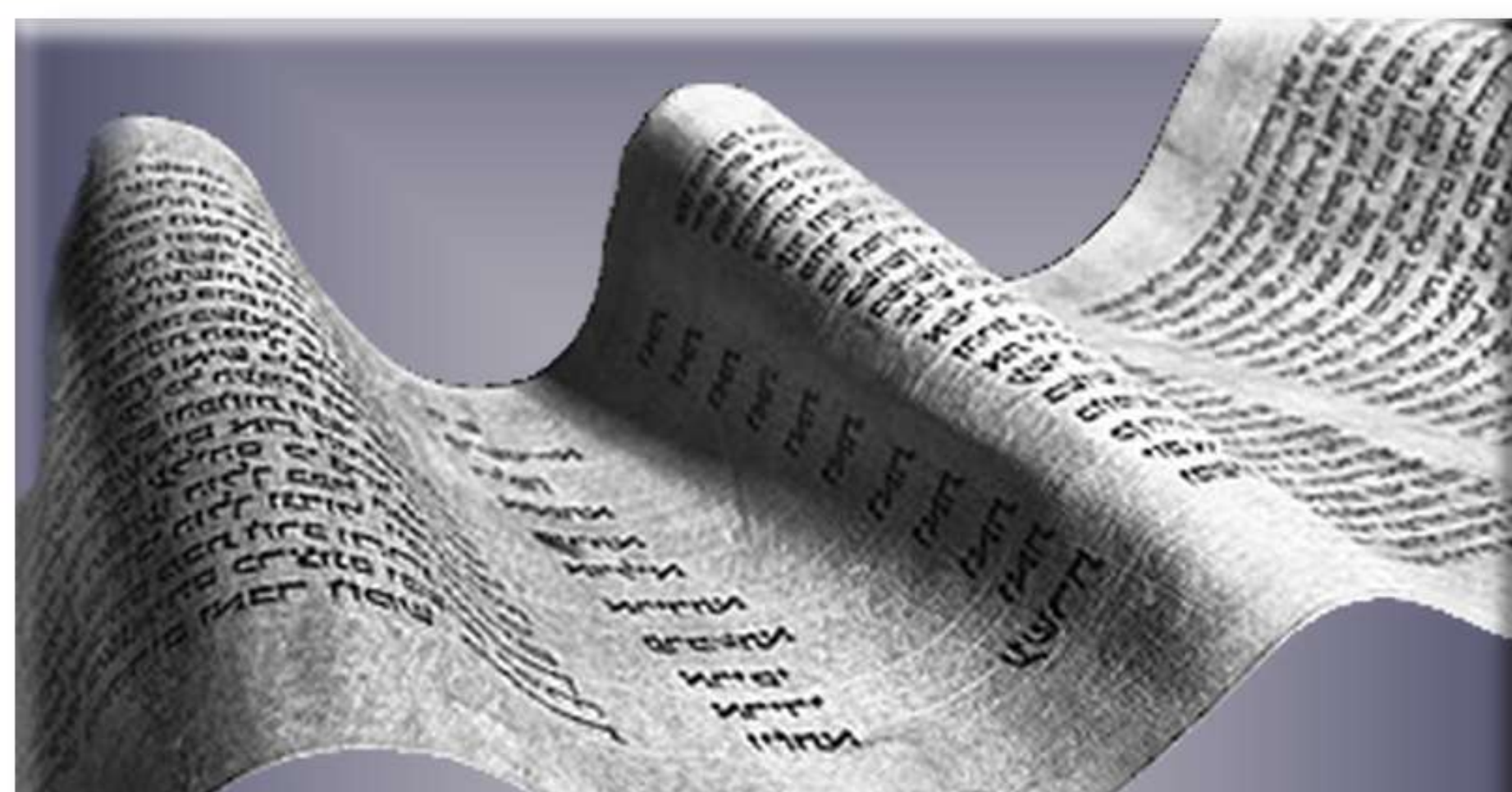


אמת

The Book of Truth



The Book of Proverbs

Wisdom: The Foundation of Life

Elusive Wisdom



- “Reflection on wisdom’s inaccessibility prompted Ben Sira to utter an enigmatic truism that, *like her name חֵכְמָה* is not accessible to many. For ancient sages like Ben Sira, Job, and Qoheleth, wisdom remained an elusive creature. Modern lovers of wisdom also found her to be a slippery word. One by one, they pronounce her name, only to have her essence slip away like oil through one’s fingers. [J.L. Crenshaw, *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*]

