

Mishlei 13-01**Moral Discipline****Key Concepts**

A child cannot be expected to develop into a responsible, Torah observing adult without focused attention and guidance on the part of his parents and teachers. It is important that this training begin at a young age and continue throughout the child's formative years.

By nature, a child will resist training because it restricts the free exercise of his wants and desires. If he does not get the benefit of consistent and loving discipline he will find it difficult to control his urges in later years.

Discipline requires strength of will on the part of parents and such strength is commonly associated with the father, but the mother's role in this is essential, especially in the early years.

A child who has gained moral wisdom through discipline will find that he respects the Torah, which is the source of moral wisdom. A child who has not gained this wisdom will likely become a scoffer who questions authority and refuses the benefits of guidance.

The term often used for moral discipline is *mussar*. This focuses especially on rebuke for the child's failings. Without such rebuke the child will not be fully sensitive to the need to observe limits to behavior based on eternal moral laws. This rebuke must be applied frequently and in the context of an offense, especially when the child is young. If done properly, the child will develop into a responsible adult guided by the moral wisdom that he has internalized over the years.

Exploring Mishlei

(א) בֶּן חָכָם מוֹסֵר אָב וְלֹץ לֹא-שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה;

(1) A wise son [is the product of] a father's discipline, but a scoffer has not heard rebuke.

This proverb shows the effect of moral discipline on the upbringing of a child, by comparing the wise son who has had the benefits of discipline with the scoffer who has not.

If parents are fortunate in their application of training they will find their son is receptive to moral discipline, as discussed in Segment 12-01.

Learning Mishlei

(א) בֶּן חָכָם מוֹסֵר אָב
וְלֹץ לֹא שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה:

A wise son is the product of **a father's discipline** — **בֶּן חָכָם מוֹסֵר אָב**, **but a scoffer has not heard rebuke** — **וְלֹץ לֹא שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה**.

Additional Insights

A series of insights illuminating this proverb are presented below. The numbers identifying the insights refer to the listing of sources at the end of the segment.

- (1) One of the benefits of wisdom is that it makes a person receptive to receiving more wisdom. Therefore, if a child is started on the right path it will be easier as he gets older. But if that opportunity is missed, the parent will find it more and more difficult to gain influence on the child. There is then the danger that he will abandon the effort.
- (2) Wisdom runs against nature because it requires a child to restrict his behavior and his natural instincts.
- (3) Moral wisdom cannot exist without the element of fear, including fear of punishment by the parent, by society, and ultimately by Hashem.
- (4) Moral discipline must be applied at an early age when the child is most receptive. The methods that work with a young child will be ineffective when the child is older.
- (5) A child that has developed into a wise son is a testimony to the efforts exerted by his parents and teachers. A child that has developed into a scoffer is a testimony to the failure of those efforts.
- (6) When a child begins to show signs of developing into a scoffer it becomes more and more difficult to give him guidance because he begins to mock authority. This discourages the parent from exerting the needed discipline, thereby reinforcing the condition.

Sources

The primary sources used for the additional insights illuminating this segment are listed below.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| (1) - המאירי, חנוך לנער, הגר"א | (4) - רבינו יונה |
| (2) - מלבי"ם | (5) - רלב"ג |
| (3) - מלבי"ם | (6) - אבן עזרא |

© COPYRIGHT NOTICE

All rights to this document are reserved by the author. For further information contact Isaac Kirzner at isaac@kirzner.com