

Mishlei 14-33**Thoroughness****Key Concepts**

When a person engages in an important project or task, he must know that the result depends on the quality of the effort he puts into it. A random series of uncoordinated actions lurching from one short-term goal to another will inevitably lead to a disappointing result. To get a satisfactory result he must learn what he has to do within the context of his overall objective. He must consider how the necessary steps relate to each other and how they relate to everything else going on around him. He then applies them conscientiously in a coordinated manner.

All of this is directly relevant to the process of learning Torah. It is not enough to acquire bits and pieces of wisdom as the mood strikes him, or when he wants to make an impression. He must think about the wisdom he wants to acquire and what its components are. He must systematically study each element and build his knowledge in a coordinated manner. Putting each piece of knowledge in a contextual framework will give him serenity and confidence in his ability to use it effectively to deal with the challenges of life.

Exploring Mishlei

(לג) בְּלֵב נְבוֹן תְּנוּחַ חֵכְמָה וּבְקֶרֶב פְּסִילִים תִּוְדָע:

(33) Wisdom rests calmly in an insightful heart.

But within fools it must be made known.

This proverb shows the benefit of wisdom acquired systematically by a person who acts with thoroughness. He works in a structured manner to gain insight into each aspect of knowledge affecting what he wants to know. Because he stores wisdom in context, it is readily accessible to him. Thus, his wisdom sits calmly in his mind and gives him the ability to use it effectively.

In contrast, the fools who gain bits of knowledge at random to make an impression, will find that the little knowledge they have acquired is not accessible to them and it must be made known to them when they need it.

Learning Mishlei

(33) In an insightful heart — בְּלֵב נְבוֹן

Wisdom rests calmly — תְּנוּחַ חֵכְמָה

because he has organized it with thoroughness,

But within fools — וּבְקֶרֶב כְּסִילִים

it is not recognized and

must be made known to them — תִּדְוַע.

Additional Insights

(1) The insightful heart knows the reasoning behind each element of knowledge he has acquired. He sees how one element of knowledge is related to another and reviews it so that he can remember the relationships. Because he organizes his knowledge, he is comfortable with it, and he can respond to any question. However, the mind of the fool is disorientred by conflicting bits of wisdom and so he depends on others to help him when he is challenged. (רלב"ג, המאירי, חנוך לנער)

(2) A *talmid chacham* who acquires wisdom without the guidance of a parent or teacher will not have a clear picture of how it all fits together. However, if he learns under the guidance of those who preceded him his knowledge will sit securely and comfortably in his mind. (בבא מציעא פ"ה:)

(3) The insightful heart carefully considers who his listeners are when he shares wisdom. His wisdom rests quietly in his mind and is revealed only to those who are worthy. In contrast, the fool broadcasts what little he knows to whoever will listen, including those who despise wisdom and will use it destructively. The limited wisdom of the fool is a coin in an empty pitcher. It makes a lot of noise, but it does not serve a useful purpose. (רש"י, רבינו יונה, אלשיך, הגר"א, מצודות)

(4) The insightful heart keeps his wisdom to himself for a long time because he wants to be sure his ideas are valid. He examines them again and again, in order to improve upon them if possible before he expresses them. In contrast, fools think their thoughts cannot be improved upon, and they have no rest until they have told all. (רש"י)