

Mishlei 17-27**Speech****Key Concepts**

There is nothing more precious than the gift of speech, the faculty that enables human beings to easily communicate with each other and their Creator. However, the value of the instrument of speech depends on what it is being used for. Is the subject matter being communicated worthy of a person's mission in life?

A wise person who uses speech in human relationships thinks of it primarily as means of sharing wisdom or knowledge. Because he recognizes the great value of speech, he always treats it with respect and uses it only where the truth being communicated is likely to be appreciated by his audience. If the thoughts that he speaks are likely to be misunderstood or misinterpreted he would rather be silent.

The wise person is concerned that the wisdom he is sharing should not be dishonored by revealing it to those who don't value it. He is also concerned that his listeners take responsibility for not allowing distortion of the truth and for passing it on with integrity.

Exploring Mishlei

The benefits of restraint in the use of speech are expressed by the last two proverbs of this chapter. In the first of these we are informed that the person who possesses Daas (moral knowledge) will carefully control his speech and restrain it when it will serve no useful purpose.

(כז) חוּשֵׁךְ אֶמְרֵי יוֹדַע דָּעַת יִקַּר רוּחַ אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה :

*(27) A man who has moral knowledge (Daas) restrains his words;
a man of discernment will calm his spirit.*

In the second proverb we are informed that a person who does not possess Daas can still benefit if he simply remains silent.

(כח) גַּם אֲוִיל מִחֲרִישׁ חָכָם יִחְשַׁב אֵטָם שְׁפָתָיו נָבוֹן :

*(28) Even a silent fool will be considered wise;
when he seals his lips he will be considered discerning.*

Learning Mishlei

(27) A man **restrains his words** – חוּשֵׁךְ אִמְרָיו –
if he has Daas. – יוֹדֵעַ דַּעַת –
He will calm his spirit – יִקַּר רוּחַ –
if he is a man of discernment. – אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה –

(28) **Even a silent fool** – גַּם אֹיִל מְחַרֵּשׁ –
will be considered wise. – חָכָם יִחְשָׁב –
When he seals his lips – אָטַם שְׂפָתָיו –
he is considered a man of discernment. – נְבוֹן –

Additional Insights

Proverb 27

(1) A man of *Daas* (יֹדֵעַ דַּעַת) restrains his words and avoids idle talk. (מצודות)

(2) A man of *Daas* arranges his thoughts and is always ready to speak, but he restrains himself and chooses the right moment to speak, as it says “*how good is a word at its proper time*” (Segment 15-23). He shares his wisdom only for an audience that is thirsty for knowledge. (רבינו יונה)

(3) The expression יִקַּר רוּחַ may also be translated as treating the breath of speech as precious, thereby minimizing it. (מצודות)

Proverb 28

(1) Someone who can even silence a fool (גַּם אֹיִל מְחַרֵּשׁ) is considered wise. (מצודות)

(2) Someone who can seal the lips of the fool (אָטַם שְׂפָתָיו) to stop him saying stupid things is considered a man of discernment. (מצודות)