

Mishlei 15-07

Consistency

Key Concepts

In order to share wisdom with others a person needs to maintain integrity in the way he develops and reveals it. For this purpose, the source of wisdom is understood to be the heart (or the mind). Ideas are developed in the heart into a form that is ready to be revealed and shared.

But a lot can happen to those ideas on the way to the lips, the point at which they actually leave the boundaries of the person's body. Ideas can get distorted through lack of true understanding, through bias, or self-serving dishonesty.

The lips are the external instrument of speech, receiving the end result of the thought process. A truly wise man will make an effort to maintain consistency between the thoughts that originate in his heart and the words that pass out through his lips.

Exploring Mishlei

(ז) שְׁפִתֵי חֲכָמִים יִזְרוּ דָעַת וְלֵב בְּסִילִים לֹא יִכֹּן:

(7) *The lips of the wise spread true knowledge;
but not so the heart of fools.*

This proverb compares the idea development process among wise men with that among fools. The lips are the end point of the process, but for wise men it matches the origin, which is the heart. Thus, the knowledge that is ultimately passed by their lips is true. But that is not the case for fools, who have distorted the knowledge produced in their hearts before it reaches their lips.

Learning Mishlei

(7) **The lips of the wise** — שְׁפִתֵי חֲכָמִים
spread true knowledge — יִזְרוּ דָעַת

which emanates from their heart and is delivered by their lips with integrity intact.

But as for the heart of fools — וְלֵב פְּסִילִים

it is not so — לֹא כֵן

for whatever ideas emanate
from their heart have been
distorted well before they
pass through their lips.

Additional Insights

(1) Another difference between wise men and fools in regard to the process of sharing wisdom is that wise men are strongly motivated to teach what they know. In contrast, fools are not eager to receive wisdom. (מצודות)

(2) The knowledge that wise men pass on to others is likely to be true, because it comes from the heart. In contrast, the ideas of the fools have been distorted in passing through the lips. (רלב"ג)

(3) The knowledge and teachings transmitted to us by wise men become our personal, permanent possession only if they are uttered by our lips, and do not remain merely thoughts within ourselves. (רשר"ה)