The Longest Title



- The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To perceive the words of understanding, To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion

Proverbs 1:1-4

The Proverbs & Wisdom



- If the prophetic literature is commentary on the Torah, highlighting Israel's faithless disobedience and Jehovah's Riv
 - Prophetic literature seeks to teach the **faithful community** what obedience (שְׂמֵעַ) and loyalty (chesed, חֶסֶד) look like in corporate circumstances
- Then the wisdom literature is a commentary on the life of faithfulness in a confused and broken world
 - Wisdom literature seeks to teach the **faithful individual** to *understand* and *discern* what obedience and loyalty look like in personal circumstances

What Is Wisdom?



- In the ANE wisdom was the art of being effective or successful at life.
 - Wisdom is applied to artisans who know their craft
 - **Exodus 28:3** "So you shall speak to all *who are* gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest
 - Wisdom is an important aspect of God's creative work
 - **Psalms 104:24** O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.

What Is Wisdom?



- Wisdom is also the primary qualification of the king's counselors
 - **1 Chronicles 27:32-34** Also Jehonathan, David's uncle, *was* a counselor, a wise man, and a scribe; and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni *was* with the king's sons. 33 Ahithophel *was* the king's counselor, and Hushai the Archite *was* the king's companion. 34 After Ahithophel *was* Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, then Abiathar. And the general of the king's army *was* Joab.
 - Jehonathan's qualifications as a counselor
 - Wise man and scribe

Wisdom



- Proverbs 4:7
 - Wisdom *is* the principal thing;
get wisdom.
And in all your getting,
get understanding
- חִכְמָה is the word for wisdom
 - In Akkadian, ḥ-kamu
 - In Ugaritic ḥkam

The other important words



- Bin, Binah, Tebunnah (תְּבוּנָה בֵּין בִּינָה)
 - Often translated understanding, or discernment

- **Proverbs 2:2-3**

So that you incline your ear to wisdom,
And apply your heart to understanding;
Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
And lift up your voice for understanding,

לְהַקְשִׁיב לַחֲכָמָה אֲזַנֶּךָ תִּטֶּה לִבְךָ לְתְבוּנָה

כִּי אִם לְבִינָה תִקְרָא לְתְבוּנָה תִתֵּן קוֹלְךָ

success

alent

Naïve and Stupid



- **Proverbs 8:5**

- O you simple ones, understand prudence,
And you fools, be of an understanding heart

– הַבְּיָנוּ פְתָאִים עֲרֻמָּה
וְכִסְיִלִּים הַבְּיָנוּ לֵב

- You naïve ones, understand discretion
You stupid, understand reason

What is a Proverb?



- The book begins with the words:
 - מְשָׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה
 - mišlê šəlōmō^h
- At the root level mašal / mashal has the idea of comparison
 - **Ezekiel 17:2** "Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel,
 - **Isaiah 46:5** " To whom will you liken Me, and make *Me* equal And compare Me, that we should be alike?

Parables and Proverbs



- The New Testament parallels to the proverbs are the parables of the gospels
 - They both seek to change our perception of life by laying something familiar alongside of what we need to see
 - “Proverbs, then, are not words of advice, but rather theses or statements about reality to bring clarity out of confusion. They invite the reader to become active, to make a judgment, to discern.”

Richard J. Clifford, *The Book of Proverbs and Our Search for Wisdom*

More Than Advice



- One passage that illustrates the awkward character of the proverbs is Proverbs 26:4-5

– Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest you also be like him.

Answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

– אַל־תַּעַן כְּסִיל כְּאַוְלָתוֹ פְּנֵי־תְשׁוּהָ־לוֹ גַם־אַתָּה ⁴

– עֲנֵה כְּסִיל כְּאַוְלָתוֹ פְּנֵי־יְהִי חֲכָם בְּעֵינָיו ⁵

^ˤal-tá^ˤan kəsîl kə'iwwaltô pen-tišwe^h-llô gam-'áttā^h
^ˤānē^h kəsîl kə'iwwaltô pen-yihye^h ḥākām bə^ˤênāyw

More Than Advice



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Lest you also be like him.
Answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own eyes.
- Should we answer or not answer?
 - This is not mizvah that one can apply without insight
 - This is not advice that we can take or leave
 - The purpose of the proverb is train our moral senses to make the right choices in a complicated world.

Ancient Proverbs and Modern Perception



- It is safe to say that the Book of Proverbs is not widely regarded today as a vital part of the Bible and a great resource in living one's life, at least by contemporary North Americans and Europeans. It is not ranked among the top ten, not even among the top forty, of biblical books. ¹ Its lack of popularity in North America is particularly striking, given that many of its concerns are those of perennial best sellers by F. Scott Peck, Parker J. Palmer, and others books on finding meaning in life. Themes of contemporary spirituality are everywhere in Proverbs: for example, discernment, making difficult choices, and finding God in all things. Many themes of moral philosophy or theology also appear: Are there any moral absolutes? What is the right thing to do? Will I be punished for bad actions and rewarded for good actions? What do I tell my children about the blessed life? (Clifford)

Solomon and the Proverbs



1 Kings 4:29-34 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men -- than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon

Solomon's Authorship



- Internal evidence (other than title)
 - **Proverbs 10:1** The Proverbs of Solomon: A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son *is* the grief of his mother
 - **Proverbs 25:1** These also *are* proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied
- External evidence
 - “King Hezekiah and his company wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, Songs, and Ecclesiastes.”
Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 15a

Date of Proverbs



- The final collection of the Proverbs could not have been completed before the time of Hezekiah, between 716-686.
- Albright believed they must be dated earlier than the Aramaic *The Sayings of Aḥikar* which is a 7th century work. Albright argued that the only portion which is not earlier than the 7th century, was the final accrostic poem.
- Contrast this with C.H. Toy who compares it to the pseudepigraphic Greek *Wisdom of Solomon*, and places it at 350.

Proverbs and Aqhat



- Albright sees similarities between the language of the Proverbs and Canaanite/ Ugaritic wisdom.
 - **Proverbs 10:26** As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So *is* the lazy *man* to those who send him
 - As with the heart of a cow toward her calf,
As with the heart of an ewe toward her lamb,
So is the heart of Anath toward Baal

Structure



- The Broad Thematic Plan
 - **At the beginning**
 - **Proverbs 3:13-18** Happy *is* the man *who* finds wisdom, And the man *who* gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds *are* better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. 15 She *is* more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. 16 Length of days *is* in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor. 17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, And all her paths *are* peace. 18 She *is* a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy *are all* who retain her.

Structure



- The Broad Thematic Plan
 - At the end
 - **Proverbs 31:10-26** Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth *is* far above rubies. 11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life...
 - 25 Strength and honor *are* her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue *is* the law of kindness.

