

## Mishlei 21-02

# Rationalization

### Key Concepts

As we have seen in Mishlei 16-02, people tend to convince themselves that the approach they want to take in any situation is morally correct and unsullied by selfish considerations. However, Mishlei has been encouraging us to think again and consider that the truth as seen by Hashem may be different from what we have concluded. The approach that we have instinctively chosen may be our own rationalization rather than the truth.

Mishlei now brings us a second proverb to make the same point and emphasize that we should keep an open mind and avoid jumping to a biased conclusion.

### Exploring Mishlei

(ב) כָּל דֶּרֶךְ אִישׁ יֶשֶׁר בְּעֵינָיו וְתִכְּן לְבוֹת ה':  
 (2) *Every road seems right to a man,  
 but Hashem scrutinizes hearts.*

If we compare this new proverb with the wording in segment 16-02 (below), we see that although there are differences, they are very subtle, and the general intent is basically the same:

כָּל דֶּרֶךְ אִישׁ זָךְ בְּעֵינָיו וְתִכְּן רוּחוֹת ה'  
*All of man's ways are pure in his own eyes,  
 but Hashem looks within human spirits.*

### Learning Mishlei

(2) **Every road** that a **man** chooses — אִישׁ כָּל דֶּרֶךְ  
 is **right** in his eyes — יֶשֶׁר בְּעֵינָיו  
**but Hashem scrutinizes hearts** — וְתִכְּן לְבוֹת ה'  
 so the man is advised to think again.

## **Additional Insights**

[1] The word **יָשָׁר** means “straight” and implies the shortest distance between two points. However, there are times when a more devious route is needed to achieve the morally right result. (מלבי"ם)

[2] The word **לְבוֹת** is in the plural to indicate that although there may be many opinions of which road is the right one, there is only one will of Hashem, who scrutinizes all hearts. (רשר"ה)