

Mishlei 13-02

Wisdom

Key Concepts

Wisdom (*chochmah*) is the knowledge that guides a person in making good choices in life. Because such wisdom often runs counter to the person's instinctive nature, it cannot be derived from human experience and must be acquired through Divinely inspired teachings.

Wisdom is referred to as the fruit of the mouth because it is essential that wisdom be communicated from parents to children and from teachers to their students. Because it is described as fruit, the receiving of wisdom is associated with eating the fruit as well as eating all the benefits that wisdom brings to mankind.

A person who rejects wisdom will be inclined to make the wrong choices in life. This will be reflected in actions which harm others and which exhibit bad character traits (*middos*). Such wrong choices are referred to as a betrayal since the individual violates the faculties and qualities entrusted to him when He was created.

Exploring Mishlei

(ב) מְפָרִי פִי־אִישׁ לֹא־כֹל טוֹב וְנֹפֵשׁ בְּגָדִים חָמָס:

(2) From the fruit of a man's mouth he will eat [what is] good, but the soul of the betrayers [will eat the fruit of their] betrayal.

This proverb compares the benefits and rewards granted to one who follows the teachings of wisdom (the fruit of man's mouth) with one who betrays those teachings.

Similar phrasing is found in Segment 12-14 (Speech and Action). However, the emphasis is different. The proverb in that segment compares the good that a person does using his mouth with the good that he does using his hands.

Learning Mishlei

(ב) מְפָרִי פִי אִישׁ לֹא־כֹל טוֹב

וְנֹפֵשׁ בְּגָדִים חָמָס:

From the teachings of wisdom which are **the fruit of a man's mouth he will**

make good choices in life and his reward will be to **eat** what is **good** for his welfare in this world and the World to Come – **מִפְרֵי פִי-אִישׁ יֹאכַל טוֹב**, **but the soul of the betrayers** who contradict the true purpose of their existence by making bad choices, will eat the fruit of their **betrayal** – **וְנֹפֵט בְּגֵדִים חָמָס**.

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) Wisdom is like the Tree of Knowledge that enables a person to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong.
- (2) A person who uses wisdom to make the right choices will eat the fruits of the Tree. But a person who who betrays the guidelines of moral wisdom will eat the fruits of his wrongful behavior.
- (3) The *tzadik* (**אִישׁ**) will acquire the fruit of his learning Torah in this world only if he is "good", that is if practices kindness to people. But those who are unkind to others, speaking harshly to them will eat the fruit of their violence.
- (4) The primary reward of Torah learning is to be granted what is "good" in the world to come, but the fruits of Torah are also present in this world.
- (5) The fruit of a man's mouth also refers to the moral discipline that he applies to his son. His wise son will benefit if he eats the "good" teaching but if he rejects his father's admonitions he will eat the fruit of his wrong behavior.

Sources

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

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| (4) - רש"י, מצודות | (1) - מלבי"ם |
| (5) - אבן יחיאל, חנוך לנער | (2) - מלבי"ם |
| | (3) - הגר"א |

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