

Mishlei 10-13

Insight

Key Concepts

It is not enough to acquire wisdom; wisdom must be further developed by comparing one concept with another in order to gain insight. Without insight a person will only be able to act on the specific wisdom that he has received. But once he has worked conceptually with his wisdom, he will be able to readily apply it to new situations as they arise throughout the day. If someone points out his errors, a person with insight will be able to consult his store of developed insight and see where he went wrong. But if he lacks insight he will find it difficult to change his way of thinking about himself.

Exploring Mishlei

(יג) בְּשִׁפְתַי נְבוֹן תִּמְצֵא חֵכְמָה וְשִׁבְט לְגוֹ חָסֵר לֵב:

(13) On the lips of the discerning thinker will be found wisdom, but a disciplining rod must be experienced by the body of the person with a deficient heart.

A person who has gained insight is one who has acquired a depth of understanding (*tevunah*). He is referred to as a discerning thinker (נְבוֹן).

In conjunction with the process of gaining insight or understanding, the discerning thinker trains his heart to work closely with his intelligence so that his heart is guided by his wisdom. He is then referred to as a *chacham lev* (wise of heart) as described in Segment 10-08 (Heart). Without this guidance, the person is free to follow the passions of the moment. He is then said to be a *chasar lev* (deficient heart). We have seen what happens to a *chasar lev* in Segment 07-02. There a youth whose heart lacks wisdom (verse 7) falls prey to temptations that he had not expected.

After acquiring insight into his wisdom, the discerning thinker has ready access to it. The wisdom is then said to be on his lips for it is available to him at a moment's notice.

Since the discerning thinker is able to deal with changing conditions, he responds honestly to criticism, but only if he is a *chacham lev*, since without wisdom his heart might prevent him from accepting the truth. In that case, he is a *chasar lev* because

his heart and mind are not integrated. He is then unable to accept the guidance of any wisdom he may have unless it is accompanied with pain from the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Learning Mishlei

(13) On the lips of the discerning thinker – בְּשִׁפְתֵי נָבוֹן – תִּמְצָא חֵכְמָה – will be found readily available wisdom – תִּמְצָא חֵכְמָה.

He has integrated wisdom into his daily life and so it keeps him from going astray. If his sins are pointed out to him, he acknowledges them and resolves to do what is right, but only if he is also a *chacham lev*, whose heart is guided by his intelligence.

But a person who lacks insight and whose heart has not been disciplined is a **deficient heart**, lacking in wisdom – חָסֵר לֵב.

Such a person will respond to admonishment only after experiencing external events, which are like a disciplining **rod** applied **to the body** – וְשִׁבְטֵי לָגוֹ.

Additional Insights

THE DISCERNING THINKER

(1) When admonished, the discerning thinker (נָבוֹן) admits his sin as David did when confronted by the prophet Nossan regarding the incident with Bas Sheva. See Tehillim Mizmor 051. (רש"י)

(2) The discerning thinker is constantly developing his thinking as he seeks to understand the implications of a concept. His wisdom is therefore readily available and can be heard from his lips. (רבינו יונה)

(3) The discerning thinker is recognized by the wisdom that he expresses through his lips. (אלשיך)

(4) The wisdom on the lips of the discerning thinker contrasts with the confusion that is evident on the lips of the fool. (See segment 10-08). (חנוך לנער)

(5) The difference between the man of wisdom (*chacham*) and the discerning thinker (*navon*) is that the *chacham* has received wisdom from his teachers and acts upon it without necessarily making an effort to gain further insight. The wisdom remains locked up in his heart. When a new situation arises he needs to stop

and think through how the received principles apply. In contrast, the navon is constantly analyzing what he has received to gain further insight. He is ready with an approach to deal with each situation that may arise. (מלבים)

(6) There is a distinction between the lips and the other organs of speech (mouth and tongue). The lips refer to the external instrument of speech, separate from the thought process. Speech emanating from the lips represents thoughts that have already been digested and formed. (מלבים)

(7) The heart is the part of the personality that guides a person to either follow wisdom or deviousness. If the heart offers no guidance one way or the other, then the individual is a deficient heart which acts as the mood strikes him. He is like a horse which need to be constantly prodded by his rider. (מלבים)

THE DEFICIENT HEART

(8) Pharaoh in Mitzrayim was an example of a deficient heart for he lacked the integrated wisdom to acknowledge his sins. (רש"י)

(9) The *chasar lev* has not trained himself to think things through and therefore he does not respond to logical reasoning. Only physical discomfort will get his attention. (רבינו יונה)