

Mishlei 16-23

Wisdom—Teaching

Key Concepts

To teach the wisdom of the Torah, a person needs to be a *chacham lev* (possessor of a wise heart), that is, a person who has trained his heart to be guided by his wisdom. The heart of such a person may be described as a *lev chacham* and that is the term used in the proverb below.

When a *chacham lev* has reached a stage of wholeness in his possession of wisdom it is his duty to teach that wisdom to others. The heart of the *chacham lev* has a central role in managing the process of teaching wisdom. One of the important qualities of the heart is its emotional sensitivity to the personality of the student. This is needed to deliver knowledge to the student at a pace and in a form that the student can digest.

The heart of the *chacham lev* knows that words of wisdom need to be structured and arranged in a way that can efficiently communicate Torah ideas to the student. In effect the heart thinks through the ideas by formulating the Torah words for delivery by the mouth. This occurs even before the mouth begins to physically deliver the words of wisdom.

The process of actual speaking words of wisdom is completed by the lips, which are the external element of the faculty of human speech. Through the act of enunciating words of wisdom with the lips, the teacher feels more involved in those words and his own knowledge of the subject matter is heightened.

Exploring Mishlei

(כג) לֵב חָכָם יִשְׁפִּיל פִּיהוּ וְעַל שְׂפָתָיו יִסִּיף לֶקַח:

(23) *The heart of a wise man prepares wisdom for his mouth,
and on his lips it adds to his learning.*

This proverb introduces the teaching process by identifying two major stages, (1) the mouth and (2) the lips. The entire process is managed by that part of the human personality which Mishlei calls the **lev chacham**, the heart of the wise teacher (who is the **chacham lev**). The initial formulation of the words of wisdom is associated

with the mouth even before speech begins. This is because the heart needs to prepare the wisdom for delivery by visualizing it in a form that can be spoken by the mouth as a whole.

The actual delivery of these words is completed by the lips, and this is why the lips are associated with the benefit that the teacher gets when he finally enunciates the words of wisdom. That benefit is an enhanced knowledge of the subject matter. With the act of delivering words of wisdom, the teacher is better able to visualize what is going on in the mind of the student. This insight adds to the insight of the subject matter that the teacher has gained.

(23) **The heart of a wise man — לֵב חָכָם**
prepares wisdom for his mouth — יַשְׁכִּיל פִּיהוּ
and on his lips — וְעַל שְׂפָתָיו
it adds to his learning — יוֹסִיף לְקַח .

Additional Insight

(1) The teaching process encompasses a virtuous circle of wisdom. It begins with the heart formulating words of wisdom in preparation for delivery by the mouth. The act of formulating wisdom enhances the quality of the wisdom of the heart. The heart continues the process with the actual delivery by the lips, thereby further enhancing the wisdom of the heart. The enhanced wisdom in the heart molds the words that are being formulated for the mouth. (מצודות)

(2) The ultimate measure of perfect wholeness for the *chacham lev* is his ability to teach the wisdom effectively. (המאירי)

(3) A measure of the integrity of the *chacham lev* is that his words, delivered through lips, are in synchronism with the idea of these words as they exist in the heart. (רלב"ג)