

## Mishlei 16-21

### Wisdom–Insight

#### Key Concepts

Wisdom (*chochmah*) is the knowledge that guides a person in making good choices in life. He applies this knowledge under control of his heart, which is a central part of the human personality. Without the involvement of the heart a person's actions lack emotional drive and passion. But if his heart is given free rein he is at risk of making unwise choices.

Because true wisdom often runs counter to the person's instinctive nature, it cannot be derived from human experience alone but must be acquired through Divinely inspired teachings. But even wisdom alone is not enough. It must be further developed by each person using the power of reason to enable him to discipline his heart.

The development of wisdom is called insight or understanding. Without insight a person will only be able to act on the specific aspects of wisdom that he has received from his teachers. With the aid of insight, a person is able to readily apply his wisdom to new situations as they arise throughout the day.

A person who has gained insight is referred to as a discerning thinker (*navon*) He has acquired understanding (*tevunah*).

In conjunction with the process of gaining insight, the discerning thinker trains his heart to work closely with his intelligence so that his heart is guided by his wisdom. He is then referred to as a *chacham lev* (wise of heart).

#### Exploring Mishlei

(כא) לְחָכְמָם לֵב יִקְרָא נְבוֹן וּמְתָק שְׁפָתַיִם יִסְיף לְקַח :

**The wise of heart student will be called discerning thinker,  
and the teacher whose speech is sweet will gain learning.**

This proverb compares the development of wisdom from the point of view of both the student and the teacher. The developing student is a *chacham lev*, the person whose heart is guided by the wisdom he has been taught. He then builds upon what he has learned and becomes a discerning thinker.

The second part of the proverb operates at the level of a teacher of wisdom. Because of his creative sweetness in making words of wisdom easy to digest he has a powerful influence on his students. At the same time, the exercise of explaining the wisdom of the Torah increases his own grasp of the subject matter.

## Learning Mishlei

(21) The learned student whose heart is guided by the Torah wisdom he has been taught is called **a wise of heart — חָכָם לֵב**.

And when that wise of heart gains new insight through reflection, then **to that wise of heart — לְחָכָם לֵב** **there is given the new title — יִקְרָא** **of discerning thinker — נְבוֹן**

And because the creative teacher **whose speech is sweet — וּמִתְקַ שְׁפָתָיו**, makes the words of wisdom easy to digest, he has a powerful influence on his students.

**He will then gain further learning — יִסִּיף לְקַח** through interaction with his students.

## Additional Insight

The speech of the teacher is described as sweet because it sounds pleasant to the ear. It is also sweet because the teacher extends himself beyond his own concerns and projects his thoughts to the welfare of his students. He thinks about how the ear of his students will perceive what he has said and adjusts the presentation for their benefit. That gracious, unselfish quality makes it especially sweet.