

## Mishlei 15-22

### Advice

#### Key Concepts

It is unpleasant to admit ignorance and therefore people often assume they know as much about an issue as there is to know. Because they know it all there is no reason to ask for advice and admit ignorance.

However, when a person is ignorant of something important, he obviously doesn't know what there is to be known about it. He doesn't know what he doesn't know. So foolish decisions and poorly thought-out plans are often the result of a failure to have the humility that enables a person to seek advice, even when he has no idea what new insights the adviser may come up with.

Is one source of advice enough? Not necessarily. A complex issue may have many aspects that need to be clarified and so there is always the possibility that additional advisers will bring up something worthwhile.

It is not easy to decide who to ask for advice and how many people to ask. But, if it is a matter involving *halachah* or *hashkafah*, a Rov should definitely be the one to consult.

In this segment Mishlei challenges us to address these questions and not to avoid dealing with them because of pride or insecurity.

#### Exploring Mishlei

(כב) הָפֵר מִחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּאֵין סוּד וּבְרַב יוֹעֲצִים תִּקּוּם :

***(22) Plans are frustrated when there is no counsel, but through an abundance of counsellors there will be success.***

This proverb compares the extremes not receiving any advice with receiving plentiful advice. When a person makes plans without consulting anyone, his plans may very well be frustrated because of some factor that he didn't consider. So instead of erring by not getting advice, a person should consult with as many advisers as seems useful. This means he should overcome his natural inclination to restrict the number of advisers (but only as long as additional advisers are bringing him new insight).

Mishlei refers to advice or counsel using a word (סוד), which also means "secret". This is a subtle way of letting us know that the issue on which we need advice should only be discussed with people who we believe are qualified to advise us properly. Sharing our private affairs with too many people is likely to be self-defeating because we may be confused by unsupported or unwise suggestions. Furthermore, unfriendly people may become privy to our affairs and use the information to cause us harm.

## Learning Mishlei

(22) **Plans are frustrated — הַפֵּר מִחֲשָׁבוֹת**  
**when there is no counsel — בְּאֵין סוּד,**  
**but with an abundance of counsellors — וּבְרֵב יוֹעֲצִים**  
**there will be hope for success — תִּקוּם**

## Additional Insights

(1) A clear distinction can be made between three related terms. A *machshavah* or "thought" represents one of many possible ideas or courses of action. During the process of consultation, a person may settle upon one course of action. This is an *eitzah* or "counsel". In a complex situation a person may need to combine a number of *eitzos* together to form a strategy in which various contingencies are planned for. This is referred to as *tachbulah*. Our proverb deals with individual *machshavos* leading to an *eitzah*. (The concept of *tachbulah* is addressed in Segment 11:14). (מלבי"ם)

(2) If plans are not kept secret they may be undermined by adversaries before being ready for implementation. This is why plans should be shared only with those who have a "need to know." (מלבי"ם)

(3) If one person reveals a secret to another, the listener may not reveal it to a third party. Even if the information is not restricted by the prohibition against *rechilus* (tale bearing), there is always the potential of it being used to cause harm to the owner of the secret. Also, there is a general prohibition against violating a confidence (see segment 20-19). (שערי תשובה)