

SEFER MISHLEI

The Book of Proverbs

Translated and Compiled by Reuven Brauner

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15th Yahrtzeit of the Passing of my Beloved Mother זצ"ל

Dedicated to
My Loving and Dear Wife

Rachel

The exemplar אשת חייל

May God Bless Her Forever



**Sublime Maxims of Wisdom, Ideals, Insights and Inspiration to
achieve Piety, Virtue and Grace**

A Synthesized Presentation of

SEFER MISHLEI

The Book of Proverbs

as composed by King Solomon son of King David

Translated and Explained

Annotated, Elucidated and Paraphrased

Based on the Commentaries of

**Rashi, Rabbeinu Yona Gerondi, Metzudos Tzion and
Metzudos David, and the Malbim (Biur HaMilos).**

Introduction adapted from Encyclopedia Otzar Yisroel by R' J.D. Eisenstein

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PREFACE

Sefer Mishlei

Solomon's Book of Proverbs

S efer Mishlei, beloved and studied for thousands of years, is the seminal composition of the Jewish philosophy of life. This work expresses the authentic Torah understanding of the proper conduct, personal attributes and attitudes that a Jew must strive to possess in order to achieve saintliness, integrity, peace and contentment, and the Godly life to which every Jew should aspire and to which he must commit.

T he author of Sefer Mishlei, King Solomon was, in Jewish tradition, the wisest man who ever lived. His profound insights here are the apex formulations of Torah ethics and decency. Understood to be Divine with lessons for all generations, Sefer Mishlei has been forever canonized as one of the Holy Books of the Tanach.

S efer Mishlei is comprehensive and speaks to everyone. No aspect of the human experience has been ignored, no moral value has been overlooked.

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INTRODUCTION

S efer Mishlei (The Book of Proverbs), sometimes called Mishlei Shlomo (Solomon's Proverbs), is one of the canonized books of Kesuvim (Writings) set between the books of Tehillim (Psalms) and Iyov (Job), and comprises thirty-one chapters dealing with ethical teachings by means of proverbs and enigmas.

M ishlei may be subdivided into two primary sections, Chapters 1-9 and 10-29, with two appendice chapters, 30 and 31.

T he first section begins with *"These are the proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel (1:1)"* with a seven-verse introduction which explain the contents of the book. This section concludes with, *"The fear of God is a prerequisite for wisdom..."* (9:10-17) and is reminiscent of the end of Koheles (Ecclesiastes) which states, *"The end of all, all is heard, God is feared"*, which also discusses the advantages of wisdom and ethics, and advises separating from lust, laziness and levity.

T he second section, from Chapter 10, *"Now, these are the Proverbs of Solomon"* (10:1) contains a large collection of shorter, miscellaneous wise maxims and instructional conundrums of various nature and topics.

T he last two chapters of the book (31 and 32) deal with Solomon's confessions. Finally, from *"These are words of King Lemuel"* (31:1)" we have the ethical teaching of a mother to her son and his response to her with the famous and wonderful poem, Eishes Chayil (Woman of Valor), which has become the seminal song of praise for the ideal Jewish woman traditionally sung on Friday nights from husband to wife.

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The topics discussed in Sefer Mishlei run the entire gamut of the human experience. The author leaves no essential aspect untouched, and he provides guidance and understanding for each concept.

To wit, Solomon informs that we should listen attentively to words of wisdom and instruction, and how to persevere, be industrious and diligent with regard to Torah and in the pursuit of wisdom. We must fear and be in awe of God, observe and preserve His Torah, and understand His attributes. We are never to act without proper forethought and contemplation, and must be fearful of evil

We should learn to survive on the minimum, and distance ourselves from physical desires and lusts, particularly to be on guard against illicit sexual relationships.

We are advised as how to avoid losing our wealth. We must try to work and toil with our hands, and always watch what we say. We are to be modest and have a humble demeanor, and content with our portions in life. We must accept afflictions and poverty with love, love justice, love our comrades, and engage in acts of lovingkindness. We are to cleave to compassion and righteousness, pursue peace and truth, abhor hypocrisy, flee from bad company, and associate with righteous people.

Solomon also discusses matters of ethics for kings, princes and judges, ethical instruction for women, how to develop and run a successful home, proper education for children, and how one should relate to his family. He informs us of the success and rewards of the righteous man versus the toil and punishment of the evil man, and God's Providence via moral lessons in the form of riddles and how to receive wisdom and knowledge.

Legend:

MD = Metzudos David MT = Metzudos Tzion RYG = Rabbeinu Yona Gerondi

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CHAPTER 1

פרק א

1. These are the allegories and proverbs with which Solomon, son of David, King of Israel enlightened us. ✦ For example, he compares the Torah to a good woman and idolatry (and heresy – MD) to a prostitute (Rashi).
מְשָׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל: א
2. “In order for you, my son, to become wise and capable of receiving ethical instruction, and to have understanding, ✦ All of these proverbs come to inform us that we should toil in Torah, which is the (paradigm and source) of wisdom, morality and understanding, righteousness and justice, and integrity (Rashi). ✦ Understanding refers to those deep matters that one must contemplate in order to properly comprehend a subject (RYG). ✦ Wisdom is not intuitive and can only be learned from God's Torah or by prophesy or from other wise men, as opposed to understanding, knowledge and common sense (Malbim).
לְדַעַת חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסֵר, לְהַבִּין אִמְרֵי בִינָה: ב

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3. To derive ethical instruction with which to live by, and abandon your lusts (RYG), **in order for you to be righteous** in your service to God (MD) and charitable (Rashi), **just** between you and your fellow man (MD) and to judge fairly (Rashi) **and be equitable** in your character and behavior (MD), and to develop a compromising and moderate disposition (Rashi). ◇ By complying with the instructions of this book, a person will come to distance himself from his natural inclinations (RYG). ◇ Righteousness is to do things beyond the call of duty, just is to do what is required, and equitable is to behave with integrity and common sense (RYG). ◇ The root of the word **מוסר** is **י-ס-ר** - to bind - as it is with the verb **אסר**. The latter refers to the body, whereas the former refers to the soul (Malbim). ג
4. To be able to impart prudent counsel to the immature, and understanding and contemplation to the youth, ◇ The young can still modify their nature (RYG). ◇ The **פתי** is incapable of understanding (Malbim). ד
5. And so that the wise men, and those even keener than the wise (Rashi) will be able to attain, and add, clever counsel, ◇ Even wise and adroit people can benefit from these parables (MD). ◇ The wise man not only has learned to be wise, he acts wisely (Malbim). ה

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6. And comprehend allegories and counsel, and the poignant thoughts of the wise, and their subtle enigmas. ו
לְהַבִּין מְשָׁל וּמְלִיצָה,
דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים וְחִידָתָם:
7. To accomplish this, not only must you first instill in yourself the fear of God by committing yourself to act (Rashi) with wisdom and understanding, you must also disparage the immorality of the evil scoffers who are contemptuous of wisdom and ethics (Rashi). ♦ Solomon's introduction has ended, and here begins the actual book (Rashi). ♦ Cynics who mock and have no awe of the Almighty will gain nothing from learning wisdom and morality (MD) because these matters are unimportant to them (RYG). ♦ אוֹיִל (scoffer) derives from אוֹלִי (maybe). Scoffers are those who are suspicious of everything – “nothing is for certain!” – and they cannot accept wisdom, always questioning its veracity. There were philosophers known as Sceptics who doubted all matters of wisdom (Malbim). ז
יִרְאֵת יְהוָה יִרְאֵת רְאשִׁית דָּעַת
חֲכָמָה, וּמוֹסָר אֹיִלִים
בְּזוֹ:
8. So, my son, pay close attention to and accept your father's moral teachings i.e., the written and oral Torahs which God gave Moses (Rashi) and do not abandon your mother's lessons, the teachings and insights of the Scribes who added cautionary hedges around the Torah (Rashi). ח
שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ, וְאַל
תִּטְּשׁ תּוֹרַת אֲמָדָּה:

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9. For Torah and morality (Rashi) will be wreaths of honor on your head, and a bejeweled necklace around your neck. ♦ Your words will then be received by your audience; for head is symbolic of wisdom, and throat, the voice (RYG). ט פִּי לְוִיַּת חֵן הֵם לְרֵאשִׁי, וְעֲנָקִים לְגִרְגָּתֶיךָ:
10. My son, do not associate with unscrupulous people who will tempt you to do evil, ♦ Dissociate yourself from such persons (RYG). י בְּנִי, אִם יִפְתּוּךָ חֲטָאִים אֶל תֵּבֵא:
11. Such as if they were to say to you, "Join us when we hide in an ambush, and watch as we go (Malbim) to shed innocent blood or even without violence¹, (MD). ♦ This all refers to robbery which is compared to bloodshed (RYG). ♦ The wicked hate the pure of heart and the righteous more than they do other people (RYG). יא אִם יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ אֶתְנוּ נֶאֱרָבָה לְדָם, נִצְפְּנָה לְנִקְי חָנָם:
12. Let us devour our victims alive and whole, as does the grave, as those who descend into the pit. ♦ Whole – when they are still rich. We will kill them and inherit their wealth (Rashi). יב נִבְלָעִם כְּשָׂאוֹל חַיִּים, וְתַמִּימִים כְּיֹרְדֵי בֹר:

¹ "Don't worry. No one will get hurt".

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13. Precious wealth is to be found with them (MD); we will fill our houses with the spoils we take (MD). יג פֶּל הוּן יִקֶּר נִמְצָא, נִמְלֵא בְּתֵינוּ שָׁלָל:
14. Cast your lot with us; we will all share equally in the loot." ♦ We will even let you decide how to divide up the spoils or we can share it all equally (Rashi, MD). יד גּוֹרְלֶךָ תִּפִּיל בְּתוֹכֵנוּ, פִּיס אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּנוּ:
15. My son, do not go in their ways, the ways the wicked encourage you to go (RYG). Restrain your foot from their path, and do not make company with them, for they are evil (RYG), and you may learn from them (MD). ♦ Ways are for the public, while paths are private (Malbim). טו בְּנִי, אַל תֵּלֶךְ בְּדַרְךְ אֲתָם, מִנַּע רַגְלֶךָ מִנְתִּיבָתָם:
16. For their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed blood. ♦ They run unaware that they are causing harm to themselves (Rashi). ♦ Others may not even detect that they are on the way to do evil, but so is their intention (MD). טז כִּי רַגְלֵיהֶם לָרַע יָרוּצוּ, וַיִּמְהָרוּ לְשַׁפֵּךְ דָּם:
17. For, in the eyes of the birds, the net is spread in vain. ♦ For although the birds see the wheat and legumes spread on the net to ensare them, they think nothing of it. So they descend and eat (Rashi). ♦ Similarly, the person intent on committing a crime takes no note of the system of justice or the judge which awaits him. His lust blinds him (RYG). ♦ Since the birds יז כִּי חֲנָם מִזְרָה הָרֶשֶׁת, בְּעֵינָי כֹּל בַּעַל כֹּנֶף:

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cannot fathom the reason why the seeds are spread out on the net, they innocently swoop down into the net and eat (MD).

18. **And the hunters (Rashi) lie in wait for their, the birds' (Rashi) blood. They lurk waiting to take their lives.** ♦ The hunters did not spread their nets in vain for they, themselves, will ultimately be caught in them (MD).
- יח וְהֵם לְדָמָם יֶאָרְבוּ, יִצְפְּנוּ לְנַפְשֵׁיהֶם:
19. **So it is with all the venal ones (robbers –Rashi, MT); they take the lives of the owners.** ♦ The way of the robber is to plot so he won't be discovered. He first robs and then stealthily takes the life of his victim so no one will know who committed the crime (MD).
- יט כִּן אַרְחוֹת כָּל בֹּצֵעַ בֹּצֵעַ, אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּעַלְיוֹ יִקַּח:
20. **But, the wisdom of Torah (Rashi) sings loudly in warning (Rashi, MT) about punishment and reward (RYG) outside from inside the study halls (Rashi) to wherever the public gathers (RYG); she raises her voice in the streets.**
- כ חִכְמוֹת בַּחוּץ תִּרְנֶה, בְּרַחֲבוֹת תִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ:
21. **She summons from the top of the raucous places at the entrance of the busy highways to the city where the many congregate (RYG), at the entrances of the city gates where the multitude enter and leave (MD), she tells her story.** ♦ The Torah is revealed to everyone, and cautions all about its observance (MD).
- כא בְּרֹאשׁ הַמַּיּוֹת תִּקְרָא, בְּפִתְחֵי שְׁעָרִים בְּעִיר אֲמַרְיָהּ תֹאמַר:

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22. “How long will you confused (RYG) simpletons who are easily seduced by enticers and heretics (Rashi) love thoughtlessness and seduction (Rashi)? And how long will you mockers delight in scorning, and you evil (RYG) fools hate knowledge? ♦ The jester is not necessarily stupid and may sometimes be very clever. His problem is that he loathes wisdom because of his lusts. The mocker is one who demeans wisdom because he simply doesn't understand it and cannot clearly comprehend it. He may not actually hate knowledge, and he will not mock something once it has been proven to him (Malbim).
- כב עַד מָתַי פְּתִים תֵּאָהֳבוּ
פְּתִי, וְלִצִּים לָצוֹן חָמְדוֹ
לָהֶם, וּכְסִילִים יִשְׁנָאוּ
דַּעַת:
23. Incline towards my rebuke, that is, repent (RYG). I will speak of my spirit to you so that you hear my reproof (MD); I shall inform you of what I have to say constantly (MD).
- כג תְּשׁוּבוּ לְתוֹכַחְתִּי, הִנֵּה
אֲבִיעָה לָכֶם רוּחִי,
אוֹדִיעָה דְבָרֵי אֶתְכֶם:
24. So I called, but was rejected. I stretched out my hand to you to return to me (Rashi), yet no one paid attention.
- כד יַעַן קָרָאתִי וְתַמְאֵנוּ,
נְטִיתִי יָדִי וְאִין מִקְשִׁיב:
25. My advice was neglected, and my counsel and (MD) reproof rejected.
- כה וְתַפְרְעוּ כָּל עֲצָתִי,
וְתוֹכַחְתִּי לֹא אֲבִיתֶם:

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26. Thus I, too, will laugh at your painful calamity. I will mock and have no compassion (MD) when you are terrified.
- כו גַם אֲנִי בְּאִידְכֶם אֶשְׁחַק, אֶלְעַג בְּבֹא פִחְדְּכֶם:
27. And when your dread engulfs you as would a sudden (Rashi) dark storm, and your calamity surely (Malbim) comes on like the fury of a hurricane; when you will be overwhelmed with trouble and distress,
- כז בְּבֹא כְשׁוֹאָה כַּשְׂאוּהָ פִּחְדְּכֶם וְאִידְכֶם כְּסוּפָה יִצְוֶקְהָ, בְּבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם צָרָה וְצוּקָה:
28. You then call to me, but I will not answer. You will seek Me, but you will not find Me.
- כח אִזּוּ יִקְרְאוּנִי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה, יִשְׁחַרְוּנִי וְלֹא יִמְצְאוּנִי:
29. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the trepidation of God,
- כט תַּחַת כִּי שִׁנְאוּ דַעַת, וַיִּרְאֵת יְהוָה לֹא בְּחָרוּ:
30. And they did not desire My guidance, and that they maligned My reproof,
- ל לא אָבוּ לְעֵצָתִי, נֶאֱצוּ כָּל תּוֹכַחְתִּי:
31. Therefore, will they eat of the fruit from the tree they planted (MD), from the ways they chose themselves to lead their lives (Rashi), and they will be satiated with their own advice.
- לא וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִפְּרֵי דְרָכָם, וּמִמַּעֲצוֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׂבְּעוּ:

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32. For the misbehavior and mischievousness (Rashi) (calm – MT) of the thoughtless ones who do not toil under the yoke of Torah (MD) will kill them, and the confidence of fools who believe that the wicked are successful (Rashi) will destroy them because they did not abandon their evil ways (Rashi). ♦ All the fool wants is tranquility, relaxation and worldly pleasures in his life (Malbim). לב כִּי מְשׁוּבֹת פְּתִים תִּהְרָגִם, וְשִׁלּוֹת כְּסִילִים תֵּאבְדִם:
33. But those who listen to Me will live securely in this world (Rashi), in peace in the World to Come (Rashi) and without fear of evil, the penalty of Hell, contently and at peace (Rashi).” ♦ There is the one who is secure because he trusts in his strength and the one who is at peace because nothing external disturbs him (Malbim). לג וְשָׁמַעַ לִי יִשְׁכֵּן בְּטַח, וְשָׁאֵן מִפֶּחַד רָעָה:



CHAPTER 2

פרק ב

1. “My son, if you will take My words to heart, and preserve deep **within you** and never forget (MD) **My Commandments**, א אם תקח אַמְרֵי, וּמִצְוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אֶתְךָ:
 ♦ If you accept all this, you will be My son (Rashi, MD). ♦ Solomon was speaking on behalf of God (MD). ♦ Torah leads to action (RYG).
2. So that your ear listens carefully to wisdom, and you will be involved with Torah (Rashi), and **your heart inclines to discernment**; ב להקשיב לַחֲכָמָה אֲזַנְךָ, תִּטָּה לִבְךָ לְתַבּוּנָה:
 ♦ Wisdom is confirmed by an external source, while discernment is something a person achieves on his own (Malbim).
3. If you call and pray (RYG) for **understanding** in order to come close to it (MD), and you raise **your voice asking for discernment**; ג כִּי אִם לִבְיָנָה תִקְרָא, לְתַבּוּנָה תִתֵּן קוֹלְךָ:
 ♦ Discernment is a more comprehensive attribute than is understanding which might only apply to a portion of a greater matter (Malbim).

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4. If you seek her, wisdom, with effort (RYG), as you would for silver, and search for her lovingly and with desire (RYG) as you would for hidden treasures, ♦ Seeking may be in the heart only, but searching is to dig deep into the hidden places to find something (Malbim). ד אִם תִּבְקֶשׁנָה כַּכֶּסֶף, וְכַמְטָמוֹנִים תַּחֲפֹשְׁנָה:
5. Then you will understand what fear of God really is, and you will find the knowledge and the mysteries (MD) of God. ה אִזְ תִּבִּין יִרְאֵת יְהוָה, וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא:
6. For although God bestows wisdom, you still have to attain it (Rashi). From His mouth comes comprehension and perspicacity. ו כִּי יְהוָה יִתֵּן חֵכְמָה, מִפִּי דַעַת וּתְבוּנָה:
7. For the way of God is that He conceals the sound wisdom of the Torah (MT) for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk whole-heartedly and He protects them from pitfalls (MD), ♦ These sound wisdoms are the secrets of the Torah which He implants in the hearts of the upright ones (MD). ♦ The upright are those who are naturally straight in regard to their senses and understanding of things, and their actions. The whole-hearted are those who do everything for the sake of Heaven (Malbim). ז יִצְפֹּן וְצִפֵּן לְיֹשְׁרִים תּוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם, מִגֵּן לְהַלְכֵי תָם:

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8. That He may uphold the paths of justice, and guard the way of His virtuous ones so that they do not falter (Rashi) and veer from the true way (MD). ח לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מְשֻׁפָּט, וְדָרֶךְ חֲסִידָיו חֲסִידוֹ יִשְׁמֹר:
9. Then after you seek wisdom, God will make you wise and (MD) you will understand righteousness and justice, and equity, and will you know (MD) every good circuit and road, ט אִז תִּבְיִן צְדָק וּמְשֻׁפָּט וּמִיִּשְׁרִים, כָּל מַעְגַּל טוֹב:
10. For erudition will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant and highly desirable (MD) to your soul. י כִּי תָבוֹא חֲכָמָה בְּלִבְךָ, וְדַעַת לְנַפְשְׁךָ יִנְעָם:
11. Discretion (the Torah –Rashi; wisdom –MD; thoughts steeped in wisdom -Malbim) will watch over you, discernment will shield you, יא מְזִמָּה תִשְׁמֹר עָלֶיךָ, תְּבוּנָה תִנְצְרֶכָה:
12. And save you from the evil way and heresy (MD), and from the heretical (Rashi) man who speaks convoluted (MD) perversity, and upends the words of Torah for evil (Rashi), and solicits you with his words (MD), יב לְהַצִּילְךָ מִדָּרֶךְ רָע, מֵאִישׁ מְדַבֵּר תִּהְפֹּכוֹת:
13. From those who have discarded the paths of uprightness in order to saunter down the routes of darkness and apostasy (MD); יג הֶעֱזָבִים אֲרָחוֹת יִשְׁר, לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכֵי חֹשֶׁךְ:

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 2

14. And from those who rejoice in doing malevolence, and revel in the perverseness of malice, for they do not believe in Providence nor in reward and punishment (MD); ♦ **שמחה** – rejoicing - is a permanent state of happiness, whereas **גילה** – delight - is the exciting, rushing feeling one experiences upon hearing good news or when making a sudden discovery (Malbim). **יז הַשְּׂמֵחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע, יִגִּילוּ בְּתֵהֶכֶח רָע:**
15. Whose ways are warped, and paths distorted; ♦ They are totally irrational (MD). **טו אֲשֶׁר אָרְחֵתֵיהֶם עִקְשִׁים, וְנִלְוִים בְּמַעֲגָלוֹתָם:**
16. To save you from the strange woman (heresy –Rashi) and the foreign woman who speaks seductively; ♦ This verse is referring to the one who has thrown off the yoke of the Commandments (Rashi). ♦ The strange woman referred to here is a married woman and the foreign woman is a non-Jewess (MD). **טז לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה, מִנְכַרְיָה אֲמַרְיָה הַחֲלִיקָה:**
17. Who forsakes the lord of her youth (her husband –MT), and forgets the covenant with her God. ♦ She, too, has a covenant with God to observe His Commandments, and not commit adultery (MD). **יז הָעִזְבָּת אֱלוֹף נְעוּרֶיהָ, וְאֶת בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁכַחָה:**

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 2

18. For hers is a house of prostitution (MD) which slides down unto death, but the Torah will protect you against such a fall (Rashi), and the path to her leads to the ghosts and Hell (Rashi) and death (MD). יח כִּי שָׁחָה אֶל מוֹת בֵּיתָהּ, וְאֶל רְפָאִים מֵעַגְלֹתֶיהָ:
19. None that go to her return, neither will they attain the pathway to life. ♦ It is difficult to disconnect from her and return (Rashi). יט כָּל בָּאֶיהָ לֹא יָשׁוּבוּן, וְלֹא יִשְׁיִגּוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים:
20. Know this so that you may walk in the way of the good men, and persist in the paths of the righteous. ♦ Wisdom protects you from these affairs (MD). כ לִמְעַן תֵּלֵךְ בְּדַרְךְ טוֹבִים, וְאַרְחוֹת צְדִיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר:
21. For the upright will reside in the land forever (Rashi), and the whole-hearted will remain in it after the wicked descend to Hell (Rashi). כא כִּי יִשְׁרִים יִשְׁכְּנוּ אֶרֶץ, וְתַמִּימִים יִוָּתְרוּ בָּהּ:
22. And the wicked will be excised from the land, and the traitors will be uprooted from there. כב וְרָשָׁעִים מֵאֶרֶץ יִכָּרְתוּ, וּבֹגְדִים יִסָּחוּ מִמֶּנָּה: פ



CHAPTER 3

פרק ג

1. My son, Israel (MD), never forget my Torah. Let my Commandments shape your heart. ♦ After discussing the importance of wisdom, we now learn of the importance of serving God (RYG). א בְּנִי, תוֹרַתִי אֵל תִּשְׁכַּח, וּמִצְוֹתַי יִצַר לְבָבְךָ:
2. For my Torah and the Commandments (Rashi) will add to you a healthy and good (RYG) life for many days and years, and in the merit of the Torah, you will live (MD) in peace and tranquility (MD). ב כִּי אַרְךָ יָמִים וְשָׁנוֹת חַיִּים, וְשָׁלוֹם יוֹסִיפוּ לָךְ:
3. Kindness and truth should not forsake you, grasp them firmly so that you will not abandon them (MD). Bind them around your neck, and inscribe them upon the tablet of your heart² by speaking and thinking about them (MD). ♦ חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת אֵל יַעֲזְבֶךָ, קִשְׁרָם עַל גְּרָגְרוֹתֶיךָ, כְּתֹבם עַל לִוַּח לְבָבְךָ: ג

² A difficult expression, indeed. It is unclear what is meant by the “tablet of the heart”. It appears again in 7:3.

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 3

against doing what may cause harm by deeds and speech, such as cruelty, meanness, hatred, envy and pride, while אמת - truth - is not to say what is bad is good and what is good is bad or to be hypocritical. Thus, one should love the honor of the righteous and be keen on the downfall of the wicked and lustful people. Yet, one should judge people fairly and justly, and be alert to confused and illogical opinions. In matters of religion, one must investigate tirelessly for the truth (RYG)³.

4. **And with your kindness and fine character (RYG) you will find grace and good favor in the sight of both God and Man.** ד וּמָצָא חֵן וְשִׂכָּל טוֹב, בְּעֵינַי אֱלֹהִים וְאָדָם: פ
5. **Trust in God** and neither in other people nor yourself (RYG) **with all your heart** and have no doubts about it (RYG), **and do not rely upon your own understanding.** ה בָּטַח אֶל יְהוָה בְּכָל לִבְךָ, וְאֶל בִּינְתְּךָ אֵל תִּשָּׁעַן:
- ◆ Everyone will know you as a good, sensible person (MD).
- ◆ Spend money to find a rabbi from whom you can learn and do not presume that you can understand all things on your own (Rashi). ◆ Do not rely upon your own abilities or strength or brains or senses (RYG). ◆ Do not believe that because you did everything until now wisely, you will continue to succeed. For the truth is that all is in the hands of God, and nothing really happens because of Man's cleverness (MD).

³ Rabbeinu Yona in his commentary waxes further at great length about these important traits. See there.

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 3

6. Be cognizant of Him by remembering His Name and having faith that He will help you in your efforts (RYG) **wherever you go** and whatever you do (MD), **and He will direct your paths** so that all you do is for the sake of Heaven (RYG), and you will succeed (MD). ♦ Believe that everything is from Heaven, large and small (RYG). ♦ "For the sake of Heaven" means that you do not request pleasure or enjoyment or honor or riches or anything from this world. Your only want should be to be able to serve God (RYG). וּ בְּכֹל דְרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ, וְהוּא יִישֹׁר אֲרָחֹתֶיךָ:
7. Do not consider yourself wise because of your past successes (RYG) nor be dismissive of those who rebuke you (Rashi). **Fear God, and depart from immorality.** ♦ Your successes were not because of your own efforts, but because they were decreed by God (RYG). ♦ Do not take lightly things which are prohibited or those preventive measures which we have been instructed believing that someone as smart as yourself does not need them. Rather fear God, lest you stumble because of your wisdom. Distance yourself greatly (from sin) and set up protective fences (MD). ז אֶל תִּהְיֶה חָכָם בְּעֵינֶיךָ, יִרָא אֶת יְהוָה וְסוּר מִרָע:
8. It (wisdom –Rashi) will be healing to your innermost being, and marrow to your bones. ♦ The protective fence will only be for your well-being and will not harm you. It will rejuvenate and strengthen you to do the Commandments (MD). ח רַפְאוֹת תִּהְיֶה לְשִׁרְךָ⁴, וְשִׁקּוּי לְעֲצָמוֹתֶיךָ:

⁴ The letter ר of the word לשרך in this verse is a rare instance in Tanach of a Resh Degusha, here indicating a missing second ר in the word.

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 3

9. Revere God with your resources and possessions, with all that that God has given you (Rashi), by giving charity (MD) and for performing the Commandments (RYG), and with the first-fruits of all your produce by giving tithes (MD),
◆ Do not fear that you will be lacking if you distribute your wealth for charitable purposes. Have trust in God that because of this He will bless you, and all that you have will increase (RYG). ט
כַּבֵּד אֶת יְהוָה מֵהוֹנֶךָ,
וּמִרְאשֵׁית כָּל תְּבוּאָתְךָ
10. And your grain silos will be filled to capacity, and your vats will overflow with new wine. ◆
Not only will nothing be lacking, but you will be blessed with abundantly more (MD). י
וַיִּמְלְאוּ אֲסַמִּיךְ שִׁבְעַ,
וְתִירוֹשׁ יִקְבִּיךָ יִפְרֹצוּ: פ
11. My son, do not despise the chastening of God if you receive afflictions, accept them with love (Rashi, MD) and do not abhor His correction. ◆ Does anyone but God really know what is good for a person (RYG)? יא
מוֹסֵר יְהוָה, בְּנִי, אַל
תִּמְאָס, וְאֵל תִּקַּץ
בְּתוֹכְחָתוֹ:
12. God corrects those He loves as would a father his beloved son.
◆ If God strikes him, he then placates him with goodness (Rashi) and compassion (RYG). יב
כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהָב יְהוָה
יוֹכִיחַ, וּכְאָב אֶת בֶּן יִרְצֶה:

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13. Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who generates understanding by having learned so well, he speaks naturally of these matters often (Rashi). יג אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם מָצָא חֲכָמָה, וְאָדָם יִפְיֵק תְּבוּנָה:
14. For its goods are better than the barter of silver, and its gain is greater than fine gold. ♦ It is better than normal barter, since when two people exchange Torah learning between themselves, they both profit (Rashi). יד כִּי טוֹב סִחָרָה מִסֶּחֶר כֶּסֶף, וּמִחֲרוֹץ תְּבוּאַתָּה:
15. She is more precious than pearls. Nothing you could desire is of comparable value with her. טו יְקָרָה הִיא מִפְּנִינִים מִפְּנִיִּים, וְכֹל חֲפָצֶיךָ לֹא יִשְׁוּוּ בָּהּ:
16. A long life is in her right hand for those who uphold her and those who are involved with her for Heaven's sake (Rashi), while in her left hand are riches and honor. ♦ However, even those who are engaged with her not for the sake of Heaven will be rewarded with riches and honor (MD following Shabbos 63a). טז אַרְךָ יָמִים בְּיְמִינָהּ, בְּשִׂמְאוּלָה עֵשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד:
17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and there is no obstacle there to prevent you from observing the Torah (MD), and all her paths are peace. ♦ In peace does Israel observe the Torah, and all the ways of the Torah bring peace (RYG). יז דְּרָכֶיהָ דְּרָכֵי נְעִים, וְכֹל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם:

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18. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her firmly, and all who support and come close to (Rashi) her are content and praised (MT). ♦ These are those who support her with protective fences (MD) or by sustaining the sincere Torah scholars and the rabbis (RYG).
- יח עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה, ותמכיה מאשר: פ
19. God founded the Earth with wisdom, the Torah, understanding and knowledge (Rashi). He upholds the Heavens with thoughtfulness.
- יט יהוה בחכמה יסד ארץ, פונן שמים בתבונה:
20. Because of His understanding, the depths were split from where the springs gush forth (MD), and the skies drip down the dew.
- כ בדעתו תהומות נבקעו, ושחקים ירעפו טל:
21. My son, do not erase these concepts from before your eyes because of their great importance (MD). Maintain sound wisdom and discretion, ♦ Observe the Torah in practice and thought (MD),
- כא בני, אל ילזו מעיניך, נצר תשיה ומזמה:
22. And they will invigorate your soul, and will be a charm about your neck.
- כב ויהיו חיים לנפשך, וחס לגרגרתך:
23. You will then walk securely in your way for you will have no fear (MD) of your enemies (RYG), and when you observe the Torah (RYG) your foot will not fail by tripping on an impediment tossed into the road (MD).
- כג אז תלך לבטח דרךך, ורגלך לא תגוף:

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24. You will not be afraid when you lie down, and you will sleep pleasantly and serenely (MD). ♦
You will not be awakened by the sudden terror (Rashi) of bad dreams and visions (RYG). ♦ This refers to one who is traveling away from home (RYG).
- כד אַם תִּשְׁכַּב לֹא תִפְחָד, וְשָׁכַבְתָּ וְעָרְבָה שְׁנָתְךָ:
25. Be not afraid of sudden terror nor of the destruction of the wicked, when it comes, for their awful fate will not befall you (MD), you will be saved since you are sinless, and you trusted in God (RYG).
- כה אַל תִּירָא מִפֶּחַד פְּתָאִים, וּמִשְׁאַת רְשָׁעִים כִּי תָבֹא:
26. For God will be your confidence and hope (MT), and will assure that your foot will not be trapped because of your confidence and hope in Him (MD). ♦ It is a miraculous thing that righteous people who did not sin and trusted in God are saved in a place which was destroyed (RYG). ♦ Regardless of one's troubles, a person must have faith in God's mercy, salvation and redemption (RYG). ♦ Hoping applies to good things, while confidence is to trust that nothing bad will happen (Malbim).
- כו כִּי יְהוָה יִהְיֶה בְּכִסְלְךָ, וְשָׁמַר רַגְלְךָ מִלִּכְד:
27. Do not withhold good from someone to whom it is due when it is within your purview to do so. ♦ Do not prevent someone from doing good for or giving charity to the poor (Rashi).
- כז אַל תִּמְנַע טוֹב מִבְּעָלָיו, בְּהֵיטֵל לְאֵל יָדְךָ יָדִיד לַעֲשׂוֹת:

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 3

28. Do not say to your friend the poor man or the laborer (Rashi), 'Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give', when you have it with you now. ♦ Fulfill your vows as quickly as possible (RYG). כח אֵל תֹּאמַר לְרֵעִיךָ לֵךְ וְשׁוּב, וּמָחָר אֶתֶן וַיֵּשׁ אֲתָךְ:
29. Do not concoct evil against your friend, seeing that he lives confidently with you. ♦ Even evil thoughts are wrong (Rashi). ♦ He trusts you. Why do you do him wrong? (MD). כט אֵל תִּחְרַשׁ עַל רֵעִיךָ רָעָה, וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב לְבִטָּח אֲתָךְ:
30. Do not battle with or complain about (Rashi) someone without cause, if he has not done you any harm and has not violated that which is written in the Torah (Lev. 16:18), "And you will love your fellow as yourself". However, you are permitted to hate the wicked person (Rashi). ל אֵל תִּרְיַב תְּרוּב עִם אָדָם חָנָם, אִם לֹא גִמְלָךְ רָעָה:
31. Do not envy the man of violence even if he is successful (Rashi), and do not choose to follow any of his ways. ♦ Do not join with an evil man even for a matter of a Mitzvah (RYG). לא אֵל תִּקְנָא בְּאִישׁ חָמָס, וְאֵל תִּבְחַר בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו:
32. For the one who is perverse in his ways (Rashi) is an abomination to God. His confidence is with the upstanding people. ♦ His counsel is with him because of his love for Him (MD). לב כִּי תוֹעֵבֶת יְהוָה נָלוֹז, וְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל סוֹדוֹ:

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 3

33. God's curse is in the evil man's house and upon his wealth (MD), but He blesses the abode of the righteous.

לג מֵאֵרֶת יְהוָה בְּבַיִת רָשָׁע,
וְנִוָּה צְדִיקִים יְבָרֵךְ:

34. If one follows the mockers, he will become a ridiculer, too, but if he joins the humble, his deeds will find grace in the eyes of the people (after Rashi). ♦ God will mock the mockers (RYG).

לד אִם לַלְצִים הוּא יִלְיָץ,
וְלַעֲנוּיִם וְלַעֲנִיִּים יִתֵּן חֵן:

35. And so the wise will inherit honor, and the fools will bear their own (Rashi) shame as they deserve (MD).

לה כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנְחָלוּ,
וְכִסְיֵלִים מְרִים קָלוּן: פ



CHAPTER 4

פרק ד

1. Listen, you, the children of the living God (MD), to the ethical instruction of a father (God – Rashi) in Heaven, who originated understanding (MD), and contemplate this in order that you may come to know understanding.

א שְׁמְעוּ בָּנִים מוֹסֵר אָב, וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לְדַעַת בִּינָה:
2. For I have given you a good portion; do not forsake my Torah.
◆ The prophet is speaking on behalf of GOD (Rashi). ◆ Have I not given you a wise and good lesson? (MD).

ב כִּי לָקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם, תּוֹרַתִי אֶל תַּעֲזֹבוּ:
3. For I was a son to my father who loved me greatly (Rashi); tender and delicate, and uniquely special to my mother (my nation –Rashi).

ג כִּי בֶן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי, רַךְ וְיָחִיד לְפָנַי אִמִּי:

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 4

4. **And** because of His love for me (MD) **He taught me** these matters of admonition so that I should remain God-fearing (MD), **and said to me: Let your heart uphold my words** and not forget them. Contemplate them always (RYG). **Observe my Commandments, and you will live.** ♦ So I have been taught and so I teach you⁵ (Rashi). ♦ Heart typically symbolizes the source of governance of the body (Malbim). וַיִּרְנֵי, וַיֹּאמֶר לִי יִתְמָךְ
דְּבַרֵי לְבָבְךָ, שְׁמַר מִצְוֹתַי
וַחֲיֶיהָ: ד
5. **Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding** and keep them with you (MD). **Neither forget nor veer from my words,** these cautions (MD). ♦ Be persistent in your learning of Torah and know how to respond to the heretic. Wisdom brings you to the awe of Heaven, and an understanding of what righteousness and justice really are. Remember that even when you are in the process of acquiring wisdom and understanding, do not forget ethics, and submit to them always in practice. That is, do not forsake morality and rectifying your character even in your pursuit of wisdom (RYG). קִנְיַת חֲכָמָה קִנְיַת בִּינָה,
אֶל תִּשְׁכַּח וְאֶל תֵּט
מֵאֲמָרַי פִּי: ה
6. **Do not abandon her** (my Torah - RYG), **and she will protect you; love her, and she will safeguard you.** ♦ Safeguarding is more rigorous than protecting (Malbim). אֶל תַּעֲזֹבֶהּ וְתִשְׁמָרְךָ,
אֶהְבֶּהּ וְתִצְרְךָ: ו

⁵ Lit. Since I was reproved in these matters, I warn you of them.

SEFER MISHLEI – CHAPTER 4

7. The beginning of the process to become wise is to acquire wisdom from others and your teacher. Contemplate these matters and you will acquire understanding (Rashi). Use all your possessions to acquire understanding. ♦ Make your learning a fixed matter with which you become deeply involved (MD).
- ז
**רֵאשִׁית חֲכָמָה קִנְיָה
 חֲכָמָה, וּבְכָל קִנְיָנְךָ קִנְיָה
 בִּינָה:**
8. Caress and seek (Rashi) her, and she will exalt you. When you embrace and bond with (MD) her, she will bring honor to you. ♦ Return repeatedly to her and scrutinize her in detail (Rashi).
- ח
**סִלְסְלָהּ וּתְרוֹמְמָךְ,
 תִּכְבְּדֶךָ כִּי תִחַבְּקֶנָּה:**
9. She will lay (raise –Malbim) a diadem of charm upon your head. She will bestow a crown of glory and honor (RYG) upon you.
- ט
**תִּתֵּן לְרֵאשֶׁךָ לְוִיַּת חַן,
 עֲטָרַת תְּפָאֶרֶת תִּמְגְּנֶךָ:**
10. Be attentive, my beloved (MD) son, and accept my words so that you will develop a good moral character, because you are my son (MD); and so you will have a long, good and peaceful (MD) life.
- י
**שְׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אִמְרֵי,
 וְיִרְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:**
11. I have instructed you in the way of wisdom, the way of serving God, i.e. correcting moral character, and having faith, trust, and the fear of God (RYG). I have directed you on the routes of uprightness. ♦ Love and respect the
- יא
**בְּדַרְךְ חֲכָמָה הִרְתִּיךָ,
 הַדְרֹכֹתַיךָ בְּמַעֲגְלֵי יֶשֶׁר:**

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wise men, repair your childish traits, and remove from yourself arrogance (RYG). ♦ A leader is greater than a teacher (Malbim).

12. When you walk, your step will not be hampered and you will not fall (Rashi); and if you run, you will not stumble. ♦ You will not falter in anything you do (MD). יב בְּלִכְתְּךָ לֹא יִצַּר צִעְדְּךָ, וְאִם תָּרוּץ לֹא תִפְּסֵל:
13. Grasp tightly morality and do not loosen your grip of her. Guard and preserve her, for she is your life. ♦ Even if you have acquired wisdom, hold tightly to morality, and disparage evil (RYG). ♦ Grab it when it wants to separate from you (Malbim). יג הַחִזֵּק בַּמוֹסֵר אֶל תָּרֹף, נִצְרָהּ כִּי הִיא חַיִּיד:
14. Do not travel the roads of the wicked who have heretical thoughts (Malbim), and do not step down the ways of evil men⁶ who do evil things (Malbim). יד בְּאַרְחַ רְשָׁעִים אֶל תֵּבֵא, וְאַל תֵּאָשֶׁר בְּדַרְךָ רָעִים:
15. Dismiss them, do not pass down them. Steer clear from them, and continue on. טו פְּרִיעֵהוּ אֶל תַּעֲבֹר בּוֹ, שְׂטֵה מֵעָלָיו וְעִבּוֹר:

⁶ It seems to me that רע refers to the one who has bad thoughts, whereas a רשע is someone who puts his evil thoughts into action, both deriving from the same (two-letter) root of ר-ע meaning lack of concern for the welfare of others. In contrast, a רעיה is one's wife and a רועה a shepherd, are both concerned about the welfare of those they are entrusted to care for. The addition of the letters of God's name (י, ה, ו) may symbolize the change from bad to good. There are further examples of the ר-ע root with similar derivative words like רעל (poison) and עיר רעים which is a place concerned friends live in harmony for the welfare of all residents (RB).

