

OT Wisdom Literature (OT6)

The Book of Proverbs

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Ross Arnold, Spring 2014
Lakeside institute of Theology



OT Wisdom Literature (OT6)

Apr 3 – Introduction to Wisdom Literature

Apr 10 – The Book of Job

Apr 17 – **No Class** (Holy Week)

Apr 24 – The Book of Psalms, Part 1

May 1 – **No Class**

May 8 – **No Class**

May 15 – The Book of Psalms, Part 2

May 22 – The Book of Proverbs

May 29 – The Book of Ecclesiastes

June 5 – The Song of Songs; Final Exam

THE STRUCTURE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



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GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
EZEKIEL
DANIEL

JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
1 SAMUEL
2 SAMUEL
1 KINGS
2 KINGS
1 CHRONICLES
2 CHRONICLES
EZRA
NEHEMIAH
ESTHER

Number of books
in the
Old Testament:

Number of books
in the
New Testament:

Number of books
in the Bible:

HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

The Book of Proverbs

Title: The Hebrew name for the book is *Mishle Shlomoh*, or “Proverbs of Solomon,” though Solomon is not the only author of the content of this book of wisdom literature.

Author: Proverbs is a “collection of collections,” made up of seven distinct units, plus an epilogue. Tradition holds that Solomon was author of parts of the book, but Proverbs itself attributes some of the writings to other wise men (Agur, King Lemuel, etc.)

Date of Writing: If Solomon is seen as a primary author of Proverbs, then these sections would date to the 10th century BC, during the time of the United Kingdom. But some sections (such as references to the role of Hezekiah’s men in ch. 25) likely were not added until sometime between 715 and 686 BC.

The Book of Proverbs

Recipients: The ancient Jewish people, and everyone since.

Themes: Proverbs is an excellent example of ancient wisdom literature, dealing with questions of values, moral behavior, the meaning of human life and right conduct. A major theme is “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”

Content: Superscriptions divide Proverbs into seven sets of sayings, plus a final Epilogue about the “perfect woman”:

Proverbs 1-9: “Proverbs of Solomon, Son of David, King in Israel”

Proverbs 10-22:16: “Proverbs of Solomon “

Proverbs 22:17-24:22: “The Sayings of the Wise”

Proverbs 24:23-34: “These Also are Sayings of the Wise”

Proverbs 25-29: “These are Other Proverbs of Solomon
that the Officials of King Hezekiah of Judah Copied”

Proverbs 30: “The Words of Agur”

Proverbs 31:1-9: “The Words of King Lemuel of Massa”

Outline of Proverbs

1:1-6	1:7	10:1	21:1	30:1	31:1
Prologue	Appeal to Wisdom	One-verse maxims		Larger Couplets	Good Woman
Purpose of the Proverbs	Wisdom Personified	Proverbs of Solomon	Proverbs of Hezekiah	Words of Agur	Words of King Lemuel

Psalms

Proverbs

Book of Worship

Book of Wisdom

Speaks to our Spirit

**Speaks to our
Intellect**

Life in prayer

Life out in the street

**Teaches us how to
be holy before God**

**Teaches us how to
practice holiness
before men**

**Love the Lord with
all your heart, soul,
and mind**

**Love your neighbor
as yourself**

Proverbs 1:1-7

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

² for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; ³ for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; ⁴ for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young — ⁵ let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance — ⁶ for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

The Book of Proverbs

Some literary forms in Proverbs:

- ▶ **Instructions** – extended admonitions, usually addressed to “my son” or “my sons.”
- ▶ **Wisdom Speeches** – poems of several verses which personify wisdom and folly.
- ▶ **Proverbs** – short aphorisms making a moral or ethical point.
 - **Sayings** – give descriptions of how wisdom or folly work, and are indicative rather than imperative.

The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools. (Pr. 3:35)

- **Admonitions** – giving an imperative command, with either positive nor negative consequences.

