

Mishlei 15-02

Eloquence

Key Concepts

The wisdom of the wise rests not only in the knowledge they have acquired over the years, but in the skills they have developed to impart that knowledge in a meaningful manner. The eloquence of the wise man is an essential teaching tool to enhance the knowledge of the student.

The wise man (*chacham*) has given thought to the proper sequence in which ideas are best communicated, starting with foundational concepts and moving on the detailed thoughts that depend on them.

The *chacham* is also careful to use words and analogies which are meaningful to the student. In this way, the student is able to take ownership of what he has learned. It becomes real to him, rather than a collection of abstract words and thoughts. This real knowledge is referred to as "daas." It is like knowledge based on personal, sensory experience, like the knowledge that fire is hot.

In contrast, fools tend to talk continuously, without regard to the value of what they are communicating. The ideas they touch upon are not developed properly and leave only confusion in the mind of the listener.

Exploring Mishlei

(ב) לְשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים תִּיטֵיב דַּעַת וּפִי כְּסִילִים יַבִּיעַ אִוֶּלֶת:

**(2) The tongue of the wise enhances knowledge,
but the mouth of fools issues foolishness.**

This proverb compares the carefully focused talk of wise men to the uncontrolled flow of confusing thoughts expressed by fools. The tongue of the wise is associated with the forming of insightful and meaningful speech. It is contrasted with the mouth of fools which is seen as an opening through which undifferentiated thoughts are continuously flowing.

Learning Mishlei

(2) The tongue of the wise — לְשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים
speaks with eloquence and thereby
enhances the knowledge — תִּיטֵיב דַּעַת

of the listener,

but the mouth of fools — וּפִי כְסִילִים

issues foolishness — יִבִּיעַ אִוֶּלֶת

in a continuous stream.

Additional Insights

(1) If wise men present wisdom with elegant and memorable language, the ideas which they convey become exalted and valued by those who hear them.

(שבט מיהודה)

(2) *Daas* refers to wisdom that a person is totally convinced as being the truth, because he has experienced it personally. (מלבי"ם)

(3) The tongue refers to speech that enhances insight. A good speaker makes it so clear that it feels like *daas*. (רבינו יונה)

(4) Besides speaking foolishness affected by his lack of knowledge, the fool adds to the problem by pouring forth a confusing stream of disorganized thoughts.

(הגר"א)

(5) Through the power of intelligent and eloquent speech the wisdom of wise men becomes reinforced and clarified in their own minds as well as the minds of their students. Speakers as well as listeners are then able to take ownership of the *daas* and it becomes their permanent possession. This is the essence of the Oral Torah.

(רלב"ג, רשר"ה)