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16. For they cannot sleep until they have done evil. Their sleep is deprived, unless they cause someone to falter. טז כִּי לֹא יִשְׁנוּ אִם לֹא יַרְעוּ, וְנִגְזְלָה שְׁנָתָם אִם לֹא יִכְשִׁילוּ יִכְשׁוּלוּ:
17. They eat the bread gained by (MD) wickedness and robbery (MD), and drink the wine obtained by (MD) violence. יז כִּי לֶחֶמוֹ לֶחֶם רָשָׁע, וַיֵּין חֲמָסִים יִשְׁתּוּ:
18. But the way of the righteous can be compared with the ever-increasing light of the morning star which shines brighter than the light of day. ♦ It shines from dawn until mid-day when it is brightest (Rashi). יח וְאֶרֶח צְדִיקִים כְּאוֹר נֶגְהָ הַזֶּה, וְאוֹר עַד נֶכּוֹן הַיּוֹם:
19. The way of the wicked is murky and dark (MD). They have no idea where they will fail. ♦ They will suddenly be confronted with some difficulty in life and will not be prepared for it (Rashi). ♦ Being incapable of recognizing the truth, they do not know of what they should be aware (MD). יט דֶּרֶךְ רָשָׁעִים כְּאֶפְלָה, לֹא יָדְעוּ בַּמָּה יִכְשִׁלוּ: פ
20. So, my son, listen carefully to my words. Incline your ear to what I have to say. ♦ Here we have a section dealing with cautions: caution regarding the Commandments, caution regarding fear, caution regarding monetary matters, caution against sinning, etc. (RYG). כ בְּנִי, לְדַבְרֵי הַקְּשִׁיבָה, לְאִמְרֵי הַט אֲזַנְךָ:

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21. Never lose sight of them, and store them deep in your heart. ♦ Never forget the Commandments and their warnings (RYG). **כא אל יליוזו מעיניך, שְׁמֵרם בְּתוֹךְ לִבְבְּךָ:**
22. For they are life for those who find them, the wisdoms of the Torah (MD). They are healing for all their flesh. ♦ Life is for those who toil and strive and search for these matters. For nothing is achieved without work and effort (RYG). **כב כִּי חַיִּים הֵם לְמַצְאֵיהֶם, וּלְכָל בֶּשָׂרוֹ מְרַפָּא:**
23. Above all is that you guard (wherever the Torah uses the phrase "guard it" it means to – Rashi), and lock your heart and do not violate a prohibition, whether it is a serious violation or a light one (Rashi), for out of it (not violating the prohibition –Rashi) issues life and reward (Rashi). ♦ Never even contemplate sinning (MD). ♦ Lock out from your heart evil, such as cruel thoughts, anger and meanness (RYG). **כג מִכָּל מְשֹׁמֵר נֹצַר לִבְּךָ, כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תוֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים:**
24. Remove crookedness from your mouth, and distance yourself from perverse lips which do not acknowledge the truth (RYG). ♦ Don't do anything that will cause people to either slander or talk badly about you (Rashi). **כד הָסֵר מִמֶּךָ עִקְשׁוֹת פֶּה, וּלְזוֹת שִׁפְתַיִם הֲרִיחַ מִמֶּךָ:**

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25. Let your eyes look straight ahead towards truth and honesty (Rashi), and your eyelids be forwardly aligned when you go in your ways (Rashi). כה עֵינֶיךָ לְנֹכַח יְבִיטוּ, וְעַפְעָפֶיךָ יִישְׁרוּ נְגִדָּךְ:
26. Make level the routes you regularly go and have integrity (MT), and let all your ways be firm. ♦ If you weigh carefully how you conduct yourself, and consider the loss of not having performed a Commandment versus the "reward" of committing a sin, your ways will be well-established (Rashi). ♦ Do not wander through life aimlessly and randomly. See to it that all that you do is done with sincere truthfulness (MD). כו פִּלַּס מַעְגַּל רַגְלֶךָ, וְכָל דְּרָכֶיךָ יִכְנוּ:
27. Neither turn right or left from the Commandments (MD). Liberate your behavior from evil. כז אַל תֵּט יְמִין וּשְׂמֹאל, הִסֵּר רַגְלֶךָ מִרָע:



CHAPTER 5

פרק ה

1. My son, listen attentively to my wisdom. To my insights, incline your ear, ♦ This is David speaking to Solomon (MD). א
בְּנִי, לְחַכְמָתִי הִקְשִׁיבָה, לְתַבּוּנָתִי הֵט אָזְנְךָ:
2. That you may avoid designs of (MD) scheming. Preserve your lips for knowledge, and avoid laughter and light-headedness which can regress into immorality (RYG). ב
לְשָׁמֹר מִזְמוֹת, וְדַעַת שְׁפִתֶיךָ יִנְצְרוּ:
3. For the lips of the strange woman drip honey (heresy – Rashi, MD), and her mouth is smoother than oil. ♦ Be very aware of seduction, for the pleasant words of the prostitute are sweet and smooth (MD). ג
כִּי נֹפֶת תִּטְפֶּנָּה שְׁפִתֶי זָרָה, וְחֶלֶק מִשְּׁמֹן חֶפֶה:
4. But her end is as bitter as wormwood, and as sharp as a double-edged sword. ♦ Following the seduction comes bitterness, and a cutting death (MD). ד
וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ מָרָה כַּלְעֵנָה, חֲדָה כְּחֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת:

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5. Her feet go down to death. Her steps support and strengthen (MD) the netherworld for you to fall into (MD). ♦ Her ways lead to death (MD). ה
 רַגְלֶיהָ יִרְדּוּת מָוֶת, שְׂאוֹל
 צַעְדֶיהָ יִתְמַכּוּ:
6. Even if she should try to walk the level road of life, her ways will meander, and she will not be aware of it. ♦ Her tortuous ways have absolutely no comparison with or even remotely resemble the ways of the wisdom of the Torah (MD). ♦ Rashi explains this verse allegorically based on the Midrash (Devorim Rabbah 6:2). He says God did not reveal the rewards for the Commandments lest people do the important ones and neglect the lighter ones. ו
 אֲרַח חַיִּים פֶּן תִּפְלֵס, נְעוּ
 מֵעֲגַלְתֶּיהָ לֹא תִדְעַ: פ
7. Now, therefore, my children, says Solomon (MD), listen to me, and do not veer from my words. ♦ I caution you in these matters out of my love for you, and not from hatred (MD). ז
 וְעַתָּה בְּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי, וְאַל
 תִּסּוּרוּ מֵאִמְרֵי פִי:
8. Retreat from her, and do not approach the entrance of her house, ח
 הֲרַחֵק מֵעַלְיָהּ דַּרְכָּךְ, וְאַל
 תִּקְרַב אֶל פֶּתַח בֵּיתָהּ:
9. Lest you consign your dignity to others (false gods – Rashi), and your years to the cruel minister of Hell (Rashi), ♦ Your life will be cut short by half with the remaining years conferred to the Cruel One of Hell to do with as he wishes (MD). ט
 פֶּן תִּתֵּן לְאַחֲרִים הוֹדְךָ,
 וּשְׁנֵתֶיךָ לְאַכְזָרִי:

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10. So that strangers (false prophets – Rashi) are will not be sated with your strength, the profits of all your intense efforts (MD), and your riches, the fruits of (MD) labor for which you toiled agonizingly (MD) end up in the house of an alien (idolatry – Rashi). י פֶּן יִשְׂבְּעוּ זָרִים כְּחֶדְךָ, וְעֲצָבֶיךָ בְּבֵית נְכָרִי:
11. And when your end comes when you will die (MD), and your flesh and your body are consumed, you will moan from heartache (MD), יא וְנִהְמַתְּ בְּאַחֲרִיתְךָ, בְּכָלוֹת בְּשָׂרְךָ וּשְׂאֵרְךָ:
12. And you will say, "How was it that I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?" יב וְאָמַרְתָּ, אֵיךְ שָׁנֵאתִי מוֹסֵר, וְתוֹכַחַת נֶאֱפָ לְבִי:
13. Neither did I listen to the voice of my teachers, nor did I bend my ear to listen to my educators. יג וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל מוֹרֵי, וְלִמְלַמְדֵי לֹא הִטִּיתִי אָזְנִי:
14. For I was only a bit involved in the evil, whether with that of the congregation of the wise (Malbim) or the assembly of the masses (Malbim)." ♦ Because of the most negligible of pleasures I am now entangled in all the evil of the masses, and my indiscretions are known to all (MD); all because I did not listen to my teachers (Rabbi Yosef Kara). יד כִּמְעַט הֵיִיתִי בְּכָל רָע, בְּתוֹךְ קְהָל וְעֵדָה:

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15. So, drink water from your own cistern the one which God gave you, the Torah of Moses (Rashi), and the ever-flowing liquids out of your own well. ♦ Have relations only with your wife, and not with any other woman (MD). טו שְׁתֵּה מַיִם מִבוֹרְךָ, וְנִזְלִים מִתּוֹךְ בְּאֵרְךָ:
16. Let your springs disseminate their waters outside to your students (Rashi), and the courses of water meander through the streets. ♦ You will have students who will teach many people, and you will be well-known (Rashi). טז יִפּוּצוּ מֵעִיִּנְתֶיךָ חוּצָה, בְּרַחֲבוֹת פְּלִיגֵי מַיִם:
17. They will be yours alone, and no strangers will be with you. ♦ You alone will be praised by them, and no one else will share this honor with you (Rashi). יז יִהְיוּ לְךָ לְבַדָּךָ, וְאִין לְזָרִים אֶתְּךָ:
18. Your source will be blessed, and you will rejoice with the wife of your youth. ♦ This is the Torah you learned when you were young (Rashi). ♦ Your wife will be blessed and adored in your eyes, and you will be happy with the love of the wife your youth (MD). יח יִהְיֶה מְקוֹרְךָ בְּרוּךְ, וּשְׂמֵחַ מֵאִשֶׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ:
19. A lovely hind and a graceful doe, her udders will satisfy you at all times. You will always be engrossed in her love. ♦ You will err and sin because of your love for her (MD). יט אֵילַת אֲהָבִים וַיַּעֲלֶת חֵן דְּדָיָה יִרְוֶךָ בְּכָל עֵת, בְּאֲהָבָתָהּ תִּשְׁגָּה תָּמִיד:

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20. Why then would you, my son, wish to be ravished by a strange woman, and be embraced in the bosom of an alien girl? כ וְלָמָּה תִּשְׁגָּה בְּנִי בְזָרָה, וּתְחַבֵּק חֵק נְכָרִיָּה:
21. For God continuously sees the ways of man and He calculates his sins and merits (Rashi), and He paves all his routes and weighs his deeds (MD). ♦ One should not say, "Who saw me?" God did (!) and He will repay you, measure for measure (MD). כא כִּי נִכַח עֵינַי יְהוָה דְּרָכַי אִישׁ, וְכָל מַעֲגָלָתוֹ מִפֶּלֶס:
22. The evil man will be entrapped by his own iniquities, and he will hang by the rope of his sin. ♦ כב עֲוֹנוֹתָיו יִלְכְּדוּ אֶת הָרָשָׁע, וּבְחַבְלֵי חַטָּאתוֹ יִתְמַד: חטא (sin) refers to unintentional sins or those done because of one's lusts, whereas עוון (iniquity) refers to sins done intentionally and with forethought, and because of heresy (Malbim).
23. He will die without having ever accepted upon himself (Rashi) ethical instruction, and because he erred so greatly in matters of morality and wisdom (Malbim) because of his stupidity. כג הוּא יָמוּת בְּאֵין מוֹסָר, וּבְרַב אֲוִלְתּוֹ יִשְׁגָּה: פ



CHAPTER 6

פרק ו

1. My son, if you become a guarantor for your fellow man in a monetary matter (Rashi) or if you shake hands with a stranger, א בְּנִי, אִם עָרַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ, תִּקְעֶתָ לְזָר כַּפֶּיךָ: ♦ This is an expression of vouching for someone (MD).
2. You will become ensnared and caught by the words of your mouth. א בְּנִי, אִם עָרַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ, תִּקְעֶתָ לְזָר כַּפֶּיךָ: ♦ You entered a trap and then got caught in it (MD).
3. However, if you fall into the hand of your friend, my son, having brought yourself into a state of obligation to the lender א בְּנִי, אִם עָרַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ, תִּקְעֶתָ לְזָר כַּפֶּיךָ: ♦ **this is how to save yourself: Go humble yourself and pay him (Rashi) or if you are unable to repay him (Rashi) urge your friend to forgive you (Rashi).** ♦ Since at Sinai we obligated ourselves to keep the Commandments and we accepted Him as our God, if you have gone astray from His way and have followed the heretics, lower yourself like a well-trodden threshold, and bring many friends to pray to Him on your behalf (Rashi).

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|--|--|
| <p>4. Allow neither your eyes to sleep nor your eyelids to slumber. ♦ That is, do it without indolence (MD).</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ד אֵל תִּתֵּן שְׁנָה לְעֵינֶיךָ,
וּתְנוּמָה לְעַפְעָפֶיךָ:</p> |
| <p>5. Deliver yourself as quickly (MD) as a gazelle would extract itself from the clutches of the hunter or a bird from the net.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ה הַנִּצַּל כַּצְּבִי מִיָּד, וּכְצִפּוֹר
מִיָּד יְקוּשׁ: פ</p> |
| <p>6. Go to the ant, you lazy one, and contemplate her ways and see how she acts (MD), and you will be wise.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ו לֵךְ אֶל נְמֻלָּה, עֲצֵל, רְאֵה
דַּרְכֶיהָ וַחֲכָם:</p> |
| <p>7. While, although she has no officer, enforcer or ruler to remonstrate her and encourage her to work faster or compel her to return to her fellow ant something she stole from her (Rashi),</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ז אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָהּ קָצִין שֹׁטֵר
וּמֹשֵׁל:</p> |
| <p>8. Nevertheless, she still prepares with her own intelligence (MD) her viands in the Summer, and gathers her own food at harvest time so that she will not have to steal from the other ants (Rashi). ♦ From here we learn that one should prepare for the future at a time when he is still capable of so doing (MD). ♦ Summer follows the harvest (Malbim).</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ח תִּכְּוֵן בְּקִיץ לַחֲמָה, אֲגַרָּה
בְּקָצִיר מֵאֲכָלָה:</p> |

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9. So, until when will you lie down, you sluggard? When will you awaken from your sleep? ט
 עַד מָתִי, עָצַל, תִּשְׁכַּב,
 מָתִי תִקּוּם מִשְׁנָתְךָ:
10. “Yet a little sleep, a little nap, a little folding of the arms in the manner of those who sleep (Rashi) to lie”, ♦ "I will sleep a little, and then I will nap a little, and then I will just fold my arms to rest a little...." (MD) י
 מְעַט שְׁנוֹת מְעַט תְּנוּמוֹת,
 מְעַט חִבְק יָדַיִם לְשָׁכַב:
11. So will your loss and (Rashi) poverty come as quickly to you as might (Rashi) an unexpected (MD) courier, and your want as fast as (Rashi) a sentry, one who rushes to protect his master (Rashi); one headed to war who stops for nothing (MD). ♦ These verses all refer to the matter that one should not be lazy in engaging in, observing and learning Torah (Rashi). ♦ Indolence results in impoverishment (RYG). יא
 וּבֹא כְמַהֲלֵךְ יִרְאֶשֶׁךָ,
 וּמַחֲסֵרְךָ כְּאִישׁ מִגֹּן: פ
12. The corrupt and Godless (MT) person, a man of iniquity, saunters about with a perverted mouth speaking calumny (MD). יב
 אָדָם בְּלֵיעַל אִישׁ אָוֹן,
 הוֹלֵךְ עַקְשׁוֹת פֹּה:
13. He mockingly (MT) winks deceit (Rashi) with his eyes. He scrapes his feet together, and points with his fingers. ♦ These are all gestures of hinting used by the evil men who seduce people into worshiping idols (Rashi). ♦ These are all the subtle gestures of slander (MD) and of the liar, and the one who denies a debt, and the false witness, etc. (RYG). יג
 קִרְץ בְּעֵינָיו מִלֵּל בְּרַגְלוֹ,
 מָרָה בְּאֶצְבָּעֵתָיו:

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14. The contrariness of his heart devises evil continually. He teases discord between Man and his Creator (Rashi). יד תהפכות בלבו חרש רע, בכל עת מדנין מדנים ישלח:
15. And so his calamity will come suddenly and he doesn't have an inkling about what is soon about to befall him (Rashi). He will shatter in an instant, without remedy for his rupture (MD). ♦ פתאום – suddenly - is a matter of time, i.e. it will soon happen, whereas פתע - in an instant - means that his punishment will be over quickly (Malbim). טו על פן פתאם יבוא אידו, פתע ישבר ואין מרפא: פ
16. There are six things which God hates, and seven which are (a seventh which is also –Rashi) an abomination to His Soul, that is, more loathed than the others (MD). טז שש הנה שנא יהוה, ושבע תועבת תועבות נפשו:
17. Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that have shed innocent blood, יז עינים רמות לשון שקר, וידיים שפכות דם נקי:
18. A heart that devises wicked thoughts, feet that are swift in running to evil, ♦ One must not contemplate the thoughts of the unorthodox believer lest he falters and is drawn after them (RYG). יח לב חרש מחשבות און, רגלים ממהרות לרוץ לרעה:

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19. A false witness who blows out (speaks -Rashi, MT) lies, and he that sows discord among loving (MD) brethren with his evil tongue. This last one is the worst of all since he kills three: himself, the listener, and the one about whom the slander is spoken (MD). יט יְפִיחַ כְּזָבִים עַד שָׁקֶר, וּמְשַׁלַּח מְדַנִּים בֵּין אַחִים: פ
20. My son, keep secure the Commandment of your father, and do not forsake the teachings of your mother, what she taught you (MD). כ נֹצַר בְּנֵי מִצְוֹת אָבִיךָ, וְאַל תִּטַּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ:
21. At all times, bind them to your heart; fasten them about your throat. כא קָשְׂרֵם עַל לִבְךָ תָּמִיד, עֲנִדֵם עַל גְּרִגְרֹתֶךָ:
22. When you walk through life (Rashi), they will lead you. When you lie down in the grave (Rashi), they will watch over you. When you awake at Resurrection to be judged (Rashi), they will talk with you and speak on your behalf (Rashi). ♦ They will lead you in the straight way and protect you against bandits in the night. Her words will speak to you amusingly like would a good friend (MD). כב בְּהִתְהַלֵּכְךָ תִּנְחָה אִתְּךָ, בְּשֹׁכְבְךָ תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ, וְהִקִּיצוֹת הִיא תִּשְׁיַחֵךְ:
23. For the Commandment is a lamp, and the learning of (MD) Torah⁷ is light. Reproofs of moral instruction are the way life keeps כג כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר, וְדַרְךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכַחוֹת מוֹסֵר:

⁷ It should be noted that throughout Mishlei the terms "Torah" and "Teaching" are synonymous and used interchangeably.

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one in check (Rashi), ♦ The merit of the Torah stands by a person forever, whereas the merit of having performed a single Commandment is short-termed, like the light of a candle or lamp (Rashi).

24. To protect you from the evil woman (idolatry –Rashi), from the smoothness of the alien woman's tongue, ♦ This is the foremost of all sins. Here we are talking, literally, about women (RYG).
- כד לְשֹׁמֵרְךָ מֵאִשֶׁת רָע, מִחֻלְקֶת לְשׁוֹן נְכַרְיָה:**
25. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart. Do not allow her to captivate you with her winks.
- כה אַל תַּחְמוֹד יָפִיָּה בְּלִבְבְּךָ, וְאַל תִּקְחֶדָּהּ בְּעַפְעָפֶיהָ:**
26. For on account of his coveting (MD) a harlot, a man can be reduced to a loaf of bread, as the adulteress hunts for the precious life. ♦ Once a precious free life, now it has been trapped for shipment to Hell (Rashi).
- כו כִּי בְעַד אִשָּׁה זֹנָה עַד כֶּכֶר לֶחֶם וְאִשֶׁת אִישׁ, נִפֶּשׁ יִקְרָה תְצוּד: פ**
27. Is it possible that a man can draw fire close to his chest, and his clothes not be burned?
- כז הֲיִחַתָּה אִישׁ אֵשׁ בְּחִיקוֹ, וּבִגְדָיו לֹא תִשְׂרַפְנָה:**
28. Or can one walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be scorched?
- כח אִם יִהְיֶה אִישׁ עַל הַגְּחָלִים, וְרַגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה:**

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29. So it is that he who calls on his neighbor's wife and has relations with her or (MD) **whosoever even just touches her, will not go unpunished.** ♦ This applies both to women and idol worship (Rashi). כט כּוּן הָבֵא אֶל אִשְׁתּוֹ רֵעֵהוּ, לֹא יִנָּקֶה כָּל הַנִּגַּע בָּהּ:
30. Now, people do not despise a thief if he only steals to satisfy his body when he is hungry. ♦ It is considered as if he is in the category of "almost compelled" (and somewhat justifiable even) since he only stole to assuage his hunger⁸ (MD). ל לא יְבוֹזוּ לַגָּנֵב כִּי יִגְנוֹב, לְמַלְא נַפְשׁוֹ כִּי יִרְעֵב:
31. Because if he is caught, and he will have to restore sevenfold what he stole, he can do it, even if he has to give up all his household possessions. ♦ He has from where he can repay his debt to the victim (Rashi). לא וְנִמְצָא יִשְׁלֵם שִׁבְעָתָיִם, אֵת כָּל הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן:
32. However, he who commits adultery with a woman lacks brains for he did not do this because he was starving to death (Rashi); **he destroys his own soul.** ♦ He is unlike the thief who can pay back his debt by returning the stolen goods or money and, besides, the thief only stole because he was hungry (Rashi). לב נֹאֵף אִשָּׁה חָסֵר לֵב, מִשְׁחִית נַפְשׁוֹ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂנָה:

⁸ His sin is almost forgivable, certainly understandable.

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33. Plagues and shame await him from the people (MD). His disgrace will not be erased or forgotten by Heaven (MD). לג נִגַע וְקִלּוֹן יִמָּצָא, וְחֶרְפָּתוֹ
לֹא תִמָּחָה:
34. For jealousy is the rage and anger (MT) of a man, and He (God – Rashi) will not have pity on the day of revenge. ♦ Her husband waits until he has the opportunity and takes his revenge; he keeps it to himself and does not forget (based on MD). לד כִּי קִנְיָה חֲמַת גָּבֵר, וְלֹא
יִחְמֹל בְּיוֹם נִקְמָה:
35. He will not contemplate accepting any inducement to pacify his indignation (MD) nor will he rest, and he is unwilling to be merciful (MD), even though you bribe him greatly. לה לֹא יִשָּׂא פָּנָיו כָּל כֹּפֶר, וְלֹא
יֵאָבֵה כִּי תִרְבֶּה שֹׁחַד: פ



CHAPTER 7

פרק ז

1. My son, observe My words, and stow away and conceal (MT) My Commandments within you. א בְּנִי, שְׁמֹר אִמְרֵי, וּמִצְוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אֹתָם:
2. Observe My Commandments and you will live, and protect My Torah as you would the pupil (the dark part –Rashi) of your eye. ב שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְחַיֶּה, וְתוֹרַתִּי כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינֶיךָ:
3. Bind them upon your fingers, and write them upon the tablet of your heart. ג קְשֹׁרִם עַל אֶצְבְּעֹתֶיךָ, כְּתֹבם עַל לוח־לִבְּךָ:
4. Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister', and call understanding 'an acquaintance'. ♦ Draw wisdom and understanding close to you (Rashi). ♦ Be as familiar with wisdom as you are with your sister (MD). ד אָמֹר לַחֲכָמָה אַחְתִּי אַתְּ, וּמִדַּע לְבִינָה תִקְרָא:

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5. That they may keep you from the strange woman who is not permitted to you (MD); from the alien woman who smoothes her words to seduce you (MD). ה לְשֹׁמְרֵךְ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה, מִנְּכַרְיָה אֲמָרִיָּה הַחֲלִיקָה:
6. For at the window of my house I peered outside (MD) through my fenestella to know the matters of men (MD). ו כִּי בַחֲלוֹן בֵּיתִי, בָּעֵד אֶשְׁנִיבִי נִשְׁקָפְתִּי:
7. And I observed among the simpletons, I perceived among the boys, a youth absent of understanding, ז וְאָרָא בַּפְתָּאִים אַבְיָנָה בְּבָנִים נְעֹר חָסֵר לֵב:
8. Passing through the market near her (the prostitute and the idolatry's -Rashi) corner. And he stepped towards her house, ח עָבַר בַּשּׁוּק אֶצֶל פְּנֵה, וְדָרָךְ בֵּיתָהּ יִצְעֵד:
9. In the twilight when he would not be seen (MD), in the evening of the day, in the darkness of night and the murky gloom. ט בְּנֶשֶׁף עֶרֶב יוֹם, בְּאִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה וְאֶפְלָה:
10. And indeed a woman came and met him, primed and cunning like a prostitute who intends to entrap men in her grip (MD). י וְהִנֵּה אִשָּׁה לְקָרְאתוֹ, שִׁית זֹנָה וְנִצְרַת לֵב:

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11. She is boisterous, calling out to attract clients (MD) and deviant and she talks about promiscuity (MD). Her feet do not find rest in her own house. ♦ She does not live at home like other women (MD). יא הַמָּיָה הִיא וְסָרְרַת, בְּבֵיתָהּ לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ רַגְלֶיהָ:
12. Now outside, now in the streets, pursuing her lovers (MD). She lurks at every corner waiting in ambush for passersby (MD). יב פַּעַם בַּחוּץ פַּעַם בְּרַחֲבוֹת, וְאַצֵּל כָּל פְּנֵה תְּאָרֵב:
13. So she caught hold of him, and kissed with him, and with an impudent and shameless (MD) look on her face she said to him: יג וְהִחֲזִיקָה בּוֹ וְנָשְׂקָה לוֹ, הֵעֵזָה פְּנֵיהָ וְתָאמַר לוֹ:
14. “I was obliged to bring a peace-offering, and today have I paid off my vows. ♦ I prepared a feast today having fulfilled my vow to bring a sacrifice and peace-offering (Rashi) and so I have a lot of meat (MD). יד זָבַחִי שְׁלָמִים עָלַי, הַיּוֹם שְׁלַמְתִּי נְדָרַי:
15. So I came out to meet you and invite you, for I have meat to eat (MD); and now I have found you. טו עַל כֵּן יָצָאתִי לִקְרֹאתְךָ, לְשֹׁחַר פְּנִידָה וְאַמְצָאָךְ:
16. I have adorned my bed with decorative, layered fabrics, and with the most exquisite knitted silk cords from Egypt. טז מְרֻבְּדִים רְבֻדְתִּי עֵרֶשִׁי, חֲטֻבוֹת אֵטוֹן מִצְרַיִם:

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17. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. יז נִפְתִּי מִשְׁכְּבִי מֵר אֶהְלִים וְקִנְמוֹן:
18. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning. Let us rejoice with much love. יח לֶכֶה נְרוּה דְדִים עַד הַבֶּקֶר, נִתְעַלְסָה בְּאֶהְבִּים:
19. For my husband (God –Rashi) is not at home. He has gone on a long journey so you have nothing to be afraid of (MD). יט כִּי אֵין הָאִישׁ בְּבֵיתוֹ, הֲלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ מֵרְחוֹק:
20. He has taken his wallet and money with him. He will only return home at the full moon.” ♦
Don't worry that he may unexpectedly show up in the middle of the night for he has taken his money with him to buy a lot of merchandise, and he will not come home until his money runs out nor before the date he scheduled for his return (MD). כ צִרוּר הַכֶּסֶף לָקַח בְּיָדוֹ, לְיוֹם הַכֶּסֶף יָבֵא בֵּיתוֹ:
21. And so, in the end, all her sweet talk succeeded in getting him to submit. With the smoothness of her lips, she enticed him. ♦ She had learned well how to talk seductively (MD). כא הִטְתּוּ בְּרַב לְקַחָהּ, בְּחֵלֶק שְׁפָתֶיהָ תִּדְיַחְנוּ:
22. He then dashed straight after her like an ox to slaughter or a poisonous rattlesnake sent by God (Rashi) to pursue the scoffer in order teach him a lesson. כב הוֹלֵךְ אַחֲרֶיהָ פְּתָאם כְּשׂוֹר אֶל טֶבַח יָבוֹא, וְכַעֲכַס אֶל מוֹסֵר אֹוִיל:

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23. Now the arrow pierces his liver⁹, like a bird which flies speedily into a net unaware that it is there (Rashi) in order to enjoy a little the seeds left there to trap her. She does not realize that her eating will be her demise (MD). He did not know that this would cost him his life, all for the pleasure of the moment (MD).
- כג עַד יַפְלֹחַ חֵץ כְּבִדּוֹ כְּמִיָּהר צְפוּרָה אֶל פֶּחַ, וְלֹא יָדַע כִּי בְנִפְשׁוֹ הוּא: פ
24. Therefore, children, listen to me and what I have to say and do not be like this one (MD).
- כד וְעַתָּה בָּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי, וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לְאִמְרֵי פִי:
25. Do not allow your heart to descend to her ways. Do not go astray in her paths.
- כה אַל יִשְׁטַ אֶל דְּרָכֶיהָ לְבָד, אֶל תִּתַּע בְּנִתִּיבוֹתֶיהָ:
26. For she has defeated many, and with casualties, and has slain a multitude.
- כו כִּי רַבִּים חָלְלִים הִפְלָה, וְעַצְמִים כָּל הִרְגִיָּה:
27. Her house leads to the netherworld, plummeting down to the chambers of death. ♦ The way to her house is the way to Hell, and it descends to the chamber of death. For there he is easily seduced and loses his life (MD).
- כז דְּרָכֵי שְׂאוֹל בֵּיתָהּ, יִרְדּוּת אֶל חֲדָרֵי מָוֹת: פ



⁹ Maybe כבדו is can be read כבודו, “his honor” and would thus mean that he was dishonored as fast as being shot by an arrow.

CHAPTER 8

פרק ח

1. But does not wisdom (the Torah – Rashi) call out follow me! (MD), and understanding raise her voice?
א הלא חכמה תקרא,
ותבונה תתן קולה:
2. She stands at the top of high places and mountains (MD) and on the thoroughfares so her voice can be heard afar (MD), at the intersections where the roads split off in many directions. There many people meet (MD).
ב בראש מרומים עלי
דרך, בית נתיבות נצבה:
3. She cries aloud from the lintels above the gates at the entrance to the city,
ג ליד שערים לפי קרת,
מבוא פתחים תלנה:
4. “To you, the people, I call. My voice is for the sons of men.
ד אליכם אישים אקרא,
וקולי אל בני אדם:
5. Let the simpletons learn the wisdom and the clevernesses required to outsmart the enticers (MD), and let the unwise gain understanding hearts.
ה הבינו פתאים ערמה,
וכסילים הבינו לב:

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6. Pay attention, for I will speak of important and valuable matters, and from my parted lips will emerge correct things. ו שְׁמָעוּ כִּי נִגִּידִים אֲדַבֵּר, וּמִפֶּתַח שִׁפְתַי מִיִּשְׂרָיִם:
7. My mouth will tell the truth since wickedness would be an abomination for my lips to utter (MD). ז כִּי אֱמֶת יִהְיֶה חֶכְמִי, וְתוֹעֵבַת שִׁפְתַי רָשָׁע:
8. All the words of my mouth are spoken in righteousness. There is nothing perverse or crooked in them. ח בְּצֶדֶק כָּל אִמְרֵי פִי, אֵין בָּהֶם נִפְתָּל וְעִקָּשׁ:
9. They are all plain to him who understands and who is capable of understanding (MD), and right to those who seek knowledge. ט כָּל־ם נִלְחִים לַמְּבִין, וַיִּשְׂרָיִם לַמְּצַאֵי דַעַת:
10. Take hold of my moral teachings, and not silver, and knowledge, rather than choice gold. י קָחוּ מוֹסְרֵי וְאַל כֶּסֶף, וְדַעַת מִחֶרוֹץ נִבְחָר:
11. For wisdom is better than pearls. Nothing desirable nor any object can be compared to her. יא כִּי טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִפְּנִינִים, וְכָל חֲפָצִים לֹא יִשׁוּוּ בָּהּ:

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12. I, wisdom, cohabit with shrewdness, and I will find the knowledge for escaping from the enticing (MD) **plotting** of the evil inclination (MD). יב **אֲנִי חֲכָמָה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִרְמָה, וְדַעַת מְזֻמּוֹת אֶמְצָא:** ♦ For when one learns Torah, he learns how to be adroit in all matters (Rashi). ♦ The evil impulse is unable to outsmart the Torah (MD).
13. Know that to be God-fearing means to hate evil, pride and arrogance, and the way of wickedness and sin (MD). And I יג **יִרְאַת יְהוָה שְׁנֵאת רָע גֵּאָה וְגֵאוֹן וְדָרְךְ רָע, וּפִי תִהְפְּכוֹת שְׁנֵאתִי:** ♦ This is the moral lesson which wisdom calls out to the people (Rashi).
14. I have the counsel to help save you from the evil inclination (MD) and the resourcefulness to weaken it (MD). I have the understanding to battle it (MD) and provide you the courage to conquer it (MD). יד **לִי עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָה, אֲנִי בִינָה לִי גְבוּרָה:**
15. With me, kings reign and noblemen decree justice. טו **בִּי מְלָכִים יִמְלְכוּ, וְרוֹזְנִים יַחְקְקוּ צְדָק:** ♦ Their monarchy will last if they rule by the laws of the Torah (MD). ♦ Using wisdom, the nobles can implement just and honest laws (MD).
16. With me, ministers govern and all the righteous judges in the land are generous. טז **בִּי שָׂרִים יִשְׁרוּ, וּנְדִיבִים כָּל שֹׁפְטֵי צְדָק:**

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17. I love those who love me. Those who earnestly wish to understand me will find much reason with (MD) me. ♦ They will find the fifty gates of wisdom (Rashi). יז אָנִי אֲהַבִּי אֲהַבִּיה אֲהַב, וּמִשְׁחָרֵי יִמְצְאוּנִי:
18. Riches and honor are acquired through (MD) me, as is enduring wealth and righteousness. יח עֶשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד אֶתִּי, הוֹן עֲתִק וְצַדִּיקָה:
19. My fruit (the reward for Torah – MD) is better than gold, even fine gold, and my good (MD) produce is better than choice silver. יט טוֹב פְּרִי מִחֶרוֹץ וּמָפֶז, וְתַבּוֹאתַי מִמָּסָף נִבְחָר:
20. I walk and lead a person (MD) in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice, כ בָּאֲרַח צַדִּיקָה אֶהְלֵךְ, בְּתוֹךְ, נְתִיבוֹת מִשְׁפָּט:
21. To provide an inheritance which comprises much good (MD) and that I may fill the treasuries of those who love me. כא לְהִנְחִיל אֲהַבִּי יֵשׁ, וְאַצְרֹתֵיהֶם אֲמַלֵּא: פ
22. God created me (the Torah –RYG) to be His possession (MD) from the beginning of His enterprise, before He created the world (Rashi), before His ancient work, that is, a very long time ago (MD). ♦ God created the world for the Torah (RYG). כב יְהוָה קָנָנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרֵפוֹ, קִדְם מִפְעֻלּוֹ מֵאָז:

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23. From the beginning, before the Earth, I was designated to be prince and ruler (MD). כג מְעוֹלָם נִסְכַּתִּי מִרֵאשׁ מִקְדָּמִי אֶרֶץ:
24. I was created before there were the abysses, and before the munificent springs of water. כד בְּאֵין תְּהִמוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי, בְּאֵין מַעֲיֵנוֹת נִכְבְּדֵי מַיִם:
25. I came into existence before the mountains had sunk and settled in place, and before the hills. כה בְּטָרָם הָרִים הִטְבְּעוּ, לִפְנֵי גִבְעוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי:
26. Before He made the inhabitable (Malbim) land of Israel and all the other lands (Rashi), and the less inhabitable (Malbim) open spaces outside of the land (Malbim), and before there was dust (Adam –Rashi) in the inhabited (MD) world. כו עַד לֹא עָשָׂה אֶרֶץ וְחוּצוֹת, וְרֵאשׁ עֲפָרוֹת תֵּבֵל:
27. I was already there when He established the Heavens, and when He encircled and set up a boundary around (Rashi) the chasm separating the land from the water (Rashi), כז בְּהִכִּינוּ שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָנִי, בְּחֻקּוֹ חוּג עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם:
28. Before He strengthened the firmament above, when the fountains of the deep were powered up, כח בְּאַמְצוֹ שְׁחָקִים מִמַּעַל, בְּעִזּוֹ עֵינוֹת תְהוֹם:

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29. Before He invested the seas with His Law instructing them not to exceed their designated boundaries and spill onto the land (MD), and that the waters should not violate His Commandment. The Earth was founded with its Laws. כט בְּשׁוּמוֹ לַיָּם חֻקּוֹ וּמִיָּם לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ פִּיּוֹ, בְּחֻקּוֹ מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ:
30. I have been like a small child he is raising up to Himself. I have been a daily delight, playing before Him all the time like a beloved daughter to her father (MD), ל וְאֶהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ אֶמּוֹן וְאֶהְיֶה שְׂעִשְׁעִים יוֹם יוֹם, מְשַׁחֲקֶת לְפָנָיו בְּכָל יְעַת:
31. Playing in His habitable Earth. My delights are with the sons of men. ♦ The Torah was God's amusement before the Creation, and is Man's joy after the Creation (RYG). ♦ I take pleasure with mankind, and they with me (MD). לא מְשַׁחֲקֶת בְּתֵבֶל אֶרֶצוֹ, וְשִׂעִשְׁעִי אֶת בְּנֵי אָדָם: פ
32. Now children, listen to Me, for those who observe My ways will find contentment. לב וְעַתָּה בְּנֵים שְׁמְעוּ לִי, וְאַשְׁרֵי דְרָכַי יִשְׁמְרוּ:
33. Accept instruction first (MD) and then (MD) become wise and seek wisdom (MD); do not reject it (my morality –Rashi). ♦ When the fear of God precedes wisdom, wisdom will certainly last (MD). לג שְׁמְעוּ מוֹסֵר וְחִכְמוּ, וְאַל תִּפְרְעוּ:

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34. For happy is the man who listens to Me, he who hurries and is in daily attendance at My gates, stationed like a permanent guard (MD) at My doorposts so as to be the first to enter the study hall and synagogue, and the last to leave (Rashi).
לד אֲשֶׁר־י אָדָם שָׁמַע לִי לְשָׂקֵד עַל דְּלֹתַי יוֹם יוֹם, לְשָׁמֹר מִזְוֹת פֶּתָחַי:
35. For whosoever finds Me finds life, and obtains the favor of God, that is, intelligence (MT). ♦ God will look upon him favorably (MD).
לה כִּי מִצְאֵי מְצָא מִצְאֵי חַיִּים, וַיִּפֶּק רָצוֹן מִיְהוָה:
36. But he who sins against and rejects (MD) Me, wrongs his soul and takes his own life (MD). All those who hate me, love death.”
לו וְחָטְאֵי חִמָּס נַפְשׁוֹ, כָּל מִשְׁנֵאֵי אָהָבוּ מוֹת: פ



CHAPTER 9

פרק ט

1. With wisdoms she (God –Rashi) **built her house** (the world – Rashi), **she has hewn out her seven pillars.** א חכמות בנתה ביתה, חצבה עמודיה שבעה:

◇ God built the world in seven days. Another matter: There are seven books in the Torah counting ויהי בנסוע הארון (Numbers 10:35-36) as a book unto itself (Rashi). ◇ This verse refers to building the character of the soul (RYG). ◇ Its many equal and symmetrical pillars are very aesthetic to the observer (MD).
2. She has prepared her meat, she **has mingled her wine** with water which is undrinkable until it is diluted (Rashi); **she has also arranged her table** furnished with all sorts of imaginative creations (Rashi) for all who call (MD). ב טבחה טבחה מסכה יינה, אף ערכה שלחנה:
3. She has sent forth her maidens (Adam and Eve or Moses and Aaron –Rashi). **She calls from the highest places of the city,** ג שלחה נערותיה, תקרא על גפי מלמי קרת:

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4. Let the **simple ones** who don't know how to prepare food (MD) **turn here** and I will teach you, and you will be wise (Rashi). **But regarding those who lack understanding, she says,** ד
- מִי פְתִי יִסֹר הֵנָּה, חֲסֹר לֵב
אָמְרָה לוֹ:
5. Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. ♦ 'If you do not have of your own food and drink, come join me'. This means that all the wisdoms of the Torah are agreeable and brighten the eyes. They bestow knowledge to those who peruse them. This is a call to all who wish to learn to come and learn. And if their hearts are closed to understanding, I will give them understanding (MD). ה
- לְכוּ לַחֲמוּ בִלְחֵמִי, וּשְׁתוּ
בַיַּיִן מִסִּכְתִּי:
6. Leave behind all thoughtlessness and you will live; step happily to the beat of understanding. ו
- עֲזְבוּ פְתָאִים וְחַיּוּ, וְאֶשְׂרוּ
בְדָרֶךְ בִּינָה:
7. Now, he who attempts to admonish a mocker procures shame for himself because he will disgrace him and not listen to him (Rashi), and he who chides a wicked man – a blemish. ♦ This is all a warning not to rebuke or reprove the enticers or even attempt to bring them close to you (Rashi). ♦ Neither the mocker nor the evil man should you rebuke. The mocker will only disgrace and shame you. The evil man will just turn around and say, "you are just like me" and will blot your honor. Have nothing to do with these people (MD). ז
- יִסֹר לֵץ לִקְחַ לּוֹ קִלּוֹן,
וּמוֹכִיחַ לְרָשָׁע מוֹמוֹ:

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8. Do not reprimand the joker for he might come to hate you for he thinks himself smart and that he is doing right (MD). **Reprove the wise man, and he will love you for he seeks correction and learns from all men (MD).**
- ח אֵל תּוֹכַח לֵץ פֶּן יִשְׁנֹאֲךָ,
הוֹכַח לְחָכָם וַיֵּאֱהָבְךָ:
9. Give to the wise man, and he will be yet wiser; inform the righteous man, and he will increase in learning by means of his own understanding (Rashi).
- ט תֵּן לְחָכָם וַיִּחְכְּם, עוֹד
הוֹדַע לְצַדִּיק וַיּוֹסֶף לְקַח:
פ
10. The fear of God is a prerequisite for wisdom, and the knowledge of sanctification¹⁰ of oneself (MD) for understanding.
- י תַּחֲלֵת חֲכָמָה יִרְאֵת
יְהוָה, וַדַּעַת קְדוּשִׁים
בִּינָה:
11. For through me, your involvement in Torah (MD) your days will be many for you will be engaged in many good deeds (MD), and the years of your life with sustenance and happiness (Rashi) will be increased. ♦ The many days you were involved in good deeds will be added to your life in the World to Come (MD).
- יא כִּי בִי יִרְבוּ יָמֶיךָ, וַיּוֹסִיפוּ
לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:

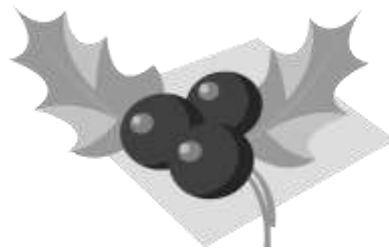
¹⁰ Or, "an awareness of (the concept of) sanctity", as we recite להבדיל בין קודש לחול. The failure of Secularism is its total rejection of the notion of holiness and its applications as defined by the Torah.

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12. For if you become wise, you become wise for yourself as an advantage (MD), and if you ridicule, you will bear that punishment (MD) alone. יב אִם חֲכָמָתְךָ לָךְ, וְלִצְתָּ לְבַדְּךָ תִּשָּׂא:
13. The foolish woman is noisy with her voice (MD). She is thoughtless and oblivious of it (MD). יג אִשָּׁת פְּסִילוֹת הַמִּיָּה, פְּתִיּוֹת וּבֶל יִדְעָה מָה:
14. And so she sits at the entrance of her house so she can watch all who pass by (MD) on a seat high in the city so she can make her voice heard afar (MD), יד וַיֵּשֶׁבָה לְפֶתַח בֵּיתָהּ, עַל כִּסֵּא מְרֹמֵי קִרְיָת:
15. To call to them who pass by, who go on the right way, the way of God (MD): טו לְקוֹלָא לְעֹבְרֵי דְרָךְ, הַמִּיִּשְׁרִים אֲרוּחוֹתֵם:
16. 'Whoever is thoughtless who has withheld goodness from his soul (MD), let him turn in here and I will teach him wisdom (Torah) without which one is considered a fool (MD)'. And to whomever lacks understanding, she says: טז מִי פָתִי יִסֹר הִנֵּה, וַחֲסֹר לֵב וְאָמְרָה לוֹ:

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17. 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten surreptitiously is pleasant.' ♦ The savoriness of relations with a virgin is incomparable with that of a woman who already has had sexual relations (Rashi). ♦ The tastiness of doing something forbidden is unparalleled with that of something permitted (MD). יז מִיִּם גְּנוּבִים יִמְתְּקוּ, וְלֶחֶם סְתָרִים יִנְעָם:
18. And he does not know that the ghosts, those who have been weakened by death (MD), are there, beckoning him from the depths of the netherworld to where he will go (MD). ♦ All those who are drawn after their lusts are doomed to die (MD). יח וְלֹא יָדַע כִּי רִפְּאִים שָׁם, בְּעִמְקֵי שְׂאוֹל קְרָאִיהָ: פ



CHAPTER 10

פרק י

1. Now, these are the Proverbs of Solomon: א משלי שלמה פ

A wise son makes his father glad, whereas a foolish one is the grief of and an affront to his mother. ♦

בן חכם ישמח אב, ובן
כסיל תוגת אמו:

Being (at home –MD) with him all the time, she sees his stupidity constantly (Rashi). ♦ The terms fool, scoffer, and evil man are all descriptions of people with bad traits (RYG). ♦ A father delights when he sees his son in the company of wise men (MD).

2. Treasures by reason of which one was given honor (Rashi) earned by means of wickedness profit nothing, whereas righteousness delivers from death. ♦ ב לא יועילו אוצרות רשע, וצדקה תציל ממות: Charity saves from death (RYG). ♦ Immorally-gained earnings will not save the evil man on Judgment Day, for one cannot buy redemption of his soul with money (MD).

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3. God does not allow the righteous to go hungry even though he has given all his money to charity (Rashi), and thwarts the cravings of the wicked, by pushing them aside, they fall away (Rashi). ♦ The evil man's sin pays him back for his wickedness (MD). ג
לֹא יִרְעִיב יְהוָה נָפֶשׁ
צַדִּיק, וְהוֹת רְשָׁעִים
יִהְדָּף:
4. Ultimately, the destitute will plummet into paucity, while the hand of the diligent and honest (MD) man will prosper. ♦ Those lacking in Torah will impart false teachings (Rashi). ♦ Fraudulent merchants will end up poor (Rashi). ♦ The honest businessman who industriously works for his living will ultimately be rich (MD). ד
רֵאשׁ עֵשָׂה כֶּף רָמְיָהּ,
וַיֵּד חֲרוּצִים תַּעֲשִׂיר:
5. The wise son gathers his harvest in the Summer, whereas the son who does shameful things goes into a deep slumber during the harvest. ♦ The wise son is conscientious and does things in their proper time, unlike the foolish son whose every deed is an embarrassment, and he does nothing on time (MD). ה
אִגֹּר בְּקִיץ בֶּן מְשֻׁפֵּיל,
נִרְדָּם בְּקֶצֶר בֶּן מִבִּישׁ:
6. Blessings are upon the head of the righteous, whereas the mouths of the wicked conceal violence. ♦ Things which descend from Heaven fall on the head first (RYG). ♦ The righteous bring blessing, while the wicked will choke on their sinfulness (MD). ו
בְּרָכוֹת לְרֵאשׁ צַדִּיק, וּפִי
רְשָׁעִים יִכְסֶה חֶמְס:

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7. The memory of the righteous will be for a blessing, whereas the name of the wicked will rot and be forgotten. ז זָכַר צְדִיק לְבִרְכָה, וְשֵׁם רָשָׁעִים יִרְקַב׃
- Whoever mentions the name of a righteous man blesses him (Rashi) "זכר צדיק לברכה" Since no one wishes to mention the name of an evil person, it will eventually be forgotten (Rashi). A person is remembered most for his deeds and his words (RYG).
8. The wise of heart (this is our teacher Moshe –Rashi) will receive Commandments, while the prating mocker will weary and fail. ח חָכֵם לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת, וְאֹיִל שְׁפָתַיִם יִלְבֹּט׃
- While the people were busy gathering the plunder of Egypt, Moses occupied himself with the Commandments (Rashi). When an obligation falls into his lap, the savant immediately begins to ponder how he can perform the Mitzvah (RYG). The wise man forever accepts upon himself his religious obligations, and looks for even more to do, whereas the fool talks a lot, but does nothing (MD).
9. He who walks upright with purity of heart (MD) will walk securely, whereas he who walks perversely and takes advantage of his fellow man by cheating and deceiving him (RYG) will be exposed and broken (Rashi) and suppressed (MD). ט הוֹלֵךְ בְּתֵם יֵלֵךְ בְּטָח, וּמַעֲקֹשׁ דְּרָכָיו יִנְדַע׃
10. The one who winks evil causes sorrow, and the chattering scorners will fall into trouble. י קָרַץ עֵינָיו יִתֵּן עֲצָבָת, וְאֹיִל שְׁפָתַיִם יִלְבֹּט׃
- He seductively winks with his eye that it's okay to do malice (Rashi).

