

## Mishlei 15-21

# Self-Control

### Key Concepts

A person with self-control has trained his heart to be guided by his intelligence. He is then referred to as a *chacham lev* (wise of heart). Without this guidance, the person is free to follow the passions of the moment. He is then said to be a fool with a deficient heart (*chasar lev*).

The *chacham lev* is also referred to as a discerning person (*ish tevunah*) because he has a deep understanding of the middos (behavioral tendencies) that need to be kept under control. The standards that he follows are defined by the straight path (*yashrus* or fair-mindedness)

One way of comparing the discerning person (**אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה**) with the fool is by seeing what gives them pleasure. The fool finds joy in foolish behavior (**אֹלֶת**). Since he doesn't think things through he is not worried about the consequences. He enjoys the foolishness while it is happening even if it is unethical or immoral.

In contrast the discerning person is concerned at all times about maintaining his standards of *yashrus*. He finds joy in the knowledge that he has himself under control so that he will always be doing the right thing in every situation.

### Exploring Mishlei

**אֹלֶת שְׂמֵחָה לְחָסְרֵי לֵב וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה יִישָׁר לֶקֶת:**

**Foolish behavior brings joy to the man of deficient heart** for he lacks self-control and is not concerned about the consequences. **But a discerning man** avoids foolish behavior. Instead, he **finds joy in walking the path of straightness** for he has mastered self-control.

### Learning Mishlei

(21) **Foolishness** gives joy — **אֹלֶת שְׂמֵחָה**  
to the man of **deficient heart** — **לְחָסְרֵי לֵב**,  
for such a man lacks self-restraint.

**But the joy of a discerning man** — **אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה**  
who thinks things through,

is in walking a straight path — **יִשְׁרָלְכֵת**  
in full control of his *middos*.

### **Additional Insights**

(1) If a discerning person does something foolish, he regrets it, but the fool who lacks understanding rejoices in his foolishness. (הגר"א)

(2) The man of discernment rejoices when he finds the proper way to go that is consistent with the path of yashrus. (הגר"א)