

AUGUST 29–M SEPTEMBER 4, 2022

Proverbs 1-4; 15-16; 22; 31; Ecclesiastes 1-3; 11-12

“THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM”

Summary: *Proverbs 1. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge—If sinners entice you, do not consent—Those who hearken to wisdom will dwell safely.*

Proverbs 2. The Lord gives wisdom, knowledge, and understanding—Walk in the way of good men.

Proverbs 3. Write mercy and truth upon the tablet of your heart—Trust in the Lord—Honor Him with your substance—Whom the Lord loves He corrects—Happy is the man who finds wisdom.

Proverbs 4. Keep the commandments and live—With all your getting, get understanding—Go not in the way of evil men.

Proverbs 15. A soft answer turns away wrath—A wise son makes a glad father—The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord—Before honor comes humility.

Proverbs 16. It is better to get wisdom than gold—Pride goes before destruction—The gray hair of the righteous person is a crown of glory.

Proverbs 22. A good name is better than riches—Train up a child in the way he should go.

Proverbs 31. Wine and strong drink are condemned—Plead the cause of the poor and needy—A virtuous woman is more precious than rubies.

Ecclesiastes 1. Everything under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit—He who increases in knowledge increases in sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 2. All the riches and wealth of the king are vanity and vexation of spirit—Wisdom is better than folly—God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to man.

Ecclesiastes 3. To every thing there is a season—Whatever God does, it will be forever—God will judge the righteous and the wicked.

Ecclesiastes 11. Do good and give to them who need—God will bring all men to judgment.

Ecclesiastes 12. At death the spirit will return to God who gave it—The words of the wise are as goads—The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is Fear of the Lord?

In this statement, “The fear of the LORD is the

beginning of knowledge.” (**Proverbs 1:7**) lies the first key of understanding. The Bible Dictionary explains, “to fear God is to feel reverence and awe for Him and to obey His commandments.”

(<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/gs/fear?lang=eng>) As we examine the scriptures of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, we find that the first section, “chapters 1-9, is the most poetic and contains an exposition of true wisdom. Chapters 10-24 contain a collection of proverbs and sentences about the right and wrong ways of living. Chapters 25-29 contain the proverbs of Solomon that the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied. Chapters 30 and 31 contain the “burden” of Agur and Lemuel, the latter including a picture of the ideal wife, arranged in (a poetic) or acrostic form.” (Bible Dictionary) A Greek translation of the Hebrew *Koheleth*, a word meaning “one who convenes an assembly,” sometimes rendered Preacher. The book of Ecclesiastes consists of reflections on some of the deepest problems of life, as they present themselves to the thoughtful observer. The epilogue (Eccl. 12: 9-14) sets forth the main conclusions at which the writer has arrived. The author describes himself as “son of David, king in Jerusalem.” (Ecclesiastes. 1:1). (Bible Dictionary)

How is respect for the written text demonstrated in Jewish life?

In Judaism, books, words and letters have a distinctive value and are afforded great respect. It is completely irreverent to place any kind of writing on the floor or the ground. The scriptures are kept in special cabinets (reminiscent of the Ark in temple times) and are often covered with silk or other precious cloths. If a book falls to the floor, it is the habit to pick it up, render a kiss, and return it to its place. Since Biblical Hebrew (the Old Testament) was written with fewer than nine thousand root words, the value of the words as they created illustrations and images was important. Ancient scripture writers used imagery that extended into related meanings. In some cases, the sayings

reflected the times they were written in as well as views of the future.

Who is the suggested author?

“In his youth King Solomon wrote the lyrical Song of Songs, in his maturity the wisdom of Proverbs, and in his old age he wrote Ecclesiastes, in which he looks back and realizes what emptiness there is in many people’s lives. The sages saw this as a symbol of the changes which take place in a man’s way of thinking as he ages: “When a man is young, he quotes poetry; when he matures, he quotes proverbs; when he grows old, he speaks of the things he has found to be worthless.” “There is no evidence about special literature in Hebrew for children in very ancient times. Presumably children then, like now, were told stories and taught proverbs. Clearly, many of the stories in the Bible were as interesting reading for children as for adults and each age group would understand the significance of the stories according to its own intellectual capacity.”