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The skeptic's secrets are revealed by his own lips (RYG). ♦ He hints with his eye to others to do evil (MD). ♦ The winker will never know peace until the vile matter is done, whereas the evil jabber will tire when his fury subsides having expended copious words (MD).

11. **From the mouth of the righteous flows the fountain of life, whereas violence in the heart is concealed in the mouth of the wicked.** ♦ The wicked speak slickly, but hatred is buried in their hearts (Rashi). ♦ Anyone who conducts himself in accordance with the words of the righteous man will live (RYG). ♦ As with this verse, most of this book presents the extremes of good and bad behavior and shows how far apart they are from each other (RYG).
- יא **מְקוֹר חַיִּים פִּי צַדִּיק, וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יְכַסֵּה חֶמְס:**
12. **Hatred stirs up strife, whereas love covers all iniquities.** ♦ Long-forgotten misdeeds are resurrected when people argue (Rashi). ♦ If Israel acts sinfully, God remembers their early transgressions. But when the people improve their ways, God conceals their iniquities (Rashi). ♦ One should always avoid the haters. All his business should be transacted with those who love him (RYG). ♦ Hatred brings a person to be exacting with his enemies' deeds, whereas love overlooks even serious infractions (MD).
- יב **שִׂנְאָה תַעֲוִיר מְדַנִּים, וְעֵל כָּל פְּשָׁעִים תִּכַּסֶּה אַהֲבָה:**
13. **Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning man, whereas the rod is on the back of he who is void of understanding.** ♦ The prudent man immediately acknowledges his errors when rebuked and says unhesitatingly, "I sinned!" as did David (II Samuel 12:13)
- יג **בְּשִׁפְתַי נְבוֹן תִּמְצָא חֲכָמָה, וְשִׁבְט לְגוֹ חֲסָר לֵב:**

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(Rashi). ♦ The savant deduces one matter from another. Therefore, regardless of the issue, he has something smart to say. Whereas the unintelligent person is not only incapable of understanding on his own, even if he is taught, he won't comprehend the matter. His only correction is by the rod (RYG).

14. **Wise men store up knowledge, whereas the mouth of the mocker invites imminent ruin.** ♦ The wise man retains his learning deep in his heart so it will not be forgotten (Rashi). ♦ The wise man listens attentively to his teachers, and remembers well what he was taught. The fool speaks without forethought, even if what he says will cause damage, whether it is slander or talebearing or liable or giving bad advice (RYG). ♦ Knowledge is hidden from the unworthy lest it become a snare for those who don't understand truth (MD).
- יד חֲכָמִים יִצְפְּנוּ דָעַת, וּפִי אֲוִיל מְחַתֵּה קִרְבָּה:
15. **The rich man's wealth, i.e. Torah (Rashi) is his fortress, whereas the impoverished man's poverty by failing to engage in Torah (Rashi) is his ruin.** ♦ This refers to the man rich in Torah. The one lacking Torah breaks quickly (MD). ♦ The impoverish person (דל) is one who had money, but lost it (lit. it thinned out) (Malbim).
- טו הוּן עֲשִׂיר קְרִית עֲזוֹ, מְחַתֵּת דָלִים רִישָׁם:
16. **The work¹¹ of the righteous is life itself, while the yield of the wicked is sin.** ♦ The actions of the righteous are the purpose of life (MD). ♦ It is better to be poor and not sin than rich and sin (after RYG).
- טז פְּעֻלַת צְדִיק לְחַיִּים, תְּבוּאֹת רָשָׁע לְחַטָּאת:

¹¹ Or, the wage for the work of the righteous is life.

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17. The one who will earn life is he who heeds ethical instruction, whereas the one who forsakes reproof errs. ♦ He misleads himself and others (Rashi). ♦ Ethical behavior is the pathway to life (MD). יז אֲרַח לְחַיִּים שׁוֹמֵר מוֹסֵר, וְעוֹזֵב תּוֹכַחַת מִתְּעָה:
18. The fool conceals his hatred behind lying and libelous lips¹². ♦ He gossips (MT). ♦ The fool retains his hatred in his heart and won't abandon it; he makes like he is a lover. This results in sins and lies. The one who cannot suppress his hatred will ridicule others and be, himself, considered the fool, since כל הפוסל במומו פוסל – the blemish someone accuses another of having is the very blemish he himself bears (MD). ♦ Regarding reproof: Do not sin when rebuking someone, that is, by humiliating him in public. Rather talk with him privately (RYG). יח מְכַסֶּה שְׂנְאָה שְׂפָתָי שָׁקֵר, וּמוֹצֵא דָבָר הוּא כְּסִיל:
19. It is impossible to speak a lot without uttering or causing (Rashi) a transgression, whereas silence is wise¹³. ♦ The wise man is he who keeps quiet (Rashi). ♦ Stop and think before speaking or answering someone, and investigate matters first (RYG). יט בְּרַב דְּבָרִים לֹא יִחְדַּל פֶּשַׁע, וְחֹשֵׁךְ שְׂפָתָיו מִשְׂכִּיל:
20. The virtuous ones who rebuke wisely (Rashi and MD) choose their words carefully like refined (MD) silver, whereas the wit of the wicked, those who heed to no כ כָּסֶף נִבְחָר לְשׁוֹן צְדִיק, לֵב רְשָׁעִים כְּמַעֵט:

¹² More literally, "Lying lips conceal hatred, and the libeler is a fool".

¹³ Or, "silence wisens".

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rebuke (Rashi), **is worth little**. ♦ The wicked cannot control their spirit and settle their thoughts. They jump up and speak before the other person finishes speaking to him (RYG). ♦ The wicked understand very little (MD).

21. The lips of the righteous shepherd the masses, whereas the foolish die from lack of understanding and empathy. ♦ Many eat in the merit of the righteous and their prayers (Rashi). ♦ The wicked never change and remain foolish until they die (RYG). ♦ Many are nourished by the lips of the righteous since they teach the ways which are good for them (MD). ♦ Since the fools would¹⁴ not comprehend the words of the righteous, they die (MD).
- כא שִׁפְתֵי צְדִיק יִרְעוּ רַבִּים, וְאֹיְלִים בְּחֶסֶר לֵב יָמוּתוּ:**
22. A blessing from God is complete; no sadness will be added to it. ♦ One need not toil for wealth for the blessing of God is sufficient (Rashi). ♦ The righteous man does not get excited neither by wealth or poverty. All is from Heaven, and he is happy with his portion (RYG). ♦ A blessing from God enriches the recipient (MD).
- כב בְּרַפַּת יְהוָה הִיא תַעֲשִׂיר, וְלֹא יוֹסֵף עֶצֶב עִמָּה:**
23. The easy (Rashi) sport of the fool is to plot wickedness, whereas wisdom is recreation for the man of discernment. ♦ It is easy for the fool to do evil; it is easy for the smart man to do wise things (MD).
- כג כְּשִׁחּוֹק לְכָסִיל עֲשׂוֹת זָמָה, וְחֻכְמָה לְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה:**

¹⁴ Maybe "could not"? Is he a fool because he chose not to listen to the wise man or is he a fool because he is incapable of understanding the wise man's words?

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24. The wicked man's terrorizing will backfire on himself, whereas God will grant the desire of the righteous. ♦ The dread of the wicked (fearing their own punishment) will come to pass (Rashi). ♦ The good the righteous desire will be obtained from the one who can give it to them, that is God (MD).
 כד מְגוֹרֵת רָשָׁע הִיא תְּבוֹאֲנוֹ, וְתַאֲוֹת צְדִיקִים יִתֵּן:
25. The wicked will perish in a sudden and (Rashi) furious whirlwind, whereas the righteous will endure forever, for they are like the foundation of the world and do not budge (MD). ♦ The wicked will perish in an instant (MD).
 כה כַּעֲבוֹר סוּפָה וְאֵין רָשָׁע, וְצְדִיק יִסּוּד עוֹלָם:
26. The sluggard burns like vinegar to the teeth, and like smoke to the eyes of the one who sent him because he did not pay attention to what he was asked to do or he did not bother to understand what he was told or he was slow in carrying out his mission (RYG). ♦ This all refers to performing the work of Torah and Mitzvohs (RYG). ♦ The indolent person sent on a mission causes loss to his dispatcher because he relied on him, yet he was lazy in its execution (MD).
 כו כַּחֲמֵץ לְשֵׁנִים וְכַעֲשׂוֹן לְעֵינָיִם, כֵּן הָעֵצֶל לְשִׁלְחָיו:
27. Having awe of God prolongs one's days, whereas the years of the wicked will be shortened. ♦ Worries weary the body and shorten one's life. Not so the concern of having sinned or the possibility of not properly worshipping God, for it says (Psalms 61:7), "Days will be added to the king, to his years,
 כז יִרְאֵת יְהוָה תוֹסִיף יָמִים, וְשָׁנוֹת רָשָׁעִים תִּקְצָרְנָה:

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like generations". ♦ That is, the one who grasps tightly the principle of the fear of God for himself (MD). ♦ That is, shortened from his initially allotted years (MD).

28. The anticipation of the righteous is gladness, whereas the expectation of the wicked is that they will perish. ♦ The hopes of the righteous will eventually be realized, and they will rejoice, but the (positive) expectations of the wicked will be dashed (Rashi). ♦ The wicked will be disappointed by their failures (MD).
- כח תוֹחֶלֶת צְדִיקִים שְׂמֵחָה, וְתִקְוֹת רְשָׁעִים תֵּאֲבֹד:**
29. The way of God is a stronghold for the whole-hearted, whereas it is perdition for the workers of iniquity. ♦ These are they who do not go in the way of God (Rashi). ♦ The way of God gives strength to those who put their full trust in God. But those who act lawlessly, without God, will crack (MD).
- כט מַעוֹז לַתֵּם דְּרֹךְ יְהוָה, וּמַחֲתָה לְפַעְלֵי אָוֶן:**
30. The righteous will never permanently collapse, whereas the wicked will not inhabit the land in serenity. ♦ The righteous may fall, but will always rise again (Rashi). ♦ The wicked will not live long on the land. Even if they "have their hour", it is fleeting (MD).
- ל צְדִיק לְעוֹלָם בַּל יִמוּט, וְרְשָׁעִים לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ אֶרֶץ:**
31. The mouth of the righteous buds with wisdom, whereas the deceitful tongue of the one who upsets the wisdom of the Torah (MD) will be severed. ♦ The opposite of wisdom is falsehood (RYG).
- לא פִּי צְדִיק יָנוּב חֲכָמָה, וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְּכוֹת תִּכָּרֵת:**

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32. The lips of the righteous are pleasing, whereas the mouth of the wicked is all deceit. ♦ The

righteous know how to placate God and Man, and make peace among men (Rashi). ♦ The wicked distort the words of God and invent apostasies from them. All their efforts are set to this end, and they are accustomed to this matter (MD).

לב שְׂפֵתַי צְדִיק יִדְעוֹן רָצוֹן,
וּפִי רְשָׁעִים תְּהַפְּכוֹת:



CHAPTER 11

פרק יא

1. God abhors those who use false weights, but delights in the honest man¹⁵. ♦ This also refers to the one who is accustomed to lying. In a dispute, he finds support for other liars and guilty parties and, by so doing, weakens the innocent (RYG).

א מֵאֲזַי מְרָמָה תֹעֵבֶת
יְהוָה, וְאָבֵן שְׁלֵמָה
רְצוֹנוֹ:
2. Arrogance ultimately leads to shame, whereas humility brings wisdom. ♦ It is characteristic of the wise to be humble and pay attention to what others have to say, and having no urge to divulge to everyone what is on his own mind (RYG). ♦ The arrogant man humiliates other people (MD). ♦ One who intentionally and publicly disputes God and His Torah, and does so proudly, is also one who mocks wisdom and the clever people (Malbim).

ב בָּא זְדוֹן וַיִּבֹא קִלּוֹן, וְאֶת
צְנוּעִים חִכְמָה:

¹⁵ More literally, "God abhors false balances, but shows satisfaction with the accurate weight."

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3. The integrity of the upright ones will guide them to the Good Way (MD), whereas the perverseness of the faithless people will destroy and rob (Rashi) them. ❖ From this point, Solomon begins to instruct us regarding the closely-related attributes of whole-heartedness and integrity. Whole-heartedness refers to the state of mind one must attain in order for him perfect his character and ways. Integrity means to love honesty, and choose righteousness and uprightedness. A person's intelligence and desires must be directed to achieving integrity (RYG).
- ג
תִּמְתּוּ יִשְׂרָיִם תְּנַחֲמֵם, וְסִלְףּ בּוֹגְדִים יִשְׂדֵּם וְשָׂדֵם:
4. Wealth will be of no use to redeem their souls (MD) on the day God fumes at the sinners, whereas righteousness and charity (MD) deliver from death. ❖ The righteous are the ones who pursue righteousness and just concerns (RYG).
- ד
לֹא יוֹעִיל הוֹן בְּיוֹם עֲבָרָה, וְצַדִּיקָה תַצִּיל מִמָּוֶת:
5. The righteousness and charitableness (MD) of the sincere man will make his way straight, whereas the wicked ones will fall by means of their own wickedness. ❖ The benevolent acts one engages in leads him to the correct and beneficial path (MD). ❖ The wicked become entrapped in the very traps they set up to ensnare others (MD).
- ה
צְדִיקַת תְּמִים תִּישֵׁר דְרָכּוֹ, וּבִרְשָׁעָתוֹ יִפֹּל רָשָׁע:

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6. The righteousness of the upright men saves them from bad (MD), whereas the rebellious traitors will be enmeshed by their own perfidy. ו צְדָקַת יִשְׁרָיִם תַּצִּילֵם, וּבְהוֹת בְּגָדִים יִלְכְּדוּ:
7. When a wicked man dies, hope is lost, and the expectation of his strength vanishes. ♦ The hope of all those who trusted him during his life will be lost; and to his children, the product of his strength, he leaves no merit for their good (to protect them – MD), unlike the children of the righteous who have in what to trust (Rashi). ♦ Do not envy the wicked in their successes. In the end, when they die, all their hopes will be lost (RYG). ז בְּמוֹת אָדָם רָשָׁע תֵּאבֵד תִּקְוָה, וְתוֹחֶלֶת אוֹנִים אֲבָדָה:
8. The righteous man is delivered from trouble, while the wicked comes in his place. ♦ God's judgment is not pacified until someone takes his place¹⁶ (MD). ח צְדִיק מִצָּרָה נִחְלָץ, וַיָּבֵא רָשָׁע תַּחְתּוֹ:
9. The hypocrite and enticer (MD) destroys his neighbor with his mouth, whereas the righteous man is saved by means of his Torah (MD) knowledge. ♦ The knowledge of Torah saves the righteous man from the flatterer, as it says (Deut. 13:9), “Do not want after him, etc.” (Rashi). ♦ Inasmuch as the need for flattery and praise is absent with the ט בְּפֶה חָנֵף יִשְׁחַת יְעֵהוּ, וּבִדְעַת צְדִיקִים יִחְלֹצוּ:

¹⁶ Later we will learn that once a punishment is decreed, someone has to be punished! Thus, if it was originally decreed for a righteous man or even for an ordinary person and then he repents, the designated punishment will not be erased but will be transferred to an evil man for its execution.

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righteous, they are saved from those who use these methods to entice them (RYG).

10. When things are going well with the righteous man everyone rejoices, as they do when the wicked perish. **י** בְּטוֹב צְדִיקִים תֵּעָלֶץ
קָרְיָהּ, וּבְאַבְדֹת רְשָׁעִים
רָנָה: ›
- Although we are prohibited from hating our brethren (Lev. 19:17), (in this matter) the wicked are not our considered our "brothers" (RYG). **י** People rejoice when they know that the righteous influenced them with the good that God had apportioned for them (MD). **י** People rejoice when the wicked perish because the distress they caused others when they were alive has come to an end (MD).
11. A city (lit. ceiling) is exalted (lit. raised) by the blessing of the upright, but it is overthrown (destroyed –MD) by the mouth of the wicked. **יא** בְּבִרְכַת יְשָׁרִים תָּרוּם
קָרְתָּ, וּבִפִּי רְשָׁעִים
תִּהְרָס: יא
- As long as the kings of Judah were upright, their prayers upheld the ceiling of the Temple (Rashi). **י** The upright attract the hearts of the people with their wisdom. They advise them wisely and with understanding (RYG). **י** If the upright lead the people to honesty, then the people are elevated because of them; but if the wicked lead, all is destroyed (MD).
12. The one who lacks understanding and compassion¹⁷ shames his neighbor, but the man of discernment holds his peace. **יב** בְּזֹלְרֵעֵהוּ חֲסַר לֵב, וְאִישׁ
תְּבוּנוֹת יַחְרִישׁ: יב
- The learned man does not respond to attempts at embarrassing him

¹⁷ לב more traditionally represented understanding, whereas in modern Hebrew it connotes compassion.

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knowing from where it came (Rashi). ♦ The one who shames his neighbor lacks understanding, and shows that he is immoral (RYG). ♦ It is dishonorable for the wise man to respond to his embarrassment (RYG). ♦ Anyone who shames his neighbor lacks compassion (MD).

13. The talebearer reveals secrets, whereas the man of spirit faithful to God (MD) conceals such matters. ♦ Do not share your secrets with gossipers nor trust them (RYG). ♦ One who reveals secrets is a talebearer. Inevitably, the subject of the secret will learn that the secret is out (MD). יג הוֹלֵךְ רָכִיל מְגַלֵּה סוּד, וְנֶאֱמַן רוּחַ מְכַסֶּה דָּבָר:
14. Without wise direction and good planning the people falter (in war), whereas with many counselors, there is safety (lit. salvation). ♦ If troubles befall Israel and they fail to contemplate the situation, and do not fast and repent, they will fall (Rashi). ♦ Leaders of the nation must be able to see the consequences of events (RYG). יד בְּאִין תַּחְבְּלוֹת יִפֹּל עָם, וּתְשׁוּעָה בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ:
15. The one who trusts in foreign idols (Rashi) will surely be broken by them, but the one who hates those who joins with these enticers (-Rashi) is secure. טו רַע יִרְוַע כִּי עָרַב זָר, וְשָׂנֵא תִקְעִים בּוֹטֵחַ:
16. The gracious and capable (MD) woman is honored, while the powerful man protects and keeps his (MD) wealth. ♦ The assembly of Israel always draws near to the honor of God and his Torah, while Edom gravitates טז אִשְׁתׁ חַן תִּתְמַדּוּ כְבוֹד, וְעַרְיָצִים יִתְמַכּוּ עִשָׂר:

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towards thievery (Rashi). ♦ The strong use their might to maintain their gains (MD).

17. **The merciful man does well for his soul and his family (Rashi), whereas the one who is cruel and destructive (MD) to others will only come to trouble his own flesh, that is, his family (Rashi).** ♦ It is a matter of loving-kindness that a person takes good care of his own soul's well-being (RYG). ♦ The one who properly maintains his physical health is surely righteous, for if he preserves himself, he will be concerned about the well-being of others as well. But the one who starves himself because of his miserly nature will also be cruel to others (MD).
- יז גַּמְלַנְפוּ אִישׁ חֶסֶד, וְעַכְרֵ שְׂאֵרוֹ אֶכְזָרִי:
18. **The deceitful man earns dishonest wages, whereas the one who sows righteousness has a true and lasting (MD) reward.** ♦ The dishonest man fools himself into thinking that his success will last, but all is lost. A true and lasting act is charity (Rashi). ♦ Sowing the seeds of charity reaps true rewards, though the charitable act itself is its own lasting recompense (MD).
- יח וְרָשָׁע עֹשֶׂה פְעֻלַּת שָׂקָר, וְזֵרַע צְדָקָה שָׂכָר אֱמֶת:
19. **Surely, the one who is steadfast, that is, he veritably gives charity in the Name of Heaven (MD) in righteousness gains life, whereas the one who pursues evil since he deceives others into thinking that he is a righteous man with his "charitable" deed (MD) pursues his own death.** ♦ Not only is his deception another reason for bringing
- יט כִּן צְדָקָה לְחַיִּים, וּמְרִדָּף רָעָה לְמוֹתוֹ:

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about his demise, his charity is not even considered a meritorious act and will be counted against him as a liability (MD).

20. The perverse of heart are an abomination to God, whereas those who are whole-hearted in their ways are His delight. כ תועֵבַת יְהוָה עֲקָשִׁי לֵב, וְרִצּוֹנוֹ תְּמִימֵי דָרֶךְ:
- ◆ The beginning of the verse refers to the deceiver who makes like he is honest, but has devious intentions; whereas the one who is as morally pure in his heart as he is in his public demeanor is God's desired one (MD). ◆ Perverse of heart is the opposite whole-hearted. A person with a perverse heart acts unwisely (Malbim).
21. The evil man will not go unpunished by God (Rashi), whereas the seed of the righteous man will escape punishment due to the merits of his forebearers, even though his ancestors' descendants themselves sinned (MD). כֹּא יָד לֵיָד לֹא יִנָּקֶה רָע, וְזָרַע צַדִּיקִים נִמְלֵט:
22. It is as despicable for a beautiful woman to behave in unbecoming or immoral ways, as it would be for a pig to roll in the mud with a gold ring in its snout. כֵּב נָזֶם זָהָב בְּאַף חֲזִיר, אִשָּׁה יָפָה וְסָרַת טַעַם:
- ◆ According to Rashi, the reference here is to a Torah scholar who turns from the Good Way. ◆ What do you expect from a pig? If you adorn it with a gold ring in its snout, will it know how to keep it clean and not soil it with mud? So it is with a woman who has abandoned counsel and wisdom. This is applied to someone who uses his Torah knowledge to deceive people (MD).

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23. The righteous ones only desire good, whereas the hope for the wicked is wrath. כג תַּאֲוֹת צְדִיקִים אֶךְ טוֹב, תְּקוֹת רְשָׁעִים עֲבָרָה:
- ◆ The wicked are assured Gehinnom (Rashi). ◆ One is only considered righteous when he has completely removed all desire to do perniciousness (RYG). ◆ The wicked ones not only desire to do bad, they hope it will really happen (RYG). ◆ Of all the things that they could have desired, the righteous choose to desire good, and they abandon all other wants (MD). ◆ The wicked only desire to find ways to be angry and be infuriated with someone (MD).
24. There are those who magnanimously distribute to the needy, and increase greatly, and there are those who withhold themselves from being honest (Rashi) or from giving charity (RYG), and are lacking. כד יֵשׁ מִפֶּזֶר וְנוֹסֵף עוֹד, וְחוֹשֵׁף מִיֶּשֶׁר אֶךְ לְמַחְסוֹר:
25. The benevolent soul who readily distributes his wealth and satiates the poor (Rashi) will be made rich and fat (MT) himself, and the one who satisfies others will himself be satiated. כה נֶפֶשׁ בְּרָכָה תִּדְשֵׁן, וּמְרוֹה גַם הוּא יוֹרָא:
- ◆ The word ברכה (blessing or benevolent here) always means ‘increase of good’ (MT). ◆ He who desires that others will be enriched, will himself be enriched (MD).

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26. The one who withholds selling (MD) food to others at a time of need because he is waiting for the price to go up (MD) will be cursed by the nation, whereas the one who sells food then will be blessed. **כו** מִנֵּעַ בָּרַךְ יִקְבְּהוּ לְאוֹם, וּבִרְכָה לְרֹאשׁ מִשְׁבִּיר:
27. The one who diligently seeks good for others (MD) will find favor, whereas evil will find the one who asks that evil befall others. **כז** שֶׁחַר טוֹב יִבְקֶשׁ רְצוֹן, וְדַרְשׁ רָעָה תְּבוֹאֲנֹו:
28. He who trusts in his riches will collapse, whereas the righteous will flower like budding leaves. **כח** בּוֹטֵחַ בְּעֶשְׂרוֹ הוּא יִפֹּל, וְכַעֲלֵה צִדִּיקִים יִפְרָחוּ:
- ◆ This refers to someone who withholds teaching Torah (Rashi). ◆ This refers to one who gives charity generously, and instructs and teaches others to give (RYG). ◆ This refers to disseminating wisdom (MD).
- ◆ The one who wishes to lead the people in the Good Way, and reproves and chastises them, wishes that God will accept and make peace with them (Rashi). ◆ This refers to the one who prays for the welfare of other people. If he prays for their needs first, and he needs the same thing, his needs will be taken care of first (RYG). ◆ Not only does the wicked man not pray for the peace and good of others, he prays that bad things will happen to them (RYG). ◆ The evil you wish on others will befall upon you (MD).
- ◆ Metzudos David reads this as a continuation of the previous verse: Even if the one who asks that the evil befall others has riches, it will not protect him; he will fall.

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29. He who causes trouble to his own house by not paying for his children's education or not seeing to it that they learn a trade with which they can sustain themselves (RYG) **will inherit the wind** (or anger – MT), that is, nothing; **and the foolish people will be the servants of the wise of heart.** ל כט עוֹכֵר בֵּיתוֹ יִנְחַל רוּחַ, וְעֶבֶד אָוִיל לַחֲכָם לֵב:
- ◆ The lazy man who does not toil in Torah or work will leave his household with nothing to eat (Rashi). ◆ What good is the wealth someone bestows to foolish children who are empty of wisdom because he did not bother with their education and did not teach them morality (RYG)? ◆ His indolence destroys his family; strife and anger increase (MD). ◆ The wise of heart is the one who has acquired wisdom and always acts wisely (Malbim).
30. The fruit (children –RYG) of the righteous is the tree of life which grows life (MD), and the wise wins souls since he teaches others the Right Way. He "acquires" these souls, as we have learned (regarding Abraham), "and the souls which were made in Haran" (Gen. 12:5) (MD). ל פְּרֵי צְדִיק עֵץ חַיִּים, וְלֵקֶחַ נַפְשׁוֹת חָכָם:
- ◆ The learned man whose words are listened to can influence people to the Way of Life with his erudition. However, the man who may not have achieved wisdom, but has worked on perfecting his traits instead, and may not have the ability to win the hearts of men to accept his moral instruction should, at least, train his children in wisdom when they are young and under his influence (RYG).

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31. If, in the end, the righteous will be returned to the earth, all the more so the wicked

לא יהו צדיק בארץ ישלם, אף
כי רשע וחוטא:

ones and the sinners! ♦ In the end, the wicked will surely pay for their misdeeds either during their lifetime or upon¹⁸ their deaths (Rashi). ♦ Why should the wicked rely on their momentary successes? Do they not see that the righteous are punished for their sins, now, in this life, and not after death? Still the wicked do not veer from their wickedness, and sin further. Surely they will receive punishment for their deeds, either before or after death (MD).



¹⁸ This may either mean that death is their punishment or that their punishments await them after death.

CHAPTER 12

פרק יב

1. Whoever loves ethics and discipline loves knowledge, whereas the one who hates reproof is a beast-like (Malbim) brute. א אהב מוסר אהב דעת, וְשֵׂנְא תוֹכַחַת בְּעַר:
♦ The one who loves receiving ethical instruction acquires knowledge for he has now learned something he had not heard before. But the one who hates rebuke is a fool, and will remain a fool (MD).
2. God favors the good man and condemns the one who devises wickedness. ב טוב יפיק רצון מיהוה, ואיש מזמות ירשיע:
♦ The good man causes God (to be set at ease and –Rashi) to want to do good for the whole world, whereas the wicked man, who follows his lusts, tips the scales of the entire world towards punishment (MD).
3. Wickedness cannot establish someone, whereas the root of righteousness is never removed. ג לא יכון אדם ברשע, ושׂרש צדיקים בל ימוט:
♦ The wealth the wicked amassed because of their evil will not support them, but even if the righteous bend near the root, they will stand upright again (MD). ♦ His root will always remain intact (RYG).

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4. The virtuous woman is a crown to her husband because of her deeds (MD), whereas the shameful one is like rot which has no healing (RYG) **in his bones.** ♦ She penetrates and grinds his bones like a worm. Her deeds are bad and humiliating (Rashi). ♦ The husband of the virtuous woman is proud of what she does (MD).
- ד אִשֶּׁת חַיִל עֶטְרַת בְּעֵלָהּ,
וּכְרָקָב בְּעֵצְמוֹתָיו
מִבִּישָׁה:
5. The thoughts of the righteous are just, whereas the advice of the wicked is deceitful. ♦ The righteous contemplate how to save the oppressed from their predicaments, while all that the wicked do is scheme (MD). ♦ The righteous are always thinking about how to avoid improper behavior like robbery, and how to avoid sinning and deceit. The wicked think bad and act bad. They misuse their minds for evil (RYG).
- ה מַחְשְׁבוֹת צְדִיקִים
מִשְׁפָּט, תַּחְבֻּלוֹת רְשָׁעִים
מִרְמָה:
6. The words of the wicked lie in wait in ambush (MD) for blood to murder or to give false testimony (Rashi), whereas the mouth of the upright saves them, those who are being pursued, by revealing to them the intents of the wicked or by contradicting their (false) testimony (Rashi). ♦ The upright have the ability to save others with their wisdom (RYG).
- ו דְּבַרֵי רְשָׁעִים אֲרֹב דָּם,
וּפִי יִשְׂרָיִם יִצִּילֵם:
7. The wicked will be overthrown and will utterly (Rashi) disappear, in a minute, as did Sodom (Rashi), whereas the house of the righteous will remain standing and be established forever (MD).
- ז הַפּוֹךְ רְשָׁעִים וְאִינָם,
וּבַיִת צְדִיקִים יַעֲמֹד:

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8. A man is commended in accordance with his intelligence, whereas the one of distorted understanding is despised. ח
לְפִי שְׂכָלוֹ יִהְיֶה אִישׁ,
וְנִעְוָה לֵב יִהְיֶה לְבוֹז:
 ♦ A person is rewarded (praised – MD) in accordance with the level of his wisdom, whether a little or a lot. The one who distances himself from Torah will be disgraced (Rashi).
 ♦ Do not embarrass your friend simply because he is not as wise as you, but praise him for whatever wisdom he has. But this is not applicable to the man who confuses everything, since he may come to support lies and say that bad is good and good is bad. It is improper to honor lies, but rather, one must disparage them (RYG).
9. Better that one regard himself lightly and a slave, than consider himself of rank and lack bread. ט
טוֹב נִקְלָה וְעֶבֶד לוֹ,
מִמֵּתְכַבֵּד וְחָסֵר לֶחֶם:
 ♦ The person who thinks so highly of himself that he feels it is beneath his dignity to go out and work for a living will die of hunger (Rashi). ♦ Our rabbis have taught (Baba Kamma 110a): 'A person should (even) engage in work which is unusual for him rather than rely on other people (for his sustenance)', and (ibid.), 'Rather strip the hides of dead animals in the public market than say 'I am too important (to do this)' ' (RYG).
10. The righteous man respects even the life of his animals, whereas even the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. י
יודֵעַ צְדִיק נֶפֶשׁ בְּהֵמָתוֹ,
וְרַחֲמֵי רְשָׁעִים אֶכְזָרִי:
 ♦ The righteous man knows what his animals and family members need (Rashi). ♦ It is forbidden for one to taste anything until he feeds his animals as it says (Deut. 11:15), "I have given grass in the fields for your animals" first, and only then, "you shall eat and be satiated" (Gittin 62a) (RYG). ♦ Cruelty, even to

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animals, is wickedness (RYG). ♦ Even when the wicked man feeds the poor man in his house, he does it cruelly. He does not relate to him or approach him or smile at him, and he sits him in a low seat. He is unconcerned about humiliating him. He gives him without mercy and compassion (RYG). ♦ The righteous man takes note even of his animals' wants, for he is merciful. But the wicked ones' "mercies" are cruel and done only for show, and without any real heartfelt intent (MD).

11. **The one who tends to and works (MD) his fields will have what to eat, whereas the one who chases vain pursuits is void of understanding** and it would be better that he go out and work the fields (MD). ♦ The first part of this verse is both to be taken literally and allegorically referring to the one who constantly reviews his learning lest it be forgotten (Rashi). ♦ One who, not having money or merchandise of his own to deal with, affiliates himself with the unemployed and empty people, lacks understanding and will not have what to eat (RYG).
- יא עֵבֶד אֲדָמָתוֹ יִשְׁבַּע לָחֶם, וּמְרִידָף רִיקִים חָסַר לֵב:
12. **The wicked man yearns to seize the prey of evil men, whereas the root of the righteous person yields fruit (strength).** ♦ The evil ones prey on the people with robbery and violence (Rashi). ♦ The righteous are continually spreading out and strengthening their roots (RYG). ♦ The wicked desire to sit in the fortress of bad people from where they strengthen themselves to do violence. But the righteous do not need any such external help, for their essence and strength alone produce the necessary good results (MD).
- יב חָמַד רָשָׁע מְצוֹד רָעִים, וְשָׂרֵשׁ צַדִּיקִים יִתֵּן:

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13. The evil man snares with the transgressions of his lips, whereas the righteous escape trouble. **יג בַּפֶּשַׁע שְׁפָתַיִם מוֹקֵשׁ רָע, וַיֵּצֵא מִצָּרָה צַדִּיק:** **יג** This refers to the Generation of the Flood who said disparagingly, "Who is this God who we need to worship?" (Job 21:15), while Noah, the righteous one, escaped troubles (Rashi). **יג** The righteous man speaks pleasantly and will avoid the next adversity (MD).
14. We will be satisfied with the good which comes from that which we speak, as well as the good we do with our hands. **יד מִפְּרִי פִי אִישׁ יִשְׁבַּע טוֹב, וּגְמוּל יְדֵי אָדָם יָשִׁיב יָשׁוּב לוֹ:** **יד** Because of the mouths (speech) of those who are engaged in Torah we eat good in this world and we will have the principal (reward) in the World to Come (Rashi). **יד** Much reward accrues for you by speaking wisely and giving good advice, when you grasp truth and speak honestly, when you sanctify the Name of Heaven, and when you turn many souls away from sin (RYG).
15. The scoffer has convinced himself that he is doing right because he holds himself wise (MD), whereas the wise man listens to the counsel of others. **טו דָּרַךְ אָוִיל יִשָּׂר בְּעֵינָיו, וְשָׁמַע לְעֵצָה חֲכָם:** **טו** The fool who has no real reason to believe his own opinions trusts himself, whereas the wise man who has every reason to believe his own opinions, nevertheless, consults with others (RYG). **טו** Because he listens to others, he is considered wise (MD).

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16. The scorner's anger will be known in a day, whereas the prudent man conceals his shame. טז אָויל בַּיּוֹם יִנְדַע כְּעֵסוֹ, וְכִסֵּה קִלְוֹן עָרוֹם:
- ◆ The fool cannot contain his anger for even one day. He begins quarrelling and berating others immediately in public without restraint (Rashi). ◆ The prudent man controls his anger, he hides his shame, and will not publicly embarrass his fellow man (MD).
17. The man of truth speaks righteously, whereas the dishonest witness talks treachery. יז יִפְיַח אֱמוּנָה יַגִּיד צְדָקָה, וְעֵד שְׂקָרִים מְרַמֶּה:
- ◆ The one who speaks faithfully will give righteous testimony at a trial meriting the innocent (Rashi). ◆ We can rely on the testimony of the one who always speaks truthfully (RYG). ◆ But the one who is accustomed to lie, even if there is substance to what he has to say, will assuredly speak perfidiously, and his words must be investigated thoroughly (MD).
18. Some speech such as slander and gossip (MD) is like the piercing of a sword, whereas the tongue of the wise man heals and brings peace (Rashi). יח יֵשׁ בּוֹטָה כְּמַדְקָרוֹת חֶרֶב, וְלָשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים מְרַפֵּא:
- ◆ False testimony will result in fights and killing (Rashi). ◆ The learned man's speech brings people to repent (MD).
19. Truthful lips will endure forever and people will believe him, and will want to listen to him (RYG). יט שְׁפַת אֱמֶת תִּכּוֹן לְעַד, וְעֵד אֲרֻגִיעָה לְשׁוֹן שְׂקָר:
- The lying tongue is but for a fleeting moment and perishes (Rashi). ◆ The punishment of the liar is that even when he tells the truth no one will believe him (RYG). ◆ Lies are found out (MD).

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20. There is deceit in the hearts of those who clandestinely (Malbim) devise evil, whereas those who wish peace have joy in theirs. ❖ Those who are preoccupied with doing evil have no time for joy (Rashi) constantly fearing that they will be exposed, whereas those who counsel peace are joyous if they are discovered (MD). ❖ Hate leads to worry, and love to happiness (RYG). כ
מְרִמָּה בְּלֵב חָרָשִׁי רָע,
וְלִיעֲצֵי שָׁלוֹם שְׂמֵחָה:
21. No mischief or unintentional sin (Rashi) will befall the righteous since God watches over him. He prevents him from erring and helps him overcome his inclinations (RYG), whereas the wicked are filled with evil for one sin draws another sin (MD). ❖ If a person commits a sin, and then again, it will become a permitted matter to him (RYG). כא
לֹא יֵאָנֶה לְצַדִּיק כָּל אָוֹן,
וְרָשָׁעִים מְלֵאוּ רָע:
22. God abhors lying lips, and delights in those who do His Will faithfully. ❖ Our Sages have said (Sotah 42a) that the liars will not welcome the Shechina (RYG). כב
תּוֹעֲבַת יְהוָה שְׂפֵתֵי שָׁקֶר,
וְעֹשֵׂי אֱמוּנָה רְצוֹנוֹ:
23. The clever man conceals his wisdom, whereas the fool broadcasts his scorn. ❖ The clever (literally, cunning) man does not broadcast his knowledge, even less so his stupidity (Rashi). ❖ The learned man only reveals his wisdom to those who are worthy of understanding it, whereas the idiot advertises his stupidity (MD) to all even though it is to his discredit (RYG). כג
אָדָם עָרוֹם כֹּסֶה דַּעַת,
וְלֵב כְּסִילִים יִקְרָא אֲוֵלֶת:

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24. The diligent and the honest ones (Rashi) will rule and become rich (Rashi), while the slothful and dishonest ones (MD) will pay tribute and melt (MT) and descend (MD).
כד יֵד חָרוּצִים תִּמְשׁוּל,
וְרַמְיָה תִּהְיֶה לְמַס:
25. Although worries burden the heart, a good word of Torah (Rashi), of wisdom and good counsel (RYG), will gladden it. ♦ Torah-talk rescues a man from his worries (Rashi). ♦ If someone is weighed down with worries, he should contain and squelch those thoughts and, if possible, even rejoice and believe that this, too, is for the good (MD).
כה דְּאָגָה בְּלֵב אִישׁ יִשְׁחַנָּה,
וְדָבָר טוֹב יִשְׂמַחנָה:
26. The righteous man yields to his fellow man, whereas the wicked leads others astray. ♦ If the righteous man has a dispute with someone, he has the advantage of being more patient or, in monetary matters, he will be more likely to capitulate. This is to his honor (RYG). ♦ The success of the wicked misleads them into holding on firmly to their evil ways (MD).
כו יִתֵּר מִרְעֵהוּ צַדִּיק, וְדָרָךְ
רְשָׁעִים תִּתְעֶם:
27. The slothful man will not hunt his prey, that is, he will have no benefit from wealth amassed immorally (RYG); but the precious substance of men is to be diligent. This verse is a continuation of the previous one (Rashi). ♦ The way of the hunter is to singe the wings of the birds he traps so they will not fly away; but not so the deceiver. He will not burn the wings so that they will look whole, and thus cheat the buyers, for once bought, the birds will fly away and all will be lost to them (MD). ♦ Although a man's wealth is precious to him, if he gives
כז לֹא יַחַרְךָ רַמְיָה צִידוֹ, וְהוֹן
אָדָם יִקָּר חָרוּץ:

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from it to the indigent, his wealth will be more valuable than the best gold which lasts for a long time and does not devalue like other metals. That is, his wealth is maintained (MD).

28. The way of righteousness is life, and days are added to the righteous man's life because of his charity (RYG), and there is no death in the path of charity (Rashi).

כח בְּאֵרֶח צְדָקָה חַיִּים, וְדָרָךְ
נְתִיבָה אֵל מוֹת:



CHAPTER 13

פרק יג

1. The wise son seeks his father guidance, whereas the jester takes no notice of rebuke. א בן חכם מוֹסֵר אָב, וְלֵץ לֹא שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה: ♦

Either this means that it is the wise son who seeks his father's advice or because the son accepts his father's advice, he becomes wise. The scoffer does not accept reproof (Rashi). ♦ There is the father who withholds his rebuke and spares the rod. But the one who supervises his young son, making sure that he does not engage in clowning, wanton talk or speaking evil, and disciplines him, when necessary, spares his son anguish when he grows up, for his adult behavior will be determined by his conditioning as a child (RYG).

2. Speak wisely (Malbim) i.e. Torah (Rashi) and you will be sustained well as a reward in this world א מְפָרֵי פִי אִישׁ יֹאכֵל טוֹב, וְנֶפֶשׁ בְּגָדִים חָמָס: ♦

(Rashi), whereas the faithless person desires violence. ♦ Your main reward awaits you in the World to Come (Rashi). ♦ A person is rewarded for accepting reproof. The traitor, however, desires violence – and how can his children be rebuked? Since his desire is violence and the desire of the evil man is evil, he will not see it wrong that his son has similar bad traits. He will not discipline him with the

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rod to remove him from this behavior. Even if does reproach him, it will not be done whole-heartedly (RYG).

3. Watch what you say, and say little, and you will preserve your life; but if you don't control your tongue, you will come to ruin. **ג** נֹצֵר פִּיּוֹ שְׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ, פִּשְׁק שְׁפָתָיו מִחֶתֶה לוֹ:
- It is unnecessary to say everything you think¹⁹ (Rashi). One should fear the damage his lips may cause as much as he would fear an enemy (RYG). Do not speak what is forbidden (MD).
4. The sluggard desires everything, but ends up with nothing, whereas the life of the diligent will be abundantly gratified. **ד** מִתְאַוֶּה וְאִין נַפְשׁוֹ עֵצֶל, וְנִפֶּשׁ חֲרָצִים תִּדְשֹׁן:
- In the future, the sluggard will see the honor given the Torah scholar and desire it but, alas, he will be unable to attain it (Rashi).
5. The righteous man loathes untrue matters and slander (MD), while the wicked man behaves vilely and causes shame. **ה** דְּבַר שֶׁקֶר יִשְׁנֵא צְדִיק, וְרָשָׁע יִבְאִישׁ וַיִּחְפִּיר:
- The wicked man accepts falsehoods (Rashi) immediately (MD). The evil man publicly and furiously humiliates his enemies or anyone who is envious of him, and with lies (RYG).

¹⁹ Not everything one thinks should he say. Not everything one says should he write. Not everything one writes should he publish.

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6. **Rectitude** (or charity) **guards his** continuous and whole (Malbim) **upright** ways, whereas **wickedness overthrows the sinner** and brings ruin upon himself (Rashi). ו
וְצַדִּיקָה תִּצַּר תָּם דְּרָדוּ,
וְרָשָׁעָה תִּסְלֵף חֲטָאתָ:
7. **Some appear rich, but really have nothing** for they achieved their wealth through robbery (Rashi), **while there are those who appear wanting yet have great wealth** for they distributed their money to the poor (Rashi). ♦ Also, there are those whose fortunes reverse – some begin rich and end poor, while there are those who begin poor and end wealthy (Rashi). ז
יֵשׁ מִתְעַשֵּׂר וְאֵין כָּל,
מִתְרוֹשֵׁשׁ וְהוֹן רַב:
8. **The ransom of a man's life is his riches**, if from it he gave charity (Rashi) **and as long as (MD) he never rebukes** or embarrasses (Rashi) **the poor** at the time he was distributing charity to them (Rashi, MD). ♦ Also, a man's ransom is his Torah, whereas the man poor in Torah does not know to veer from evil since he was never warned. The Midrash Aggadah (Mechilta Misphotim 21:30) says that this refers to the Half Shekel which Scriptures demand payment of from all Israel, poor and rich alike. Here, the poor would not be shamed and have to hear the rich boast that their portion in the public offerings was greater than theirs (Rashi). ח
כֹּפֶר נַפְשׁ אִישׁ עֲשָׂרוֹ,
וְרֵשׁ לֹא שָׁמַע גְּעָרָה:

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9. **The light of the righteous rejoices in Gan Eden (MD), whereas the lamp - the soul (MD) - of the wicked will be extinguished.** ♦ The joy of the wicked ends when they die (RYG). ט אור צְדִיקִים יִשְׂמַח, וְנֵר רְשָׁעִים יִדָּעַךְ:
10. **Malice brings contention, whereas wisdom is with those who seek counsel from others regarding proper behavior when in dispute with someone else (RYG), and to act liberally with others (MD).** י רק בְּזָדוֹן יִתֵּן מִצָּה, וְאֵת נוֹעְצִים חֲכָמָה:
11. **Affluence derived from vanity (i.e. thievery –MD) will diminish, whereas treasures gained by manual toil will grow.** ♦ One who does not review his studies will forget his learning, bit by bit (Rashi). יא הוֹן מֵהַבֵּל יִמָּעֹט, וְקִבְּץ עַל יַד יִרְבֶּה:
12. **Dashed hopes sicken the heart²⁰, whereas desires fulfilled is like eating from the Tree of Life.** ♦ The one who breaks promises to a friend causes him heartache (Rashi). יב תוֹחֶלֶת מִמְּשָׁכָה מַחֲלָה לֵב, וְעֵץ חַיִּים תֵּאָוֶה בְּאָה:
13. **The one who despises any of the (Rashi, MD) Commandments will be struck (his wounds are, therefore, self-inflicted –MD) because of this, whereas the one who reveres and elevates (MD) the Commandments will be rewarded.** ♦ יג בָּז לְדָבָר יַחֲבֵל לוֹ, וִירָא מִצְוָה הוּא יִשְׁלָם:

²⁰ Disappointment and depression are the results of unfulfilled expectations.

