

Mishlei 19-13**The Intelligent Woman****Key Concepts**

It is natural for a man to seek serenity and peace in his home. Therefore, he is especially dependent upon the personal qualities of his wife and children. For example, having an unworthy son can be a source of bitter disappointment. By the same token, a wife who is dissatisfied with her lot can make her husband's life a misery.

Of course, a man can have a major influence over the qualities of his children. His expenditure of significant time and effort in guiding them is likely to be rewarded. And so, if he ends up being disappointed in them, he may only have himself to blame.

But the man's contribution to the raising of his children cannot be judged without appreciating the qualities of their mother. If she is an intelligent woman, she will know how to manage every challenge that arises. As a result, she will be a true partner and will leave an indelible mark on the character of her children. In effect, the happiness of her family is in her hands.

How does a young man seeking matrimony find an intelligent woman? Mishlei answers this question in the closing words of the two proverbs that form this segment. Mishlei teaches that he can expect an intelligent woman only as a gift from Hashem. That means she cannot be taken for granted. To receive such a blessing, he needs to make himself worthy of this special gift.

Exploring Mishlei

(יג) הוֹת לְאָבִיו בֶּן כְּסִיל וְדֹלֶף טֵרֵד מְדִינֵי אֲשָׁה :

(13) A foolish son is a father's heartbreak,

and a fault-finding wife is like an incessant drip.

Mishlei begins the sequence of two contrasting proverbs by addressing sources of aggravation within a man's family. A foolish son who does not fulfill the hopes and expectations of his father can be a heartbreak. By the same token the father

can be made miserable by a fault-finding wife whose unending complaints are like the water dripping from a leaky roof.

(יד) בֵּית וְהוֹן נְחֻלַּת אָבוֹת וּמָה ' אִשָּׁה מְשַׁכֶּלֶת :
(14) Property and wealth are a father's legacy,
but an intelligent wife is a gift from Hashem.

In the second proverb, Mishlei focuses on the critical ingredient to a happy home, which is an intelligent woman. The proverb asks the man to appreciate the marvellous phenomenon of being married to such a woman. He must realize that she comes to him as a special gift from Hashem. To make that point clear, Mishlei compares the blessing of an intelligent woman with the blessings of material wealth and property. The comparison makes clear that whereas wealth and property come to a man through a natural sequence of inheritance from his forbears, an intelligent woman is a miraculous expression of the direct hand of Hashem. The Creator has chosen her just for him.

Learning Mishlei

(13) A father's heartbreak — הוֹת לְאָבִיו
 is having a **foolish son — בֶּן כָּסִיל**
But like an incessant drip — וְדֹלֵף טֵרֵד
 is having a **fault-finding wife — מְדִינֵי אִשָּׁה**

(14) Property and wealth — בֵּית וְהוֹן
 are a **father's legacy — נְחֻלַּת אָבוֹת**
but a gift from Hashem — 'ומה
 is an **intelligent wife — אִשָּׁה מְשַׁכֶּלֶת**

Additional Insights

[1] A leaking roof has the effect of driving out the man who lives there, just as a contentious wife has the effect of driving her husband out of the home. (אבן עזרא)

[2] If his contentious wife has driven him out of his home with her constant complaints, and he then encounters his wayward son on the street, the man's anguish is unbearable. (מלבי"ם)

[3] If a person inherits wealth from his father, he will not be able to hold onto it unless he is also blessed with an intelligent wife who manages his household wisely. With her assistance he will then be able to pass it on to the next generation. (מלבי"ם)

[4] The aggravation that a man experiences from having a foolish son is not continuous. The emotional pain comes and goes, but the pain from having a quarrelsome wife never lets up. It is like a never-ending drip. (חנוך לנער)

[5] When a man seeks a wife, he should not look for someone that brings him property and wealth, for material riches can easily be lost. Instead, he should look for her qualities of *middos* and refined character, for such qualities are forever, like a gift from Hashem. (חנוך לנער)