

Mishlei 19-08**Heart****Key Concepts**

A person's physical heart occupies a central and active role in the survival of his body throughout his lifetime. It is also a metaphor for his mind, character, and personality, all of which are spiritual qualities that affect his very existence as a human being, his very soul. As long as his heart continues to pump life-giving blood throughout every part of his body, the person is alive. In a similar manner, the ability of his mind to think and to control his behavior is critical to his continued existence as a person.

Mishlei is concerned with all of the qualities that exist within the framework of the person's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual heart. Whereas the physical heart operates autonomously without conscious attention, the individual is directly responsible for all his other heart qualities. This means he needs to actively work on developing and enhancing these qualities by building up his store of Torah wisdom and strengthening his ability to use that wisdom in directing his behavior. This proverb speaks of acquiring a "heart" which implies taking possession of all the qualities that are essential to this purpose and are subject to his control.

Exploring Mishlei

(ח) קָנָה לֵב אֱהָב נַפְשׁוֹ שֹׁמֵר תְּבוּנָה לְמַצָּא טוֹב:

**(8) *One who acquires heart loves his soul,
he guards understanding to find good.***

The proverb begins with the word **קָנָה**, making clear that each person has an active role in taking possession of something which Hashem has made available to him. There are many ways of acquiring Torah wisdom and developing personal character. It is up to each individual to make use of them.

This is not easy to do, and the person who engages in it is showing his appreciation for his spiritual existence (**נַפְשׁוֹ**). The person's relationship to **נַפְשׁוֹ** is

described as one of love (**אהב**), reflecting his gratitude to Hashem for having created him and for having given him both physical and spiritual life.

The proverb continues by paying tribute to the role of his understanding (**תבונה**) in managing and marshaling the person's spiritual resources. To be effective in his life's mission the person needs to guard (**שמר**) his understanding of Torah wisdom and his own relationship to that wisdom.

Such guarding requires constant effort because his path through life is strewn with distractions that pull him in other directions. However, if he keeps in mind that his efforts need to be constantly redirected to what is good (**טוב**), he will achieve his goal with Hashem's help. His access to **טוב** is described as a process of finding (**למצא**), suggesting that what he seeks is really there and has been provided for him. It is up to him to find it.

Learning Mishlei

(8) **One who acquires** — **קנה**

his spiritual, emotional and intellectual **heart** — **לב**
loves his soul — **אהב נפשו**.

He guards — **שמר**

and actively uses his gift of **understanding** — **תבונה**
to find — **למצא**
 only **good** — **טוב**.

Additional Insights

[1] A person's spiritual heart needs to master the emotional center of his personality so that he can take control of his instincts and govern them in accordance with the laws of morality. (מלבניים)

[2] Gaining true understanding is a challenging and difficult process. It is especially important to retain what one has learned so that he can translate it into action and actively develop himself as a person. (רבינו יונה)