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The former refers to the one who makes light of minor prohibitions (RYG).

14. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life and saves from death traps. ♦ The Torah instructs a person to avoid the fatal errors in life (Rashi) which are the sins (MD). יד תורת חכם מקור חיים, לסור ממקשי מות:
15. Sagacious governing grants grace to the sovereign, whereas the renegade's rule is exceedingly (MD) ruthless for himself and for others (Rashi). ♦ Everyone likes the one with common sense. Even so, the turncoat is very strong and even with all one's common sense and charisma he will be unable to divert him from his ways (MD). טו שכל טוב יתן חן, ודרך בגדים איתן:
16. The prudent man like King David (Rashi) thinks ahead, whereas the fool like Ahaseverus (Rashi) spreads confusion. ♦ The clever man does things thoughtfully and in private (RYG). ♦ The wise man plans carefully, yet not everyone understands him, while the fool has no inhibitions about displaying his foolishness (MD). טז כל ערום יעשה בדעת, וכסיל יפרש אולת:
17. The wicked messenger like Balaam (Rashi) who maliciously perverts his sender's charge (MD) will plummet into evil, whereas the faithful ambassador like Moses (Rashi) who improves some weakness in his dispatcher's communication and makes it more acceptable for the recipient (MD) יז מלאך רשע יפל ברע, וציר אמונים מרפא:

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heals. ◇ An ambassador is required to return with an answer (Malbim).

18. Poverty and shame comes to the morally undisciplined, whereas the one who accepts reproof will be honored. יח ריש וקלון פורע מוסר, ושומר תוכחת יכבד:
19. A desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination for fools to part from their evil ways because they are pleased to gratify their desires (Rashi). ◇ In fact, they feel disgusted when they are divorced from doing evil for they now lack an outlet for their lust (MD). ◇ God desires Israel to do His Will, and when they do, it is satisfying for Him (Rashi). יט תאוה נהיה תערב לנפש, ותועבת כסילים סור מרע:
20. He who walks with the wise will be wise for he learns from them (MD), whereas the companion of fools will shatter. ◇ His "reward" for associating with idiots is that he will destruct with them (MD). ◇ The רועה – companion - is an associate (Malbim). כ הולך הלוד את חכמים יחכם וחכם, ורעה כסילים ירוע:
21. Sins pursue the evil-doer until his destruction (Rashi), whereas the righteous will be repaid for their goodness. ◇ Their evil pursues them causing them to falter with even more serious sins in order that they may be eradicated completely without hope (RYG). ◇ The evil the sinners do testifies against them and destroys them, while the merit of the righteous speaks well on their behalf, and they are rewarded well (MD). כא חטאים תרדף רעה, ואת צדיקים ישלם טוב:

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22. The good man leaves an everlasting inheritance of merit and wealth (Rashi) for generations, whereas the wealth of the sinner is preserved for the righteous. ♦ The sinner leaves nothing (of spiritual value) for his children (Rashi). כב טוב ינחיל בני בנים, וצפון לצדיק חיל חוטא:
23. There is plenty of food due to the plowing of the poor, but much gets lost because of the lack of righteousness. ♦ Much Torah is learned by teachers from their students due to their discussions concerning the Halacha (Rashi). ♦ Many die because they acted improperly, such as those who did not accurately tithe and give to the poor (Rashi). ♦ They plow deeply to remove the thorns (Malbim). כג רב אכל ניר ראשים, ויש נספה בלא משפט:
24. Spare the rod and ruin the child²¹. Love your child with chastisement when he is young. ♦ The parent who fails to discipline his child will come to hate him when he sees that he has grown into a delinquent (Rashi). ♦ In the end, aberrant children die because of their own sins (MD). ♦ If you love your child, discipline him when he is young and still impressionable (MD). כד חושך שבטו שונא בנו, ואהבו שחרו מוסר:
25. The righteous eat only enough to quell their hunger, whereas the bellies of the wicked are always in want. ♦ Overeating leads to illness and disease (RYG). ♦ The righteous have no desire for delicacies, but only eat that which is כה צדיק אכל לשבע נפשו, ובטן רשעים תחסר: פ

²¹ Lit. 'He who spares his rod, hates his child'.

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necessary to survive, unlike the wicked who delight in sweets and such, yet are always hungry and never satiated (MD).



CHAPTER 14

פרק יד

1. The wise woman builds and establishes securely (Rashi) her home, whereas the befuddled one demolishes it with her own hands. א חכמות נשים בנתה ביתה, ואולת בידיה תהרסנו:
2. The upright man fears God, whereas the perverse man²² embarrasses Him (or the upright man - MD). ♦ Alternatively, it is the God-fearing man who is upright (Rashi)²³. ב הולך בישרו ירא יהוה, ונלוז דרכיו בוזהו:
3. The scoffer's proud talk is like a walking-stick, whereas the mouth of the wise man preserves him. ♦ The fool cannot control himself from talking arrogantly all the time (RYG). ♦ His pride is rigid, like a staff (MD). ♦ The wise man is careful not to speak haughtily (MD). ג בפּי אױל חטור גאוה, ושפתי חכמים תשמורם:

²² Rashi uses the phrase עוקם דרכיו – one who makes his paths crooked.

²³ Similar phrase inversions apply throughout Proverbs.

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4. Lack of oxen may keep the trough clean, but neither will be there increase. ד
בְּאֵין אֶלְפִים אֲבוֹס בָּר,
וְרַב תְּבוּאוֹת בְּלֶחֶ שׁוֹר:
 ◇ Even the house is clean of hay when there are no oxen [there to eat] (Rashi). ◇ A place absent of Torah scholars lacks (is clean of) proper instruction (Rashi, MD). ◇ Where people accept the yoke of Torah, as the ox accepts his yoke, there will be much Torah (MD).
5. The faithful witness will not lie, whereas the false witness breathes out lies. ה
עַד אֱמוּנִים לֹא יִכְזֵב,
וַיִּפִּיחַ כְּזָבִים עַד שָׁקֵר:
 ◇ He lies because he is accustomed to lying. Anything he says must be thoroughly investigated (MD).
6. Even if a mocker were to seek wisdom when he needs it (Rashi) he will not find any in his heart (Rashi), whereas wisdom comes easy to him with discernment for he is accustomed to wisdom (MD). ו
בְּקֵשׁ לֵץ חֲכָמָה וְאֵין,
וְדַעַת לְנַבּוֹן נִקְלָ:
 ◇ A mocker is one who engages in vain talk and ridicules the deeds and words of other people. This behavior distances a person from wisdom (RYG).
7. Flee and distance yourself (MD) from the foolish man for you will never know if what he speaks is knowledge, and lest you become like him (MD). ז
לֵךְ מִנֶּגֶד לְאִישׁ כְּסִיל, וּבֵל
יִדְעַת שְׁפִיתִי דַעַת:
 ◇ Do not associate with fools for, in the end, you will not know wisdom (Rashi). ◇ It is dangerous to associate with such a person (RYG).

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8. The wisdom of the shrewd man is to understand where he is going, whereas the folly of the fool is deceit. ◇ The cautious man weighs his steps (Rashi). ◇ Deceit results in stupidity (Rashi). ח חֲכָמַת עָרוּם הִבִּין דְּרָכּוֹ, וְאוֹלֶת כְּסִילִים מְרָמָה:
9. Guilt perverts the path of the simpleton, whereas among the upright who are at ease with God (Rashi) is good will. ◇ Fools end up paying money (or a guilt-offering -MD) for their sins (Rashi). ◇ Scoffers are always looking for people's defects and guilt, and apply them with blemishes. They will never speak in praise of them or say anything good about them (RYG). ט אָוִלִים יִלְיָץ אָשָׁם, וּבִין יִשְׁרִים רָצוֹן:
10. The heart knows of its own bitterness alone, and its joy no stranger can share. ◇ Since only he knows of the toil and labor he has put in for Torah, no one else can share the joy of his ultimate reward (Rashi). י לֵב יוֹדֵעַ מֵרַת נַפְשׁוֹ, וּבִשְׂמֵחָתוֹ לֹא יִתְעַרֵּב זָר:
11. The house of the wicked will be overthrown, whereas the tent of the upright will flourish. ◇ Even if the house is strong and the tent frail (MD). יא בֵּית רְשָׁעִים יִשְׁמַד, וְאֹהֶל יִשְׁרִים יִפְרִיחַ:
12. A man may believe that there is a way which is right for him but, in the end, it is the way to sorrow יב יֵשׁ דָּרֶךְ יִשָּׁר לְפָנָי אִישׁ, וְאַחֲרֵיהָ דְרָכֵי מוֹת:

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and death. ♦ This verse refers to the laughter and joy which appear to be proper and permitted, but in the end they lead to death (RYG). ♦ He thinks that he is straight (MD).

13. **The heart can ache even (MD) in laughter, and the end of mirth is despair.** ♦ God plays with him in this world, but his heart will pain in the future (Rashi). ♦ Even if he did not violate a Commandment with all his fun, his heart will ache when he will pay for having pursued amusements. His laughter will turn to sorrow (MD).
- יג גַם בְּשִׂחוֹק יִכָּאֵב לֵב,
וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ שְׂמֵחָה תִּוְגָה:**
14. **The dissembler in heart will have his fill from his own ways, whereas the good man will be satisfied from himself.** ♦ The one who retreats from God will be repaid in kind, while the good man will be distanced from him at that time so as not be punished with him (MD).
- יד מְדַרְכָּיו יִשְׂבַּע סוּג לֵב,
וּמַעֲלָיו אִישׁ טוֹב:**
15. **The thoughtless are completely naïve and believe and follow the wicked, ultimately leading them to heartache (Rashi), whereas the prudent man looks well at what he does and avoids conflict, waiting patiently until it is clear to him what is right to be done (Rashi, MD).** ♦ The thoughtless believe the slander they hear (Rashi, MD). ♦ Fools believe everything they hear. They cannot distinguish between good and bad advice nor between the good person and the hypocrite²⁴ (RYG).
- טו פְּתִי יֶאֱמִין לְכָל דָּבָר,
וְעָרוֹם יִבִּין לְאַשְׁרוּ:**

²⁴ Here the meaning is a person who does not want to listen to what other people have to say believing he is right.

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16. The wise man fears evil and punishments (Rashi) and frightening things (MD) and avoids it, whereas the fool is overbearing and self-confident, believing that no harm will befall him (MD), but he slips and falls (Rashi). ♦ The fool over-steps bounds. Because he lacks any fear of God, he does not stop his lusts (Malbim). טז חָכָם יָרָא וְסָר מִרָע, וְכָסִיל מִתְעַבֵּר וּבֹטֵחַ:
17. The man quick to anger acts foolishly and is foolish (MD), and the wicked and angry (RYG) man's acts and thoughts (Rashi) are hated, by Heaven and Man (MD). יז קָצַר אַפִּים יַעֲשֶׂה אֲוֵלַת, וְאִישׁ מְזֻמּוֹת יִשְׂנֵא:
18. The thoughtless possess (clench tightly, like someone who holds dearly to his territory –MD) folly, whereas the prudent are crowned with knowledge. ♦ Foolishness is the territory of the thoughtless (RYG). ♦ The thoughtless are those who are enticed by the derisive attitudes of the scoffers, and follow them (Malbim). יח נָחְלוּ פְתָאִים אֲוֵלַת, וְעֲרוּמִים יִכְתְּרוּ דַעַת:
19. The evil ones will ultimately (Rashi) bow before the good people, and the wicked person will, in the end, beg for bread (MD) at the gates of the righteous man. יט שָׁחוּ רָעִים לְפָנַי טוֹבִים, וְרָשָׁעִים עַל שַׁעְרֵי צַדִּיק:

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20. The poor and ignorant (Rashi) man is hated even by his own neighbors, his valet, and his close friends (Rashi), whereas the rich have many friends. ◇ Even his poor friends hate the poor man. Normally, people in the same situation (equals) have compassion one for another (MD)²⁵.
- כ גַּם לְרַעְהוּ יִשְׁנֵא רָשׁ,
וְאֶהְבִּי עֲשִׂיר רַבִּים:
21. It is sinful to despise and humiliate (MD) your fellow man, whereas being gracious to and loving (MD) the humble is his happiness²⁶.
- כא בַּז לְרַעְהוּ חוּטֵא, וּמְחוּיֵן
עֲנִוִים עֲנִיִּים אֲשֶׁרִיו:
22. The ones who fashion evil will go astray, whereas there will be mercy and truth for those who devise good. ◇ Those who cause others to sin will not be given the opportunity to repent (RYG). ◇ Evil boomerangs upon its purveyors, whereas kind thoughts will come to fruition upon those who had those thoughts, and for those for whom those good thoughts were intended (MD).
- כב הֲלוֹא יִתְעוּ חֲרָשֵׁי רָע,
וְחֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת חֲרָשֵׁי טוֹב:
23. There is profit in all labor and toil, but excessive (MD) and foolish (Rashi) talk leads to perjury and crime (MD). ◇ Nothing good comes from vain talk (RYG).
- כג בְּכֹל עֵצֶב יִהְיֶה מוֹתָר,
וְדַבַּר שִׁפְתַיִם אֵךְ
לְמַחְסוֹר:

²⁵ Everyone hates the Nebisch.

²⁶ אֲשֶׁרִי may derive from the root י-ש-ר i.e. correct or honest. Being kind to the poor is simply the right and proper thing to do (based on R. Shimshon ben Raphael Hirsch).

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24. **Wisdom is the crown of the wise and their riches (rich in Torah – Rashi), whereas the folly of the fools remains folly.** ◇ They were lazy and neglected to learn wisdom (Rashi). ◇ The wise are recognized by their honor and graciousness with their giving to the poor, and their beautiful faces (MD). ◇ Wherever some folly is found, there is a lot more still to be revealed (MD).
- כד** עֵטֶרֶת חֲכָמִים עֶשְׂרָם,
אֹלֶת פְּסִילִים אֹלֶת:
25. **The true witness delivers souls, whereas the one who breathes lies is nothing but all deceit.** ◇ The liar will save the deceitful ones with his lies and false testimonies (MD).
- כה** מְצִיל נַפְשׁוֹת עֵד אֱמֶת,
וַיִּפֶחַ כְּזָבִים מְרֵמָה:
26. **Being in awe of God brings one to have firm trust, and his children will be saved.** ◇ They will be sheltered and saved in the shadow of their father's merits (Rashi). ◇ The God-fearing man does things with full confidence (MD).
- כו** בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה מְבֹטָח עֹז,
וּלְבָנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחְסָה:
27. **The fear of God is the fountain and source (MD) of life, and saves from death.** ◇ Reverential awe of the Almighty is the singular source of all the good character traits in a person, and all the good deeds he does (RYG). ◇ Fear frightens one away from the death-traps of sins and transgressions (MD).
- כז** יִרְאַת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים,
לְסוּר מִמִּקְשֵׁי מוֹת:

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28. In the greatness²⁷ of the people is the glory of the king i.e. God (Rashi), but the dearth of the nation is the prince's ruin. ◇ It is the glory of God when the people are meritorious, but when they do not cling to Him, His honor is diminished. This is as if He gives His glory to a foreign god who rules his children (Rashi).
- כח בָּרַב עַם הַדֶּרֶת מְלֹךְ,
וּבְאֶפְס לֹאם מְחַתֵּת רְזוֹן:
29. He who is slow to anger is of great understanding²⁸, whereas the hasty of spirit raises skepticism. ◇ The man with a short fuse does not have the patience to investigate matters thoroughly (RYG). ◇ Anger expels wisdom (MD).
- כט אָרֶךְ אַפַּיִם רַב תְּבוּנָה,
וּקְצַר רוּחַ מֵרִים אוֹלֵת:
30. The tranquil heart without jealousy is life and healing to the body, but envy and anger (MT) is rottenness to the bones. ◇ Even the hard bones, not to mention the flesh, decay with the disease of jealousy (RYG).
- ל חַיֵּי בְּשָׂרִים לֵב מְרֵפָא,
וְרָקֵב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְאָה:
31. Oppression of the poor is blasphemy to God, whereas the one who is gracious to the needy honors Him. ◇ He oppresses and takes advantage of the poor because they are weak. He thinks that since God made him thus, He is unable to save him from his sad predicament. However, the one
- לא עֲשֵׂק דָּל חֵרֶף עֲשֵׂהוּ,
וּמִכְבֵּדוֹ חִנּוּן אֲבִיוֹן:

²⁷ The word **ברב** is punctuated with a Komatz under the **ר** and not with a Cholom. This would support the meaning of greatness of the people and not multitude.

²⁸ As indicated before, these verses can be read inversely, as here, "The wise man is slow to anger", etc.

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who is merciful with the indigent honors God (MD). ♦ An אביון – needy – is one who is unable to work, and can only survive off of charity (Malbim).

32. The wicked are thrust down in their misfortune, whereas the righteous have shelter and comfort (MD) **even in death.** ♦ The righteous man is confident that he will go to Gan Eden when he dies (Rashi). ♦ If enticed to do evil, the righteous man protects himself from succumbing to it by contemplating the day of his death (MD). לב בְּרָעָתוֹ יִדָּחָהּ רָשָׁע, וְחֹסֶה בְּמוֹתוֹ צַדִּיק:
33. Wisdom rests tranquilly in the heart of the man of discernment, whereas the inner fool will make itself known. ♦ Fools are interested in honor and not wisdom (RYG). ♦ Wisdom lies serenely within the smart man and is not revealed to anyone who is unworthy of it, whereas the little wisdom the fool has becomes known to all (MD). לג בְּלֵב נְבוֹן תְּנוּחַ חֲכָמָה, וּבִקְרֹב פְּסִילִים תִּוָּדַע:
34. Righteousness and charity (MD) exalts the nation (Israel -Rashi), but the seeming kindness of the Nations is sin. ♦ Israel gives (charity) because it is the morally correct thing to do (MD). ♦ The Nations (however) merely take (steal –MD) from one to give to another (Rashi). ♦ The Nations do not give charity altruistically, but do so for their own glory. Nevertheless, they will be successful and become enriched because of it, and it will atone for their unintentional sins as if they would have brought a sin-offering (RYG). לד צְדָקָה תְּרוֹמֵם גּוֹי, וְחָסֵד לְאֻמִּים חֲטָאת:

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35. The king shows favor to the wise servant even if he is angry with him, because he is clever (MD), but his hand strikes the shameful

לה רצון מלך לעבד משכיל,
ועברתו תהיה מביש:

one. ♦ God wants wise servants who perform the Commandments because of their love and awe of Him. He less wants those who are observant having been motivated only by self-glorification. Nevertheless, since they still do abide by His Commandments, they will receive commensurate reward and compensation (RYG). ♦ The king is forever irate with his very dumb servant who is a complete embarrassment (MD).



CHAPTER 15

פרק טו

1. A gentle reply turns away wrath, whereas a grievous and furious (RYG) word and response (MD) stirs up anger. א
מַעֲנֶה רֵךְ יִשְׁיב חֵמָה,
וְדַבַּר עֶצֶב יַעֲלֶה אָף:
2. The tongue of the wise augments knowledge, whereas the fool's mouth pours out thoughtlessness. ♦ The wise man speaks to the point, whereas the fool babbles on and on (MD). ב
לְשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים תִּיטִיב דָּעַת,
וּפִי כִסִּילִים יַבִּיעַ אֲוֶלֶת:
3. God sees everything everywhere - the evil and the good. ♦ Nothing is hidden from the eyes of God (MD). ג
בְּכָל מָקוֹם עֵינַי יְהוָה,
צִפּוֹת רְעִים וְטוֹבִים:
4. The soothing tongue is a tree of life, whereas perverseness wounds the spirit. ♦ False or distorted speech ultimately results in one's own destruction (Rashi). ♦ The healing of the tongue is most wonderful since other medicines ד
מְרַפָּא לְשׁוֹן עֵץ חַיִּים,
וְסֻלְף בָּהּ שָׁבַר בְּרוּחַ:

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and drugs are only occasionally effective, whereas comforting words are always beneficial (RYG). ♦ Similarly, wise reproof offered to the one who is worthy of accepting it will inevitably bring positive results (RYG). ♦ The one who only speaks gently and kindly will see growth (MD). ♦ Twisted talk is not accepted nor will that person's will be fulfilled (MD).

5. **The scoffer despises his father's corrections** because they are unimportant in his eyes (Malbim), **whereas he who values reproof is prudent and shrewd** (MT). ♦ The fool refuses to accept his father's admonitions, but the one who retains the reproof will ultimately become wise (MD).
- ה אָוִיל יִנְאֵץ מוֹסֵר אָבִיו,
וְשִׁמְר תּוֹכַחַת יַעֲרִם:
6. **The righteous man's house is strength, whereas the (sources of the) revenues and movements (MT) of the wicked are muddled.** ♦ The righteous David's Temple was a tower of strength for Israel, whereas the idols Menashe brought ruin (Rashi). ♦ The homes of the wicked will be destroyed (MD).
- ו בֵּית צְדִיק חֶסֶן רַב,
וּבְתֻבּוֹאֹת רָשָׁע נִעְכָּרֹת:
7. **The wise disseminate knowledge, whereas the fool's heart falters.** ♦ The wise crown wisdom while the fool's heart is untrue (Rashi). ♦ The wise teach wisdom to everyone (MD). ♦ The fools resist learning, while the wise wish to teach (MD).
- ז שִׁפְתֵי חֲכָמִים יִזְרוּ דַעַת,
וְלֵב כְּסִילִים לֹא כֵן:
8. **The sacrifice of the wicked (this refers to Balak and Balaam –Rashi) is an abomination to God** for they
- ח זָבַח רָשָׁעִים תּוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה,
וּתְפִלַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל רְצוֹנוֹ:

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have neither repented nor prayed for forgiveness (MD), whereas the prayer of forgiveness (MD) of the upright (this refers to Moses – Rashi) when he brings his offering (MD) is His delight – this is what God wants (MD).

9. The way of the wicked is repugnant to God, whereas He loves the one who continuously pursues righteousness. ◇ God abhors those on their way to do evil even though none was actually done, while the one who chased after some charitable act, even if he was unable to actually perform it, is loved by God (MD). ט
תוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה דְּרֹךְ רָשָׁע, וּמְרִידָה צְדָקָה יֶאֱהָב:
10. The one who forsakes God's way will have grievous correction, and the one who hates reproof will die. ◇ Horrible afflictions await those who turn from the (right and proper – MD) way of the Holy One, blessed be He (Rashi). ◇ The latter one is worse than the former since there is no hope for him, and he cannot be corrected (RYG). י
מוֹסֵר רָע לְעֵזֵב אֶרֶח, שׁוֹנֵא תוֹכַחַת יָמוּת:
11. If the netherworld and the grave (MD) and destruction are always before God, so much so are the hearts of the children of men. ◇ If God knows all about what is in the grave and beyond, then surely He knows the thoughts of man (Rashi, MD). יא
שָׂאוֹל וְאֶבְדּוֹן נֶגְדַי יְהוָה, אֵף כִּי לְבוֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם:
12. The ridiculer scorns reproof and does not seek the wise. ◇ Since he despises admonishment, he avoids going to the wise man for fear of being rebuked (MD). יב
לֹא יֶאֱהָב לֵץ הוֹכַח לוֹ, אֶל חֲכָמִים לֹא יֵלֵךְ:

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13. A merry heart makes for and causes (MD) a very (MD) cheerful and glowing (MD) countenance, **whereas the sorrowful heart breaks the spirit** and causes one to feel lowly (MD). ♦ Make God's heart happy by going in His ways, and He will turn His good countenance towards you, and do all your will. But, if you should upset Him, He will cause you dejection (Rashi). ♦ Do not believe that only what one does in practice is important, because [although] matters of pleasure and sorrow are [only] in the heart, [they are equally real] (RYG).
- יג לֵב שְׂמֵחַ יִיטֵב פְּנִים,
וּבְעֵצְבַת לֵב רוּחַ נִכְאָה:
14. The heart of discernment pursues knowledge, whereas the mouth of fools feeds on folly. ♦ Fools do foolish things with their companions and friends (MD).
- יד לֵב נְבוֹן יִבְקֹשׁ דָּעַת, וּפִי
וּפְנֵי כְּסִילִים יִרְעֶה אֲוֹלָת:
15. For the poor man, every day is bad even the Sabbaths and the Holidays (Rashi), whereas he who has a joyous heart has a continual feast. ♦ This is to teach that a person should always be happy with his lot (Rashi). ♦ The one who never looks at what someone else has and is happy with his portion will have good, because he has a good heart and is never envious of others (MD).
- טו כָּל יְמֵי עֲנִי רָעִים, וְטוֹב
לֵב מְשִׁתָּה תָמִיד:
16. Better a little honestly-earned (MD) accompanied with the fear of God, than a great treasure with turmoil. ♦ People are crying that
- טז טוֹב מְעֵט בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה,
מֵאוֹצַר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בּוֹ:

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the criminal's riches were ill-gained because he robbed and oppressed them (Rashi, MD). ♦ His contentment is his fear of God. Even if he is poor, he feels as if he is rejoicing all the time (RYG).

17. **Better to provide (MD) a regular (MT) dinner of herbs with love, than the meat of a fattened ox with hatred.** ♦ The (honest) poor man's small offering is preferred over the (large) sin-offering of the wicked man (Rashi). ♦ Another explanation: It is better to give (a little) to the poor man with a happy face, than to give him fattened meats with an angry countenance (Rashi). ♦ God's love for you is better than all your other friendships (RYG).
- יז טוב אֶרְחַת יָרֵק וְאַהֲבָה
שָׁם, מִשּׁוֹר אֲבוֹס וְשִׂנְאָה
בוֹ:
18. **The wrathful man - the one who is unable to control his anger (Rashi) - stirs up discord among people (MD), whereas the one who is slow to anger appeases strife and soothes conflict (MD).**
- יח אִישׁ חֵמָה יִגְרֶה מְדוֹן,
וְאֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם יִשְׁקִיט רֵיב:
19. **The path before the sluggard appears to him as though it is hedged and blocked with thorns, whereas the path of the upright is level and paved (MD).** ♦ For the lazy man, everything is difficult and there are always insurmountable obstacles in his way (MD).
- יט דֶּרֶךְ עֲצֵל כְּמִשְׁכַּת חֲדָק,
וְאַרְחַ יִשְׁרָיִם סִלְלָה:
20. **The wise son gladdens his father, while the foolish man despises his mother.** ♦ He causes others to disgrace his mother (Rashi). ♦ A father is happy when his son keeps company with wise people (MD). ♦ Since mothers pamper their
- כ בֶּן חָכָם יִשְׂמַח אָב, וְכֹסִיל
אָדָם בּוֹזֶה אִמּוֹ:

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children more and spare the rod, people will curse them more if their children turn out bad (MD). ♦ It is written 'foolish man' to indicate that he is independent of his parents' guidance (Malbim).

21. The heartless man enjoys his own (MD) folly, whereas the man of discernment has personal satisfaction when he (MD) walks straight ahead – in the right way (MD). **כא אִוֶּלֶת שְׂמֵחָה לַחֲסֹר לֵב, וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה יֵיטֵר לְכַת:**
22. The lack of good counsel frustrates purposes, whereas with a multitude of counselors, the purpose is attained. ♦ Without advice (of the many – MD), ideas do not materialize (Rashi). ♦ סוד – secret – refers to something concealed; עצה – counsel – refers to investigating the opinions of a matter (RYG). ♦ Either, counsel is typically given in confidence - סוד - or the word derives from יסוד, foundation, i.e. counsel is the foundation of the structure (MT). **כב הָפֵר מִחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּאֵין סוֹד, וּבִרְבּ יוֹעֲצִים תִּקּוּם:**
23. People enjoy their own answers. What is better than a timely word²⁹? ♦ People appreciate the one who gives them pleasant and gentle responses to their inquiries (Rashi). ♦ Timely refers to when the people ask about the Laws of Passover at Passover-time, and Succos in its season (Rashi). ♦ It is the nature of people to like their own answers and say whatever comes up in their heads at that moment. However, one should control that impulse and only speak things in their proper time (RYG). ♦ A good answer in one instance may not be good in another circumstance (MD). **כג שְׂמֵחָה לְאִישׁ בְּמַעֲנֵה פִּיו, וְדָבָר בְּעֵתוֹ מֵה טוֹב:**

²⁹ Or thing.

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24. The way he conducts his life elevates the wise man to return to God (MD) so that he reverts from the netherworld below.

כד אָרַח חַיִּים לְמַעַלָּה
לְמִשְׁכְּבִיל, לְמַעַן סוּר
מִשְׂאוֹל מָטָה:

25. God will uproot the home of the one who rearranges the borders of the weak and helpless (MD) widow, and will reestablish them firmly.

כה בֵּית גְּאִים יִסַּח יְהוָה,
וַיִּצַב גְּבוּל אֱלֻמָּנָה:

26. Even (Malbim) thoughts of wickedness are an abhorrence to God, whereas the words of pleasantness are pure. ♦ There are those who speak comfortingly, but their thoughts are evil. The proper thing is that the one who speaks pleasant words should be pure without any inclusion of bad thoughts (MD).

כו תּוֹעֵבֹת יְהוָה מַחֲשָׁבוֹת
רָע, וְטְהוּרִים אִמְרֵי נְעִם:

27. The house of the greedy and the thief (MT) is polluted, whereas the one who hates gifts will live.

כז עֲכָר בֵּיתוֹ בּוֹצֵעַ בְּצַע,
וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנַת יְחִיָּה:

♦ Since he hates gifts, surely he hates robbery³⁰ (Rashi). ♦ The greedy man's house will be destroyed (MD). ♦ The one who hates

³⁰ What is the connection between despising gifts and despising robbery? The Malbim seems to suggest that this sort of person is repulsed by the idea of making any unearned gains for himself.

My son Avromie ז"ל had a nice insight regarding שׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנַת יְחִיָּה. He once asked my late uncle Joe Kampler how he was able to survive six years in Nazi labor camps. Uncle Joe said that he had learned from his home in Frankfurt-am-Main to always be self-sufficient and never rely on anyone for anything. If he was hungry, he had to take his own food, and not wait to be served by his mother. This forced him to develop his own ingenious solutions for every problem and circumstance and served him well in the camps when basic necessities were scarce. Joe never waited until someone gave him his daily ration of bread -

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gifts and relies on God (for his sustenance) will be given additional life from Him, something that no human has the power to give (MD).

28. **The righteous man studies well and thinks things through and understands (Rashi) the issue before he answers** and, therefore his words are few (MD), **whereas the wicked just blabber malevolence**, and a lot, because they really don't care what they are saying³¹ (MD).
- כח לֵב צַדִּיק יִהְיֶה לְעֲנוּת, וּפִי רְשָׁעִים יִבְיַע רָעוֹת:
29. **God is distant from the wicked and, metaphorically, can't hear their prayers (MD), whereas He hears the prayers of the righteous.**
- כט רָחוֹק יְהוָה מִרְשָׁעִים, וּתְפִלַּת צַדִּיקִים יִשְׁמָע:
30. **The light of the eyes (Torah - Rashi) gladdens the heart, and a good report (an innovative piece of Torah –MD) fattens the bones.**
- ל מְאוֹר עֵינַיִם יִשְׂמַח לֵב, שְׂמוּעָה טוֹבָה תִּדְשֵׁן עֲצָם:
- ◇ A person is glad when he is able to answer the questions he is asked (Rashi). ◇ The plain meaning of this verse is simply that something nice to look at makes people happy, like a verdant vegetable garden or flowing rivers (Rashi). ◇ Nothing in the world makes a person happier than being released from doubts (MD).

which was not always coming - he went out and found it himself. This, says Avromie, is the meaning of our phrase. It is only the one who relies only on himself (and God) to provide his needs and does not wait for human "gifts" who survives.

³¹ Maybe, they are cavalier and just don't care about the consequences of what they tell people. Or they may think that no one takes them seriously anyhow, so it makes no difference what they say.

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31. The ear that listens to the reproof of life resides among and is bound to (MD) the wise, and the wise desire and are happy with their company (RYG). לא אֶזֶן שִׁמְעַת תּוֹכַחַת חַיִּים, בְּקָרֵב חֲכָמִים תִּלְוֶן:
32. The one who annuls correction despises and makes despicable (MD) his own soul because he is not concerned about its welfare (MD), whereas the one who hearkens to reproof obtains a new heart of (MD) understanding with which he will acquire venerable character traits and the ability to make proper choices (RYG). לב פּוֹרֵעַ מוֹסֵר מוֹאֵס נַפְשׁוֹ, וְשׁוֹמֵעַ תּוֹכַחַת קוֹנֵה לֵב:
33. Being in awe of God is a prerequisite for achieving intelligent morality. Humility precedes and brings (Rashi, MD) honor³². ♦ Our rabbis have said (Avodas Zoroh 20b), Humility is greater than everything else (RYG). ♦ Fear of God is considered rebuke for the one who listens to wisdom, and is why it precedes it (MD). לג יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוֹסֵר חֲכָמָה, וּלְפָנַי כְּבוֹד עֲנוּהַ:



³² Or, Humility is a prerequisite for honor.

CHAPTER 16

פרק טז

1. Man may design and scheme, but it is God who formulates the response. **א** **לְאָדָם מְעַרְכֵי לֵב, וּמִיְהוָה מַעֲנֶה לְשׁוֹן:** **א**
◇ God organizes his counsel and words in the man's heart. If he is worthy, then God prepares for him a good response (Rashi). ◇ This verse refers to humility (RYG). ◇ He helps him organize his words so that he will not fail (MD).
2. Man always views himself blameless and pure (MT), but God really knows. **ב** **כָּל דֶּרֶכֵי אִישׁ זָדָבְעִינָיו, וַתִּכַּן רוּחוֹת יְהוָה:** **ב**
◇ God delves into everyone's soul and knows if he is truly blameless or not (MD), and who is good and who is evil (Rashi). ◇ If a man sincerely wishes to direct his heart to the worship and fear of God, He will help him correct his heart and straighten his traits (RYG).
3. Dedicate your efforts to the service of (MD) God, and your thoughts will be established. **ג** **גַּל אֶל יְהוָה מַעֲשֶׂיךָ, וַיִּכְּנֹוּ מַחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ:** **ג**
◇ Roll your needs over to God (Rashi). ◇ Another explanation – If you pray to Him for all your needs, (when He fulfills your requests) they will be firm and ever-lasting (Rashi). ◇ If everything you do is done

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in order that it leads you to serve God, then all your thoughts will be solid and permanent (MD).

4. **God made everything for His own purpose and praise (Rashi, MD), yet even the occasionally wicked man is evil.** ♦ God created Man so that he may serve Him, and everything is for His glory³³ (RYG). ♦ Even the might given the wicked is for God's praise for it will be used for punishing (the guilty) (MD). ד כָּל פֶּעַל יְהוָה לְמַעַנְהוּ, וְגַם רָשָׁע לְיוֹם רָעָה:
5. **The arrogant are a detestation for God; they will not go unpunished!** ♦ He will not absolve those who were insolent (RYG). ה תוֹעֵבֹת יְהוָה כָּל גִּבְהַ לֵּב, יָד לֵיזָד לֹא יִנְקָה:
6. **Mercy and truth expiate iniquity, while those who fear Him depart from evil.** ♦ There is no atonement without repentance (RYG). ♦ Because of one's charitableness and truthfulness he will be exonerated of sin, and as long he steers clear of evil because of his fear of God, and not because of his fear of men (MD). ו בְּחֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת יִכַּפֵּר עֲוֹן, וּבִירְאֵת יְהוָה סוּר מִרָע:
7. **When a man's ways please God when he is straight (MD), He causes even his enemies to come to terms with him.** ♦ Our rabbis taught (Avos 3:41), One who has friends (because of his good traits and people find him acceptable) ז בְּרָצוֹת יְהוָה דְּרָכֵי אִישׁ, גַּם אוֹיְבָיו יִשְׁלַם אֹתוֹ:

³³ את הכל ברא לכבודו. In these few words, we have the entire explanation of why God created Man, the universe and all within it.

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below (in this world), should know that he has friends Above (RYG).

◇ Nor will he gain new enemies (MD).

8. **Better a little with righteousness than riches with** (gained through - MD) **injustice** such as by means of thievery or oppression (MD). ח טוֹב מְעֵט בְּצַדִּיקָה, מְרֹב תְּבוּאוֹת בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט:
9. **Man plans, God directs**³⁴. ◇ God assists the one who wishes to go in the Right Way, as we have learned (Shabbos 104a), God helps the one who wishes to purify himself (Rashi). ◇ There is no one of greater arrogance and foolishness, nor a greater traitor, than he who turns his God-given strength and abilities against Him (based on RYG). ◇ God will lead a person in whichever way he wants to go (MD). ט לֵב אָדָם יַחֲשֵׁב דֶּרֶכּוֹ, וַיְהוֶה יָכִין צֵעְדוֹ:
10. **Upon the lips of the king is magic and clarity** (MD), **he will not pervert justice**. ◇ This refers to the wise judge (Rashi). ◇ No one lies before the king for all fear him and, besides, lies will be exposed (RYG). ◇ The words of the king are as clear (and obeyed) as if he had magic on his lips, and wishing to find favor with him, no one hides anything knowing that all will be revealed by him. Thus, justice is served (based on MD). י קָסָם עַל שְׂפֵתַי מְלֶכֶךְ, בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא יִמְעַל פִּיו:
11. **God's balances and scales are just, and Man puts his own weights in His bag**. ◇ God pays everyone back what they deserve יא פָּלֶס וּמֵאזְנֵי מִשְׁפָּט לַיהוָה, מַעֲשֵׂהוּ כָּל אֲבֵנֵי כִּיס:

³⁴ More literally, Man thinks about which way he would like to go, but God sets his steps.

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(Rashi). ◇ God weighs each person in accordance with his own deeds (MD).

12. It is an abomination for kings and judges (Rashi) to commit evil, since their thrones are upheld by rectitude. יב תועֵבַת מְלָכִים עֲשׂוֹת רָשָׁע, כִּי בַצְדָקָה יִכּוֹן כְּסֵא:
13. Kings delight in the words of righteousness, and they love those who speak right and straight. יג רָצוֹן מְלָכִים שְׁפָתַי צְדָקָה, וְדַבַּר יִשְׂרָאֵל יֶאֱהָב:
14. The King's³⁵ wrath is like (Rashi) a messenger of death, but the wise man will ransom to placate or pacify (Rashi) His anger. ◇ The learned man removes wrath with the sweetness of his speech (MD). יד חֲמַת מֶלֶךְ מְלַאכֵי מוֹת, וְאִישׁ חָכָם יִכְפְּרֶנָּה:
15. The light of the King's face when He is not angry is life, and His favor is like the later seasonal rains. ◇ It behooves a man to set his ways straight before God (Rashi). ◇ The one who finds favor before God will have it good, like a cloud pregnant with rain (Rashi). ◇ When God causes angry and weary faces to shine, it enlivens them, for there is much good in the hand of the King (MD). טו בְּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים, וְרָצוֹנוֹ כְּעַב מִלְקוֹשׁ:
16. Better the acquisition of wisdom than fine gold, better the acquisition of understanding טז קָנָה חֲכָמָה מִה טוֹב מִחֲרוֹץ, וְקָנֹת בִּינָה נְבָחַר מִכֶּסֶף:

³⁵ From the text alone, it is impossible to know if the king referred to is human, God or both.

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than silver. ♦ This relates to that said above. The King's will and His love cannot be "acquired" except through wisdom (RYG).

17. The upright man's way is to flee evil, and the one who so goes preserves his soul. ♦ The upright contemplate their ways and make sure they do not falter in sin. The one who wishes to preserve his soul will give thought as to how he behaves and will not act impulsively (MD).
- יז מְסִלַת יִשְׁרִים סוּר מִרָע, שְׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ נִצֵּר דְרָכּוֹ:
18. Pride precedes destruction, and a haughty spirit comes before failure. ♦ Just before the wicked fall, they receive great power and pride. In this way, their pain is multiplied when they collapse (MD).
- יח לְפָנַי שְׁבֵר גָּאוֹן, וְלִפְנֵי כֶּשֶׁלֹן גְּבַה רוּחַ:
19. Better a lowly spirit with (learned from -RYG) the humble, than to divide the spoils and wealth (MD) with the arrogant, lest you learn from their deeds (MD).
- יט טוֹב שְׁפַל רוּחַ אֶת עֲנָוִים עֲנִיִּים, מִחֶלֶק שָׁלַל אֶת גְּאִים:
- כ מִשְׁפִּיל עַל דָּבָר יִמָּצֵא טוֹב, וּבּוֹטָח בַּיהוָה אֲשֶׁר יוּ:
20. Ponder the consequences of (MD) your deeds well and you will find good (success – MD); trust in God and find happiness. ♦ One will find contentment if he trusts in God and does good (the right thing), even if there is an element of danger or expense in performing a Mitzvah (Rashi). ♦ If after all his contemplations he trusts in God, he is praiseworthy (MD).

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21. **The wise are called men of acumen for they learned from their teachers (Rashi, MD); the sweetness of the lips improves the lesson.** ♦ When the teacher explains something by providing sensible reasoning, and he sweetens his words with rationales, the lesson is enhanced (Rashi). ♦ The teacher also benefits when he adds logical and acceptable explanations, for through this he, too, achieves greater insights into the matter (MD).
- כא לַחֲכָם לֵב יִקְרָא נְבוֹן,
וּמִתֵּק שְׂפָתָיִם יִסִּיף
לְקַח:**
22. **A man's intelligence is his fountain of life, whereas folly is the chastisement of the fools.** ♦ The intelligence given to Man is the source of his life since it enables him to investigate and understand with his own mind the preferred ways which lead to the Creator and how he is to make himself acceptable to Him. Man's natural sense is to know the difference between bad and good, although he has the ability to distort this by accustoming himself to lust and choosing to do evil (RYG). ♦ From his intelligence springs forth life (MD). ♦ The fool's afflictions result from his own folly (MD).
- כב מִקְוֹר חַיִּים שֶׁכֵּל בְּעַלְיוֹ,
וּמוֹסַר אֲוִלִים אֲוֶלֶת:**
23. **The heart of the wise teaches his mouth to speak intelligently and sweetly (MD), and adds clarity and understanding (MD) to his lips.** ♦ The wisdom of the heart influences the lips, and the lips influence the heart, and so forth (MD).
- כג לֵב חָכָם יִשְׁפִּיל פִּיהוּ,
וְעַל שְׂפָתָיו יִסִּיף לְקַח:**

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24. Pleasant words of Torah (Rashi) are like honeycakes, sweet to the soul and therapeutic for the bones. ◇ Nicely spoken words and ideas attract people (MD).
- כד צוֹף דְּבַשׁ אֲמַרִי נַעַם,
מִתּוֹק לְנַפֵּשׁ וּמְרַפֵּא
לְעַצְמוֹ:
25. Sometimes, what appears right like laughter and joy (RYG), ends in death. ◇ A person might think that something is right (Rashi), but it is the really the route to death (MD).
- כה יֵשׁ דֶּרֶךְ יֵשָׁר לְפָנַי אִישׁ,
וְאַחֲרֵיהָ דֶּרֶךְ מָוֶת:
26. The hungry mouth (the body with its desires) compels one (the soul) to go to work for it. ◇ Sometimes it is the soul which toils for the body, and not the reverse as it is with the wise man (RYG).
- כו נֶפֶשׁ עֹמֵל עִמָּלָה לוֹ, כִּי
אֲכַף עָלָיו פִּיהוּ:
27. The ungodly, lawless man excavates evil, and speaks like a scalding fire. ◇ The evil sits burning on his lips until he speaks it with his mouth and he executes his deeds (Rashi). ◇ His face burns from this (MT). ◇ The way of the wicked is to dig around and find machinations to do dastardly things to people. They talk sharply and angrily as if their lips are on fire (MD).
- כז אִישׁ בְּלִיעַל פָּרָה רָעָה,
וְעַל שְׂפָתָיו שִׁפְתֵי כֹּהֵן
צָרְבֶת:

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28. **The confused man sows strife by twisting people's words around (MD), while the grouch who complains about people (MD) separates friends and makes himself into their enemy (MD).** כח אִישׁ תְּהַפְּכוֹת יִשְׁלַח מְדוֹן, וְנִרְגָּן מִפְּרִיד אֱלוֹף:
29. **The violent man entices his neighbor to violence for he needs a partner (MD) and leads him to no good³⁶. ♦ This verse comes to warn us against associating with violent people (RYG).** כט אִישׁ חָמָס יִפְתֶּה רַעְהוּ, וְהוֹלִיכוֹ בְּדָרֶךְ לֹא טוֹב:
30. **He winks and shuts (MD) his eyes so as to plan evil; he bites his lip to bring evil to pass. ♦ He shuts his eyes so he can think how he can manipulate matters (MD). ♦ He moves his lips hinting at his slanderous speech (MD).** ל עֵצָה עֵינָיו לַחֲשֹׁב תְּהַפְּכוֹת, קֶרֶץ שִׁפְתָיו כֹּלָה רַעְהוּ:
31. **A long life is a glorious crown for righteousness and charity. ♦ The one who acts virtuously and with generosity will have a long and magnificent life (Rashi, MD).** לא עֵטָרַת תְּפֹאֶרֶת שִׁיבָה, בְּדָרֶךְ צְדָקָה תִּמְצֵא:
32. **Better to be slow to anger than to be mighty; better to control your spirit than to capture a city. ♦ The mighty only overcome (their enemies) because of their might, but the one slow to anger will conquer all with his self-control (MD).** לב טוֹב אֶרֶךְ אַפִּים מִגִּבּוֹר, וּמִשָּׁל בְּרוּחוֹ מִלְּכַד עִיר:

³⁶ Or, leads him in a bad way.

