

## Mishlei 21-16

### Intelligence

#### Key Concepts

A person depends upon his intelligence to tell him whether it is right or wrong to perform a specific act. It is up to the person to use his intelligence to help him overcome temptations that lead him astray and that draw him into self-destructive behavior. To the extent that he gives in to his temptations, despite what his intelligence is telling him, he is failing in his mission in life. Therefore, he deserves only to end up in the company of the dead.

#### Exploring Mishlei

**(טז) אָדָם תּוֹעָה מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂפִיל בְּקֵהל רְפָאִים יָנוּחַ:**  
**(16) *A man who strays from the way of intelligence,***  
***will come to rest in the company of the dead.***

Mishlei speaks about the man who loses the connection to self-control that is available to him through the use of his intellect. This is the connection by which a man has access to the teachings of the Torah. Without that connection, the meaning of that man's life has deteriorated so drastically that he may as well be dead and buried.

The deterioration that takes place without intelligent self-control is a gradual process described by the word **רְפָאִים**, which means "weakened." The weakening of self-control is so serious that its ultimate stage is death. Accordingly, the proverb compares the losing of the intelligence connection with the state of death.

#### Learning Mishlei

**(16) A man who strays — אָדָם תּוֹעָה —**  
**from the way of his intelligence — מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂפִיל —**  
 is in the process of losing self-control. At the end,  
**he will rest in the company of the dead — בְּקֵהל רְפָאִים יָנוּחַ**