

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. 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) שְׁפִתַי חֲכָמִים יִזְרוּ דַעַת וְלִבַּי כְּסִילִים לֹא־כֵן:

(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 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

(ז) שְׁפִתַי חֲכָמִים יִזְרוּ דַעַת
וְלִבַּי כְּסִילִים לֹא־כֵן:

The lips of the wise — שְׁפִתַי חֲכָמִים **spread true knowledge** — יִזְרוּ דַעַת, because it emanates from their heart and is delivered by the lips with integrity intact. **But it is not so for the heart of fools** — וְלִבַּי כְּסִילִים לֹא־כֵן, for whatever ideas emanate from their heart are distorted well before they pass through their

lips.

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) Another difference between the 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.

(2) The knowledge that wise men pass on to others 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.

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

Sources

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

(3) - רשר"ה

(1) - מצודות

(2) - רלב"ג