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33. **Man is he who determines** (by his thoughts and deeds) **the fate God will decree for him.** ♦ Don't

think things happen randomly or by chance for it is God who decrees what everyone will receive (MD).

לֹג בַּחֵיק יוֹטֵל אֶת הַגּוֹרֵל,
וּמִיָּהוָה פֶּל מִשְׁפָּטוֹ:



CHAPTER 17

פרק יז

1. Better a slice of dry bread in tranquility than a contentious home stocked with slaughtered meat. א טוב פת חרבה ושלום בה, מבית מלא זבחי ריב:
- ◇ It was better for God to destroy His Temple and His city and have respite from the sins of Israel than keep his House within which they would bring sacrificial offerings of strife (Rashi). ◇ Choose peace, since it is better to have less without resorting to a fight, then much gained via friction, such as might occur when brothers have to divide up an inheritance (RYG).
2. Better a bright servant than a feckless and shameful son³⁷; it is the former who will inherit with the brothers and be considered as one of them (MD). ב עבד משפיל ומשל בן מביש, ובתוך אחים יחלק נחלה:
- ◇ A righteous alien is better than an evil citizen. The former will one day divide the spoils and inheritance with Israel, as it says (Ezekiel 47:23), "And it will be in the tribe within which the convert resides...." (Rashi). ◇ This verse comes to tell fathers that they have to instruct their sons how to be sensible (RYG).

³⁷ More literally, The sensible servant will govern the disgraceful and impudent son.

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3. Silver is refined in a cupel and gold in a furnace, but God tries the heart. **ג** מִצָּרְף לְכֶסֶף וְכוּר לְזָהָב,
וּבִחַן לְבוֹת יְהוָה: ג
◇ God refines hearts, He tests them, and knows their thoughts (Rashi). ◇ Impure dross can be separated from a metal ore by heat in a furnace leaving the pure silver or gold. God, however, just needs to look into a man's heart to determine if it is good or bad (MD).
4. The evildoer heeds wicked lips, and the liar listens to the mischievous tongue. **ד** מִרַע מִקְשִׁיב עַל שְׂפֹת
אָוֹן, שֶׁקֶר מִזִּין עַל לְשׁוֹן
הוֹת: ד
◇ The evildoer accepts slander and false testimony (Rashi). ◇ The proper thing to do is to detest slander – not to listen to it, not to believe it, and not to tell it to someone else. One should not stop loving and respecting his friend when there is doubt (that what was said about him was true), but only when the matter becomes absolutely certain. In the meantime, he should retain the matter in his heart and not accept the rumor as true, but simply be suspicious (RYG, based on Nidda 61a). ◇ The evildoers accept each other's murmurs, and won't part from them(MD).
5. Ridiculing the poor is blasphemy to God. The one who is gladdened by another's calamity will not go unpunished. **ה** לַעֲג לְרֵשׁ חֲרֵף עֲשֵׂהוּ,
שְׂמֵחַ לְאִיד לֹא יִנָּקֶה: ה
◇ The mocker will say that the man became poor because he lacked smarts, and not that it was God who caused this to happen to him (MD). ◇ He who rejoices in the failings of his fellow man will not be cleared, but will be punished in the same way (as his victim suffers) (MD).

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6. Grandchildren are a man's crowning splendor, and the glory of the children are their fathers, if they are honored (MD). ו **עֲטָרַת זְקֵנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים, וְתִפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם:**
 ◇ When grandparents see their grandchildren going in the Good Way, it is their crown; and when grandchildren have righteous grandparents, it is their glory (Rashi).
7. If arrogant speech is unbecoming of the lout, all the (MD) more so are lying lips for a prince. ז **לֹא נְאוּה לְנֹבֵל שְׁפַת יִתְר, אִם כִּי לְנֹדֵיב שְׁפַת שָׁקֵר:**
 ◇ More than the despicable person's distaste for exalted and beneficial talk is the dislike of the wise man for falsehood (MD).
8. A bribe is like a precious jewel in the eyes of the briber, but the one who spurns gifts will prosper. ח **אֶבֶן חַן הַשָּׁחַד בְּעֵינָי בְּעֵלָיו, אֶל כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִפְנֶה יִשְׁפִּיל:**
 ◇ When someone comes before God and pacifies Him with words and repents, he is like a precious stone in His Eyes. He will prosper in all that he asks for from God; he will succeed (Rashi). ◇ Once a person becomes accustomed to accepting bribes, it becomes for him like a valuable gem, and he will not condemn this act. He will also come to find merit with the briber and even find justification for the (evildoer's) act³⁸ (RYG).
9. To win a friend, make no mention of his sins if he sinned against you (Rashi, MD), and harping on such matters will only estrange God or officials and governors (MT). ט **מִכֶּסֶה פֶּשַׁע מִבֵּקֶשׁ אֶהְבֶּה, וְשִׁנְה בְּדָבָר מִפְּרִיד אֱלוֹף:**
 ◇ The way to win a friend is to turn a blind eye to his sins (RYG). ◇ By retelling his

³⁸ Or, maybe, he will find justification in taking the bribe.

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friend's criminal acts in order that his friend does not forget them, causes him to separate from God, for he is in violation of the Torah prohibition against bearing a grudge (Lev. 19:18) (MD).

10. The wise man internalizes a single rebuke for it terrifies him (MD) more so than would a hundred lashes affect the fool. י תַחַת גְּעָרָה בְּמִבִּין, מֵהַכּוֹת כְּסִיל מֵאַה:
11. The disobedient and stubborn (Rashi) man who rebels against God (MD) seeks only evil all the time (Rashi) in this world (MD); he will be visited by a cruel messenger who will judge him after his death (MD). יא אֵד מְרִי יִבְקֹשׁ רָע, וּמִלְאָד אֶכְזָרִי יִשְׁלַח בּוֹ:
12. Rather meet a really angry bear whose whelps were taken from her than a fool in his folly who will entice you to veer from God and His Torah (Rashi). ♦ Beware of the anger of the fool, and avoid arguing with him (RYG). ♦ The bear has now become a killer because of the bitterness in its heart (MD). יב פָּגוּשׁ דָּב שְׂפוּל בְּאִישׁ, וְאֵל כְּסִיל בְּאוֹלָתוֹ:
13. The one who repays evil for good will not see evil depart from his home. ♦ He will be visited with an unbearable punishment (RYG). ♦ No one will want to help save him from something bad since he never repaid (any of the good done for him) (MD). יג מִשִּׁיב רָעָה תַחַת טוֹבָה, לֹא תִמוּשׁ תִּמְיֵשׁ רָעָה מִבֵּיתוֹ:

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14. Quarrels begin with little things that get out of hand like a small hole in a dam which only grows (Rashi, MD). **Abandon strife early and avoid shame.** ♦ Cut off arguments early before provokers hear of it and won't let it rest (MD).
- יז פוטר מים ראשית מדון,
ולפני התגלע הריב
נטוש:
15. Both the one who justifies the wicked and the one who condemns the righteous are abominations before God. ♦
Such people commit several violations: 1) they encourage the wicked by honoring them, and cause others not to condemn their sins and evil acts; 2) the evil people will rule because they are honored, and their words will be heard, and others will follow them; 3) the righteous and wise will be disparaged and will be unable to cause the masses to repent from their transgressions; and 4) by honoring the evil ones and putting down the righteous ones, the people will not increase in their worship of God. Souls will be lost (RYG).
- טו מצדיק רשע ומרשיע
צדיק, תועבת יהוה גם
שניהם:
16. The fool cannot even buy wisdom for money, because he won't understand what he bought. ♦
What good is it that the fool buys wisdom if he hasn't as yet acquired good traits and has not eradicated evil from his heart? (RYG) ♦ The fool learns Torah only for his own reputation, but he has no intention of observing the Torah (Rashi).
- טז למה זה מחיר ביז
פסיל, לקנות חכמה ולב
אין:

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17. The definition of friend is one who loves you at all times whether things are going good or bad (MD), **he will be your brother in times of adversity.** יז **בְּכָל עֵת אֱהָב הָרַע, וְאָח לְצָרָה יוֹלֵד:** ◇ One must forever love friends, that is, acquire those who love you (Rashi). ◇ In times of trouble, a friend will help you and empathize with you (Rashi). ◇ Brothers may not always care for each other, but when adversity strikes one of them they come to his aid, because he is their flesh and blood. It is as if his brothers were born just for this calamity (MD).
18. **The unwise man shakes hands³⁹ with the heretic in order to follow him (Rashi), although he is already a guarantor committed to observe the Commandments (Rashi) for his friend (God –Rashi).** יח **אָדָם חָסַר לֵב תּוֹקֵעַ כָּף, עֵרֵב עֲרֻבָה לְפָנַי רֵעֵהוּ:**
19. **The one who loves crime, loves strife; and the one who speaks arrogantly, invites destruction.** יט **אֱהָב פֶּשַׁע אֱהָב מִצָּה, מִגְבִּיָּה פִתְחוּ מִבְּקָשׁ שֹׁבֵר:** ◇ That is, he loves transgressing against his friend (Rashi). ◇ This is the one who stirs up strife by means of his insolent speech (MT).
20. **The one with a stubborn and contrary heart finds no good, and the one with a perverse tongue falls into evil.** כ **עֵקֶשׁ לֵב לֹא יִמְצָא טוֹב, וְנִהְפֵּךְ בְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ יַפּוֹל בְּרָעָה:** ◇ The one who speaks innocently, but is really devising a trap, will fall victim to the very snare he prepared for others (MD).

³⁹ As people do when sealing a deal.

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21. The fool's parents grieve and are anguished (MT), and the boor's father lacks joy. ❖ For although he has wealth and acquisitions, he will never find peace of mind knowing that he is leaving all his hard-earned possessions to a disgraceful and lowly son (RYG).
- כא יֵלֵד כְּסִיל לְתוֹגָה לוֹ, וְלֹא יִשְׂמַח אָבִי נְבֵל:
22. A merry heart is good medicine, whereas a broken spirit dries the bones. ❖ When a person is happy with his lot, his face shines (Rashi). ❖ Not only will his flesh wither, but even his bones; this despite his otherwise good physical health (RYG).
- כב לֵב שְׂמֵחַ יִיטֵב גֵּהָה, וְרוּחַ נִכְאָה תִיבֹשׁ גְּרָם:
23. The wicked judge takes his bribes clandestinely when he wishes to pervert justice. ❖ Conversely, God accepts words of subjugation and peace from people who did wrong, that is, in private between them and Him (when they repent); He will reverse their judgment from bad to good (Rashi). ❖ The Torah has already taught that it is forbidden for the judge to accept bribes, and from here we learn that the briber is also evil (RYG).
- כג שֹׁחַד מִחֵיק רָשָׁע יִקַּח, לְהַטּוֹת אֲרָחוֹת מִשֹּׁפֵט:
24. Wisdom is close to him with understanding (he learns from everyone -MD), whereas the eyes of the fool look to the ends of the earth believing there is no one nearby from whom he can learn, thinking that the wise are far away (MD). ❖ The fool says, "How can I possibly learn all of Seder Nezikin (the laws of damages) which is thirty chapters long and the Tractate
- כד אֶת פְּנֵי מִבֵּין חֲכָמָה, וְעֵינָי כְּסִיל בְּקִצָּה אֶרֶץ:

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Keilim (Vessels) which is thirty chapters, and the Tractate Shabbos which is twenty-four chapters?" But for the wise man it is easy for he says, "Today I will learn two chapters, and tomorrow I will learn two chapters..." (Rashi). ♦ The wise one loves to understand and he has the mind for it. He is capable of evaluating the correctness of matters and is willing to accept the truth regardless of the source. The fool's pride prevents him from learning from others; neither does he really love wisdom – he only wants it in order to help him increase his dominance over others. Besides, he isn't capable of evaluating the true worth of anything he's heard. He accepts it only because the person he heard it from is known as being wise (RYG).

25. The fool's father is vexed, his mother is bitter that she bore him. כה כַּעַס לְאָבִיו בֶּן כָּסִיל, וּמָמַר לְיֹלְדָתוֹ:
♦ This refers to Jeroboam with whom God is angry, and so are the people of Israel, because he caused them to sin (Rashi).
26. To include the righteous in punishment is as bad as it would be to strike the generous ones for their uprightness. כו גַּם עֲנוּשׁ לְצַדִּיק לֹא טוֹב, לְהַכּוֹת נְדִיבִים עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל:
♦ Generous people are better known to the public than are righteous people who are better known by God (Malbim).
27. The one with knowledge spares his words, and he who expends his spirit wisely is a man of discernment. כז חוּשֵׁךְ אִמְרָיו יוֹדֵעַ דַּעַת, יָקָר וְקָר רֹחַ אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה:
♦ The wise man does not speak of useless matters because each breath for him is valuable and important (MD).

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28. Even a fool who keeps quiet is reckoned as wise. The man of understanding keeps his lips shut. ❖ This is advice for the fool: Keep quiet and listen. People might then think you are smart (RYG). ❖ The one who quiets the fool is called judicious (MD).
- כח גם אָויל מִחֲרִישׁ חָכָם
יִחָשֵׁב, אֵטֶם שְׁפֹתָיו נָבוֹן:



CHAPTER 18

פרק יח

1. He who isolates himself from the public cares only about his own desires; he banishes all good advice. א
לְתַאֲוָה יִבְקֹשׁ נִפְרָד, בְּכָל תּוֹשֵׁיָהּ יִתְגַּלֵּעַ: ב
◇ He who separates himself from God in order that he does not have to observe the Commandments and so that he can pursue his evil lusts will have, in the end, his disgrace revealed among the wise. This also refers to those who engage in sexual immorality whose abasement will be known in the study halls and the synagogues (Rashi). ◇ This refers to a Talmudic scholar who abandons Torah to pursue his desires. Everyone will know of his shame since his absence in the Beis Medrash will be obvious to all (MD).
2. The fool does not care to add to his (MD) understanding, but only in revealing his own emotions and "wisdom" (MD). ב
לֹא יַחְפֹּץ כְּסִיל בְּתְבוּנָה, כִּי אִם בְּהַתְגַּלוֹת לְבוֹ: ב
◇ The fool has no desire to learn anything new. What he knows now is good enough for him. Still he revels in telling everyone the little that he knows (MD).

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3. **With the wicked comes contempt of other people (MD), with ignominy, reproach.** ◇ It is a complete derision for the one who chooses a life of promiscuity (Rashi). ◇ The wicked have contempt for everyone. Our Sages have said (Avos 3:1): Who is honorable? He who honors others (RYG). ◇ Such a person will shame others by accusing them of the very sins he himself commits (MD).
- ג בְּבוֹא רָשָׁע בָּא גַם בּוֹי, וְעַם קָלוֹן חָרְפָּה:**
4. **Words spoken by an important man are profound, like deep waters or a flowing brook, and a fountain of wisdom.** ◇ The wisdom of Torah makes wise those who involve themselves with it (MD).
- ד מִים עֲמֻקִּים דְּבָרֵי פִי אִישׁ, נֶחַל זָבֵעַ מְקוֹר חֲכָמָה:**
5. **There is no good in honoring the wicked particularly when it is at the expense of pushing aside the righteous man in judgment.** ◇ It is not to the advantage of the wicked that they are rewarded in this world for their (greater) punishment awaits them in the World to Come, while the reverse holds true for the righteous ones (Rashi). ◇ It is a double sin when the judgment is perverted to favor the evil ones and the righteous are found guilty (MD).
- ה שְׂאֵת פְּנֵי רָשָׁע לֹא טוֹב, לְהַטּוֹת צְדִיק בַּמִּשְׁפָּט:**
6. **The fool's lips lead to contention, and his mouth, beatings.** ◇ His own mouth invites afflictions upon himself (Rashi). ◇ The fool, when responding to someone, begins by fighting and arguing, and in
- ו שְׂפֵתַי כְּסִיל יִבְאוּ בְרִיב, וּפְיוֹ לְמַהֲלָמוֹת יִקְרָא:**

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anger, for so is his habit. He disagrees without even thinking about what he is saying (RYG). ♦ The fool yells; he does not speak calmly and with repose. Others will strike him for such talk. (MD).

7. **The fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips the snare of his soul.** ♦ **פִּי כְּסִיל מְחַתָּה לוֹ, וּשְׂפָתָיו מוֹקֵשׁ נַפְשׁוֹ:** ז
The fool will fear his mouth like he fears his enemies since it is not in his control, for he has trained his lips to move without thinking and consideration (RYG).
8. **Grumbling words are shattering, and they descend into the innermost parts of the belly.** ♦ **דְּבָרֵי נִרְגָּן כְּמַתְּלֵה־מִים, וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן:** ח
The words of the grumbler, the one who is always complaining, are destructively hard and deep, and the pain they cause is very difficult to heal (MD). ♦ Grumblers constantly bawl (Malbim).
9. **The lazy worker is brother to the Destroyer (Satan -Rashi).** ♦ **גַּם מְתַרְפֵּה בְּמַלְאכְתּוֹ, אָחֵהוּא לְבַעַל מְשָׁחִית:** ט
This refers to the scholar who has abandoned Torah (Rashi). ♦ The one who is weak in Torah becomes a brother and friend to the one who wishes to destroy the words of the Torah with fabrications. In the end, he will resemble him because he will forget his Torah (MD).
10. **God's Name is a tower of strength upon which the righteous man climbs on high and becomes empowered⁴⁰.** ♦ **מִגְדָּל עֹז שֵׁם יְהוָה, בּוֹ יִרוּץ צַדִּיק וְנִשְׁגָּב:** י
When one is in trouble, he can save himself by remembering God's Name⁴¹ and praying to Him (RYG). ♦

⁴⁰ Alternatively, "...to where he runs and is strengthened."

⁴¹ God's Name is His apparent manifestation in this world.

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Regarding strength: There are Commandments which require toil, expediency and preparation such as redeeming captives or saving a life, while other Commandments require diligence and persistence, day and night, and one has to tirelessly pursue them, like learning Torah and acquiring good character traits (RYG). ♦ A person who fortifies himself within a tower is imprisoned and can go nowhere. But the one who leans on God's Name can go wherever he wants, and is strengthened (MD).

11. The rich man believes that his wealth is his robust city or wall, and his stone floor, his defender. ♦ He thinks his money will save him from death (MD). **יא הוֹן עָשִׂיר קְרִית עֲזוֹ, וְכַחוּמָּה נִשְׁגָּבָה בְּמִשְׁכְּבֵיתוֹ:**
12. A haughty heart precedes destruction, whereas humility goes before and is rewarded with (MD) honor. ♦ Because he "raised" his heart haughtily, God will raise him in order that his troubles double when his downfall comes (MD). **יב לְפָנַי שָׁבַר יִגְבֶּה לֵב אִישׁ, וְלְפָנַי כְּבוֹד עֲנָוָה:**
13. The one who replies before he hears the question is foolish and confused because he failed to understand the question. He will be humiliated because he did not answer properly (MD). ♦ The difference between ענה – answer – and משיב – reply – is that the replier contradicts his friend (Malbim). **יג מִשִּׁיב דָּבָר בְּטָרָם יִשְׁמָע, אֲוֶלֶת הִיא לוֹ וְכִלְמָה:**

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14. A man's spirit and his intelligence (MD) will support him in infirmity, but who can bear a broken heart? ♦ The unceasing spirit of the courageous man does not take worry to heart. He embraces all that befalls him with joy (Rashi). ♦ A healthy mind is able to bear the sufferings of bodily illnesses, but the body cannot comfort the spirit when it is afflicted with the disease of worrying (RYG). יז רוח איש יכלכל מחלהו, ורוח נכאָה מי ישאָנה:
15. The prudent one is he who gains understanding, as does the ear of the wise which seeks knowledge. ♦ Our rabbis have taught that a person should first learn wisdom, and then try to understand the rationale for things (RYG based on Brochos 63b). ♦ The discerning ones acquire their own knowledge, but there are other wise people who cannot understand on their own, and must listen again to what others have to say (MD). ♦ Wisdom (חכמה) is defined as received knowledge (from an outside source), while understanding (בינה) is what one understands on his own (Malbim). טו לב נבון יקנה דעת, ואזן חכמים תבקש דעת:
16. Because of a man's gifts there will be room for him, and he will be comfort before great ones. ♦ The one who gives charity will have a greater share in the World to Come. During his lifetime, great people will call him eminent (Rashi). ♦ He will make a name for himself and win many friends. Great people will seek him out (RYG). טז מתן אדם ירחיב לו, ולפני גדלים ינחנו:

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17. The first one who proclaims his rightness in a dispute (will be believed), until he is investigated. יז צַדִּיק הָרֵאשׁוֹן בְּרִיבוֹ, וְבֹא יֵבֵא יַעֲהוּ וַיִּחְקְרוּ:
- ◆ It is forbidden for a judge to hear one litigant in the absence of the other (RYG quoting Shavuos 31a). ◆ The one who presents his arguments first in a dispute will appear to be right because he gives acceptable reasons for his actions, and people will believe him, until someone comes and challenges him. People will now consider him a liar, and his words will be investigated (MD).
18. Casting lots and compromise (MD) can prevent arguments between litigants (Rashi) and separates the disputants. יח מְדִינִים יִשְׁבִּית הַגּוֹרֵל, וַבֵּין עֲצוּמִים יִפְרִיד:
- ◆ They will praise this solution. It is good and proper to use this method since the parties will say that the outcome was determined by God. They will no longer have any desire for the other one's portion, and this quells the argument (RYG). ◆ Casting lots gives each party something (MD).
19. An offended brother is harder to win back than conquering a city. The contention between quarreling brothers is like the strong, unbreakable lock or bolt (MT) of a castle gate. יט אָח נִפְשָׁע מִקְרִית עֹז, וּמְדִינִים וּמְדוּנִים כְּבָרִיחַ אֲרָמוֹן:
- ◆ The offended brother loses a "fortified city" when he revolts. His quarrel separates the brothers forever with an unbreakable lock (Rashi). ◆ (as a continuation of the previous verse) Brothers must be very careful that, when dividing inheritance, disagreements do not lead to hatred and enmity (RYG). ◆ (However,) if he is in trouble, he will be embraced firmly by his brother(s) even more than a strong lock (MD).

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20. A person fills his belly with his own words, that is, he has to live with what he says. The more he talks, the more he feels satiated. **כ** מִפְּרִי פִי אִישׁ תִּשְׂבַּע בְּטֶנּוֹ, תְּבוֹאֵת שְׂפָתָיו יִשְׂבַּע:
- ◇ Disputes cause one to sin by speaking evil and gossip. He will be punished for the produce of his lips as he would for performing an act (RYG). ◇ On the other hand, a person's reward increases if he reproves the public to do good or if he brings peace between people or if he teaches Torah. The end of this verse refers to the reward of the righteous man (RYG). ◇ He will eat his words, for better or worse (MD).
21. The tongue brings death or life. You will eat your words as you would your food. **כא** מָוֶת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד לָשׁוֹן, וְאֵהָבִיהָ יֹאכַל פְּרִיהָ:
- ◇ The one who likes to talk Torah will be rewarded in this world (Rashi). ◇ Talking Torah brings life, gossip, death (MD).
22. The find of a good wife (or Torah -Rashi) is a great good. He will draw favor from God. **כב** מָצָא אִשָּׁה מְצָא טוֹב, וַיִּפֶּק רָצוֹן מִיהוָה:
- ◇ A good wife is a partner in the husband's efforts. She also saves him from sinning (MD).
23. The poor man speaks in supplications, while the rich respond brazenly. **כג** תַּחֲנוּנִים יְדַבֵּר רָשׁ, וְעִשִּׂיר יַעֲנֶה עֲזוֹת:
- ◇ Despite the fact that the rich speak harshly to them, the poor should respond pleadingly; and so it is with the teacher and the student (Rashi). ◇ The rich respond acrimoniously even though the poor beg (MD).

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24. People acquire friends because there are friends who are closer than brothers and relatives, and he will need them (Rashi). **כִּד אִישׁ יַרְעִים לְהִתְרַעֵעַ, וַיֵּשׁ אֲהַב דָּבָק מֵאָח:** ♦ Sometimes there are friends who are greater soul-mates and love each other more than do brothers (MD).



CHAPTER 19

פרק יט

1. **Better the innocent poor man** א
who speaks no deceit to acquire
wealth (MD) **than the fool**
perverse in his lips who speaks
haughtily (RYG). ♦ He is a fool because he mistakenly thinks he will
succeed with his deception (MD).

טוב רש הולך בתמו,
מעקש שפתיו והוא
כסיל:
2. **Nothing good comes from the** ב
ignorant soul nor from the
reckless one who rushes to sin. ♦

גם בלא דעת נפש לא
טוב, ואץ ברגלים חוטא:

It is not good for a person to be without Torah (Rashi). ♦ The man
ignorant of Torah will unintentionally violate its Laws, and this will
be for the detriment of his soul (MD). ♦ The Gemara (Eruvin 100b)
says the ignorant one referred to here is he who compels his wife to
have marital relations against her will, and the reckless one refers to
the man who has relations with her, and then again. Another
meaning is that this refers to someone who tramples grass on
Shabbos (Rashi). ♦ Even the unintentional sinner is harmed by his
act (MD).

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3. A man's foolishness perverts him and causes him harm (Rashi), his heart vexes against God. ♦ When his punishment comes, he is irate with God for having had watched him so closely (MD). ג
אֲוֹלַת אָדָם תְּסַלֵּף דַּרְכּוֹ,
וְעַל יְהוָה יִזְעַף לְבוֹ:
4. Wealth adds many new (RYG) friends, poverty separates them from him. ♦ The one who learns Torah is beloved (Rashi). ♦ Everyone loves the rich man, while no one likes the poor man; even other poor men dislike him (MD). ד
הוּן יְסִיף רַעִים רַבִּים, וְדָל
מִרְעֵהוּ יַפְרֵד:
5. The perjuring witness will not go unpunished nor the one who regularly (MD) spews falsehoods escape punishment (MD). ♦ One of his lies will trap him (RYG). ♦ His lies will ultimately be exposed (MD). ♦ A falsehood (כִּזָּב), as opposed to a lie (שָׁקֵר), sounds true at the beginning (Malbim). ה
עַד שְׁקָרִים לֹא יִנָּקֶה,
וַיִּפְיַח כְּזָבִים לֹא יִמְלִיט:
6. Many seek the favor of the generous man who gives as much as he can and does good for people and seeks the welfare of others (RYG), and everyone wishes to associate with the gift-giver. ♦ This can refer to both the charitable person as well as the one who disseminates Torah (Rashi). ו
רַבִּים יַחֲלוּ פָּנֵי נְדִיב, וְכָל
הָרַע לְאִישׁ מִתֵּן:
7. The indigent man's brothers and relatives (Rashi) hate him, even more so do his friends distance themselves from him. People will ז
כָּל אַחֵי רֵשׁ שְׂנֵאוּהוּ אֵף כִּי
מִרְעֵהוּ רָחֲקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ, מְרִידֵף
אַמָּרִים לוֹ לֹא הֵמָּה:

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turn against the one who blabbers about himself telling them who he is related to and who he knows, none of which is true (Rashi). ◇ This can also refer to the one who lacks Torah and good deeds (Rashi). ◇ Hypocrisy is an evil and bitter trait (RYG). ◇ If his own flesh and blood hate him, even more so will others (MD). ◇ Indigent (רש) is worse than impoverished (דל) (Malbim).

8. The one who loves (wishes to do good for) **his own soul will pursue wisdom, and the one who retains understanding** so that it will not be forgotten (by reviewing his learning) (MD) **will find good** and good traits by putting any new wisdom he has learned into practice (RYG). ח קנה לב אהב נפשו, שמר תבונה למצא טוב:
9. The false witness will not go **unpunished** by God, even if not warned (and thus un-punishable by a human court) (MD) **and the liar will ultimately** (MD) **perish.** ◇ There is no future or hope for the false witness (RYG). ט עד שקרים לא ינקה, ויפיח כזבים יאבד: פ
10. **Luxury and beauty** (MT) **is unseemly for the fool, much less for the servant to rule the princes.** ◇ The fool needs material comforts to fulfill his lusts and desires, whereas within pleasant surroundings the wise person's mind expands, and he can properly maintain his body and health. It is for these purposes a person should want things like a nice home, a good wife and beautiful possessions (RYG). ◇ Since honor is more precious than pleasures, it is a great disgrace to honor one unworthy of it (RYG). ◇ The slave will oppress everyone with the evil traits he acquired while in servitude (MD). י לא נאווה לכסיל תענוג, אף כי לעבד משל בשרים:

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11. The prudent man who uses his brains (MD) is slow to anger and quarrel (MD), and to his credit is to forgive the transgressions of others (MD). ◇ His glory is to control his own emotions (Rashi). יא שָׁכַל אָדָם הָאָרִיז אָפוֹ, וְתַפְאֲרָתוֹ עֵבֶר עַל פְּשָׁע:
12. The King's wrath is like the growl of a young lion, and his favor like dew upon the grass, for the king has the power to raise or to lower (MD). ◇ There is no such thing as a king roaring or his showing favor without consequences. 'One must always be in fear of the monarchy' (Zevachim 102b) (RYG). ◇ The young lion only attacks within his own domain. Lions growl (נהם) only when they are ill-tempered and have no prey, and roar (שאגה) when they are happy that they have prey (Malbim). יב נָהֵם כַּכְּפִיר זֶעַף מֶלֶךְ, וְכִטַּל עַל עֵשֶׂב רְצוֹנוֹ:
13. The foolish son is a calamity for his father, while a contentious wife is like the incessant dripping of rain from the roof. ◇ A bad wife perturbs everyone in the house (Rashi). ◇ The quarrelsome wife is worse than a foolish son for he will not cause his father to leave the house, unlike the bad wife who may cause him to flee since he cannot contend with all her words or all her argumentations. As no one can live in a house with persistent, continuous dripping, so can no one live with her (RYG). ◇ She causes her husband to distance himself from her (MD). יג הִוֵּת לְאָבִיו בֶּן פְּסִיל, וְדֹלֶף טֵרֵד מִדִּינֵי אִשָּׁה:

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14. House and riches are the inheritances from his father, but an astute, successful and sensible wife is a gift from God. ♦ Such a woman is worth more than a house and wealth (RYG). י ד
בֵּית וְהוֹן נְחִלַּת אָבוֹת,
וּמִיְהוָה אִשָּׁה מִשְׁכָּלֶת:
15. Laziness leads to deep sleep as does idleness (MD), and the dishonest soul will hunger. ♦ The one who is lazy in his learning will doze off when asked for some wisdom (Rashi). ♦ The one who sustains himself by trickery and not by his own handiwork will come to starvation, since he will not always have an opportunity to deceive someone (and will have nothing to rely upon to provide himself sustenance) (MD). ט ו
עֲצָלָה תִּפְּיֵל תִּרְדָּמָה,
וְנַפְשׁ רְמִיָּה תִרְעֵב:
16. He who keeps the Commandments preserves his soul, whereas he who despises His Ways, will die prematurely (MD), for he doesn't take them seriously (Rashi). ♦ The common sinner believes that he may one day overcome his desires and then God will forgive him. But the one who despises God's Laws will make no effort in correcting his behavior since he sees no wrong in his actions. For him, there is no hope (RYG). ט ז
שֹׁמֵר מִצְוֹת שְׁמֹר נַפְשׁוֹ,
בּוֹזֵה דְרָכָיו יָמוּת יוֹמָת:
17. He who is gracious and lends to the poor, lends to God. He will repay his good deeds. ♦ When he takes ill and is close to death, his charity in having saved the poor from death will come to defend him when he comes before the Divine court (Rashi). י ז
מִלֶּוֹה יְהוָה חוֹנֵן דָּל, וּגְמָלוֹ
יִשְׁלַם לוֹ:

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18. Chastise and discipline (MD) your son for there is always (MD) hope even though you may not see immediate benefit (MD), **but not to the point where you may destroy him** with fatal blows (Rashi).
 יח יִסַּר בְּנֵךְ כִּי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה, וְאַל הִמִּיתוּ אֶל תִּשָּׂא נַפְשְׁךָ:
19. The very angry man will surely be punished, but do not interpose lest you make it worse.
 יט גִּדְּל גֵּרֵל חֲמָה נִשְׂא עֲנָשׁ, כִּי אִם תִּצְיֵל וְעוֹד תּוֹסֵף:
 ♦ If you surmount your anger against him and save your enemy when he is in tough straits, you will add days to your life and good (Rashi).
20. Listen to advice and obey ethical instruction, so that, ultimately, you will become wise, even if you hadn't learned (wisdom) when you were young (MD). ♦ While the previous verses were addressed to the father, this verse is addressed to the child. Even as a youth one should already begin to think about his future. He should not say, I will wait until I am older to serve God, for no one knows what will be with him. He should repent today for he may not live to see tomorrow (RYG).
 כ שְׁמַע עֵצָה וְקַבֵּל מוֹסֵר, לְמַעַן תִּחְכַּם בְּאַחֲרֵיתֶךָ:
21. Man makes many plans, but only do God's counsel and decrees (RYG) endure.
 כא רַבּוֹת מַחְשְׁבוֹת בְּלֵב אִישׁ, וְעֵצַת יְהוָה הִיא תִקּוּם:
22. The lust of a man is his shame (alternatively, people are drawn to a kind person); **better a poor man than a fraud** who does not keep his promises (Rashi), and even if he
 כב תַּאֲוַת אָדָם חֲסָדוֹ, וְטוֹב רֵשׁ מֵאִישׁ כְּזָב:

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does much good (RYG). ◇ The main reason people are attracted to someone is because of his kindness and generosity (Rashi). ◇ This verse refers to the one who says that he is going to steal and do violence, but then does good (RYG). ◇ The poor man who has nothing to promise others is preferable to the rich man who promises but disappoints (MD).

23. Being in awe of God brings life. **כג** **יְרֵאֵת יְהוָה לְחַיִּים, וְשָׁבַע**
יְלִין בַּל יִפְקֹד רָע:
The one with it will rest content
knowing that he will not be
visited with evil. ◇ He will not be afraid that evil will befall him
(Rashi).
24. The lazy man may put his hand **כד** **טָמֵן עֵצֶל יָדוֹ בְּצַלְחַת, גַּם**
אֶל פִּיהוּ לֹא יִשְׁיבֶנָה:
in the dish, but he will be unable
to bring it up to his mouth. ◇ A
person who begins to perform a Mitzvah but fails to complete it is
called a sluggard in the work of Heaven (RYG). ◇ In the end, he will
starve (MD).
25. Strike the mocker and the **כה** **לֵץ תִּפְּהַ וּפְתֵי יַעֲרֹם,**
וְהוֹכִיחַ לְנֹבֵן יִבִּין דָּעַת:
simpleton will be enlightened
and become shrewd (MT). Rebuke
the astute man and he will come to understand knowledge. ◇
When Pharoah was struck and we battled Amelek, Jethro got wise
and converted (Rashi). ◇ Your strikes to the mocker will not be
effective with him, but it may arouse the average onlookers (to
change their ways) (RYG).

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26. The shameful and reproachful son despoils his father and mother, and is chased away. ♦
The father will accuse the mother for their son's behavior, and divorce her (MD). כו מִשְׁדָּד אָב יִבְרִיחַ אִם, בֶּן מִבֵּישׁ וּמַחְפִּיר:
27. My son, stop listening to bad teaching which causes you to err. ♦ There are deceivers who seduce their audiences away from (true) understanding by beginning their lectures with some sort of pleasant moral lesson. Desist from listening to such things, my son, and from those who steer you away from Wisdom. Do not say that you will accept the good and reject the bad (you hear from them), for you will have been caught in their trap (and may be unable to distinguish between good and bad) (MD). כז חֲדַל בְּנִי לִשְׁמֹעַ מוֹסֵר, לְשִׁגוֹת מֵאֲמָרֵי דָעַת:
28. For the Godless witness ridicules what is right and brings afflictions and death with his advice (Rashi), and the wicked ones' mouths will devour themselves in their sin. ♦ They speak in a soft way which makes people believe that they are innocent but, in fact, they have evil intentions (MD). חח עַד בְּלִיעַל יִלְיֹץ מִשְׁפָּט, וְפִי רְשָׁעִים יִבְלַע אָוֶן:
29. But, painful (MD) judgment is prepared for the frivolous ones, and the whip is ready for breaking (MD) the backs of the fools. כט נָכוֹנוּ לְלִצִּים שְׁפָטִים, וּמַהֲלָמוֹת לְגוֹ פְּסִילִים:



CHAPTER 20

פרק כ

1. Wine mocks, alcohol riots. **א** לֵץ הַיַּיִן הִמָּה שֵׁכָר, וְכָל
שֹׁגֵה בּוֹ לֹא יִחְכַּם:
Whoever imbibes will not
become wise. ♦ The upshot of
drinking, as is frivolity, is to relieve oneself of the burdens of the
heart (RYG). ♦ One who drinks is a buffoon, although a little wine
wisens (MD).
2. The terror of a king is like the **ב** נִהַם כְּכַפִּיר אֵימַת מֶלֶךְ,
מִתְעַבְּרוּ חוּטֵא נִפְשׁוֹ:
growl of a lion cub; the one who
provokes him endangers and
(MD) forfeits his life. ♦ This aphorism follows the one regarding
drinking since it is not proper to speak to a king if one has just had
something to drink and still under its influence (see Eruvin 64a)
(RYG). ♦ Provoking is to go beyond the line of respect for the king
(Malbim).
3. Man's honor is to avoid strife, **ג** כְּבוֹד לְאִישׁ שְׁבֵת מֵרִיב,
וְכָל אֲוִיל יִתְגַּלֵּעַ:
whereas the fool will be exposed.
♦ If two people are quarelling, the
honorable one is he who keeps silent first and stops the fight (see
Kedushin 71b) (RYG). ♦ The impatient fool's disgrace will be

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exposed (Rashi) because he will reveal his idiocy with all his excessive talking (MD).

4. Since the lazy man does not plow in the Winter, he will have no harvest, and will be reduced to begging. ד
מַחֲרֹף עָצַל לֹא יַחֲרֹשׁ,
וְשֹׂאֵל יִשְׂאֵל בְּקִצִּיר וְאֵין:
ד
 ◇ Because of the cold, he sits idle and does no work and does not engage in Torah (Rashi).
 ◇ One should be diligent and do his work regardless of (harsh) conditions for he may not have a later opportunity. Our Sages also apply this to the learning of Torah: Do not say I will learn when I have the time, for you may not ever have the time (Avos 2:6) (RYG).
5. Counsel is in the heart like deep water; but the man of understanding will draw it out. ה
מִיַּם עֲמֻקִּים עֵצָה בְּלֵב
אִישׁ, וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה
יִדְלָנָה:
ה
 ◇ The way of the wise man is to hide his counsel deep in his heart, like at the bottom of a well, making it hard for others to understand. The intelligent person pulls understanding out from the learned man by first drawing out the upper waters (simple matters), and then (he can access) the lower waters (which contain the deeper understandings of things) (MD).
6. Many declare themselves compassionate, but who can find a faithful man⁴², because everyone lies (MD)? ו
רַב אָדָם יִקְרָא אִישׁ
חֲסִדוֹ, וְאִישׁ אֲמוּנִים מִי
יִמְצָא:
ו
 ◇ Who can find the one who keeps his promise to do him kindness (Rashi)? ◇ Most people boast about their kindness and publicize their righteousness (RYG).

⁴² The cynical tone of this verse is echoed elsewhere Mishlei, as with "Who can find a woman of valor?" Was Solomon serious in his remarks or was he asking rhetorically?

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7. The one who walks wholeheartedly is righteous; happy are the children he leaves behind. ◇
 Who is righteous? He is the one who performs the Commandments correctly, and as they have been transmitted. He is God-fearing, and loves God. He does not do this because he wishes to boast or be glorified. One is not called righteous until he unqualifiedly serves the Creator with a whole heart (RYG). ◇ After his death, his children are protected by his merits (MD).
- ז מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתַמוּ צְדִיק,
אֲשֶׁר־י בְּנָיו אַחֲרָיו:
8. The king sitting in judgment disperses all evil with his eyes. ◇
 God sees everything even that which is done in secret (MD).
- ח מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל כִּסֵּא דִין,
מְזַרְהַ בְּעֵינָיו כָּל רָע:
9. Therefore, (MD) can anyone say before Him (MD) that my heart has been cleansed pure of sin and I have repented (MD)? ◇ It is proper that one be in constant fear before God who knows his thoughts (RYG).
- ט מִי יֹאמֵר זְכִיתִי לִבִּי,
טָהַרְתִּי מִחַטָּאתַי:
10. God abhors those who possess diverse weights or measures. ◇
 Just having the evil intention of perpetrating fraud is despicable to God (RYG). ◇ It is all done for fraud (MD).
- י אָבֹן וָאָבֹן אֵיפָה וָאֵיפָה,
תּוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה גַּם שְׁנֵיהֶם:
11. Even a youth is known by his deeds, and if his actions are pure and truthful. ◇ The way of the youth is to behave frivolously and do things for fun, and to avoid
- יא גַּם בְּמַעַלְלָיו יִתְנַפֵּךְ נָעַר,
אִם זֶךְ וְאִם יָשָׁר פְּעֻלוֹ:

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responsibility. Their sense of sensibleness has not yet matured. Their desires blind their common sense (RYG). ◇ Even young people know how to deceive unsuspectingly, and no one can know for sure if their true intentions were for good or bad (MD). ◇ Pure means that something lacks impurities or mixtures of any kind (Malbim).

12. God created both the hearing ear and the seeing eye. ◇ God wants your ear to hear reproof and your eye see the consequences of your actions (Rashi). ◇ God created the body and the senses to work for and serve Him (MD). יב אֵזֶן שִׁמְעַת וְעֵין רֹאֶה, יְהוָה עָשָׂה גַם שְׁנֵיהֶם:
13. The love of sleep results in poverty, because you are not working then (MD). Open your eyes and you will be satiated with bread. יג אֶל תִּתְּאֵהָב שְׁנָה פֶּן תִּוְרַשׁ, פָּקַח עֵינֶיךָ שְׁבַע לֶחֶם:
14. First, the buyer cries that it (the goods he wishes to buy) are very bad in order to get the price down (MD) but, when he leaves, he boasts of the high-quality merchandise he bought. ◇ The one who acquires Torah under pressure or afflictions of hunger says, “Oh to me for this evil and aggravation”. In the end, he will be filled with wisdom, yet brag how he suffered to attain it (Rashi, MD). יד רַע רַע יֹאמַר הַקּוֹנֶה, וְאֵזֶל לוֹ אֵז יִתְהַלֵּל:
15. Lips with knowledge are more precious jewels and rarer (MD) than a multitude of rubies or gold. ◇ Even though he knows the value of his purchase was greater than what he paid still, the buyer, after the sale, will complain to the טו יֵשׁ זָהָב וְרַב פְּנִינִים, וּכְלִי יָקָר שִׁפְתַי דָּעַת:

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seller that he was cheated. Later, he will boast of his clever purchase to others (RYG, who connects this with the previous verse).

16. Take the garment of the guarantor of a stranger as security and you will not be guilty for this for he had made himself the guarantor of a stranger (whom he should have suspected might default on his debts –RYG), and put himself into this predicament (MD); and hold him in pledge for the alien (promiscuous – RYG) woman.⁴³ ♦ Trust and ethics are more prevalent amongst men (RYG). ♦ The laws of suretyship and guaranty are equally applicable for women as they are for men (MD).
- טז לָקַח בְּגָדוֹ פִּי עֶרְבִי זֶר, וּבִעַד נְכָרִיָּה נְכָרִים חֲבִילָהּ:
יז עֶרְבִי לְאִישׁ לֶחֶם שָׂקֵר, וְאַחַר יִמְלֵא פִּיהוּ חֶצֶץ:
17. At first, the bread of falsehood is sweet, but later his mouth will be filled with gravel. ♦ This refers to adultery (Rashi). ♦ Lust blinds (RYG). ♦ Stolen food tastes sweet. In the end, his flesh will wither (MD).
- יח מְחֻשְׁבוֹת בְּעֵצָה תִּכּוֹן, וּבַתְּחִבָּלוֹת עֲשֵׂה מְלַחְמָה:
18. Plan based on thoughtful counsel, and wage war with strategies. ♦ If you come to do battle with Satan, prepare yourself with strategies of repentance, prayer and fasting (Rashi). ♦ Well-advised plans succeed (MD). ♦ Be well-prepared because your enemy will be prepared (MD).

⁴³ We are sympathetic for inadvertent misfortune, but not if adversity came about from stupidity of willful neglect (R' Abraham Cohen).