What might be considered the “purpose” of the Proverbs?

The objective of Proverbs, indicated in the work itself, is to develop the habits of piety and ethical practice by training the mind to understand them. Two methods are used: one is *musar*, the training and instruction in do’s and don’ts by parent and teacher; the other is *ezah*, counsel by a wise man, or the teacher in that role, describing the ways of life and of the world, in proverbs, questions, poetry and metaphors. Being wise is often a divine grace but can be attained by training. Virtues are praised and vices are deplored and ridiculed. Here are some quotations: “My son, if sinners entice thee consent thou not...restrain thy foot from their path for their feet run to evil...Forget not my teaching, but let thy heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace will they add to

thee. Let not kindness and truth forsake thee...write them upon thy heart and find grace and good favor in the sight of God and man” The final chapter contains the well-known acrostic poem which begins, “A woman of valor who can find...” and gives us fascinating insights into the activities and responsibilities of the capable matron.” “Neither the date nor the authorship is certain. Some scholars place it in the eighth and some as late as the first century B.C.E. King Solomon is named as the supreme sage, and traditionally the work is considered to be his, but scholars are divided in their opinion. With the books of Job and Ecclesiastes, Proverbs is one of the three “wisdom books” of the sacred writings.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How does wisdom fit in?

The subject of wisdom is often connected with respect for the aged. It is something that is inherited, learned, and taught: “Respect for the aged is always a mitzvah (commandment or a blessing- or both!): “You shall rise before gray hairs, and show respect to the old man” (Leviticus 19:32). Indeed, the prophet Isaiah speaks of disrespect for the aged as a sign of a corrupt generation (Isaiah 3:5).” “The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for “able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain” (Exodus 18:21) and “wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge.” “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” is the recurring motto of the Book of Proverbs, and a good and satisfying life is the reward promised if one cultivates wisdom.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) In a rabbinic discussion, scholars are expected to be amiable to each other and to respect one another in their halakhic discussions for “if a sage becomes angry,

his wisdom departs from him.” “The term “wisdom” (Hebrew *hokhmah*) has a wide range of meanings in different contexts, ranging from intelligence to an ethical and religious quality of life. As an historical phenomenon, biblical wisdom designates a distinctive cultural tradition and scholarly activity in the history of ancient Israel, continuing in Judaism and early Christianity. It was a way of thinking and an attitude to life that emphasized experience, reasoning, morality, and the concerns of man as man rather than as Israelite. Wisdom, however, was not considered to be just intellectual ability or capacity; true wisdom had to be based on the fear of God and on a moral way of life.” “Although the capacity to obtain wisdom might be considered a natural endowment, wisdom itself had to be learned, and could be taught. The two principal methods of teaching were *musar* (instruction or training) and *ezah* (counsel, or persuasion) according to whether the teacher’s authority was imposed or freely sought. In general, the teacher’s *musar* was an appeal to reason and conscience and to the pupil’s own desire for knowledge and understanding. The wisdom was transmitted by a saying or proverb; a rhetorical question; a parable or allegory; and imaginative tales and anecdotes.” “Despite this great emphasis on teaching and learning, however, wisdom ultimately remained a divine gift rewarding those who desired it enough to submit to its discipline.” “In the Bible there are no articles of faith or dogmas in which the Jew is commanded to believe. Belief in God’s existence and infinite ability is taken for granted and is the basis of the Bible. This is the importance of the story of the Exodus from Egypt; the Children of Israel witnessed God’s wonders and passed on the record of their own personal experience to their descendants. The biblical word *emunah* (and its other forms) which is often translated as “belief ” really means “trust” or “confidence,”

which is something quite different.”
([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What is “The Word” and how is it used to teach?