Structure



- The book of proverbs begins with the admonition
 - To seek wisdom and avoid the evil woman
 - Written to one who is beginning his own household
- It ends with “the king well-married”
 - It moves from the ideal and metaphorical
 - To the practical and allegorical
- Wisdom is about “success”
 - Success is not wealth or fame
 - Success is wisely threading this confusing life
 - This success often brings wealth of fame
- Wisdom knows which is the real and which is accidental

Structure



- The Proverbs are easily divided by the internal headings
 - Title, Preamble and Prologue (1:1–9:18)
 - Fifteen lessons on wisdom
 - Proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16)
 - 375 short maxims, some linked by a common theme.
 - Mostly distych and antithetic
 - Several synthetic cola using min comparative

Structure



- Thirty Sayings of the Wise (22:17–24:22)
 - A wide variety of mashal some as many as 6 lines in length
- Further Sayings of the Wise (24:23-35)
 - 4 meshalim with 2,3,4, &6 lines and an ode to a sluggard
- Hezekiah’s Collection of Solomon (25:1–29:27)
 - In chapters 25-27 the style is parabolic or emblematic. “as – so” Repetition of several parables from the first Solomonic collection

Structure



- The Sayings of Agur son of Jakeh (30:1-33)
 - The middah type (a measure or allotted number) is prevalent in this short section.
- The Sayings of Lemuel's Mother (31:1-9)
- An excellent wife (31:10-31)

Purpose



- **Proverbs 1:5-7**

A wise *man* will hear and increase learning,
And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,
To understand a proverb and an enigma,
The words of the wise and their riddles.
The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge,
wisdom and instruction fools despise.

- The structure of the preamble is interesting
 - Synonymous parallelism
 - Synonymous (with elipsis)
 - Antithetical (with chiasm)

A Father's Admonition



- **Proverbs 1:10-19**

- My son,
if sinners entice you,
Do not consent.
If they say, Come with us,
Let us lie in wait to *shed* blood;
Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause;
Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
And whole, like those who go down to the Pit;
We shall find all *kinds* of precious possessions,
We shall fill our houses with spoil;
Cast in your lot among us,
Let us all have one purse"

My son,
do not walk in the way with them,
Keep your foot from their path;
For their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed blood.
Surely, in vain the net is spread In the sight of any bird;
But they lie in wait for their *own* blood,
They lurk secretly for their *own* lives.
So *are* the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain;
It takes away the life of its owners.

Wisdom Personified



- **Proverbs 1:20-22, 27-29**

- Wisdom calls aloud outside;

She raises her voice in the open squares.

She cries out in the chief concourses,

At the openings of the gates in the city She speaks her words:

"How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?

For scorers delight in their scorning,

And fools hate knowledge.

When your terror comes like a storm,

And your destruction comes like a whirlwind,

When distress and anguish come upon you.

"Then they will call on me,

but I will not answer;

They will seek me diligently,

but they will not find me.

Because they hated knowledge

And did not choose the fear of the LORD,

Proverbs 1:32 & 33



- Wisdom gives true security
 - For the turning away of the simple will slay them,
And the complacency of fools will destroy them;
But whoever listens to me will dwell safely,
And will be secure, without fear of evil.“

– כִּי מְשׁוּבַת פְּתִים תִּהְרָגִים
וְשִׁלוֹת כְּסִילִים תֵּאבְדִים
וְשִׁמְעֵ לִי יִשְׁכֵן-בְּטִחַ
וְשִׁאֲנֹן מִפֶּחַד רָעָה

Proverbs 1:32 & 33



- kî məšûbat̪ pəṭāyīm taḥarḡēm
wəšalwat̪ kəsîlîm təʔabbəḏēm
wəšōmē^{ac} lî yiškon-béṭaḥ
wəšaʔānan mippāḥad̪ rā^cā^h

- Notice the contrasting words:

– məšûbat̪ מְשׁוּבַת turning away [leaving]

yiškon יִשְׁכֹּן dwelling [staying put]

– šalwat̪ שְׁלוֹת ease, comfort, confident prosperity

šaʔānan שְׁאֲנֹן be at ease, peace, rest securely

Proverbs of Solomon



- **10:2** Treasures of wickedness profit nothing,
But righteousness delivers from death.
- **11:25** The generous soul will be made rich,
And he who waters will also be watered himself.
- **12:9 “min comparison”**
Better *is the one* who is slighted but has a servant,
Than he who honors himself but lacks bread.
- **15:11 “aph-ki”**
Hell and Destruction *are* before the LORD;
So how much more the hearts of the sons of men.