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19. Avoid mingling amongst smooth-talking, silly gossipers⁴⁴ for they will reveal your secrets, too. ♦
Tell them nothing of the guilt of the people or about something that someone did wrong (RYG).
- יט גוֹלָה סוּד הוֹלֵךְ רְכִיל,
וּלְפִתָּה שְׁפָתָיו לֹא
תִתְעָרֵב:
20. The lamp of the one who curses his mother or father will be extinguished in the blackest darkness. ♦ Evil will befall him when things are just the darkest for him (Rashi). ♦ Sins extinguish Mitzvahs. One's candle is extinguished if he curses a parent, and in a time of darkness. He will have no light in hand to protect him against obstacles (RYG).
- כ מְקַלֵּל אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ, יִדְעֵךְ
נֵרוֹ בְּאֶשׁוֹן בְּאִישׁוֹן חֹשֶׁךְ:
21. Sometimes, one can acquire great wealth very quickly and unexpectedly (MD), but the end of it will not be a blessing. ♦
This refers to the one who steals from his parents reasoning that (their gain from) all their toil and their personal sacrifices was for him anyhow (RYG).
- כא נִחְלָה מְבֹהָלֵת מִבַּחֲלֵת
בְּרֵאשֵׁנָה, וְאַחֲרֵיתָהּ לֹא
תִבְרָךְ:
22. Do not say that you will repay evil done to you (MD) with evil. Trust in God and He will save you from those who wish to do you harm (MD). ♦ Do not take revenge yourself in order that others will see who it was who harmed you. Go to court (RYG).
- כב אַל תֹּאמַר אֲשַׁלְּמָה רָע,
קִוֵּה לַיהוָה וַיִּשַׁע לָךְ:

⁴⁴ With whom you share your secrets.

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23. Diverse weights are an abomination to God; neither is a false balance any good in the Eyes of God (MD). **כג תועבת יהוה אָבֹן וְאָבֹן, וּמֵאֲזַנֵי מֶרְמָה לֹא טוֹב:** **כג** **וּמֵאֲזַנֵי מֶרְמָה לֹא טוֹב:** **כג** Neither sell to your friend with one weight and to your enemy, even one who cheated you, with another, for injustice and thievery are abhorred by God (RYG).
24. The way a man goes is from God, and his success in his endeavors is up to Him (RYG). **כד מִיֵּהוָה מְצַעְדֵי גֵבֶר, וְאָדָם מֵה יִבִּין דְּרָכּוֹ:** **כד** **מֵה יִבִּין דְּרָכּוֹ:** **כד** But, can anyone expect to understand Him? **כד** Trust God to provide you your successes and blessings (RYG).
25. One should never be hasty and dedicate something without thinking (Malbim), for later he may have to rescind his oath. **כה מוֹקֵשׁ אָדָם יִלַּע קִדָּשׁ, וְאַחַר נִדְרִים לְבַקֵּר:** **כה** **וְאַחַר נִדְרִים לְבַקֵּר:** **כה** When a man stumbles and is entrapped by sins, he impairs his sanctity (Rashi). **כה** This continues from the end of the previous verse. Can a man entirely protect himself from the traps of sinning and the stumbling blocks he encounters during his travels (life)? He must entrust his soul to God (RYG).
26. The wise king knows who is wicked and he pounds them hard. **כו מִזְרָה רְשָׁעִים מִלֶּךְ חָכָם, וַיִּשָׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אוֹפֶן:** **כו** **וַיִּשָׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אוֹפֶן:** **כו** God will punish measure for measure (RYG). **כו** The wise king disperses the evil people so they can't band together to conspire evil (MD).

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27. Man's soul is God's lamp. It sheds light for Him as to who he really is. ♦ God knows what's really going on in a man's mind (RYG). כז נֵר יְהוָה נִשְׁמַת אָדָם, חִפְשׁ כָּל חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן:
28. The king is preserved by means of his compassion and truth, and his throne is upheld by the mercy which he has bestowed (MD). ♦ He did good for them by directing them towards a true way. He protected them from injustice, and judged them truthfully and righteously (RYG). ♦ Those who he treated well will protect him out of love (MD). כח חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת יִצְרוּ מַלְךְ, וְסֵעַד בְּחֶסֶד כִּסְאוֹ:
29. Strength is the honor of the young, whereas the hoary head (wisdom –MD) is the glory of very old. ♦ Everything in its right time (RYG). כט תְּפָאֶרֶת בַּחֳרִים כֹּחַם, וְהֵדָר זְקֵנִים שִׁיבָה:
30. A man is cleansed of his evil by means of penetrating wounds which cannot be healed (Malbim), and with severe lashes, and plagues to the deep innards as retribution for his sins (MD). ♦ As everything in its right time is good, so is every fitting punishment good (RYG). ל חֲבֵרוֹת פִּצַּע תִּמְרוֹק תִּמְרִיק בָּרַע, וּמְכוֹת חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן:



CHAPTER 21

פרק כא

1. God guides the hearts of kings,
as does the channel direct the
path of the water. ◇ Since the
public is dependent on the king
and he has the power of life and death, and to do good or evil for
them, God watches that his heart does not veer, but executes only the
decree of the Almighty. Therefore, the people should not fear the
wrath of the king, but should beseech God for mercy. To Him they
should set their eyes (RYG).
- א פִּלְגִי מִיָּם לֵב מְלֶךְ בְּיַד
יְהוָה, עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר יַחֲפֹץ
יִטְנוּ:
2. Everyone thinks he does right,
but God knows the truth. ◇
When someone decides to follow
God and serve Him, God will change his evil nature and correct his
heart (RYG). ◇ God is in his heart (MD).
- ב כָּל דֶּרֶךְ אִישׁ יִשֶׁר בְּעֵינָיו,
וְתִכֵּן לִבּוֹת יְהוָה:
3. God prefers a person's
righteousness and justness over
his sacrifices. ◇ Righteousness is
to love good, and justness is to love truth (RYG). ◇ Righteousness
(צדקה) refers to the Commandments between Man and God, while
justice (משפט) are the precepts between Man and Man (Malbim).
- ג עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט,
נִבְחָר לַיהוָה מִזְבֵּחַ:

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4. The arrogant look upwards with a proud and lustful (Rashi) heart; the tillage of the wicked is sin. **ז**
 רום עינים ורחב לב, נר
 רשעים חטאת:
- They contemplate how they can fulfill their lusts (Rashi). **ז** The way of the haughty is to look upwards, while the humiliated look down (MD).
5. The diligent and honest (Rashi) man who adds value to whatever he does (MD) will prosper, whereas the hasty one who acts recklessly, doing things before their time (Rashi), will only want. **ה**
 מחשבות חרוץ אד
 למותר, וכל אץ אד
 למחסור:
6. The treasure attained by the lying tongue is like a fleeting and fatal vapor for him (Rashi). **ו**
 פעל אוצרות בלשון שקר,
 הבל נדף מבקשי מות:
- It will be the cause of his death (MD).
7. The violence of the wicked people will keep their victims in perpetual terror; they refuse to act justly and return the stolen goods to their rightful owners (MD). **ז**
 שד רשעים יגורם, פי
 מאנו לעשות משפט:
- ז** No one sees himself as being liable (RYG).
8. The eccentric man reverses the way, whereas the one who is pure does right. **ח**
 הפכפך דרך איש נזר, וזך
 ישר פעלו:
- The eccentric man is one who veers⁴⁵ from the Commandments, and his ways are contradictory (Rashi). **ז** Even though someone has bad traits, they are obnoxious and repulsive to him when he sees someone else with

⁴⁵ Rashi implies that זר – strange – is related to סר – to veer.

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them. But, since his lust overcomes him, he cannot see the disgrace of the evil character in himself. This is a great iniquity since he sees how awful they are with others, but learns nothing of it for himself. Those who are habitually and totally evil, however, take no note of any of this. (RYG). ♦ The rebellious man is inconsistent, whereas the pure man never veers from the straight path (MD).

9. **Better to live in the corner of a roofless, exposed (MD) attic, alone without acquaintances (MD), than in house with a quarrelsome wife, even in the company of friends (MD), or in the house of a friend and speak with his wife (Rashi).** ♦ Despite the company of many good friends, an evil woman disrupts all pleasant companionship and comfort with them because of her contentious talk and her grievousness (RYG).
- ט טוב לְשֹׁבֵת עַל פִּנֹּת גָּג,
מֵאִשֶׁת מְדִינִים וּבֵית
חֶבֶר:
10. **The wicked man's soul desires vice, he looks at his neighbor unfavorably.** ♦ The evil man shows no compassion for his friend when things go bad for him. He might help him, but he has no sympathy for him on the day of his misfortune (RYG). ♦ The wicked man thinks that everything he does is good (MD).
- י נֶפֶשׁ רָשָׁע אֹתָהּ רָע, לֹא
יֵחַן בְּעֵינָיו רֵעֵהוּ:
11. **The scorner's punishment makes the simpleton wise and causes him to repent (Rashi) out of fear for his own fate (MD), while the wise one, who obeys moral instruction, obtains added (MD) knowledge.**
- יא בְּעֵנָשׁ לֶץ יִחְכַּם פְּתִי,
וּבֵה שְׂפִיל לְחָכָם יִקַּח
דָּעַת:

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12. The righteous man sees the home of the wicked and is warned, while the nefarious ones go on distorted ways. **יב** מִשְׁכֵּיל צְדִיק לְבֵית רָשָׁע, מְסַלֵּף רְשָׁעִים לָרַע:
- ◇ Many think that a righteous man does not understand the evil man's character nor his excuses and his nature since they are the opposite of his. But, this is not so (see Baba Basra 89b). They reason that since the righteous do no wrong they cannot understand those who do. However, since the righteous man is so careful with every thing he does, more so than the average person, he is very aware of what is evil in order to avoid it (RYG). ◇ The righteous cause the home of the wicked to be blessed when he is there, however this will distort the understanding of the wicked man and cause him to do wrong since he will think that the blessing was due to himself, and that his deeds are acceptable before God (MD).
13. Whoever shuts his ears to the cries of the poor will not be heeded to when he himself cries out. **יג** אַטֶּם אָזְנוֹ מִזְעַקַת דָּל, גַּם הוּא יִקְרָא וְלֹא יַעֲנֶה:
- ◇ Measure for measure (RYG).
14. A secret gift of charity (Rashi) pacifies anger, while a bribe, also charity (Rashi), calms rage. **יד** מִתֵּן בְּסֵתֶר יִכְפֶּה אַף, וְשֹׁחַד בְּחֶק חֲמָה עֲזֶה:
- ◇ (The merit of) secretly-given charity calms the anger resulting from his sins, as well as deferring punishments decreed for him. This is because his surreptitious act does not embarrass the poor man, and shows that he is not seeking any honor, but gave only to serve God (RYG).

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15. The righteous delight in doing just, whereas this is the ruin of the iniquitous. ♦ God delights in doing justice for the righteous in order that they merit the World to Come, and it is joy for the righteous that God afflicts them now so that they will merit the World to Come (Rashi quoting Midrash Tehillim). ♦ The lawless ones take no note of (why they are being punished and make no effort in) repenting. Their afflictions and sufferings have no effect (to motivate them to repent) (Rashi). ♦ The righteous man delights when others worship God and do justice, and when they distance themselves from lust. He sighs when he hears of oppression and injustice, and he is happy when the people pursue justice, righteousness and truth (RYG). ♦ Besides being punished for their evil and their violence, the wicked will be punished for their hatred of justice (RYG).
- טו שְׂמֵחָה לְצַדִּיק עֲשׂוֹת
מִשְׁפָּט, וּמַחֲתָה לְפֹעֲלֵי
אָוֶן:
16. The one who strays from the sensible way (Torah –MD) will rest with those in the shade, among the ghouls, that is, in Gehinnom (Rashi) or among the dead (MT). ♦ He is better off dead, and he can return his source to its roots. For Man was created with the purpose that his wise soul rules desire and, by this, he serves God (RYG). ♦ He strays further and further each day that he is alive (MD).
- טז אָדָם תּוֹעָה מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂפִיל,
בְּקֶהֱל רְפָאִים יָנוּחַ:
17. The fun-seeker, the hedonist (RYG), will lack good (MD), and the loyal (Rashi) lovers of wine and oil and the gourmand (RYG) will not be rich in good (MD).
- יז אִישׁ מַחְסוֹר אֱהָב שְׂמֵחָה,
אֱהָב יַיִן וְשֶׁמֶן לֹא יַעֲשִׂיר:

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18. The wicked will be the ransom for (punished in place of) the righteous, and the faithless will replace the upright. ♦ Once decreed by Heaven, a punishment has to be meted out. If a death-sentence was originally prepared for a righteous man, but then cancelled for him, a wicked man will receive it (MD). יח כָּפֹר לְצַדִּיק רָשָׁע, וְתַחַת יִשָּׂרִים בּוֹגֵד:
19. You are better off in a desert alone (MD) than to live in an inhabited place (MD) with a contentious and grumpy woman who is always angry (MD). ♦ If the man is short-tempered, then it is better that he move to the desert than live with an irritable woman (RYG). יט טוֹב שָׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר, מֵאִשָּׁת מְדִינִים מְדוֹנִים וְכַעַס:
20. The home of the wise has stored up (MD) treasures of silver and gold (RYG) and oil in preparation for a time of need (MD), whereas the fool wastes and devours (MT) it all and is oblivious to the fact that he might not find anything in times of want (MD). ♦ Our sages have said (Baba Kama 42a) that a person should always divide his money into three: one third invested in property, one third in merchandise for commerce, and one third liquid (RYG). כ אוֹצֵר נְחָמֵד וְשָׁמֵן בְּנוֹה חָכָם, וְכָסִיל אָדָם יִבְלַעֵנוּ:
21. The pursuer of righteousness and mercy will himself (MD) find life, prosperity and honor from God (MD). כא רֹדֵף צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד, יִמְצָא חַיִּים צְדָקָה וְכְבוֹד:

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22. The wise man scales the walls of the mighty city and brings down its mighty fortifications. ♦ This refers to Moses our teacher who went up to be among the mighty angels (Rashi). ♦ Wisdom is more praiseworthy than might (MD).
- כב עִיר גְּבָרִים עָלָה חֶכֶם,
וַיֵּרַד עִז מִבְּטָחָהּ:
23. Watch your tongue and mouth, and you will keep your soul from troubles. ♦ The wise man controls his desires, and he doesn't eat food which is detrimental for him (RYG). ♦ Someone who talks too much cannot stop himself from speaking maliciously and, thus, harms his soul (MD).
- כג שָׁמַר פִּיו וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ, שָׁמַר
מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ:
24. The proud and haughty man is called a scorner or mocker (MD), as well as is the one who deals with overbearing pride. ♦ The arrogant man will ultimately become a scoffer and refuse ethical rebuke (Rashi). ♦ Our sages have compared (Taanis 8a) the one who speaks evil of others with a snake. He injures with his bite, but has no enjoyment from it, unlike a ferocious lion or a vicious wolf who relish in eating their prey (RYG).
- כד יָד יִהְיֶה לֵץ שָׂמוֹ, עוֹשֶׂה
בְּעִבְרַת זְדוֹן:
25. Lethargy kills the indolent for his hands refuse to work. ♦ He will starve to death (MD). ♦ Working is not burdensome for active people (RYG).
- כה תִּאֲוֹת עֲצֵל תִּמְיָתָנוּ, כִּי
מֵאֲנוּ יָדָיו לַעֲשׂוֹת:

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26. Some greedily covet all day to satiate their empty souls' lusts (MD), whereas the righteous man gives and spares nothing from his wealth (MD) which God has granted him (Rashi). ♦ The righteous man eats only enough to survive so that he has (leftover from) what to give to the poor. He will give to sustain the poor as often as he is asked to, regardless of how often he has already given that day (RYG).
- כו כָּל הַיּוֹם הִתְאַוָּה תְּאַוָּה,
וְצַדִּיק יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִחְשָׁד׃
27. The wicked man's sacrifice is an abomination, more so if it was bought with the profits or thoughts (MT) of depravity. ♦ He brings his sacrifice with plans of doing evilness⁴⁶ (Rashi) to delude the people into believing he is pious, but in truth he has not repented at all (MD).
- כז זָבַח רְשָׁעִים תּוֹעֵבָה, אֵף
כִּי בְזָמָה יְבִיאֵנוּ׃
28. The false witness will perish and, if not punished by a human court, then by the Heavenly court (MD), whereas the obedient man who obeys the Torah (Rashi) will speak unchallenged forever. ♦ Still, false testimony is forever repeated by those who heard it, since they believed that it was true (MD).
- כח עַד כְּזָבִים יֵאבֹד, וְאִישׁ
שׁוֹמֵעַ לְנֹצַח יִדְבָּר׃
29. The wicked man's face constricts when he is angry (Rashi), whereas the upright man understands where he is going. ♦ When angry, the wicked man's face shows insolence and he does not think about what he does. The upright man always contemplates his actions, even when he is angry (MD).
- כט הֵעִז אִישׁ רָשָׁע בְּפָנָיו,
וַיִּשָּׂר הוּא יָבִין יִכֵּן דַּרְכּוֹ
דַּרְכּוֹ׃

⁴⁶ Maybe, by attempting to appease God with his offering –RB.

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30. No wisdom or understanding or advice nor anyone (Rashi) is comparable to God. ♦ No honor is given to a rabbi where there has been some disgrace of Heaven (Rashi, Berochos 19b). ♦ No wisdom or counsel can cancel God's decree (MD).
- לֹא אֵין חֵכְמָה וְאֵין תְּבוּנָה,
וְאֵין עֵצָה לְנַגֵּד יְהוָה: פ
31. The horse may be prepared for battle, but (true) salvation is with God and not achieved by means of might (RYG).
- לֹא סוּס מוּכָן לְיוֹם מְלַחְמָה,
וְלִיהוָה הַתְּשׁוּעָה:



CHAPTER 22

פרק כב

1. Choose a good name over great riches, and genial grace over silver and gold. ♦ A good name is preferred over riches (MD).

א נְבָחַר שֵׁם מֵעֶשֶׂר רָב,
מִכֶּסֶף וּמִזָּהָב חֵן טוֹב:
2. Eventually all men, rich and poor, appear before the maker of us all, God. ♦ If a poor man is harshly refused assistance from a rich man, God renews them both and makes the rich man poor and the poor man rich (Rashi). ♦ Therefore, no one should be conceited because he is rich (RYG). ♦ Being wealthy is not, in and of itself, praiseworthy nor is poverty shameful, since both were decreed by God, and it was not due to that man's cleverness that he became rich. But a good name and charm are in the hands of man⁴⁷ (MD).

ב עֲשִׂיר וָרֵשׁ נִפְגָּשׁוּ, עֲשֵׂה
כֻּלָּם יְהוָה:

⁴⁷ One can make himself charming and appealing to others.

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3. The prudent man hides from the evil he sees coming (MD), whereas the thoughtless transgress and are punished. **ג**
- עָרוֹם רָאָה רָעָה וְנִסְתָּר, וּפְתִיִּים עָבְרוּ וְנִעְנְשׂוּ:
- The sensible man sees before him the punishment for committing a sin, and does not transgress (Rashi). **ד** Impoverishment is also called 'punishment' (MT). **ה** The shrewd man sees the bad that's coming and protects himself from it, while the fools go about in evil ways unconcernedly. They will be punished, and lose (MD).
4. The rewards for humility are the fear of God, riches, honor and life. **ד** Fear of God is secondary to humility (Rashi). **ה** Being humble is a greater achievement than riches, courage and wisdom (RYG). **ו** When a man recognizes how lowly he is, his understanding of the greatness of God increases. He will then find richness, honor and life (MD).
- עֵקֶב עֲנוּוָה יִרְאֵת יְהוָה, עֶשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד וְחַיִּים:
5. The road of the obstinate is lined with thorns and snares and afflictions (Rashi), whereas the one who watches his soul and walks straight (Rashi) will keep far from these things. **ה** Sometimes people take (what they believe to be) short-cuts in life, but which actually lead them via circuitous routes filled with thorns and briars (RYG). **ו** Fear of God obtained through humility is the basis for saving oneself from sinning (RYG). **ז** **צְנִיִּים** are illnesses which come from the cold (**צִיְנָה**), and **פְּחִיִּים** refers to fire and brimstone (**הַפְּחָת אֵשׁ**) (Malbim).
- צְנִיִּים פְּחִיִּים בְּדֶרֶךְ עֵקֶשׁ, שׁוֹמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְחַק מֵהֵם:

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6. **Train and accustom (MD) each child from the beginning (MT) in his own way, God's ways, in accordance with the child's capability to understand matters, whether a little or a lot (MD), and even when he is old he will not depart from it.** ♦ A person, even in old age, will not abandon what he learned as a young child, for better or worse (Rashi). ו חֲנֹךְ לַנֶּעַר עַל פִּי דַרְכּוֹ, גַּם כִּי יִזְקִין לֹא יִסּוֹר מִמֶּנָּה:
7. **The rich in wisdom (MD) rule the poor in wisdom (MD), and the borrower is the servant of the lender.** ♦ The ignoramus will always need the Torah scholar (Rashi). ♦ This verse is talking about actual rich and poor people (RYG). ז עֲשִׂיר בְּרָשִׁים יִמְשׁוּל, וְעֶבֶד לוֹה לְאִישׁ מְלוֹה:
8. **The one who sows wickedness reaps lust, and the rod of his anger with which he bullies people (Rashi) will fail him (MD) and he will collapse (RYG).** ♦ What he sows is what he will reap; his retribution will be in kind with his actions (Rashi). ח זֹרַע עֲוֹלָה יִקְצֹר יִקְצוֹר אָוֶן, וְשִׁבְט עֲבָרָתוֹ יִכְלֶה:
9. **The benevolent man will be blessed by God (MD) because he generously (MD) gives his bread to the indigent.** ♦ It is proper for everyone to eat less in order that he have something to give to the poor, as it says (Gittin 7b), "even the poor man who survives on charity, himself must give charity" (RYG). ♦ God will bless him with more wealth to distribute even more to the poor, and he will not feel bad about doing so (MD). ט טוֹב עֵין הוּא יִבְרָךְ, כִּי נָתַן מִלֶּחְמוֹ לְדָל:

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10. Banish the mocker (the evil inclination – Rashi) and contention will leave (be eliminated –MT), as will strife and shame. ✧ In court, the disputants seek to humiliate one another. But, without an instigator, all is quiet (MD). י גֵרֵשׁ לֵץ וַיֵּצֵא מִדֹּן, וַיִּשְׁבֹּת דִּין וְקָלוֹן:
11. The King befriends the one who loves pureness of heart and has grace on his lips. ✧ God cherishes and loves him (Rashi). ✧ It is obligatory for the man of truth to faithfully love others who fear God and are, themselves, men of truth (RYG). ✧ Such as person is worthy to have a king as his friend (RYG). ✧ The king loves him, because he speaks wisely (MD). יא אֱהָב טָהוֹר לֵב, חֵן שִׁפְתָיו רַעְהוּ מִלֶּךְ:
12. God preserves the knowledgeable one and overthrows the words of the faithless man. ✧ God protects the wise people by distorting the ensnaring evil counsel of the traitor (MD). יב עֵינַי יְהוָה נֶצְרוּ דַעַת, וַיִּסְלַף דְּבָרַי בְּגֵד:
13. The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside; I will be slain in the street!” ✧ The lazy man asks, “How will I be able to go and learn (so much) Torah?” (Rashi). ✧ Indolence is born of timorousness, resoluteness breeds assiduousness (RYG). ✧ He won't go do his work since he imagines there is a lion outside who wants to kill him or that he will be killed by bandits on the road (MD). יג אָמַר עֶצֶל אֲרִי בַחוּץ, בְּתוֹךְ רְחֹבוֹת אֶרֶץ:

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14. The cunning mouth of an alien woman (idolaters –Rashi) is a deep pit dug to capture animals (Malbim), and all who abhor or are abhorred by (Rashi) (anger –MT) God will fall therein. ♦ So deep that anyone who falls in has great difficulty in getting out. So it is with someone trapped by heresy from which it is exceedingly hard to extricate him (MD).
- יז שׁוֹחָה עֲמֻקָּה פִּי זָרוֹת,
זְעוּם יְהוָה יִפֹּל יִפּוֹל יִפּוֹל שָׁם:
15. Although the youth's heart is bound (bonded – MD) to foolishness, do not give up hope since (RYG) the rod of correction will drive his evil traits (RYG) far away.
- טו אֲוֵלֶת קְשׁוּרָה בְּלֵב נָעַר,
שֶׁבֶט מוֹסֵר יִרְחִיקָהּ
מִמֶּנּוּ:
16. As a man may exploit the poor for enrichment, he may give to the affluent and come away lacking.⁴⁸ ♦ He ends up giving his money to rich idol worshippers and only loses by it (Rashi). ♦ Most of those who covet money are misers and will not repay in any way for the gifts they have received (RYG). ♦ The rich do not have to steal from the poor since they are stronger than them anyway (MD).
- טז עֵשֶׂק דָּל לְהַרְבוֹת לוֹ, נִתֵּן
לְעָשִׂיר אֵךְ לְמַחְסוֹר:
17. Listen carefully to the words of the Sages (Torah – Rashi), and apply your heart to God's wisdom. ♦ However, if your teacher is evil, do not learn from his actions (Rashi). ♦ Listening with your ears is insufficient; Torah must be understood and remembered (MD).
- יז הִט אָזְנְךָ וּשְׁמַע דְּבָרֵי
חֲכָמִים, וּלְבָבְךָ תִּשְׁתִּי
לְדַעְתִּי:

⁴⁸ The Hebrew text is ambiguous.

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18. Keep these things well in mind and talk of them, and it will be pleasant if you preserve them deep in your soul, and speak of them, so that they will not be forgotten (Rashi). ♦ Remember them well so that you can put what you learned into action (RYG). ♦ Talking about something repeatedly helps to remember it (RYG).
- יח כִּי נְעִים כִּי תִשְׁמְרֵם
בְּבִטְנְךָ, יִכְנוּ יַחְדָּו עַל
שְׂפָתֶיךָ:
19. That your trust should be with God, I have informed even you today. ♦ I am informing you that if you trust in God and engage in Torah you will not come to say, "If I stop working, how will I be able to bring in an income?" (Rashi) ♦ Turn from your general activities and delve into the words of the Sages with all your heart (MD). ♦ Even if you only learn for yourself and are not advanced enough to teach others, as long as you trust in God, there is hope for you, too (MD).
- יט לְהִיּוֹת בֵּיהוָה מִבְּטַחְךָ,
הוֹדַעְתִּיךָ הַיּוֹם אֲף אֶתְּהָ:
20. Have I not written three important and noble works (MT), the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings (Rashi), advising you on the matter of all these things?
- כ הֲלֹא כָּתַבְתִּי לְךָ שְׁלֹשִׁים
שְׁלֹשִׁים, בְּמוֹעֵצַת וְדַעַת:
21. So that you will be certain and informed (MD) of the clearly understood and revealed (Malbim) truth, and return truthfulness to those who ask you for instruction (as per Rashi). ♦ Know how to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and fear not, so that you will be able to defend the Torah against its detractors (MD).
- כא לְהוֹדִיעֶךָ קִשְׁט אִמְרֵי
אֱמֶת, לְהִשָּׁיב אִמְרֵים
אֱמֶת לְשִׁלְחֶיךָ: פ

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22. Do not rob the impotent because you deem him too weak to resist you (Rashi) and you are not concerned that he has the ability to retrieve something you stole from him (RYG), nor crush the poor at the gate of the courthouse if you come to have a judgment together (MD). ◇ Even if you know that were you to beat him in public no one would come to save him, don't do it (RYG). כב אֵל תִּגְזֹל דָּל כִּי דָל הוּא, וְאֵל תִּדְכֵּא עָנִי בְּשַׁעַר:
23. For God fights their battles, and plunders their plunderers. ◇ One who robs the poor is sentenced to death by Heaven because stealing from the poor man is equivalent to killing him. Further, this sort of thief is despicable in that he reasons that if no one has come to protect the poor man, he need not fear God. He rationalizes, if there is no justice, there must not be a judge. But, since the poor man's eyes are only towards God, God will come and fight his battles (based on RYG). כג כִּי יְהוָה יִרִיב רִיבָם, וְקִבַּע אֶת קִבְעֵיהֶם נֶפֶשׁ:
24. Do not befriend the angry man nor join with the wrathful one, ◇ One should choose as friends those who have a patient disposition and demeanor (RYG). כד אֵל תִּתְרַע אֶת בַּעַל אָף, וְאֶת אִישׁ חַמּוֹת לֹא תִבּוֹא:
25. Lest you learn from their ways and your soul will be ensnared. כה כִּי פֶן תִּלְמַד מֵאֲרָחֹתָיו אֲרָחֹתוֹ, וְלִקְחָתָּ מוֹקֵשׁ לְנַפְשְׁךָ:

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26. Do not be of those who shake their hands nor be a guarantor (even) in a place where everyone is a guarantor of loans for everyone else (MD). ♦ Be very careful as to what you promise people (RYG). כו אֵל תְּהִי בְתִקְעֵי כָף, בְּעֵרְבִים מִשָּׂאוֹת:
27. Because if you fail to pay your debts, you allowed your creditor to remove your bed from under you. ♦ Even if you were rich at the time you agreed to be a guarantor, do not assume that you will be rich when the debt is due (RYG). כז אִם אֵין לְךָ לְשֵׁלִם, לָמָּה יִקַּח מִשְׁכָּבְךָ מִתַּחְתֶּיךָ:
28. Do not reposition the ancient borders established by your forefathers. ♦ Do not forsake the customs of your fathers (Rashi). ♦ Do not change the good customs and ordinances your fathers established, nor move the boundaries and fences they made around the Torah (RYG). כח אֵל תַּסֵּג גְּבוּל עוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ:
29. In the end, the diligent and expeditious worker will serve kings and not stand before the downtrodden and lowly. ♦ This refers to a person who does not stop working until the job is done. Kings seek out people like that for their service. This verse is connected to the previous one in that all the fences our forefathers erected were in order to make us more conscientious, since if a person is not careful about something today, he will come to violate a Torah prohibition tomorrow. For expeditiousness (in this context) implies an understanding of the כט חֲזִיתָ אִישׁ מְהִיר בְּמַלְאכָתוֹ לְפָנֵי מְלָכִים יִתְיַצֵּב, בַּל יִתְיַצֵּב לְפָנֵי חֲשִׁפִים: פ

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consequences of one's actions. The one with this trait is praiseworthy (RYG).



CHAPTER 23

פרק כג

1. Beware when dining with a ruler. **א** **כִּי תֵשֵׁב לְלַחֹם אֶת מוֹשֵׁל, בֵּין תְּבִין אֶת אֲשֶׁר לְפָנָיִךְ:**
Know very well what is before you. ♦ Prepare yourself beforehand before you sit before a king, by speaking with his companions. Learn who was successful with him and who was not; learn what pleases him. Also do not sit yourself above those of a higher rank than you. Know your place (RYG). ♦ Pay attention and understand what he has placed before you, and see whether he is gracious or miserly (MD).
2. The knife will be at your throat if you have too big an appetite. **ב** **וְשִׁמַּת שִׁכִּין בְּלַעַךְ, אִם בַּעַל נֶפֶשׁ אָתָּה:** ♦ If you see he is stingy, don't eat from him. So, if you are a ravenous eater, it would be better for you to thrust a knife between your teeth (Rashi) or down your throat (MD). ♦ Simply, don't be a glutton (RYG).
3. Do not desire his delicacies; it is deceitful food. **ג** **אַל תִּתְּאוּ לְמִטְעֻמוֹתָיו, וְהוּא לֶחֶם כְּזָבִים:** ♦ Rashi says that these verses refer to the relationship between student and teacher. The disciple should take great care when questioning his master, carefully pondering the

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subtleties of his answers and be cautious so as to not embarrass him with problems for which he might not know the solutions. If he can't do this, he should find another teacher. ♦ Beware of the parsimonious (MD).

4. Don't abandon the pursuit of wisdom in order that you may exert yourself to pursue riches. ד
אַל תִּיגַע לְהַעֲשִׂיר, מִבִּינְתֶּךָ חֲדָל:
 ♦ Don't make your learning into bundles (biting off more than you can chew) for then you will forget it (Rashi).
5. Riches (wisdom) have wings and can suddenly (MD) fly away in the blink of an eye (MD) like an eagle soaring to Heaven. ♦ These last verses are connected with those above. Take care not to follow (rely upon) a king in order to get rich (RYG). ה
הֲתַעֲיֵף הַתְּעוּף עֵינֶיךָ בּוֹ וְאִינְנוּ כִּי עָשָׂה יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ, כְּנַפְיִם כְּנֶשֶׁר יַעוּף וְעֵיף הַשָּׁמַיִם: פ
6. Beware when eating with an evil and miserly man, and have no appetite for his luxuries. ו
אַל תִּלְחֶם אֶת לֶחֶם רָע עֵינִי, וְאַל תִּתְאָוִי תַתְּאוֹ לְמִטְעַמְתָּיו:
7. He may invite you to eat and drink with him, but he speaks (MD) deceptively. ♦ He may have invited you to join him in food, but he really doesn't want you to eat, and his words are meaningless (MD). ז
כִּי כִּמוֹ שֶׁר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ כֹּן הוּא אָכַל, וּשְׂתֵה יֹאמֵר לְךָ וְלִבּוֹ בַּל עֹמֵד:

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8. You will vomit your (his –MD) פְּתַךְ אֲכַלְתָּ תְּקִיאָנָה, ח
 bread and lose your sweet words וְשַׁחַתְתָּ דְּבָרֶיךָ הַנְּעִימִים:
 which you spoke nicely with him
 at first (Rashi). ♦ Seeing his begrudging face, you won't digest your
 food properly and will come to vomit it out. Your pleasant,
 intelligent and wise words with him will be cut down since it they
 are burdensome for him, and will be upset because he actually ate
 with you (RYG).
9. Do not confide wisdom (MD) to a בְּאֲזְנֵי כֶּסֶל אֵל תִּדְבֹר, פִּי ט
 fool for he will only despise your יְבוֹז לְשָׁכַל מְלִיד:
 sagacity. ♦ Speak little with a fool
 and do not try to talk about intelligent matters with him. He won't
 like them, and he will even disparage them. It is not to the honor of
 the words of wisdom to speak of them except among those who will
 love and embrace them (RYG).
10. Do not remove or reposition (MD) אֵל תִּסַּג גְּבוּל עוֹלָם, י
 an ancient landmark in order to וּבְשָׂדֵי יְתוּמִים אֵל תִּבְא:
 seize land from your neighbor's
 field (MD), and do not cross into and harvest for yourself (MD) the
 fields of the fatherless surmising that they are too weak and
 incapable of preventing you from doing so (MD). ♦ This refers to the
 poor man's portion of the gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the
 corners of the fields (Rashi).
11. For their Redeemer is robust, and כִּי גֵאֲלֵם חֲזָק, הוּא יִרְיב יא
 He will side with those you have אֶת רִיבֵם אֶתֶךָ:
 wronged. ♦ God sides with the
 weak; He will fight their battles (MD).

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12. Listen to and internalize moral instruction and understanding. ♦ Both your emotions (desires) and your intellect need ethical directive and correction (RYG). יב הַבִּיָּאָה לְמוֹסֵר לְבָדָה, וְאַזְנֶה לְאִמְרֵי דָעַת:
13. Spare not discipline from the child; the rod will not kill him. ♦ The pain of the rod is transitory (MD), yet you will be saving him from death (RYG). יג אֵל תִּמְנַע מִנַּעַר מוֹסֵר, כִּי תִכְנֹן בַּשֶּׁבֶט לֹא יָמוּת:
14. Your strikes will save him from Hell. ♦ Better his pain from the rod than the suffering of Hell (MD). יד אַתָּה בַּשֶּׁבֶט תִּכְנֹן, וְנִפְשׁוֹ מִשְׂאוֹל תִּצִּיל:
15. Be wise, my son, and I, too, will be glad and dance (Malbim). ♦ I will be happy when you become wise by listening to my admonitions knowing it was from me your wisdom has come (MD). טו בְּנִי, אִם חָכַם לְבָדָה, יִשְׂמַח לְבִי גַם אָנֹכִי:
16. I will profoundly rejoice when you speak right things to help others improve (MD). ♦ Since your heart is wise (Rashi). טז וְתִעְלֶזְנָה כְּלִיּוֹתַי, בְּדַבָּר שֶׁפִּתִּיךְ מִיִּשְׂרָיִם:

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17. Do not envy the success of the (Rashi, MD) sinners and do not desire to be like them (Rashi); rather be in trepidation⁴⁹ of God all day, for your good is greater than theirs (MD).
- יז אֵל יִקְנָא לְבָדָּ בַחֲטָאִים,
כִּי אִם בְּיִרְאַת יְהוָה כָּל
הַיּוֹם:
18. For where there is a future⁵⁰, there is hope! ♦ There is a future for those who fear Heaven (RYG). ♦ Your merits will be accounted for at the end of days, so do not stop your expectations for your reward. That will come (MD).
- יח כִּי אִם יֵשׁ אַחֲרֵית,
וְתִקְוֹתֶיךָ לֹא תִכְרֹת:
19. Be wise and attentive, my son, and guide your heart in wisdom. ♦ A wise heart will not lead you to sin (Rashi).
- יט שְׁמַע אֶתְּהָ בְנֵי וְחָכְם,
וְאַשֶׁר בְּדַרְךְ לְבָדָּ:
20. Do not make your company with the drinkers of wine and the gourmands. ♦ This refers to the ones who drink for their own enjoyment, and not those who eat and drink in the honor of Shabbos and Yom Tov (MD).
- כ אֵל תְּהִי בְּסַבְּאֵי יַיִן,
בְּזִלְלֵי בָשָׂר לְמוֹ:
21. For their end is impoverishment and poverty having spent all their money on the pursuit of their desires (RYG); the drowsy will be clothed in rags.
- כא כִּי סַבְּא וְזוּלִל יוֹרֵשׁ,
וְקָרְעִים תִּלְבָּשׁ נוֹמָה:

⁴⁹ Here, as in all other places, the Hebrew word ירא means both fear and awe, and should be read in both ways.

⁵⁰ אחרית more literally means “an end” and here would imply a fruitful conclusion, i.e. it will be worth all the effort for those who did right.

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22. Listen to your father because it is he who brought you into this world and, as such, desires your well-being (MD); **do not hate your mother even when she is old when she may speak foolishness (MD).** כב שִׁמַע לְאָבִיךָ זֶה יִלְדָּךְ, וְאֵל תִּבּוֹז כִּי זָקְנָה אִמְךָ:
23. Acquire instruction in (Rashi) truth, wisdom, ethics and understanding if you cannot find them available for free (Rashi), **and do not sell them.** ♦ Even if you see that you can earn a lot of money in business, do not abandon your Torah learning. Do not trade your Torah for gold and pearls (RYG). ♦ Do not say, since I had to buy my learning (for a fee), I may sell them (for a fee) (Rashi) rather, teach them without charge (MD). ♦ This verse refers to the Oral Torah for which no one is permitted to take a fee for teaching, however one is permitted to charge for teaching others how to read from Scriptures (MD, based on Nedorim 37a). כג אֲמַת קָנָה וְאֵל תִּמְכֹּר, חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסָר וּבִינָה:
24. The father and teacher (MD) of a righteous and wise (RYG) son will greatly rejoice, and the parent of the prudent child will be joyous. ♦ This refers to the one who instills wisdom in his child (MD). כד גֵּיל גּוֹל יִגִּיל יִגּוֹל אָבִי צְדִיק, וַיּוֹלֵד יוֹלֵד חָכָם יִשְׂמַח וַיִּשְׂמַח בּוֹ:
25. Your father and mother will be pleased, and the one who gave birth to you will rejoice. כה יִשְׂמַח אָבִיךָ וְאִמְךָ, וְתִגַּל יוֹלְדָתְךָ:

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26. Give (Prepare for –MT) Me your **heart** to revere and love Me (RYG) and understand My words (MD), **my son, and set your eyes on wanting My ways.** ♦ You will come to see that My way is the right one (MD).
- כו תְּנֵה בְּנִי לִבְךָ לִי, וְעֵינֶיךָ
דְּרָכַי תִּצְרְנָה תְּרַצְנָה:
27. The harlot is like a deep ditch, and the alien woman, a narrow pit. ♦ Passing close to the harlot's threshold will trap you suddenly, if you are not alert (RYG). ♦ A Gentile woman, even if she is not a harlot, is like a narrow pit. If one accustoms himself to speak with her and looks at her face all the time, he will desire her, and the craving for illicit relations will overcome him, and he will fail (RYG). ♦ It is very hard to raise and separate oneself from harlotry (and heresy) once ensnared by it (MD). ♦ Involvement with a Gentile harlot is like a narrow and tight pit within which no one can turn around and extricate himself (MD).
- כז כִּי שׁוֹחָה עֲמֻקָּה זֹנָה,
וּבְאֵר צָרָה נִכְרְיָה:
28. She lies in wait like a snatching thief, like a wild animal in ambush (RYG), and multiplies the number of faithless to God (Rashi) among men by means of her seductiveness (MD). ♦ Although (the) man is upright by nature, he will become a traitor to that since her desires will conquer his probity (RYG).
- כח אֵף הִיא כְּחֹתֵף תֶּאֱרָב,
וּבּוֹגְדִים בְּאָדָם תּוֹסֵף:
29. Who wails, 'Oy'? and who, 'Oy Vey'? Who has contentions? Who is busy chattering? Who has received bloody wounds without cause? Who has redness
- כט לְמִי אֹי לְמִי אֲבוֹי לְמִי
מְדִינִים מְדוֹנִים לְמִי שִׁיחַ לְמִי
פְּצָעִים חֲנָם, לְמִי חֲכָלְלוֹת
עֵינָיִם:

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in his eyes because of all the wine he has drunk and because this is a disgrace for him (Rashi, MD)? ♦ For whom should we cry and wail? For those who are contentious; for those who speak without using their brains and are confused; and for those who become drunk and get into fights and injure people (MD).

30. **There are those who linger over wine, and those who search it out and seek out where good wine is sold (Rashi) because of their obsession with it (MD). ♦ They drink their wine undiluted so as not to diminish its strength (RYG).**
- ל לְמֵאַחֲרַיִם עַל הַיַּיִן,
לְבָאִים לְחַקֵּר מִמְּסָד:**
31. **But, don't turn towards wine because it is red and colorful and thus pleasant and praiseworthy (MD), and it goes down smoothly. ♦ To the one who is habitually intoxicated, all sins appear level⁵¹ and all ways appear straight (Rashi). ♦ The text has בכיס (purse) but it is read בכוס (cup), that is, the drinker has his eyes on the cup, but the seller on his purse (Rashi).**
- לֹא אֶל תִּרְא יַיִן כִּי יִתְאַדָּם כִּי
יִתֵּן בְּכֹס בְּכִיס עֵינָיו,
יִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּמִישְׁרַיִם:**
32. **For its last bite is poisonous like a serpent, and it stings mortally (Rashi) like a venomous (Malbim) basilisk (snake –MT). ♦ Wine is tasty at first, but bitter in the end. It will cause swelling like a snake bite, from heel to head (MD).**
- לֵב אַחֲרִיתוֹ כְּנֹחַשׁ יִשָּׂד,
וְכִצְפֹּעֲנֵי יִפְרֹשׁ:**

⁵¹ Sins should appear like bumps in the road making one's travel through life a rocky journey.

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33. You will hallucinate about strange women (Malbim), and you will speak confused ludicrousness. **לג עֵינֶיךָ יִרְאוּ זָרוֹת, וְלִבְךָ יִדְבֵר תַּהֲפֹכוֹת:** ♦ Your drunkenness will lead you to ogle prostitutes (Rashi). ♦ Wine brings one to 'thoughts' (RYG). ♦ Your intoxication will lead you to see mirages. Your common sense will be up-ended (MD).
34. You will act as if you drowned in a deep sea or are lying on top of a ship's mast and you will feel like you are falling from its swaying (Rashi). **לד וְהֵייתָ כְּשֹׁכֵב בְּלֵב יָם, וְכִשְׁכֹּב בְּרֹאשׁ חֵבֶל:** ♦ The ship's severe rocking will confuse your mind (MD).
35. "They struck until I was sick, and beat me until I broke, but I didn't feel a thing. When I awake, I will pursue the wine again." **לה הִפּוּנִי בֵּל חֲלִיתִי הֶלְמוּנִי בֵּל יִדְעֵתִי מְתִי אָקִיץ, אוֹסִיף אֲבַקֶּשְׁנוּ עוֹד:** ♦ The ill-effects of the wine will be forgotten, and you will return to drink (Rashi). ♦ You will praise the wine and forget all the damage it causes. You will only say that it removes all your sorrows. You will be unaware of time, and will not retreat from your wine, but will request more (RYG). ♦ Wine is addictive (MD). ♦ 'Beating' is harsher than 'striking' (Malbim).



