

## Mishlei 15-20

# Parenting

### Key Concepts

The Jewish father has a duty to educate his son in the wisdom of the Torah. He does so through personal and professional instruction, through the application of consistent loving discipline, and by setting a good example. The father's goal is to raise a son whose knowledge of Torah and whose adherence to its moral and ethical standards enables the boy to be recognized in the community as a wise son or ben Torah.

A wise son is well on his way to assuming the responsibilities of manhood. Seeing his son succeed in this rigorous process brings the father great joy partially because it enables him to feel that his own duties have been successfully performed. Not only has he pleased His Creator, he has reared a young man who will conscientiously serve Hashem.

The boy's mother shares in some of the responsibilities of the father, but her emphasis is on providing the physical and emotional nurturing that will enable him to confidently meet the challenges of life and wholeheartedly serve Hashem. As the boy grows into a man, she shares in her husband's joy but her satisfaction does not come from the boy's specific achievements in the field of Torah knowledge, but from the recognition that he has earned in the community.

Unfortunately, not every boy develops into a wise man. Some individuals fall by the wayside, and develop into foolish men who give in to human weaknesses such as pride and laziness. Such men fail to be highly regarded in the community and the resulting shame is felt by both parents, but especially by the mother who is sensitive to the honor of the family name.

### Exploring Mishlei

(כ) בֶּן חָכָם יִשְׂמַח אָב וּכְסִיל אָדָם בְּנֵיה אָמוֹ:

*A wise son gives joy to his father, but the foolish man shames his mother.*

In this proverb the benefits of wisdom are compared with the drawbacks of foolishness. Besides all the benefits described in the other proverbs on this subject,

a boy should be motivated by the opportunity to honor his father and bring joy to him. He should also be motivated to exercise the self-discipline that will prevent him from growing into a foolish man. If he fails to do so he must know that he is bringing shame to his parents, but especially to his mother.

This is the second proverb dealing with the relationship between parents and their growing son. The other is in Segment 10-01 (Joy and Sorrow). That proverb is almost identical to the current one but instead of calling attention to the grown-up foolish man, it looks at the foolish son who is in an earlier stage of development, and is already causing sorrow to his mother.

## Learning Mishlei

(כ) בֵּן חָכָם יִשְׂמַח אָב  
וּכְסִיל אָדָם בּוֹזֵה אִמּוֹ:

**A wise son gives joy to his father – בֵּן חָכָם, but the foolish man shames his mother – וּכְסִיל אָדָם בּוֹזֵה אִמּוֹ.**

## 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 proverb is designed to motivate a son to achieve the kind of success in life that will bring joy to his parents.
- (2) When a boy grows into a foolish man, some people blame his mother for spoiling him as a child. This adds to her pain.
- (3) The foolish man shames his mother because he feels himself too much at ease in her presence and does not give her the respect she deserves.
- (4) The foolish man shames his mother because he has not outgrown his immaturity. In contrast, the wise son gives joy to his father even when he is still immature.

## Sources

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

(4) - חנוך לנער

(1) - המאירי

(2) - מצודות

(3) - אבן יחיאל, הגר"א