But let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. (Pr. 3:1b-2)

- **Numerical sayings** – probably derived from game or riddles, these usually follow an X, X+1 pattern.

There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four things I do not understand... (Pr. 30:18)

- **Rhetorical Questions** – forcing the student towards the right answer.

Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? (Pr. 6:27)

The Book of Proverbs

Some literary forms in Proverbs:

- ▶ **Proverbs** – short aphorisms making a moral or ethical point.

- Calls to attention – demanding focus.

My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding. (Pr. 5:1)

- Reflection on experiences – shared from a teacher to a student.

For I too was a son to my father, still tender, and cherished by my mother. ⁴Then he taught me, and he said to me, “Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live. ⁵Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them. (Pr. 4:3-5)

- Account of personal observation – another form of argument from experience.

At the window of my house I looked down through the lattice. ⁷I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who had no sense. ...

¹⁰ Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. ... (Pr. 7:6-7,10)

- Beatitudes – promises or exclamations of happiness.

*Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding...
(Pr. 3:13)*

- Allegory/extended metaphor – usually with imagery, especially of water.

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. ... (Pr. 5:15ff)

The Book of Proverbs

- I. Purpose and theme. (1:1-7)
- II. The superior way of wisdom (1:8-9:18)
 - A. Appeals & warning confronting youth (1:8-33)
 1. Enticements to use violence (1:8-19)
 2. Warnings against rejecting wisdom (1:20-33)
 - B. Commendation of wisdom (chs.2-4)
 1. Benefits of wisdom's instructions (ch.2)
 2. Wisdom bestows well-being (3:1-20)
 3. Wisdom's instructions and benefits (3:21-35)
 4. Challenge to hold on to wisdom (ch.4)
 - C. Warnings against folly (chs.5-7)
 1. Warning against adultery (ch.5)
 2. Warning against perverse ways (6:1-19)
 3. Cost of committing adultery (6:20-35)
 4. Warnings against the adulterous woman (ch.7)

The Book of Proverbs

- D. Appeals addressed to youth (chs.8-9)
 - 1. Wisdom's call (ch.8)
 - 2. Invitations of wisdom and folly (ch.9)
- III. Main collection of Solomon's proverbs (10:1-22:16)
- IV. Thirty sayings of the wise (22:17-24:22)
- V. Further sayings of the wise (24:23-34)
- VI. Hezekiah's collection of Solomon's proverbs
(3:13-18)
- VII. Sayings of Agur (ch.30)
- VIII. Sayings of King Lemuel (31:1-9)
- IX. Epilogue: The wife of noble character (31:10-31)

Some Themes in the Proverbs

- ▶ **The Way of Wisdom**
- ▶ **Principles of Work**
 - **Skilled work will lead to success**
 - **Diligent work will lead to success**

Go to the ant, O sluggard
Observe her ways and be wise,
Which, having no chief,
Officer, or ruler;
Prepares her food in the summer,
And gathers her provisions in the harvest.

Proverbs 6:6-8

Some Themes in the Proverbs

- ▶ The way of Wisdom
- ▶ Principles of Work
- Principles of Generosity, Business and Finance

27 He who trusts in his riches will fall,
W But the righteous will flourish like the *green* leaf.
28 (Proverbs 3:27-28).

"G
And tomorrow I will give *it*,"
When you have it with you. (Proverbs 3:27-28).

Some Themes in the Proverbs

- ▶ **The way of Wisdom**
- ▶ **Principles of Work**
- ▶ **Principles of Business and Finance**
- **Principles of Spiritual Speech**

**For lack of wood the fire goes out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.
Proverbs 26:20**



Lessons from the Proverbs

- ▶ **The universal need for wisdom**
 - ▶ **The universal arena of wisdom**
 - ▶ **What is wise is also what is good**
 - ▶ **Principles rather than promises**
 - ▶ **A real view of the real world**
 - ▶ **Watch your tongue**
 - ▶ **Pay attention**
 - ▶ **Be generous**
 - ▶ **Keep your pants zipped**
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