

Mishlei 14-18**Value****Key Concepts**

A person's true character is not always evident, even to himself. However, a good indication can be obtained by looking at what types of activities he values. An intelligent or clever person is quickly bored by inane pastimes that have no depth. In contrast, the simple-minded person is happy to be entertained by activities which the clever person finds a foolish waste of time.

There is also a distinction in the mental energy level a person is willing to invest in what he values. The simple-minded person is quick to indulge in foolish entertainments, but does so passively. He is waiting to be entertained.

In contrast, the intelligent person realizes that the value he gains from any mental exercise is dependent on the energy he puts into it. As he acquires more knowledge, his vistas of learning and understanding are expanded. The gratifying sense of value that he gains from his knowledge continues to expand.

Exploring Mishlei

(יח) נָחְלוּ פְתָאִים אֲוִלָּת וְעָרוּמִים יִכְתְּרוּ דַעַת:

The inheritance of fools is their folly but the clever crown themselves with knowledge.

This proverb contrasts the attitudes of people toward the kinds of activities that they value. The fool appreciates activities that require a minimal of mental energy. Such activities are described as his inheritance because they came to him naturally, without effort.

The clever person, on the other hand values meaningful knowledge, especially Torah knowledge. Such knowledge enhances his life as a crown enhances a royal personage. But it is a crown that does not come without effort, an effort that the wise person is happy to expend.

Learning Mishlei

(יח) נַחֲלוּ פְתָאִים אֲוֵלָת
וְעָרוּמִים יִכְתְּרוּ דַעַת:

The inheritance of fools that comes to them with a minimum of effort **is** their **folly** – נַחֲלוּ פְתָאִים אֲוֵלָת, **but clever people** are happy to invest in the rewarding labor of learning. As a result, they **crow**n themselves **with knowledge** – וְעָרוּמִים יִכְתְּרוּ דַעַת.

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) The fool holds on to his folly the way an heir holds on to his inheritance.
- (2) The fool tends to be gullible and does not make the effort to evaluate or question ideas that are presented to him.
- (3) The clever person looks at new ideas critically in order to understand their implications. If he engages in an activity he knows why he is doing it and what he expects to get out of it.
- (4) The clever person appreciates the value of knowledge. He takes pride in knowing what is important to him.
- (5) When a clever person comes into possession of knowledge, his natural reaction is to build on it, to see where it takes him. In contrast, the fool accepts it as a finished product and gives no thought to working further with it.

Sources

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

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| (1) - מצודות | (4) - רבינו יונה |
| (2) - רלב"ג, מלבים | (5) - שבט מיהודה, רשר"ה |
| (3) - רלב"ג, מלבים | |