CHAPTER 24

פרק כד

1. Do not be envious of the success of the (MD) evil ones nor desire to be in their company and do their deeds (MD), even if it would be financially profitable to be with them (RYG). א
 אֵל תִּקְנֵא בְּאַנְשֵׁי רָעָה, וְאַל תִּתְאַוּ תְּתַאוּ לְהִיּוֹת אִתָּם:
2. They are only intent on thievery and destruction, and they speak of mischief. ♦ Since they speak of their crimes all the time, you will be punished for your silence and failure to stop them when you hear from them about their sins (RYG). ♦ Their exploits are worthy of contempt (MD). ב
 כִּי שׂוֹד יִהְיֶה לָבָם, וְעֵמֶל שְׁפִתֵיהֶם תִּדְבַּרְנָה:
3. A house is built with wisdom and made permanent and complete (Malbim) by understanding. ♦ Peace of mind and riches come from wisdom and understanding (RYG). ג
 בְּחִכְמָה יִבָּנֶה בַּיִת, וּבִתְבוּנָה יִתְכוּוֹן:
4. (If -MD) its rooms are filled with knowledge, with (it will have – MD) precious and pleasant riches. ♦ The house and rooms may refer to building the soul by ד
 וּבִדְעַת חֲדָרִים יִמְלֵאוּ, כָּל הוֹן יִקָּר וְנִעִים:

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means of one's free-will and repentance which overcome Man's innate destructive impulses. With these tools, your soul will be filled with awe and love of God, and you will bond with Him (RYG).

5. **The wise man is staunch in his fear of God (MD), and the man of knowledge increases strength in instruction (MD).** ה
גִּבּוֹר חָכְם בְּעוֹז, וְאִישׁ דַּעַת מֵאֲמֹץ כֹּחַ:
 ◇ The wise man will always be at peak strength (Rashi). ◇ Since he sees all the vectors and has a broader perspective of matters, which others do not, he is in a much better position to make correct decisions, and be successful with them. He will be equal to many advisers (RYG). ◇ The man of knowledge is preferred over the learned man for he is always investing energy in learning and adding to his knowledge (MD).
6. **Make war against your tempting evil inclination (MD) with wise counsel; there is victory with a multitude of counselors.** ו
כִּי בְּתַחֲבִלוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ מִלְחָמָה, וּתְשׁוּעָה בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ:
 ◇ One cannot be successful in battle unless he understands all his enemy's tricks (RYG). ◇ You have always to keep ahead of your desires with increasingly cleverer defenses (MD).
7. **Wisdom is as unattainable to fools as are precious stones from above (Malbim); he will not dare open his mouth at the gate** ז
רָאמוֹת לְאֹיִל חֲכָמוֹת, בְּשַׁעַר לֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיהוּ:
 where the wise men sit (MD). ◇ The fool thinks that (the vast amount and breadth of) Torah wisdom is unattainable to him (so he stops learning – MD), whereas the wise man learns a little today and little tomorrow (Rashi). ◇ When the Law is being adjudicated and they speak Torah, he will shut his mouth because he will not know how to respond (RYG).

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8. The one who even only (MD) plots evil is called mischievous. ח
מְחַשֵּׁב לְהָרַע, לוֹ בַעַל
מְזֻמוֹת יִקְרְאוּ:
9. The fool's thoughts are of sin and are sinful (MD) and unwise (Malbim), and the scorner is an abomination to men and God (Rashi), even if all he did was curl up his lip (MD). ט
זְמַת אֹלֶת חֲטָאת,
וְתוֹעֵבַת לְאָדָם לֵץ:
10. If you become weak on the day of trouble, your strength will constrict. ♦ If you are weak in Torah, you will have no vigor on the day of your punishments (Rashi). ♦ You were weak with yourself and never paid attention to save your soul (RYG). ♦ If you are too weak to help your friend in his time of need, you will be too weak to help yourself when you have your own troubles (MD). י
הַתְּרַפִּית בְּיוֹם צָרָה צַר
כַּחֲכָה:
11. Now, if you fail to deliver someone about to die or you do not rescue those who are about to be killed, יא
הֵצַל לְקַחִים לְמוֹת,
וּמָטִים לְהָרֹג אִם תַּחְשׂוּד:
12. And say, 'I surely did not know this', that they were about to die. Your words are meaningless since (MD) does not He, who weighs hearts, consider it and He knows if you knew or not (MD)? And He who formed your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render due to every man according to his works? ♦ But since you knew that he was about to die and you יב
כִּי תֹאמַר הֵן לֹא יִדְעֵנוּ זֶה
הֲלֹא תִכֵּן לְבוֹת הוּא יָבִין
וְנִצַּר נַפְשֶׁךָ הוּא יִדַע,
וְהִשִּׁיב לְאָדָם כַּפְּעָלוֹ:

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feigned weakness in order not to help, your strength will be sapped. You will be punished measure for measure (MD).

13. My son, as eating honey is good and the honeycomb is sweet flowing on your palate (MT), יג אָכַל בְּנֵי דְבִשׁ כִּי טוֹב, וְנֹפֶת מִתּוֹק עַל חֶפֶד:
14. Enable your soul to know wisdom. If you find it, you will have a future and hope, and not be destroyed. ♦ As you would run to eat honey, run to learn wisdom (Rashi). ♦ Wisdom is greater than eating honey since honey can sometimes be injurious (MD). יד כִּן דַּעַה חֲכָמָה לְנִפְשֶׁךָ אִם מְצָאתָ וְיֵשׁ אַחֲרֶיךָ, וְתִקְוֹתֶיךָ לֹא תִכְרֹת: פ
15. And to you, the wicked, I say, lie not in wait for the righteous when his hand totters (MD) nor spoil and rob (MT) his resting-place, טו אֵל תִּאָּרֵב רָשָׁע לְנֹוֹה צְדִיק, אֵל תִּשָּׁדֵד רִבְצוֹ:
16. For the righteous man may fall, and fall again, but he rises each time, whereas the wicked will stumble under his adversity, and not arise (MD). ♦ One downfall is enough to do him in permanently (RYG). טז כִּי שָׁבַע יִפּוֹל צְדִיק וְקָם, וְרָשָׁעִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ בְרָעָה:
17. Do not rejoice when your enemy falls nor be glad when he stumbles and begins to fall (Malbim). ♦ Do not hate someone because he is your enemy; hate him because he is evil (based on RYG). יז בְּנִפְל אוֹיְבֶךָ אוֹיְבִיךָ אֵל תִּשְׂמַח, וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ אֵל יִגַּל לִבֶּךָ:

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18. God will see this and it will displease Him, and it will cause Him to turn His wrath from him onto you. ♦ God is displeased with him because his gladness in his fellow's downfall stemmed neither for the sake of Heaven or because his colleague was evil, but because he was his enemy (RYG). יח פֶּן יִרְאֶה יְהוָה וְרַע בְּעֵינָיו, וְהִשִּׁיב מֵעַלְיוֹ אָפוֹ:
19. Do not compete or join (MD) with the evildoers nor be envious of the success of (MD) the wicked, in matters of their serenity, wealth and honor (RYG) יט אַל תִּתְחַר בַּמַּרְעִים, אַל תִּקְנֵא בְּרִשְׁעִים:
20. For the evil man has no future. The lamp (souls – MD) of the wicked will be extinguished. כּ כִּי לֹא תִהְיֶה אַחֲרֵית לָרָע, נֵר רִשְׁעִים יִדָּעֵף:
21. My son, fear God and then (MD) the mortal king. Do not have anything to do with those who manipulate matters, ♦ Fear the mortal king only when it does not maneuver you away from fearing God, which takes precedence (Rashi). ♦ Those who claim there are two Powers (in the universe) (Rashi). ♦ These are they who alter the Torah and the Commandments (RYG). ♦ These rebels change the directives of God and the commands of kings, and implement the evil in their hearts. Steer clear of them (MD). כא יִרְא אֶת יְהוָה בְּנִי וּמֶלֶךְ, עִם שׁוֹנִים אַל תִּתְעַרֵּב:
22. For their calamity will come suddenly, too fast for you to avoid (RYG). Who knows what sort of ruin awaits them? כב כִּי פְתָאִם יִקּוּם אִידָם, וּפִיד שְׁנִיהֶם מִי יוֹדֵעַ: ט

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23. These, too, are the sayings for the wise judges (Rashi): **Do not respect and show favor to those in judgment; this not good**⁵². ◇ Even though these matters are well-known by the wise and there is no reason to caution them, nevertheless, they are mentioned to further their understanding of the grave significance of the matter (MD). כג גַּם אֵלֶּה לְחַכְמִים, הַפֶּר פְּנִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט בַּל טוֹב:
24. **Do not tell a wicked man that he is righteous for people will curse you, and the Nations will denounce you.** ◇ This is all about the matter of flattery (RYG). ◇ If the wicked man sees that people are calling him righteous, it will encourage him to do more evil to the entire nation, and cause them to curse whomever had called him upright (MD). כד אַמֵּר לְרָשָׁע צְדִיק אַתָּה יִקְבְּהוּ עַמִּים, יִזְעַמוּהוּ לְאַמִּים:
25. **But for those who decide justly by admonishing the wicked (MD), delight and blessing will come upon them,** those who properly rebuke (MD). ◇ Reprovers should make pleasant their reproaches and say, "You know that you are really a good person, but occasionally you err" (MD). כה וְלְמוֹכִיחִים יִנָּעַם, וְעַלֵּיהֶם תָּבוֹא בְרַכַּת טוֹב:

⁵²The judge must never show any favoritism to any litigant.

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26. God kisses the lips of the one who gives true and (MT) right responses. ♦ It is fitting for all lips to kiss him (Rashi). ♦ The evil man will shut tight his lips and be unable to answer those who reprove him although, in the end, he will say that he will do as they told him (MD). כו שִׁפְתֵי־יֵשֶׁק מִשֵּׁיב
דְּבָרִים נִלְחִים:
27. Prepare a means of sustenance on the outside (this is Scriptures – Rashi) and a field (Mishna –Rashi) for the future for yourself first, and then build your house (Gemara –Rashi). ♦ Alternatively: first fields and vineyards, then animals in the field, and then a wife (Rashi). כז הֲכֵן בַּחוּץ מִלְאֲכָתֶךָ
וְעִתְדָה בְּשָׂדֶה לְךָ, אַחֲרַי
וּבְנִיתָ בֵּיתֶךָ: פ
28. Never bear false witness against your neighbor, and never speak deception. ♦ Never lead your friend astray with words (Rashi). כח אַל תְּהִי עֵד חֲנָם בְּרֵעֶךָ,
וְהִפְתִּיתָ בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ:
29. Never say or think (MD), “I will do to him as he did to me; I will give him what he deserves”. כט אַל תֹּאמַר כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לִי
כִּי אָעָשָׂה לוֹ, אֲשִׁיב לְאִישׁ
כַּפְּעָלוֹ:
30. I went by the lazy man’s field and the vineyard of the fool, ♦ The lazy man is one who does not review his studies (Rashi). ל עַל שָׂדֶה אִישׁ עֲצֵל עִבְרַתִּי,
וְעַל כַּרְם אָדָם חֲסוּר לֵב:

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31. And I found them overgrown with thistles and covered with nettles since he was too lazy to manicure his property (MD). The stone wall was broken down. ♦ He will forget his wisdom and mix up the Law, ruling that what is pure defiled and that which is defiled pure. He will destroy the world (Rashi).
- לא וְהָיָה עָלָהּ כָּלֹּקְמִשְׁנִים
כָּסוּ פָּנָיו חֲרָלִים, וְגָדָר
אֲבָנָיו נִהְרָסָה:
32. This awakened me and opened my eyes (MD) and I understood what laziness leads to, so I abandoned this trait (MD).
- לב וְאֶחְזָה אֲנֹכִי אִשִּׁית לְבִי,
רָאִיתִי לְקַחְתִּי מוֹסָר:
- 33 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands when lying down which is the manner of one who lies down to rest (MD). ♦ I now see that the proper thing is to minimize sleep and slumber (MD).
- לג מְעַט שְׁנוֹת מְעַט תְּנוּמוֹת,
מְעַט חִבְק יָדַיִם לְשֹׁכֵב:
34. Your poverty will pass like a speedy runner, and your wants as an armed man who hurries to war (MD). ♦ Whatever it is that will impoverish you will come quickly (Rashi). ♦ If you should do this (be industrious and diligent), then even if you are stricken with poverty, it will not last, and it will pass like someone who is in the midst of his travels and does not linger in any one place. (MD).
- לד וּבָא מִתְהַלֵּךְ רִישָׁד,
וּמַחְסְרִיךָ כְּאִישׁ מְגִן: פ



CHAPTER 25

פרק כה

1. These, too, are Solomon's proverbs, as recorded (preserved –Rashi; copied –MT) by the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah. ♦ It seems that, unlike the Proverbs cited in the earlier chapters, these statements were not readily available to the general public until they were copied from Solomon's books by the court of King Hezekiah. Therefore, it is stressed that these are on equal footing with the aphorisms cited above, and as true, and also from King Solomon (MD).
- א גַם אֵלֶּה מִשְׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה,
אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱתִיקוּ אַנְשֵׁי
חִזְקִיָּה מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה:
2. It is the splendor of God to conceal a matter (His greatness – MD), and it is to the honor of kings to investigate affairs thoroughly. ♦ God conceals the account of the Chariot and matters of the Creation (Rashi). ♦ Matters of mortal kings and sages should be researched and questioned, and the reasons behind their edicts investigated. Not so with the Chariot and Creation nor with the statutes in the Torah such as the prohibition against eating pig, laws of admixtures in a vineyard or Shaatnez (linen and wool). These one must simply accept and say that they are
- ב כָּבֹד אֱלֹהִים הַסֵּתֵר דָּבָר,
וּכְבוֹד מְלָכִים חֻקֵּי דָבָר:

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the King's decrees (Rashi). ◇ God's glory is that he hides his incomprehensibly infinite exaltedness, unlike that of mortal kings whose perceptible glory is limited (MD).

3. **The infinite (Malbim) height of the heavens and the depth of the earth, and what is in the heart of kings are unfathomable** regardless of all the research done on their laws and wars (Rashi). ג
 שָׁמַיִם לָרוֹם וְאָרֶץ לְעֵמֶק,
 וְלֵב מְלָכִים אֵין חֶקֶר:
4. **Remove the dross from the silver, and you have a vessel for the refiner.** ◇ The public is not free from punishment until the wicked ones are separated out and judgment meted out to them (Rashi). ד
 הָגוּ סִיגִים מִכֶּסֶף, וַיֵּצֵא
 לְצִרֹף כֶּלִי:
5. **Remove the wicked from before the king and his throne will be established in righteousness.** ◇
 הָגוּ רָשָׁע לְפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ, וַיִּכּוֹן
 בְּצִדָּק כֶּסֶא֔וֹ: ה
 The wicked try to confound the king and pervert justice (MD).
6. **Do not show off before a king and his officers, and don't stand in the place of great men.** ◇
 אַל תִּתְהַדָּר לְפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ,
 וּבְמָקוֹם גְּדֹלִים אַל
 תַּעֲמֹד: ו
 Don't be pretentious and proud before a king or even stand in front of someone who is greater than you, for it is better that he invites you to come than for you to come without his permission, and he will say, "Go" (Rashi). ◇ Make yourself unimportant when standing before a king, ready to do his bidding and fulfill his will (RYG). ◇ Don't push yourself ahead of those greater and more important than yourself nor stand in their place (MD).

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7. For it is truly better that you sit among the lowly and (MD) be invited up by others greater than you (MD) than to be sent down from the presence of the prince. ז
 פִּי טוֹב אָמַר לְךָ עֲלֵה הִנֵּה
 מִהַשְּׁפִילָךְ לְפָנַי נָדִיב,
 אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינַיִךְ:
8. Don't hastily squabble and be drawn into arguments (MD) when you don't know what to do in the end because you didn't investigate matters properly (MD) and your fellow will shame you. ח
 אַל תִּצָּא לָרֵב מִהֵר פֶּן מֵה
 תִּעֲשֶׂה בְאַחֲרִיתָהּ,
 בְּהַכְלִים אֶתְךָ רֵעֶךָ:
9. Contend with your neighbor but only if you are compelled to so (Rashi), but do not reveal another's secret, ♦ Do not make mention of the secret sins of his deceased fathers (Rashi), i.e. do not introduce other injustices into a quarrel which have no relevance to this disagreement (based on Ibn Nachmias). ♦ That is, do not bring up matters only for the sake of embarrassing the other side (MD). ט
 רִיבֶךָ רִיב אֶת רֵעֶךָ, וְסוֹד
 אַחֵר אַל תִּגַּל:
10. Lest he hear of it and revile you, and you will find yourself slandered without end. ♦ Other people will hear what you said and call you a slanderer (MD). ♦ Calumnious speech, once uttered, cannot be retracted and has no remedy (MD). י
 פֶּן יַחֲסֹדֶךָ שְׁמַעַ, וְדַבַּתְךָ
 לֹא תִשׁוּב:
11. Right (MD) words spoken at the right time are like golden apples in settings of silver artistry. יא
 תְּפוּחֵי זָהָב בְּמִשְׁכָּיוֹת
 כָּסוּי, דָּבָר דָּבָר עַל אֶפְנָיו:

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12. The words of the reprover to the obedient ear are like golden earrings or nose rings (MT) and ornaments. יב
נָזָם זָהָב וְחֹלִי כָתֶם,
מוֹכִיחַ חֶכֶם עַל אָזְן
שֹׁמְעֵת:
13. The faithful messenger who performs his task as required is as refreshing to the one who sent him as would be the cold of a snowy day during the high heat at harvest-time. ♦ Like the (comforting –MD) winter cold which someone dreams about during the (hot) harvest season (Rashi). יג
כְּצִנַּת שֶׁלֶג בְּיוֹם קָצִיר צִיר
נֶאֱמָן לְשִׁלְחָיו, וְנִפְשׁ
אֲדָנָיו יִשְׁיב: פ
14. As there is wind and heavy clouds without rain; so there is the man who glorifies himself with fictitious gifts. ♦ There are expectations which do not come to fruition (Rashi). ♦ There are those who say how much charity they will give, but they lie and deceive, and disappoint the poor (Rashi). ♦ The poor are pained by this (MD). יד
נְשִׂאִים וְרוּחַ וְגֶשֶׁם אֵין,
אִישׁ מְתַהַלֵּל בְּמַתַּת
שֶׁקֶר:
15. With patience and repentance (Rashi) and the soft language of prayer and supplications to God (Rashi) it is possible to overcome every adversity and Heavenly decree (Rashi). ♦ Gentle speech and patience subdue all anger (MD). טו
בְּאַרְךָ אַפִּים יִפְתָּה קָצִין,
וְלִשׁוֹן רַכָּה תִשְׁבֵּר גְּרוֹם:

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16. Do not overstuff yourself with honey for you might vomit it. ♦
A small amount of honey is beneficial, but all benefits are lost if you eat it to satiation (MD). טז דְּבַשׁ מְצַאֲתָּ אֶכְלֵ דְיִיָּן, פֶּן תִּשְׂבַּעְנֶנּוּ וְהִקְאֲתוּ:
17. Do not spend too much time in your neighbor's house even if he is a relative or close friend (Rashi) and don't visit him too frequently. He might get sick of you. ♦
Also, do not accustom yourself to sin inadvertently and then have to bring the various sin and guilt offerings to the Temple to God, Who is called a Friend of Israel (Rashi). ♦ Friends visit friends only occasionally (MD). ♦ Absence makes the heart grow fonder (MD). יז הִקְרַר רַגְלְךָ מִבֵּית רֵעֶךָ, פֶּן יִשְׂבַּעְךָ וְשִׁנְאֶךָ:
18. The false witness is like a maul or sledgehammer (Malbim) and a sword and a sharp arrow. ♦ All these are weapons (Rashi). ♦ His testimony kills with his tongue as would a weapon of war (MD). יח מִפִּיץ וְחָרֵב וְחָץ שָׁנוּן, אִישׁ עֵנָה בְּרַעְהוּ עַד שֶׁקֶר:
19. Putting your trust in an unfaithful man during a time of trouble is like a relying on a broken tooth to eat with or a foot out of joint to walk upon. יט שֵׁן רָעָה וְרֶגֶל מוּעָדָת, מִבֶּטֶחַ בּוֹגֵד בְּיוֹם צָרָה:
20. Singing to one with a broken heart is like standing dressed in pretty, but inappropriate (MD) clothing or rags (Rashi) in the cold or like pouring vinegar on niter which will extinguish it or crack the surface (MD). ♦ Such singing is useless (MD). ♦ This all כ מְעַדָּה בְּגַד בְּיוֹם קָרָה חֲמֵץ עַל נֹתֵר, וְשָׂר בִּשְׂרִים עַל לֵב רָע: פ

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refers to teaching Torah to an evil student who has no intention of observing it (Rashi).

21. If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, ♦ Our Sages (Succah 52a) said that this refers to the Evil Inclination which demands to satiate its hunger and thirst with sins. Drag it to the Beis Medrash, feed and give it to drink from the Torah (Rashi).
- כא אִם רָעֵב שִׁנְאָךָ הֶאֱכִלְהוּ לֶחֶם, וְאִם צָמֵא הִשְׁקֵהוּ מַיִם:
22. For it will be as if you are heaping fiery coals on his head and he will be very ashamed of himself that you responded to his wrong-doing with goodness, although he will think this to be revenge (MD), and God will reward you charitably (MD), and he will not overcome you (Rashi).
- כב כִּי גִחְלִים אַתָּה חֹתֵה עַל רֹאשׁוֹ, וַיְהִי־הוּא יִשְׁלַם לָךְ:
23. As the North wind brings about the rain, the back-biting tongue brings an angry face. ♦ God is angry at the slanderer (Rashi). ♦ The slandered is angry with the slanderer (MD).
- כג רוּחַ צָפוֹן תְּחוּלֵל גֶּשֶׁם, וּפְנִים נִזְעָמִים לְשׁוֹן סִתְרוֹ:
24. It is better to live in the corner of the attic alone and exposed to the elements on the roof (MD) than in the same (a friend's) house with an argumentative woman, even if there are other people there (MD). ♦ Israel caused the Shechinah to depart because they teased Him with their sins. The same house means bringing idolatry together with the Shechinah (Rashi).
- כד טוֹב שֹׁבֵת עַל פְּנֵת גֹּגֶן, מֵאִשֶׁת מְדִינָיִים מְדוּנִים וּבֵית חֶבֶר:

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25. Good news from a distant country is like refreshing cold water to a faint soul. ◇ They are equally pleasurable (MD). כה מִיָּם קָרִים עַל נֶפֶשׁ עֵיפָה, וְשִׂמוּעָה טוֹבָה מֵאֶרֶץ מְרַחֵק:
26. The words of a righteous man speak to the wicked are like spring waters which became muddied and undrinkable. ◇ The righteous man totters before the evil one and is afraid to reprove him (Rashi). כו מֵעֵין נֶרְפֵשׁ וּמְקוֹר מְשֻׁחָת, צְדִיק מֵט לִפְנֵי רָשָׁע:
27. As it is not good to eat too much honey, it is no honor for men to search out their own glory. ◇ One should not publicly teach (the esoteric) matters of the Creation and the Chariot. The masses will then come to ask, "What is above and what came before?" Rather, they should inquire into the reasons for the decrees of the Sages or why they erected fences around each of their decrees. This is the honor of the Sages (Rashi). ◇ It is a pleasant thing to praise the sagacious and righteous people (RYG). ◇ It is to the honor and glory of the Sages that people thoroughly probe into their wisdom (MD). כז אֶכֶל דְּבֶשׁ הַרְבּוֹת לֹא טוֹב, וְחָקֵר כְּבוֹדָם כְּבוֹד:
28. The unrestrained spirit and speech (MT) (the angry man – RYG) who adulterates his soul (MD) is like a breached city without a wall. חה עֵיר פְּרוּצָה אֵין חוֹמָה, אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אֵין מַעְצָר לְרוּחוֹ:

CHAPTER 26

פרק כו

1. It is as inappropriate and unnatural to honor a fool as is snow in the summer or rain at harvest-time. ♦ If you show him respect, he will come to think that there is no advantage in (acquiring) wisdom (MD).

א פֶּשֶׁלֶג בְּקִיץ וְכַמָּטָר
בְּקִצִיר, כִּן לֹא נֶאֱוָה
לְכַסִּיל כְּבוֹד:
2. The causeless curse will return home like the wandering sparrow and the flying swallow to their nests (Rashi). ♦ Curses boomerang upon those who utter them (MD). ♦ The דרור does not accept mastery by humans, and will not live with them (Malbim).

ב כַּצְפוֹר לָנוּד כְּדְרוֹר לְעוֹף,
כִּן קִלְלַת חֲנָם לוֹ לֹא
תִּבְא:
3. A whip for the horse and bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back and body (MT) of the fools to rein them in. ♦ Afflictions await the wicked (Rashi). ♦ The wicked do not abandon their evil ways by words, but only by physical beatings (MD).

ג שׁוֹט לְסוֹס מִתֵּג לְחִמּוֹר,
וְשִׁבְט לִגּוֹ כְּסִילִים:

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4. Don't respond to the fool in a foolish and contentious (MD) way lest you become like and resemble (Rashi) **him** in the eyes of onlookers (MD). ◇ Do not speak in a quarrelsome and beligerent way with the fool (Rashi). ◇ The way of wise men is not to squabble one with another⁵³ (MD). ד אֵל תֵּעַן כְּסִיל כְּאַוְלָתוֹ, פֶּן תִּשְׁוֶה לוֹ גַם אֶתָּה:
5. Respond to the fool in his (so he sees his -Rashi) foolish way lest he think himself wise. ◇ This refers to the one who wishes to turn you to idolatry; let him know of his folly (Rashi). ◇ Respond to the ignoramus in Torah by showing him his error lest he think of himself wise seeing that you were unable to answer him (MD). ◇ The contradiction between verses 4 and 5 is explained that the former refers to those instances where you should not respond if people will compare you to the fool while the latter refers to cases where if you do not respond to him, he will think himself wise (Rashi). ה עֲנֵה כְּסִיל כְּאַוְלָתוֹ, פֶּן יִהְיֶה חָכָם בְּעֵינָיו:
6. If you send a message via a fool you will be wearing out and cutting off (MT) legs, and will drink destructive waters. ◇ He who sends a fool to deliver a message will wear out the many legs of those who will have to be sent after him to correct what the first one distorted. They will be upset at him that he sent a fool as the messenger in the first place (Rashi). ◇ He sent the fool in order to give rest to his own legs but, in the end, he himself will have to cut off his (the fool's) legs and run quickly to correct what the fool messed up. He will have to suffer the indignities of other peoples' anger with him because of the foolish ו מְקַצֵּה רַגְלִים חָמָס שְׂתָה, שְׁלַח דְּבָרִים בְּיַד כְּסִיל:

⁵³ The disagreements of the Sages were only for the sake of Heaven.

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things said by his messenger for they will think that this is what his dispatcher actually told him (MD).

7. The fool's parable hangs as limp as do the legs of the lame. ז
דְּלִיּוֹ שְׁקִים מִפֶּסַח, וּמָשַׁל
בְּפִי כְּסִילִים:
 ◇ Just like the lame man's legs are unequal, so are the fool's parables where there is no analogy between examples given and that to which it is supposedly compared (MD).
8. Giving honor to the fool is as beneficial as it would be to throw a small pebble onto a large heap of stones. ח
כְּפָרוֹר אֶבֶן בְּמַרְגְּמָה, כֵּן
נוֹתֵן לְכֶסֶל כְּבוֹד:
 ◇ It is as fleeting as a rock in a slingshot, i.e. it will be quickly flung out. So is teaching Torah to an unworthy student like tossing a stone before the idol Mercurus (Rashi). ◇ The fool is unable to remain honorable. He will quickly disgrace himself with his foolishness (MD).
9. To tell a fool a parable is like asking a drunk to pick a flower. All he will come up with is a thorn in his hand. ט
חוֹחַ עָלָה בְּיַד שָׂכוֹר,
וּמָשַׁל בְּפִי כְּסִילִים:
 ◇ Now the fool will be a danger to himself and to others (MD).
10. The contentious person destroys everything, while he who stops a fool, dams up a flood. י
רַב מְחוֹלֵל כָּל, וְשָׂכַר
כְּסִיל וְשָׂכַר עֲבָרִים:
 ◇ Since the contentious person leaves many victims among those who approach him, no one goes near to him (MD). ◇ An alternative reading in accordance with Rashi and the Malbim: **God, who created everything**, and judges and sustains everything, fool and wise man alike, also gives everyone including **the fool and those who violate His Commandments their just rewards.**

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11. As does a dog to its vomit so the fool repeatedly returns to his folly. ♦ Just as the fool fails to understand that he vomited because he ate bad food, he returns to the same folly which he failed at before! (MD). יא כְּכֶלֶב שָׁבַעַל קָאוּ, כְּסִיל שׁוֹנֶה בְּאֹלְתוֹ:
12. The biggest and most hopeless fool is the one who thinks he is wise. ♦ There is hope for the one who knows he is not smart because he may learn and become wise, unlike the one who deceives himself into believing he is sagacious. He won't bother to learn from anyone (MD). יב רְאִיתָ אִישׁ חָכָם בְּעֵינָיו, תִּקְוֶה לְכָסִיל מִמֶּנּוּ:
13. The lazy man will always find excuses, "There is a lion in the road!" ♦ He exaggerates the severity of the situation (MD). יג אָמַר עֲצֵל שַׁחַל בְּדַרְדָּר, אָרִי בֵּין הַרְחָבוֹת:
14. The door swings on its hinges, and the lazy man is on his bed. ♦ Like the door swings back and forth on its hinges but never comes off, so the lazy man turns over and over in his bed and never gets up (MD). יד הַדְּלֵת תִּסּוֹב עַל צִירָהּ, וְעֲצֵל עַל מִטָּתוֹ:
15. The lazy man may have his hand in the plate, but he is too lethargic and tired (MT) to bring the food to his mouth. ♦ The lazy man avoids work, but all day he is eating and licking his plate until he is so tired he can't even raise his hand to put more food in his mouth. Such a person will starve (MD). טו טָמֵן עֲצֵל יָדוֹ בַּצֶּלְחַת, נִלְאַה לְהַשִּׁיבָה אֶל פִּיו:

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16. The lazy man considers himself brighter than seven truly wise men since he always finds clever excuses not to work (MD). טז חָכֶם עָצַל בְּעֵינָיו, מְשַׁבְּעָה מְשִׁיבֵי טָעַם:
17. Someone who meddles in other people's strife is like someone who picks a dog up by his ears. He endangers himself with its bites (MD) and, יז מְחַזֵּיק בְּאָזְנֵי כָּלֵב, עֹבֵר מִתְעַבֵּר עַל רִיב לֹא לוֹ:
18. Like the one who exerts himself when tossing murderous firebombs or shooting deadly arrows. ♦ He has exercised his arm practicing to be able to shoot arrows and throwing other lethal objects (MD). יח כְּמִתְלַהֵלֶה הַיָּרֵה זֻקִים חֲצִים וְמוֹת:
19. So is the man who deceives and entices (Rashi) his neighbor from the "Ways of Life" to the "Ways of Death" (Rashi) and feigns that he was "only kidding" when his friend senses what is really going on (MD). ♦ But, he wasn't kidding. He meant it! Stay clear of him because he will do it again when he thinks he can get away with it (MD). יט כִּן אִישׁ רָמָה אֶת רֵעֵהוּ, וְאָמַר הֲלֹא מְשַׁחֵק אָנִי:
20. Without wood there is no fire; without grumbling and slandering (Rashi) there is no contention. כ באֶפֶס עֵצִים תִּכְבֶּה אֵשׁ, וּבְאִין נִרְגָן יִשְׁתַּק מְדוֹן:
21. The litigious man kindles and stokes (MD) the fire of strife. He is fuel, like coal and wood, to a fire. ♦ He is 'ready for action' (MD). כא פָּחַם לְגַחְלִים וְעֵצִים לָאֵשׁ, וְאִישׁ מְדִינִים מְדוֹנִים לְחֲרָחַר רִיב: פ

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22. Complaints are words of war. **כב דְּבָרֵי נִרְגָּן כְּמַתְּלֵה־מַיִם, וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ חֲדָרֵי בֶטֶן:**
 They go straight to the innards to one's essence (RYG). ♦ Whiny words are like rupturing blows. They go deep inside and are hard to heal (MD).
23. Duplicitous lips and a wicked heart are like a useless (Rashi) silver-coated piece of pottery. ♦ **כג כֶּסֶף סִיגִים מְצַפֶּה עַל חֶרֶשׁ, שְׁפָתַיִם דֹּלְקִים וְלֵב רָע:**
 Lips which pursue the love of people, but he has treachery in his heart (MD).
24. Regarding someone who speaks deceitfully- **כד בְּשִׁפְתָיו בִּשְׁפָתוֹ יִנְכַּר שׁוֹנֵא, וּבְקִרְבוֹ יִשִּׁית מְרֻמָּה:**
25. Do not believe him even when he speaks nicely and entreatingly (MD) for he has seven (many – MT) abominations in his heart. **כה כִּי יִחַיֵּן קוֹלוֹ אֶל תֶּאֱמֹן בּוֹ, כִּי שֶׁבַע תּוֹעֵבוֹת בְּלִבּוֹ:**
26. His hatred may now be concealed from people (MD) in the dark, but his wickedness will ultimately be revealed to all. ♦ **כו תִּכְפֹּסֶה שְׂנְאָה בְּמִשְׁאוֹן, תִּגְלֶה רָעָתוֹ בְּקֶהֱל:**
 God will expose his unknown evil publicly (Rashi).
27. The one who digs a pit for others will eventually fall in it himself; as the one who rolls a stone onto others (MD) will have it roll over him. **כז כָּרָה שַׁחַת בָּהּ יַפֵּל, וְגִלְל אָבֹן אֵלָיו תִּשׁוּב:**

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28. The lying tongue hates those it crushes; the flattering mouth works ruin by distancing all those who accept his lies from God (Rashi).

כח לְשׁוֹן שֶׁקֶר יִשְׂנֵא דַבְּיוֹ,
וּפִה חֶלֶק יַעֲשֶׂה מְדַחֶה:



CHAPTER 27

פרק כז

1. Don't boast of about something you have promised to do in (MD) the future for you don't even know what tomorrow will bring which may prevent you from carrying out your plans (MD). א אל תתהלל ביום מחר, כי לא תדע מה ילד יום:
2. Never praise yourself even for things you have already accomplished (MD). Let others do that for you. ב יהללך זר ולא פיד, נכרי ואל שפתיך:
3. Heavier and harder to bear (MD) than stones and the burden of carrying sand is a fool's anger which, because of his stupidity, just multiplies (MD). ♦ The fool angers God, and brings irritation to the world (Rashi). ג כבד אבן ונטל החול, וכעס אויל כבד משניהם:
4. Rage is cruel and anger overwhelming, but who can stand before the jealousy of the ד אכזריות חמה ושטף אף, ומי יעמד לפני קנאה:

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resentful and revengeful person (Rashi)? ♦ Rage brings cruelty, but worse still is jealousy because the jealous man would rather it be bad for him and his enemy than good for both (MD).

5. **Better open rebuke than hidden love.** ♦ Better the rebuke of love hidden in the heart of the rebuker who has the intention of correcting his friend and not vexing him (MD). ה טוֹבָה תּוֹכַחַת מִגְלָה, מֵאַהֲבָה מְסֻתָּרָת:
6. **More loving and effective (MD) is the bloody stab (wound) of a friend with his faithful and chastising rebuke (MD) than the many importunate kisses of an enemy.** ו נְאֻמֵּי פִצְעֵי אוֹהֵב, וְנִעְתָּרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׁוֹנֵא:
7. **The satiated soul loathes even the honeycomb, whereas to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.** ♦ One who considers himself satiated with Torah and feels he needs no more to satisfy his soul will not see it important to (learn) even easily acceptable matters. However the one who thirsts for Torah has no difficulty with those things that come bitterly or with effort. For him, they are sweet (Rashi). ז נֶפֶשׁ שְׂבֻעָה תִּבּוֹס נֶפֶת, וְנֶפֶשׁ רָעֵבָה כָּל מֵר מֵתוֹק:
8. **An itinerant man away from his natural place is like a bird which has wandered from its nest.** ♦ This refers to the Torah scholar who strays from his learning and does not review it (Rashi). ח כְּצִפּוֹר נוֹדָדַת מִן קִנָּה, כִּן אִישׁ נוֹדָד מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:

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9. The sweetness of a friend's good and sincere (MD) counsel gladdens the heart as does the scent of fragrant ointment and incense. ✧ Giving good counsel is an act of loving-kindness (RYG). ט
שָׁמֵן וְקִטְרֵת יִשְׁמַח לֵב,
וּמִתֵּק רֵעֵהוּ מֵעֲצַת נֶפֶשׁ:
10. Never abandon your friend or your father's friend (God -Rashi); nor go to your brother's house on the day of your calamity. Better a close neighbor (God -Rashi) than a distant brother who does not join with you (MD). ✧ This refers to the cruel and deceptive descendants of Esau and Ishmael upon whom we should not rely in our times of need (Rashi). ✧ Abandoning God will bring punishments upon you (Rashi). י
רֵעֶךָ וְרֵעַ וְרַעֵה אָבִיךָ אֶל
תַּעֲזֹב וּבֵית אָחִיךָ אֶל
תָּבוֹא בְיוֹם אִיְדָךָ, טוֹב
שָׁכֵן קָרוֹב מֵאֵחַ רְחוֹק:
11. Be wise, my son, and make my heart pleased, that I may be able to answer those who taunt me. ✧ יא
חֲכָם בְּנֵי וְשִׂמַח לְבִי,
וְאֲשִׁיבָה חֲרָפִי דְבָר:
 Become wise and I will be glad (Rashi). ✧ However, if you are a fool, I will be compelled to shut (your/my) mouth for I fear that your deficiency will be revealed (MD).
12. The prudent man sees evil coming (Rashi) and hides himself from it and withdraws from sin (Rashi), whereas the thoughtless ones travel down the evil way (Rashi) and are punished, and lose (MD). ✧ Losing money is also called a punishment (MT). יב
עָרוֹם רָאָה רָעָה נִסְתָּר,
פְּתָאִים עָבְרוּ נֶעְנָשׁוּ:

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13. Take his garment that is surety for a stranger, and hold him in pledge which is security for an alien woman. יג **קַח בְּגָדוֹ כִּי עֶרְבַּ זָר, וּבְעֵד נְכַרְיָה חֲבִלָּהּ:**
 ♦ The judge will instruct the creditor to take the garment (the pledge) from the guarantor (Rashi) and the creditor will be guiltless because he became a guarantor for a stranger by his own volition and put himself in this predicament. The verse tells us that there is no difference if he was a guarantor for a man or a tempestuous, afflicted woman (MD).
14. It is considered a curse if someone blesses and glorifies (MT) a man publicly (MD), in a loud voice, early in the morning יד **מִבֶּרֶךְ יַעֲהוּ בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל בְּבִקְרַת הַשָּׁפִים, קִלְלָה תִחַשֵּׁב לוֹ:**
 all the time; and he will lose his riches (MD). ♦ There are blessings which turn to curses. The word will go out that he is rich and easy with his money. Everyone will then come and borrow from him. The government will then be roused to take his money from him. So it says in Arachin 16a (Rashi). ♦ Or wayfarers who broadcast their host's generosity causing the many to swarm to his house (RYG).
15. The contentious woman is compared to an incessant downpour in the house. טו **דָּלֶף טוֹרֵד בַּיּוֹם סִגְרִיר, וְאִשָּׁת מְדִינִים מְדוֹנִים נִשְׁתָּוָה:**
 ♦ She is like the dripping from the roof on a very rainy day when everyone is inside the house, and she's bothers them all (Rashi). ♦ However, her husband she vexes all the time (MD).

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16. She is as impossible to control as it is to confine (MD) the wind; he invites upon himself (prefers) that which is cleansed by means of the oil daubed on his right ear lobe, thumb, and big toe⁵⁴ i.e. leprosy, until she leaves (Rashi). ♦ It is impossible to conceal a woman's wranglings and bickerings (MD). טז צִפְנִיָּהּ צָפֹן רוּחַ, וְשָׁמֹן יְמִינוֹ יִקְרָא:
17. As iron sharpens iron so do loving colleagues hone one another. ♦ Torah scholars (who sit together and are engaged in Torah –MD) sharpen one another in the Halacha (Rashi). ♦ The word יחד is derived from the root חדד, to sharpen (Malbim). יז בְּרֹזֶל בְּבִרְזֵל יַחַד, וְאִישׁ יַחַד פְּנֵי רֵעֵהוּ:
18. Maintain the fig tree, and you will eat the figs in addition to your wages for guarding the tree (MD). Serve your master, and you will be honored and benefit from the payment for his deeds (MD). יח נִצֵּר תֵּאָנָה יֹאכֵל פְּרִיָּהּ, וְשָׁמַר אֲדָנָיו יִכְבֹּד:
19. As water reflects the image of your face when you look into it, so are the hearts of two friends. ♦ Their faces reflect their mutual love (Rashi). ♦ They fully empathize with one another. When one is happy or sad, so is the other (MD). יט כַּמִּים הַפְּנִים לַפְּנִים, כֵּן לֵב הָאָדָם לְאָדָם:

⁵⁴ This refers to his purification ceremony when oil is daubed on the leper's right ear lobe, right thumb, and right big toe.

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20. Neither Hell nor graves (MT) nor Destruction are ever satiated⁵⁵ with receiving the wicked (Rashi), **neither the eager eyes of man.** ♦
- כ שְׂאוֹל וְאֶבְדֹה וְאִבְדָה לֹא
תִשְׂבַּעְנָה, וְעֵינֵי הָאָדָם לֹא
תִשְׂבַּעְנָה:
- The eyes of the evil man are never satisfied and are constantly roving about after enticements in order to indulge his lusts (Rashi).
21. Silver is refined in a refining pot, gold in a furnace, and a man is rated by his praise. ♦ The public praises him for his good deeds. The public judges people, whether for good or bad (Rashi). ♦ You can tell who a person is by what sort of person and what sorts of behavior he praises. The good praise the wise and righteous, the bad praise the reprehensible and the sinful (RYG).
- כא מִצָּרֶף לְכֶסֶף וְכוֹר לְזָהָב,
וְאִישׁ לְפִי מִהֲלָלוֹ:
22. Even if you crush a fool using a mortar and pestle, he will still retain his foolishness.
- כב אִם תִּכְתוֹשׁ אֶת הָאֱוִיל
בַּמִּכְתֵּשׁ בְּתוֹךְ הָרִיפּוֹת
בְּעֵלִי, לֹא תִסּוֹר מֵעָלָיו
אוֹלָתוֹ: פ
23. Do not turn to the ruling authorities, but pay constant (Rashi) attention to your flocks and their needs (Rashi). Watch carefully how they are doing, ♦ Know what those who are dependant upon you (your flock) need (MD).
- כג יָדַעַתְּ דַּע פְּנֵי צֹאנְךָ, שִׁית
לְבָךְ לְעֹדְרִים:

⁵⁵ They always welcome more.

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24. For neither riches nor crown are forever. כד **כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶן, וְאִם
נֶזֶר לְדוֹר וְדוֹר דּוֹר:**
25. When the hay is cut and the lawn is mown, and the mountain herbs gathered in, ♦ Stock up on what you may later lack (MD). כה **גָּלָה חֲצִיר וְנִרְאָה דְּשָׂא,
וְנֶאֱסְפוּ עֲשָׂבוֹת הַרִים:**
26. The lambs will provide clothing for you and fleece (MD) and the he-goats go for the price of a field. ♦ You will eat meat and sell the hides (Rashi). כו **כְּבָשִׂים לְבֹשֶׁתְךָ, וּמַחִיר
שֶׁדָּה עֲתוּדִים:**
27. There will be enough goat-milk and food for your entire family, and the maidens will be well-cared for. ♦ A public leader should embrace his people and lead them slowly. When his lessons are heard throughout and Torah is elevated because of him, then these sheep will become his garments – his students will be for him a name, cloaked in honor and glory (Rashi). כז **וְיֵדֵי חֵלֶב עֲזִים לְלַחְמְךָ
לְלֶחֶם בֵּיתְךָ, וְחַיִּים
לְנַעֲרוֹתֶיךָ:**



CHAPTER 28

פרק כח

1. The wicked flee on the day of their misfortune (Rashi) even if no one is pursuing them, whereas the righteous who are closely bound to God (Rashi) are as secure as a young lion who is very confident of himself (Rashi). ♦ The wicked are overcome by cowardice, and take flight (MD).
- א נָסוּ וְאִין רִדְף רָשָׁע,
וְצַדִּיקִים כְּכַפִּיר יִבְטָח:
2. When crime is rampant, there will be a multitude of ministers who tyrannize the people and ruin the land (MD), but if someone wise leads, someone who knows how to correct the people (MD) and knows how to establish righteousness on a lasting foundation (Malbim), a country will survive much longer.
- ב בְּפֹשַׁע אֶרֶץ רַבִּים שָׁרִיָּה,
וּבְאָדָם מִבֵּין יָדַע כֵּן
יֵאָרִיד:
3. A poor man who oppresses those even weaker than himself is likened to an eroding rainstorm which leaves behind no food since the seeds are washed away (MD). ♦ The poor man referred to here is an ignorant and injudicious judge who comes down hard on the weak (Rashi). ♦ This poor man thinks
- ג גֹּבֵר רָשָׁ וְעֹשֶׂה דְלִים,
מִטֵּר סַחֵף וְאִין לָחֵם:

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that he can increase his wealth by stealing, but he will only be defective (MD).