Sayings of the Wise



- **23:1-3**

- When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
Consider carefully what *is* before you;
And put a knife to your throat
If you *are* a man given to appetite.
Do not desire his delicacies,
For they *are* deceptive food.

- **23:4-5**

Do not overwork to be rich;
Because of your own understanding, cease!
Will you set your eyes on that which is not?
For *riches* certainly make themselves wings;
They fly away like an eagle *toward* heaven.

Sayings of the Wise 2nd series



- **Proverbs 24:30-34**

- I went by the field of the lazy *man*,
And by the vineyard of the man devoid of
understanding;
And there it was, all overgrown with thorns;
Its surface was covered with nettles;
Its stone wall was broken down.
When I saw *it*, I considered *it* well;
I looked on *it and* received instruction:
A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest;
So shall your poverty come *like* a prowler,
And your need like an armed man.

Hezekiah's Collection



- **Proverbs 25:11-12**

- A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold In settings of silver.
Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold
Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.

- **Proverbs 26:1-3**

- As snow in summer and rain in harvest,
So honor is not fitting for a fool.
Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow,
So a curse without cause shall not alight.
A whip for the horse, A bridle for the donkey,
And a rod for the fool's back.

- **Proverbs 27:14-17**

He who blesses his friend with a loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
It will be counted a curse to him.
A continual dripping on a very rainy day
And a contentious woman are alike;
Whoever restrains her restrains the wind,
And grasps oil with his right hand.
As iron sharpens iron,
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend

Agur ben Jakeh



- **Proverbs 30:7-9**

- Two *things* I request of You

- (Deprive me not before I die):

- Remove falsehood and lies far from me;

- Give me neither poverty nor riches –

- Feed me with the food allotted to me;

- Lest I be full and deny *You*,

- And say, "Who *is* the LORD?"

- Or lest I be poor and steal,

- And profane the name of my God.

Agur ben Jakeh



- **Proverbs 30:15-17**

- The leech has two daughters –
Give *and* Give!

There are three *things that* are never satisfied,
Four never say, "Enough!":

The grave, The barren womb,
The earth *that* is not satisfied with water –
And the fire never says, "Enough!"

- **Proverbs 30:18-19**

- There are three *things which* are too wonderful for me,
Yes, four *which* I do not understand:

The way of an eagle in the air,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea,
And the way of a man with a virgin

The Sayings of Lemuel's Mother



- **Proverbs 31:1-9**

The words of King Lemuel,
the utterance which his mother taught him:

What, my son?

And what, son of my womb?

And what, son of my vows?

Do not give your strength to women,
Nor your ways to that which destroys kings.

It is not for kings, O Lemuel,

It is not for kings to drink wine,

Nor for princes intoxicating drink;

Lest they drink and forget the law,
And pervert the justice of all the afflicted.

Give strong drink to him who is perishing,

And wine to those who are bitter of heart.

Let him drink and forget his poverty,

And remember his misery no more.

Open your mouth for the speechless,

In the cause of all *who are* appointed to die.

Open your mouth, judge righteously,

And plead the cause of the poor and needy.

The Excellent Woman



- An acrostic poem
- The Quest to marry wisdom has led to the king wisely married.
- This is more than a check list for wives
- This is the result of wisdom applied
- This wife personifies the practical results of wisdom just as the woman in the beginning personifies wisdom itself

The Place of Proverbs



- The role of proverbs in the covenantal scriptures and biblical theology
 - The Law is God's way, man's tutor to Xp leading to a full & prosperous happy life.
 - Worship is the recognition of God's glorious presence, the response to which is awe, the fear of God which is the Theme of Proverbs
 - Theologically highlights and offsets the noetic effect of sin
 - [values, perspectives, world-view, direction] cf. Mark 4
 - New Covnt. laws in our heart
 - Wisdom found in Xp and in us cf. Col. 2:2 & 3:1-3,10