is evident in his speech, which displays an unconscious skepticism about what his real values are.

Hashem has given us a world in which we are surrounded by the opportunity to do *mitzvos*. For example, we can think about the real meaning in our *tefillos* and we can show kindness and consideration to those around us. Mishlei teaches us to train our hearts to be receptive to the *mitzvos* that come our way.

Learning Mishlei

The wise of heart — חֵכֶם לֵב

will seize every opportunity to do mitzvos — יִקַּח מִצְוֹת

He has trained his heart to accept the discipline of wisdom and so he will not hesitate when a *mitzvah* presents itself to him.

But the foolish man of skeptical lips – וְאִוִּיל שְׁפָתַיִם – יִלְבֹּט – will be confused – יִלְבֹּט

by the choices he must make. He has not trained his heart and so his internal uncertainty about right and wrong is evident in his speech.

Additional Insights

THE WISE OF HEART

(1) The wise of heart is defined as the person whose wisdom has been internalized within his heart. (אבן עזרא, מלבי"ם)

(2) The person who is wise of heart does not wait for the obligation to perform a *mitzvah*. He is constantly on the lookout for situations in which a potential *mitzvah* might be ripe for action. (רבינו יונה)

(3) The wise of heart gives priority to action over speech. Rather than just talking about doing a *mitzvah*, he goes ahead and does it. (רבינו יונה)

(4) The wise of heart has investigated the *halachah* and he is immediately ready to take action. (המאירי)

(5) The wise of heart is receptive to knowledge. He readily accepts the truth when it is taught to him by someone wiser than he. (אבן יחיאל)

(6) The wise of heart does not delay in performing a *mitzvah* when the opportunity arises. (מצודות, הגר"א)

(7) The wise of heart does not depend on the fact that he is being commanded to perform a *mitzvah*, *implying that he* has no choice. He performs it because he wants to do it and he knows that his Creator wants him to do it. (מלבי"ם)

THE FOOLISH MAN

(8) The foolish man is unsure of what he wants to do. He seeks a refuge in words, while he thinks some more about possible courses of action. (רבינו יונה)

(9) The foolish man regularly resists *mussar*, because he doesn't know if he is ready for it. (חנוך לנער)

(10) The foolish man delays his performance of a *mitzvah* as he quibbles about the details. In the end he doesn't do it at all. (הגר"א)

(11) The foolish man is torn by inner conflict, because he does not know what he really wants. In contrast, the life of the wise of heart is harmonious and serene.
(Malbim) (מלבי"ם)