4. They who abandon the Torah praise the wicked, and those who observe the Law must contend with those who have forsaken it. ד

עֲזְבֵי תוֹרָה יִהְלְלוּ רָשָׁע,
וְשֹׁמְרֵי תוֹרָה יִתְגָּרוּ בָּם:

פ

◆ This verse refers to the hypocrite who praises the wicked man to other people, whether in his presence or not, and even if he doesn't actually justify his violence nor does he lie for him in court, still he says he is a good man. He would not have done so unless he himself abandoned the Torah and denied its Commandments (RYG). ◆ Those who abandon the Torah are worse than the evil man since the latter one knows he is doing wrong and does so only out of a need to satisfy his desires, while the former one applauds evil deeds (MD).

5. Evil people have no concept of justice and give no thought to their ultimate retribution nor do they give thought to repentance which could save them (Rashi), and even when they are being punished, they think all is random (MD), whereas those who seek God understand everything and know what is good and what is bad (Rashi). ◆ They understand that everything is from Heaven, why things happen and what brought them about, and that nothing is by chance (MD). ה

אֲנָשֵׁי רָע לֹא יְבִינּוּ
מִשְׁפָּט, וּמִבְּקֵשֵׁי יְהוָה
יְבִינּוּ לָל:

6. Better a poor man even poor in Torah (Rashi) with integrity and honesty who refuses to cheat people in order to become rich ו

טוֹב רָשׁ הוֹלֵךְ בְּתַמּוֹ,
מֵעֶקֶשׁ דְּרָכִים וְהוּא
עָשִׂיר:

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(MD) and who has good deeds (Rashi) **than a rich one who goes in perverted ways** and became rich because of his deceit (MD).

7. The wise son observes the Torah **וְרָעָה** ז
and he honors his father by his **זוֹלָלִים יַכְלִים אָבִיו:**
good deeds (MD), whereas the **נוֹצֵר תּוֹרָה בֶּן מִבִּין, וְרָעָה**
companion of gluttonous people shames his father. ◇ People
attribute the good or bad actions of a child to the training he received
at home and blame his parents for his behavior (MD).
8. The money from the one who **מְרַבֵּה הוֹנוֹ בְּנִשְׁךְ וְתַרְבִּית** ח
augments his earnings by means **וּבְתַרְבִּית, לְחֹנֵן דָּלִים**
of charging interest or by usury **יִקְבְּצֵנוּ:**
will one day come into the hands
of the righteous man who lends without interest. ◇ The authorities
will hear of him and take his money to build bridges and repair roads
for the benefit of the poor (Rashi based on a Midrash). ◇ God will
arrange it that his ill-earned gains will end up with those who are
compassionate with the indigent (MD).
18. The prayer of the one who turns **מִסִּיר אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמַע תּוֹרָה,** ט
his ear from listening to the Law **גַּם תִּפְלֹתוֹ תוֹעֵבָה:**
is an abomination. ◇ God will
consider his prayers unimportant and unacceptable (MD).
10. Whoever causes an honest person **מִשְׁגָּה יִשְׂרָיִם בְּדַרְךְ רָע** י
to unintentionally sin and go **בְּשַׁחֲוֹתוֹ הוּא יְפוֹל,**
where there is danger (MD) will **וּתְמִימִים יִנְחֻלוּ טוֹב:**
himself fall into that pit. But, the
whole-hearted persons who lead others in the straight way (MD)
will inherit good.

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11. The wise man understands that he is rich; the poor one will gain understanding by interrogating him. **יא חֶכֶם בְּעֵינָיו אִישׁ עֹשִׂיר, וְדָל מִבֵּין יַחְקְרֵנוּ:** **יב בְּעֹלֶץ צְדִיקִים רַבָּה תִּפְאָרֶת, וּבִקּוּם רְשָׁעִים יַחֲפֹשׂ אָדָם:**
12. When the righteous triumph, there is great glory for God (MD); but when the criminals rise, great men must be searched for, for they will be hiding from them (MD). **יג מְכַסֶּה פְּשָׁעָיו לֹא יִצְלִיחַ, וּמוֹדָה וְעֵזֵב יִרְחַם:**
13. He who conceals and denies (MD) his sins will not prosper, whereas the one who confesses and forsakes his crimes forever (Rashi) will obtain mercy and forgiveness from God (MD). **יג מְכַסֶּה פְּשָׁעָיו לֹא יִצְלִיחַ, וּמוֹדָה וְעֵזֵב יִרְחַם:**
- ◆ This refers to a rabbi and his student. When the student cross-examines him, the rabbi becomes wiser (Rashi). ◆ The rich man holds himself to be wise, but it is not so. Even a poor man can be wiser than him, if he is smart and explores wisdom, for wisdom is not a result of wealth (MD).
- ◆ The way of the wicked is to hunt for someone's faults and mistakes in order to topple him, even if that person has abandoned those deeds and has repented (RYG).
- ◆ A person need not reveal his sins publicly, but he must confess them. If he harmed someone, he has to ask for forgiveness of him and make restitution for any loss he caused or return anything he stole. If one committed sins against God which are publicly-known, however, he has disgraced the Name of Heaven, and must mourn them in public in order to sanctify God's Name. The absolute prerequisites for repentance are three: remorse, confession and abandoning the sin (RYG).

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14. Happy is he who is always **anxious** of punishment (Rashi) **and is careful** not to sin (Rashi), **whereas the one who is brazen** and has no fear of sinning (MD) will **plummet into evil**. ◇ One should always be in trepidation that he may not have repented properly and that his impulse may again get the best of him. He should, therefore, always pray to God for help in repenting and surmounting his desires (RYG). יז אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם מִפֶּחַד תָּמִיד, וּמִקְשָׁה לְבוֹ יִפּוֹל בְּרָעָה:
15. The wicked ruler of a poor **people is fearsome** to them (MD) **like a roaring lion or a growling,** blood-thirsty (Malbim) **bear** who pursue the weaker ones (MD). טו אָרִי נֹהֵם וְדָב שׁוֹקֵק, מִשֵּׁל רָשָׁע עַל עַם דָּל:
16. The imprudent prince will be a **great oppressor and robber** (MT) since he is even unconcerned with **own his life** (Rashi), **whereas he who hates cupidity will prolong his days in office**. ◇ The fool does not understand this (MD). טז נָגִיד חָסֵר תְּבוּנוֹת וְרָב מַעֲשֵׂקוֹת, שֵׁנָא שֵׁנָאִי בְּצַע יֶאֱרִיד יָמָיו: פ
17. The **thieving exploiter** (a murderer – MD) **burdened with blood on his hands,** that is, the one who has caused another to sin (Rashi) **moves swiftly towards his grave** fearing that he is being pursued (MD) and that **no one supports him**. ◇ God will not give him time to repent, so that he should not wind up in Gan Eden while leaving his "students" behind in Gehenna. So it is in Yoma 87a (Rashi). יז אָדָם עָשִׂק בְּדָם נֶפֶשׁ, עַד בּוֹר יִנוֹס אֶל יְתֻמָּכוֹ בּוֹ:

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18. The decent man will be rescued, but the malicious and distorted (MT) one will plummet summarily and never rise from his fall (Rashi). יח הוֹלֵךְ תְּמִים יִשָּׁע, וְנֶעֱקַשׁ דְּרָכָיו יִפּוֹל בְּאַחַת:
19. The one who tills the ground by plowing and seeding (MD) will have plenty of bread to eat, whereas the one who pursues vain matters will be plenty poor. ♦ Rest is only realized after toil (RYG). יט עֲבַד אֲדָמָתוֹ יִשְׁבַּע לֶחֶם, וּמְרַדֵּף רְקִים יִשְׁבַּע רִישׁ:
20. The faithful man will abound with blessings, whereas the one who rushes for riches at the expense of the poor (Rashi) will not go unpunished. ♦ The faithful man is he who gives his tithes faithfully, that is, there is no witness to this except for God Who will then give him great blessing (Rashi). כ אִישׁ אֲמוּנוֹת רַב בְּרָכוֹת, וְאֶץ לְהַעֲשִׂיר לֹא יִנְקָה:
21. The judge must not favor or honor (MD) any litigant. He should also be aware that even an important man will sin for a piece of bread. כא הַפֶּה פָּנִים לֹא טוֹב, וְעַל פֶּה לֶחֶם יִפְשַׁע גְּבַר:
22. The one with an evil eye pursues great riches, and steals from his tithings (Rashi). He does not give charity for he is miserly (MD) yet does not know that want follows. כב נִבְהַל לְהוֹן אִישׁ רַע עֵין, וְלֹא יֵדַע כִּי חָסֵר יִבְאֵנוּ:

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23. It is he who admonishes someone and distances that person from him sins (Rashi) who will find favor in the end, and not the flatterer. כג מוֹכִיחַ אָדָם אַחֲרֵי חוֹן יִמָּצָא, מִמַּחֲלִיק לְשׁוֹן:
24. He who dismisses theft from one's father or mother as being no sin, claiming that it his anyway, is the companion of a destroyer. ♦ The one who causes the masses to sin against God creates a rift between Him and His children, and steals the Good from them (Rashi). כד גּוֹזֵל אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ וְאָמַר אֵין פְּשָׁע, חֵבֵר הוּא לְאִישׁ מִשְׁחִית:
25. The avaricious man whips up discord because his passions are never gratified, and so he is anxious and distressed (MD). But the one who trusts in God that He will provide him his needs and will not give him cause to worry (MD) will be abundantly fulfilled. ♦ The greedy man incites Divine punishment upon himself (Rashi). כה רָחַב נַפְשׁ יִגְרָה מְדוֹן, וּבּוֹטַח עַל יְהוָה יִדְשָׁן:
26. He who trusts his emotions and his own schemes when he is in trouble (MD) is a fool, whereas the one with a wise head who trusts in God (MD) will escape troubles altogether (MD). ♦ The fool tricks himself into believing his own subterfuges⁵⁶ (MD). כו בּוֹטַח בְּלִבּוֹ הוּא כָּסִיל, וְהוֹלֵךְ בְּחִכְמָה הוּא יִמְלֹט:

⁵⁶ The habitual liar believes his own lies.

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27. He who provides generously (MD) to the poor will not lack, whereas the one who veils his eyes from them so that he will not have to give charity (MD) will reap many a curse and will "go down the drain" (MD). ♦ The former case also applies to the teacher who does not withhold Torah from his students (Rashi). כז נותן לְרַשׁ אֵין מַחְסוֹר, וּמַעְלִים עֵינָיו רַב מְאֹרוֹת:
28. Men secrete themselves when the depraved are on the ascent for they fear them (MD), while the righteous ones will increase and intensify and assemble (MD) when the iniquitous finally expire. כח בְּקוֹם רְשָׁעִים יִסְתֵּר אָדָם, וּבְאָבְדָם יִרְבוּ צַדִּיקִים:



CHAPTER 29

פרק כט

1. An argumentative (Malbim) person who has been repeatedly and deservedly (MD) reprimanded will develop resistance to scolding (MD). And were his stiff neck to be swiftly shattered, it would be irreparable.

אִישׁ תּוֹכָחוֹת מִקְשָׁה עֵרָף, פִּתְעַ יִשְׁבֵּר וְאִין מִרְפָּא:
2. People will rejoice with the increase of righteousness, but groan when wickedness rules. ♦ Since God watches over the people in the merit of their righteous rulers, the people rejoice (MD).

בְּרַבּוֹת צְדִיקִים יִשְׂמַח הָעָם, וּבְמִשָּׁל רָשָׁע יֵאָנַח עָם:
3. A father celebrates when he sees his child loving wisdom, while the one who keeps company with harlots wastes his essence. ♦ He squanders all his father's money on prostitutes. This will greatly pain his father (MD).

אִישׁ אֲהַב חֲכָמָה יִשְׂמַח אָבִיו, וְרַעָה זֹנוֹת יֵאָבֵד הוֹן:

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4. **The king if he is a good judge (Rashi) establishes the land by means of justice, whereas the one with guile who is audacious and not moderate in his judgments (Rashi) overthrows it.** ♦ Our rabbis taught (Kesubos 105b) that if a judge does not need to buy friends and take bribes, he will uphold the land, whereas if he is like a Kohen who has to beg for his tithe portion, he will destroy the land (Rashi). ♦ In a land of justice, oppression ceases since the offenders are punished. However, if the king shares in the money confiscated by the oppressors, justice is abandoned and he will destroy the nation (MD).
- ד מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט יַעֲמִיד אֶרֶץ,
וְאִישׁ תְּרוֹמוֹת יִהְרָסֶנָּה:
5. **Cajole your neighbor and you will entrap your feet.** ♦ If you intended to trip up your neighbor, you yourself will stumble on that very impediment you set up for him (MD).
- ה גָּבַר מִחֲלִיק עַל רֵעֵהוּ,
רָשָׁת פּוֹרֵשׁ עַל פְּעָמָיו:
6. **The sin of an evil man contains a trap for himself (MD), but the righteous man sings and rejoices for he did not follow in his (evil) ways and did not fall into his pitfall (MD).**
- ו בְּפִשַׁע אִישׁ רַע מוֹקֵשׁ,
וְצַדִּיק יִרוֹן וְשִׂמְחָ:
7. **The righteous man knows the grievous (MT) judgment of the deprived, whereas the wicked do not understand knowledge.** ♦ The righteous man understands the afflictions of the disadvantaged, and their wants. He pays heartfelt attention to them (Rashi). ♦ The wicked man does not want to know of or comprehend the wants of the poor (MD).
- ז יָדַע צַדִּיק דִּין דְּלִים, רָשָׁע
לֹא יבִין דַּעַת:

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8. Scornful men set the city ablaze inciting the fire of disputes with their argumentativeness (MD), **וְחִכְמִים יִשְׁיבוּ אָף:** **אֲנָשִׁי לְצוֹן יִפְיחוּ קִרְיָה,** ח
- whereas wise men turn away wrath. ♦ The wise know how to negotiate peace and remove anger from amongst men (MD).
9. There is no rest when the wise and scorner compete. ♦ There is no satisfaction for the wise person when he attempts to reprove the ridiculer. Either he will either receive an angry face or be laughed at (Rashi). ♦ Stay away from the contemptuous ones (MD). **אִישׁ חָכָם נִשְׁפָּט אֶת אִישׁ אָוִיל, וְרָגַז וְשָׂחַק וְאִין נִחַת:** ט
10. Blood-thirsty men hate the sincere and the blameless person, and seek the life of the upright man. ♦ **וַיִּשְׂרִים יִבְקָשׁוּ נַפְשׁוֹ:** **אֲנָשִׁי דָמִים יִשְׁנְאוּ תָם,** י
- The wicked hate the pure and the innocent. All people should be informed of this principle so that no one believes anything the evil man might say arrogantly disparaging the righteous (RYG).
11. The fool squanders all his energies and anger (MT), whereas the wise man keeps his resentments (MD) **וְחָכָם בְּאַחוֹר יִשְׁבְּחֶנָּה:** **כָּל רוּחוֹ יוֹצִיא כְּסִיל,** יא
- inside and is silent (MT). ♦ The fool expends all his energies on venting his annoyances (MD). ♦ Once the fool exhausts himself, the wise man can then humiliate and silence him with his words (Rashi).

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12. If a ruler listens to falsehood⁵⁷, all his servants will become wicked and lie themselves in order that they gain favor in their leader's eyes (MD). יב מִשָּׁל מִקְשִׁיב עַל דְּבַר שָׁקֵר, כָּל מְשָׁרְתָיו רְשָׁעִים:
13. If a poor man and an intriguer clash, God opens their eyes. ♦ Our rabbis explained (Temura 16a, Vayikra Rabbah 34:4) that this refers to the student who meets someone knowledgeable in Torah and requests that he teach him a chapter, and he does so (Rashi). יג רָשׁ וְאִישׁ תְּכַכִּים נִפְגָּשׁוּ, מֵאִיר עֵינָי שְׁנֵיהֶם יְהוָה:
14. The throne of the king who justly judges the poor will last forever. יד מֶלֶךְ שׁוֹפֵט בְּאֵמֶת דְּלִים, כִּסֵּאוֹ לְעַד יָפוֹן:
15. The rod and reproof result in wisdom, whereas the undisciplined child whose father threw him aside and let him go wherever he wanted (Rashi) is his mother's shame. ♦ This refers to Ishmael (Rashi). ♦ Women like to talk about their children, but this one only humiliates her (MD). ♦ Reproof (תוכחה) is done calmly, whereas ethical discipline (מוסר) is administered with the rod (Malbim). טו שֵׁבֶט וְתוֹכַחַת יִתֵּן חֵכְמָה, וְנֵעַר מִשְׁלַח מִבֵּיט אָמוֹ:
16. The more wickedness, the more sin; and the righteous will watch their demise and rejoice that they did not join in (MD). טז בְּרַבּוֹת רְשָׁעִים יִרְבֶּה פֶשַׁע, וְצַדִּיקִים בְּמַפְלֹתָם יִרְאוּ:

⁵⁷ and believes it.

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17. Correct your son and he will give you satisfaction, and he will delight your soul with his good deeds (MD). יז יִסֵּר בְּנֵךְ וַיִּנְיָחֶךָ, וַיִּתֵּן מַעֲדָנִים לְנַפְשֶׁךָ: פ
18. Where there is no vision and prophecy (MD), the people will cast off restraint. He who complies with the Law will be happy. ♦ When the people insult the prophets, prophecy is removed from them. They will then degenerate (Rashi). ♦ Without prophets, the people lack moral leadership (MD). יח בְּאִין חָזוֹן יִפְרַע עָם, וְשָׁמַר תּוֹרַה אֲשֶׁרֶהוּ:
19. The slave will not be corrected by words, but by the rod. He may understand, but he will refuse to say that he will abandon his ways (MD). ♦ The verse is not speaking of an actual slave, but one who rejects the words of the judges (Rashi). יט בְּדַבְרִים לֹא יוֹסֵר עֶבֶד, כִּי יָבִין וְאִין מַעֲנָה:
20. There is more hope and success (MD) for the fool who contemplates matters (MD), than for the thoughtless one who talks hastily and hurries his reply (Rashi). כ חֲזִיתָ אִישׁ אֶץ בְּדַבְרָיו, תִּקְוָה לְכִסִּיל מִמֶּנּוּ:
21. If you indulge your slave, your evil inclination (Rashi), from childhood, he will eventually become a (your –MD) master. כא מִפְּנֵק מְנַעַר עֶבְדּוֹ, וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ יִהְיֶה מָנוֹן:

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22. The enraged man stirs up strife, and proliferates sin. ♦ The angry man does not care what he does, as our Rabbis have said (Nedorim 22b), that even God becomes irrelevant to the angry man (MD). כב אִישׁ אֶף יִגְרֶה מְדוֹן, וּבַעַל חֶמָה רַב פֶּשַׁע:
23. Pride alone can (MD) bring down a person, whereas the one with a lowly spirit will maintain honor. כג גְּאֹת אָדָם תִּשְׁפִּילֶנּוּ, וְשִׁפְל רֹחַ יִתְמַךְ כְּבוֹד:
24. The thief's partner hates his own soul, as does he who has evidence and does not come forward, because he hears that anyone who knows about the case is made to take oath and give witness to the crime. But now, since the thief has shared the take with him, he will not testify. He will bear his own sin and forfeit his soul (MD). כד חוֹלֵק עִם גֵּנֵב שׁוֹנֵא נַפְשׁוֹ, אֱלֵה יִשְׁמַע וְלֹא יִגִּיד:
25. Fear is a snare, whereas the one who trusts in God will be fortified. ♦ A person who fears disaster is more likely to falter even in a light matter (MD). כה חֲרֹדֶת אָדָם יִתֵּן מוֹקֵשׁ, וּבּוֹטָח בַּיהוָה יִשְׁגָּב:
26. Many seek the ruler's favor asking him for authority to govern, believing that these matters are in his hands (MD), but a man's just judgment comes from God. כו רַבִּים מִבְּקָשִׁים פְּנִי מוֹשֵׁל, וּמִיְהוָה מִשְׁפָּט אִישׁ:

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27. The unjust man is an abomination to the righteous just as the upright man is an abomination for the wicked. ♦ It is a Mitzvah to

denigrate and shame the sinners and to publicize their sins in order that the people will be repulsed by their evil deeds (RYG).

כז תועֵבַת צְדִיקִים אִישׁ
עֹל, וְתועֵבַת רָשָׁע יֵשֶׁר
דָּרָךְ: פ



CHAPTER 30

פרק ל

1. Ogur the son of Yokeh said, “So says the man prophetically, since *Issiel!* (= God is with me!) I am able to do whatever I want (MD)”. א
- דְּבַרֵי אֹגוּר בֶּן יָקֵה הַמְּשָׂא
נֶאֱמַר הַגִּבּוֹר לְאִתִּי אֵל,
לְאִתִּי אֵל וְאֶכֶל:
- ◇ This man is Solomon who gathered (*ogar*) understanding and expelled (*yokeh*) wisdom, and declared this ‘prophecy’ on himself (Rashi). ◇ Prophecy was taken from him (MD). ◇ He used his wisdom to multiply his gold, horses and women, all of which he was warned against increasing. He said, “Since God is with me, I can do what I want. I will have many women, but they won't entice me. I will have much gold, but it won't cause me to veer. I will have many horses, but I will not return the people to Egypt” (Rashi). ◇ “Surely, someone so wise like me needs no restrictions or supervision.” Yet, in the end, his wives diverted his heart... (MD).
2. However, I realize now that (MD) I am but the stupidest oaf without any human understanding since I relied on my own judgment in a matter where the Holy One, blessed be He, was concerned that I would come to sin (Rashi); so what good is my own wisdom? (MD). ב
- כִּי בַעַר אֲנֹכִי מֵאִישׁ, וְלֹא
בִּינַת אָדָם לִי:

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3. I have learned no wisdom, and do not know neither of God nor religion. ♦ It is as if I had learned nothing (MD) ♦ Human wisdom is incomparable with Moses' Torah (MD). ג
 וְלֹא לִמְדוֹתַי חֲכָמָה, וְדַעַת
 קְדוּשִׁים אֵדַע:
4. Who else (MD) ascended to Heaven like Moses and came down in peace as he did (MD)? And who can catch the wind in his fists as did Moses who threw the ashes of the furnace in the air (MD)? Who can tie up waters like a sheet as did Moses at the splitting of the Sea when the waters stood upright and did not move (MD)? Who can bring together the ends of the earth so they would not collapse as did Moses whose Torah supports the world (MD)? What is his name and do we know of anyone else like him (i.e. Moses)? But, if you don't know that, at least what is (MD) his son's name? ♦ Tell us what family is descendent from him so that we can know who he is (Rashi). ♦ Moses wrested the Torah from the hands of the angels (MD). ♦ Solomon now realizes that neither he nor anyone else has any business in questioning Moses, nor should anyone rely upon their own judgment (MD). ד
 מִי עָלָה שָׁמַיִם וַיֵּרַד מִי
 אֶסְרֹף רוּחַ בְּחַפְנָיו מִי צָרַר
 מַיִם בְּשִׁמְלָה מִי הֵקִים
 כָּל אַפְסֵי אֲרֶץ, מַה שְּׁמוֹ
 וּמַה שֵּׁם בְּנוֹ כִּי תִדַע:
5. Every word of God is refined. He shields whomever takes refuge with Him. ♦ No word God wrote is so unnecessary that I can be inattentive to what it says (Rashi). ה
 כָּל אִמְרַת אֱלֹהִים צְרוּפָה,
 מִגֵּן הוּא לַחֲסִים בּוֹ:

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6. Do not add to His words because they are pure as is (MD). He will reprove you, and you will be exposed as a falsifier. ♦ It will be proven that what you added to them caused you to sin, and certainly if you subtract from them (Rashi). ו אֵל תוֹסֵף עַל דְּבָרָיו, פֶּן יוֹכִיחַ בְּךָ וְנִכְזַבְתָּ: פ
7. I have asked of you God (Rashi) two things. Do not deny them to me before I die. ז שְׁתִּים שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאַתָּה, אֵל תִּמְנַע מִמְּנִי בְּטָרִם אָמוֹת:
8. Prevent me from speaking (MD) meaningless (Malbim) nonsense and transitory (Malbim) falsehoods, and give me only (MD) my just portion of bread – neither do I want riches or poverty. ♦ I don't want more than just what I need to live (MD). ח שָׂוֵא וּדְבַר כְּזָב הִרְחַק מִמְּנִי רֵאשׁ וְעֶשֶׂר אֵל תִּתֶּן לִי, הִטְרִיפְנִי לֶחֶם חֻקִּי:
9. For if I would be rich I'd be arrogant and (Rashi) I would deny there is a God, and if I would be poor, I would steal and curse His Name. ♦ Swearing falsely in court is worse than worshipping idols in private since the former is a matter of desecrating God's Name in public (RYG). ♦ I would make false oaths using God's Name denying that I was a thief (MD). ט פֶּן אֶשְׁבַּע וְכַחֲשֵׁתִי וְאָמַרְתִּי מִי יְהוָה, וּפֶן אֲרֹשׁ וְגִנַּבְתִּי וְתַפְּשֵׁתִי שֵׁם אֱלֹהֵי: פ

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10. Do not slander the servant before his master lest he, the servant (MD), curse you and you will be found guilty. **י** אֵל תִּלְשֹׁן עֶבֶד אֶל אֲדֹנָיו אֲדֹנָי, פֶּן יִקְלֹד וְאַשְׁמֵת:
11. There are generations who curse their fathers, and do not bless their mothers. **יא** דֹּר אָבִיו יִקְלֵל, וְאֵת אִמּוֹ לֹא יְבָרֵךְ:
12. And there are those who consider themselves pure, but are quite filthy. ♦ One who considers himself free of sin will not repent (MD). **יב** דֹּר טָהוֹר בְּעֵינָיו, וּמְצֹאָתוֹ לֹא רַחֵץ:
13. And there are those who consider themselves lofty with their noses in the air⁵⁸. ♦ They are insolent (Rashi). **יג** דֹּר מָה רָמוּ עֵינָיו, וְעַפְעַפְיוֹ יִנְשְׂאוּ:
14. And there are those whose front teeth and molars are sharp as swords and knives. They devour the poor and needy. ♦ They do not consider the poor human beings. And even though their evil is very great, do not spread slander among them (MD). **יד** דֹּר חֲרָבוֹת שִׁנָּיו וּמִאֲכָלוֹת מִתְּלַעְתָּיו לֶאֱכֹל עֲנִיִּים מֵאָרֶץ, וְאֲבִיוֹנִים מֵאָדָם: **פ**

⁵⁸ More literally, their eyelids are raised, i.e. they are arrogantly looking up.

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15. The leech has two daughters: **טו** לְעֹלֹקָה שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה
Give and Give. Three are never שְׁלוֹשׁ הֵנָּה לֹא תִשְׂבַּעְנָה,
satisfied, and four which want אַרְבַּע לֹא אָמְרוּ הוּן:
ever more: ♦ The two daughters
are Heaven which says give me the righteous, and Hell which says
give me the wicked. The righteous one should not say that there is no
room for me in Heaven nor should the wicked one say that Hell is
full. It is not so. Both Heaven and Hell thirst for more residents (MD).
16. They are the grave, the barren **טז** שְׂאוֹל וְעֵצֶר רַחֵם אֶרֶץ לֹא
womb (the prostitute –Malbim), שְׂבַעַת מַיִם, וְאִשׁ לֹא
the Earth which needs water and אָמְרָה הוּן:
rain (MD), and the fire of Hell
which is never extinguished and
never says, "Enough!" (MD). ♦ The desire for sexual intercourse is
never sated (Rashi).
17. The cruel (MD) eye which mocks **יז** עֵינַי תִּלְעַג לְאָב וְתִבּוֹז
his father's ethics (MD) and hates לִיקָהֶת אִם יִקְרוּהָ עַרְבֵי
obeying his mother will be נַחֵל, וְיֹאכְלוּהָ בְנֵי נֶשֶׁר:
punctured out by cruel (Rashi)
ravens, and his abandoned, unburied body will be devoured by
young eagles. ♦ The ravens will not enjoy the fruits of their
cruelness, but the merciful eagles will (MD).
18. There are three things which are **יח** שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה נִפְלְאוּ מִמֶּנִּי,
wondrous for and concealed from וְאַרְבָּעָה וְאֵרְבַּע לֹא יָדַעְתִּים:
(Rashi) me and I do not know
where they are because they
moved so fast out of sight (Rashi), and four I did not know:

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19. As the eagle effortlessly soars in the sky, and the serpent slithers swiftly on the slippery stone, and the ship sails smoothly at sea, so is the manner of men with **maidens**, in adulterous intercourse (MT). ♦ The sex act need not leave any obvious signs with either of them, except in the case of a virgin who loses the signs of her virginity (MD).
- יט דָּרְךְ הַנְּשֹׂר בַּשָּׁמַיִם דָּרְךְ
נָחַשׁ עָלַי צוֹר דָּרְךְ אֲנִיָּה
בְּלֵב יָם, וְדָרְךְ גִּבּוֹר
בְּעֵלְמָה:
20. And so the adulterous woman wipes her mouth after her deed, and denies it saying, "I did no evil!" ♦ But, God knows! (MD).
- כ כִּן דָּרְךְ אִשָּׁה מְנַאֲפֶת
אָכְלָה וּמָחְתָּה פִּיהָ,
וְאָמְרָה לֹא פָעַלְתִּי אֵוֹן: פ
21. Three things will cause the Earth to quake, and a fourth which it cannot endure:
- כא תַּחַת שְׁלוֹשׁ רָגְזָה אֶרֶץ,
וְתַחַת אַרְבַּע לֹא תוּכַל
שָׂאת:
22. The slave who reigns, the churl when he is filled with food, ♦ The slave does not know of royal etiquette and rules irrationally (MD).
- כב תַּחַת עֶבֶד כִּי יִמְלוֹךְ, וְנָבֵל
כִּי יִשְׂבַּע לֶחֶם:
23. Having relations with a detested wife because of her deeds as an adulterous prostitute (MD), and the maidservant who inherits her **mistress** as when the master divorces his wife to marry her and the wife becomes the maidservant (MD). ♦ Regarding the former instance: Since she can attribute a pregnancy to her husband, she can
- כג תַּחַת שְׂנוּאָה כִּי תִבְעַל,
וְשִׁפְחָה כִּי תִירֶשׁ גִּבְרָתָהּ:
פ

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readily seduce others into having relations with her⁵⁹ (MD). ◇
Regarding the latter instance: Nothing causes greater terror and is more difficult than the maidservant who becomes the mistress of the house, even more so than a servant who becomes a king (MD).

24. There are four things which are puny on the Earth, but are very, very wise: ◇ and people can learn from them (MD). כד אַרְבָּעָה הֵם קְטַנֵּי אָרֶץ, וְהֵמָּה חֲכָמִים מְחֻכָּמִים:
25. The ants are not a powerful nation⁶⁰, yet they are wise enough to store food in the Summer for the Winter. ◇ Prepare when you can (MD). כה הַנְּמָלִים עִם לֹא עֹז, וַיִּכְיֶנּוּ בַקִּיץ לַחֲמָם:
26. The rock-badgers are a feeble folk, yet they are clever enough to make their homes in the crags and save themselves from those who hunt them. ◇ They work bit by bit until they finish the job carving out their safe-places from the stone. This is a lesson for those who wish to learn the Torah which is vast. One should not abandon the task which appears daunting, but learn a little at a time until it is all done (MD). כו שְׂפַנִּים עִם לֹא עֲצוּם, וַיִּשְׂימוּ בַסַּלַע בֵּיתָם:
27. The locusts have no leader or king (MD), yet they know to go forth in bands to gather food. ◇ They would be captured if they go individually. From this we learn כז מִלֶּךְ אֵין לְאַרְבֶּה, וַיֵּצֵא חֲצֵץ כָּלוּ:

⁵⁹ She tells her lover not to worry for if she gets pregnant she has an alibi, simply saying that the child's father is her husband.

⁶⁰ Calling ants a nation (עַם) is a bit perplexing, but maybe they are so called because they are typically found in large groups.

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that when there is no leader, people should still band together and help each other (MD).

28. You may be able to grab a spider in your hand because she is small, yet if (MD) she chooses to live in the king's palace, she can't be evicted. ◇ As the spider eats from its own handiwork (the flies it catches in its web), so should a person be nourished by means of his own efforts and work, and not rely on that of others (MD). כח שְׂמַמִּית בְּיָדַיִם תִּתְפָּשׂ, וְהִיא בְּהִיכָלֵי מֶלֶךְ: פ
29. There are three things which are stately, confident and successful (MD) when marching, and four when going: כט שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה מִיִּטְבִּי צָעֵד, וְאַרְבָּעָה מִיִּטְבִּי לֶכֶת:
30. The bravest animal, the mighty lion who recoils from no one. ◇ He does not turn back until he conquers his objective (MD). ל לֵישׁ גְּבוּר בְּבִהְמָה, וְלֹא יָשׁוּב מִפָּנָי כָּל:
31. The greyhound, a hunting dog (MD), and the fleet (MD) he-goat who is a very capable hunter (MD) who lead their packs, and the unchallengeable king. No one can stand up to these. ◇ The king who girds himself in battle most courageously will usually win. Similarly, the ones who have the greatest self-confidence are usually successful (MD). ◇ The Midrash Aggadah explains these lists of four things as corresponding to the four Kingdoms – Babylonia, Media/Persia, Greece, and Esau (Rome) - who ruled Israel and who sinned by violating the dictates of the five לא זָרְזִיר מִתְנַיִם אוֹ תֵּשׁ, וּמֶלֶךְ אֶלְקוּם עֲמוֹ:

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books of the Torah, therefore they are mentioned five times (IAW Rashi who explains this at length).

32. If you were made a rogue by your friend you insulted and now you want to involve yourself in a vexing quarrel, place your hand on your mouth and keep quiet, **לֹב אִם נִבְלַת בְּהִתְנַשֵּׂא, וְאִם זְמוּת יָד לִפֶּה:**
33. For churned milk brings curd; a boxed nose, blood and fury, and additional (MD) friction. **לֹג כִּי מִיץ חֶלֶב יוֹצִיא חֶמְאָה וּמִיץ אֵף יוֹצִיא דָם, וּמִיץ אִפִּים יוֹצִיא רִיב:פ**



CHAPTER 31

פרק לא

1. With these words King Lemuel's mother chastised and prophesized about (MT) him. א דְּבַרֵי לְמוֹאֵל מֶלֶךְ, מִשָּׂא אֲשֶׁר יִסְרְתוּ אִמּוֹ: א

Solomon calls himself Lemuel relating these words before or in the name of God (*Lemo El*) because of his sin (Rashi). ♦ Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter on the day of the dedication of the Temple. She brought along many musical instruments, and Solomon was up all night partying, oversleeping the following morning until the fourth hour of the day. Since the key to the Temple courtyard was under head, the proper time for the morning Tomid offering was missed. His mother (Bas-Sheva) came and chastised him (Rashi, MD). ♦ Solomon called this a prophesy to show that one should treat his mother's words as if they came from God (MD).

2. What have you done, my son, the son of my womb? ♦ Knowing that your father was righteous, the people will accuse me of being the cause of your wickedness. Unlike your father's other wives who separated themselves from him when they became pregnant, I pushed my way in in order to have relations with him because relations are good for the embryo during the last six months of pregnancy (Rashi). ♦ Since there are incidences when a woman raises a child she did not give birth to and still she is called ב מַה בָּרִי וְיָמָה בֵּר בְּטָנִי, וְיָמָה בֵּר נְדָרַי: ב

the people will accuse me of being the cause of your wickedness. Unlike your father's other wives who separated themselves from him when they became pregnant, I pushed my way in in order to have relations with him because relations are good for the embryo during the last six months of pregnancy (Rashi). ♦ Since there are incidences when a woman raises a child she did not give birth to and still she is called

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his mother (as with Michal daughter of Saul who is called the mother because it was she who raised her sister Meirav's children), here she emphasizes that he is her biological son (MD). ♦ You are not only my biological son, but I raised you, and I am most concerned about your character (MD).

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| <p>3. Don't consign your vigor to women nor protest the way of kings. ♦ Do not weaken yourself with women (Rashi). Although, excess sexual activity weakens the male, it empowers the female (MD). ♦ Act like a just and clear-thinking king (MD).</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ג אֵל תִּתֵּן לְנָשִׁים חֵילְךָ,
וְדַרְכֶיךָ לְמַחֹת מְלָכִין:</p> |
| <p>4. It is improper for kings to drink wine, nor princes alcohol, ♦ The king is the anointed of God, and should act accordingly (MD).</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ד אֵל לְמַלְכִים לְמוֹאֵל אֵל
לְמַלְכִים שְׁתוּ יַיִן, וְלַרוֹזְנִים
אוֹ אֵי שֵׁכָר:</p> |
| <p>5. For they may forget the decrees of the Torah (Rashi) and pervert justice.</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ה פֶּן יִשְׁתֶּה וְיִשְׁכַּח מִחֻקֵּי
וְיִשְׁנֶה דִין כָּל בְּנֵי עֲנִי:</p> |
| <p>6. Liquor is only for those who are assigned to die (the wicked – Rashi) and wine for the bitter of soul because of his great toil and weariness (MD).</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ו תִּנּוּ שֵׁכָר לְאוֹבֵד, וַיַּיִן
לְמָרִי נַפֶּשׁ:</p> |
| <p>7. Drink is only for those who wish to forget their poverty and the misery which embitters their souls (MD). ♦ Wine eases sorrows (MD).</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">ז יִשְׁתֶּה וְיִשְׁכַּח רִישׁוֹ,
וְעָמְלוֹ לֹא יִזְכֵּר עוֹד:</p> |

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8. Your job is to speak up for those who cannot do so themselves, and for those who are about to be **destroyed** (the orphans –Rashi). ♦ Don't open your mouth for wine, but speak up for those who can't speak up for themselves or do not know how to properly defend themselves (MD). ח פֶּתַח פִּיךָ לְאֵלִים, אַל דִּין כָּל בְּנֵי חַלוּף:
9. Open your mouth and judge righteously. Plead the cause of the poor and needy. ט פֶּתַח פִּיךָ שֹׁפֵט צְדָקָה, וְדִין עָנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן: פ
10. ⚡ Who can find a woman of **valor**, one who is diligent and honest (MT)? **She is worth more than pearls** and as rare (MD)⁶¹. ♦ This refers to the Torah. Happy is the one who merits finding her (Rashi). ♦ Having concluded relating his mother's moral instruction to him, Solomon now praises the woman of valor in his mother's honor as a memorial to her (MD). י אִשָּׁת חַיִל מִי יִמְצָא, וְרַחֵק מִפְּנִינִים מִכָּרָה: כ
11. ⚡ Her husband trusts her **implicitly** to properly maintain her home (MD) and **only gains good** (Rashi) **from her** and is never concerned that anything is lacking there (MD). יא בָּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ, וְשָׁלַל לֹא יִחְסָר: ל

⁶¹ There is an entirely different understanding for these final verses by the Metzudos Dovid which explains this section of Ayshes Chayil allegorically as referring to the Learned Soul. I have only provided the plain meaning here.

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12. **ג** She does him good and never evil all the days of her life⁶². יב גַּמְלֵתְהוּ טוֹב וְלֹא רָע, כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ:
13. **ד** She seeks on her own (MD) the wool and linen (Torah, Mishna, Midrash -Rashi) **she needs** for her students (Rashi) **and** willingly (MD) works hard with her hands. יג דְּרִשָּׁה צֹמֶר וּפְשֵׁתִים, וְתַעֲשֵׂ בַחֲפָץ כַּפֵּיהָ: **◇** She shows initiative and does more than what she is required to do (MD).
14. **ה** She is like a merchant ship bringing blessing and food to her students (Rashi) **and travels afar for their food.** יד הִי תְהֵאֲנִיּוֹת סוֹחֵר, מִמְּרָחֵק תָּבִיא לַחֲמָה: **◇** She seeks sustenance, even though it is the husband who has the obligation to support the wife (MD).
15. **ו** She gets up in the middle of the night before dawn (Rashi) to prepare food for her family and maidservants. טו וַתִּקָּם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וַתֵּתֵן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ, וְחֶק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ: **◇** This is the rabbi who teaches his students the right laws for them (Rashi).

⁶² Shai Kowal said he heard an interesting explanation: “One would think that it should have been written **כל ימי חייו** –all the days of *his* life. Why, then, is it ‘all *her* life’? Even if he dies first, she will continue to only speak good of him.”

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16. **יז** She is a savvy businesswoman and knows a good deal when she sees it and will not remain silent until she buys the field (MD). **She plants her own vineyard.** **יז** She evicts Esau from this world and establishes Israel for eternal life (Rashi).
זְמָמָה שָׂדֵה וַתִּקְחֶהּ, מִפְּרֵי כַפֵּיהָ נֹטַע נֹטְעָה כָּרָם:
17. **יח** She tightens her belt firmly and with confidence, and strengthens her arm with work (MD). **יח** She gathers herself together and does her own work (MD).
חָגְרָה בְּעוֹז מְתַנֶּיָּה, וַתִּאֲמָץ זְרַעוֹתֶיהָ:
18. **יט** Knowing that her handiwork is commercially-viable, she is industrious and works late at night, if need be. **יט** **טַעֲמָה כִּי טוֹב סָחָרָה, לֹא יִכְבֶּה בַּלַּיִל בַּלַּיִל נָרָה:**
19. **כ** She is capable, and knows how to work the spindle, and how to operate the distaff. **כ** Even though she is a good businesswoman, she does not abandon the work of the women, the spindle and distaff (MD).
יָדֶיהָ שְׁלָחַה בְּפִישׁוֹר, וְכַפֵּיהָ תִמְכּוּ פֶלֶד:
20. **כא** She stretches her hand out to the poor and supports him (Rashi) and reaches forth to the needy to help when he is too ashamed to take for himself (MD). **כא** **כַּפָּה פָּרְשָׁה לְעָנִי, וַיִּדְּיָה שְׁלָחַה לְאַבְיוֹן:**

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21. **ל** No weather conditions, even snow, prevents her from providing for her family. She makes sure that they are always finely and properly dressed in colored clothing (Rashi); in scarlet which is warm (MD); in silk (Malbim).
כא לֹא תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשָּׁלֶג,
כִּי כָל בֵּיתָהּ לְבֹשׂ שָׁנִים:
22. **מ** She makes the bedding for herself, and her clothing is of the finest linen and purple material which she made herself (MD).
כב מִרְבָּדִים עָשְׂתָהּ לָהּ, שֵׁשׁ
וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁה:
23. **נ** Her husband is known to all because of his fine attire (Rashi) which she made for him (MD) and he sits amongst the elders.
כג נֹדַע בְּשַׁעְרִים בַּעֲלָהּ,
בְּשִׁבְתוֹ עִם זְקֵנֵי אֶרֶץ:
24. **ס** She manufactures and sells⁶³ exquisite garments to the sages (Rashi), and belts to the merchant. ♦ Besides the clothing she has to make for her own needs, she also makes extra for sale (MD).
כד סָדִין עָשְׂתָהּ וְתַמְכָּר,
וְחִגּוֹר נָתַנָּה לְכַנְעָנִי:
25. **ע** She is clothed in strength and dignity. She is always in good humor. ♦ She will die having made a good reputation for herself, having lived a life with a good name (Rashi). ♦ Her clothing is lasting and beautiful (MD). ♦ She has no fear of God's stern judgment knowing she will be saved from it, and so she is happy all the time (Rashi). ♦ She is content her
כה עֵז וְהָדָר לְבוּשָׁהּ, וְתִשְׁחַק
לְיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן:

⁶³ Maybe, gives.

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entire life knowing that when she passes away she will be honored (MD).

26. פ She speaks wisely and has a kind word at all times. ♦ Everything she says is wise and she teaches lovingkindness, that is, she teaches and is quick in doing kindness for people (MD). כו פִּיהָ פְּתִיחַהּ בְּחִכְמָה, וְתוֹרַת חֶסֶד עַל לְשׁוֹנָה:
27. צ She is always concerned about the welfare of her home and family taking note of their needs and that they behave truthfully and modestly (Rashi), seeing what is good and what is bad (MT), and only eats what she has to quickly and then gets right back to her work (MD). ♦ This refers to the Torah which teaches the Good Way and the abandonment of sin (Rashi). ♦ She corrects them humbly and with the fear of God (MD). כז צוֹפִיָּה הֶלְיכוֹת בֵּיתָהּ, וְלֶחֶם עֲצָלוֹת לֹא תֹאכֵל:
28. ק Her children and students (Rashi) rise and bless her soul (Malbim), and her husband (God – Rashi) abounds in her praise. ♦ She is blessed in the World to Come by means of having had good children, and she is praised in this world by her husband (Malbim). כח קָמוּ בָנֶיהָ וַיְבָרְכוּהָ, בְּעֵלְהָ וַיְהַלְלֶהָ:
29. ר Many women have done well and acquired valor (MT), but you have exceeded them all. כט רַבּוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חֵיל, וְאַתְּ עָלִית עַל כֻּלָּן:

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30. **ל** **שְׁקֵר הַחַן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי,**
אִשָּׁה יִרְאַת יְהוָה הִיא
תִּתְהַלֵּל:
- Grace is deceitful and beauty superficial; the woman who fears God is the one who will be praised. ♦ Idols may be great and beautiful, but they are worthless (Rashi). ♦ A woman's grace and beauty have no real value, it is only her fear of God which is worth praising (MD).
31. **ל** **תָּנוּ לָהּ מִפְּרֵי יָדֶיהָ,**
וַיְהִלְלוּהָ בַשְּׁעָרִים
מֵעֲשִׂיהָ:
- Give her her just due, the praises and glory she is due (MD), the fruit of her hands; and her deeds will praise her to all at the gates where the important people sit (MD). ♦ She will receive glory and eminence, vigor, honor and prestige (Rashi).

