

Mishlei 15-14

Discernment

Key Concepts

A person who develops an appreciation for the value and power of wisdom will be motivated to think deeply into the knowledge that he has acquired. He will learn to distinguish between similar concepts and will be able to apply them to new and different circumstances. This is the power of discernment.

If he has made the effort to discern and gain insight into what he knows he will be motivated to seek new and more intensified knowledge. The more he knows and the better he knows it, the more fulfilled he will be as a person and the closer he will be to understanding the Torah and the world that Hashem has given us.

When a person is so familiar with his knowledge that it is part of his very being, then that knowledge is described as "daas." When a child has burnt his finger with a lit match, he has internalized the knowledge of fire and it has become daas. We should seek to reach a high level of daas in all of the moral concepts that guide us through life.

Exploring Mishlei

(יד) לֵב נְבוֹן יִבְקֹשׁ דָּעַת וּפִי כְּסִילִים יִרְעֶה אֲנִלָּת:

A discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on folly.

This proverb calls attention to the energetic person who seeks a greater depth of knowledge. It compares him with the fool whose knowledge remains undeveloped. The seeker of knowledge is described in terms of his heart, the quality that motivates him to go beyond what he has already achieved. The fool is described in terms of his mouth with which he consumes the essentials of his existence without making the effort to go further.

The quality of discernment is also treated in Segment 10-13 (Insight). The proverb there makes use of the concept that a person who has gained insight is referred to as a discerning thinker (*navon*).

Learning Mishlei

(יד) לֵב נְבוֹן יִבְקֹשׁ דָּעַת
וּפִי כְּסִילִים יִרְעֶה אֲוֵלֹת:

A discerning heart seeks knowledge because all knowledge is interconnected. – **לֵב נְבוֹן יִבְקֹשׁ דָּעַת** – **וּפִי כְּסִילִים יִרְעֶה אֲוֵלֹת** because fools don't make the effort to understand the truth behind what they think they know.

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 is so pleased with his own mental faculties and his smattering of learning that he is convinced of the absolute infallibility of his own views. He makes little effort to expand the scope and intensity of his knowledge. In contrast, the one who seeks daas is never confident that he knows it all.

(2) The "mouth of fools" also refers to their preaching foolishness and presenting it as if it were wisdom. They do not realize how foolish it is because they have not made the effort to study it.

(3) The search for daas is driven by the need to resolve uncertainties and doubts about the validity of what a person knows.

Sources

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

(3) - רבינו יונה

(1) - חנוך לנער, רשר"ה

(2) - דעת סופרים