The “Word” is one of the names of the Lord and apparently people resorted to wearing a “word” or “words” to take the name of the Lord upon themselves. “It became the custom for people to wear amulets, which were pieces of paper or metal disks with inscriptions on them, which would protect the bearer from sickness, the “evil eye” and other troubles. The inscriptions commonly consisted of verses from the Bible or names of various angels. The use of writings as a way to keep off evil spirits came from the belief in the holiness and power of certain words.”

What is a “book” and what is its purpose?

“The most important book in Judaism is, of course, the Bible. Therefore, it is crucial to have an exact, established text. The Hebrew language is made up of consonants and vowels—the books of the Bible were originally written without the vowels and so some words can be read in different fashions. Also, the Torah (as well as parts of the rest of the Bible) is read in the synagogue with a special melody which is marked on the words by what is known as cantillation marks. These too were not in the original text.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) The cantillations add meanings by inference as well as combination of meanings.

How is “PRIDE” described in Proverbs?

On the subject of pride, Latter-day Saints have been given special counsel. In 1989, President Ezra Taft Benson said, “Pride is ugly.” There is no justifiable use of the words pride or proud. Apparently, every mention of pride in the scriptures is negative. As a replacement for the word pride or proud, let us consider the highest

compliment and honor as stated in the scriptures. “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” ([Matthew 17:5](#)) “When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” ([Joseph Smith History 1:17](#))

How do I allow pride to be my Tower of Babel?

In Hebrew, the root meaning for pride is actually “excellence.” “According to some modern commentators, the building of the tower (of Babel) was an example of man’s extreme pride in his own ability. The building became such an obsession that, according to the Midrash, when a builder fell off the tower to his death, the other builders paid no attention, but when a brick fell, they would cry: “When shall another come in its place?” According to this interpretation, every generation has its own Tower of Babel, when it begins to idolize its technology. The moral of the story is thus as applicable today as it was thousands of years ago.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How do I become a friend more than just being friendly?

One of my Jewish-Orthodox acquaintances taught me a great lesson when he said, “It is easy being friendly and rare being a friend.” “Friendship is a relationship between people arising from mutual respect and affection. The ideal of friendship in the western world is derived from classical Greece, which exalted friendship as one of the great human achievements and prime goals of life. The significance of friendship is recognized in the Bible, but is never raised to such an

important place. A friend is defined as “one who is like your very self.”

(**Deuteronomy 13:7**) and as one “who sticks closer than a brother” (**Proverbs 18:24**). Of the few depictions of close friendship in the Bible, perhaps the most famous is that of David and Jonathan. The Bible appears to be more concerned with social and family relations than with individual ones, and thus puts more emphasis on being a good neighbor than it does on friendship. The Bible also warns against false friendship, saying that people might be attracted to a person solely because of his wealth, and not out of motives of respect.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What is a role of children?

The Lord spoke of the need to be as little children. It is interesting to consider that in some cultures, respect for the aged surpasses the care of children. This became apparent when Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel. The drought-stricken people preserved and fed the oldest first, leaving the children to perish. This is actually opposite of Biblical Jewish tradition: “Jewish custom provides for great festivity and joy following the birth of a child. A boy is named when he is eight days old at his circumcision ceremony, an event of great religious importance and happy celebrating. A girl is named in the synagogue on the first day following her birth on which the Torah is read. The service, usually on the Sabbath, is likewise followed by a festive meal popularly known as a *Kiddush*.” “Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother’s role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in mitzvot and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children, and warned

against showing favoritism.” “In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue.” “Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What is the responsibility of children?

“Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” “A convert to Judaism is considered a newborn child, and, from the halakhic point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of Abraham.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Jesus taught that we must be as little children: “And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (**Matthew 18:3**)

How significant is a physical affection and material fondness between parents and children in Israel?

“In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of

transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In *Talmudic* times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands (known as *semikhah*)." "Israel's population, unlike that of the Diaspora, has a high rate of natural increase (average 2.9 children, and among orthodox Jews it is much higher)." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** "With an average of three children per woman, Israel also has the highest fertility rate in the OECD by a considerable margin and much higher than the OECD average of 1.7. **(Society at a Glance 2014 Highlights: ISRAEL, OECD" (PDF). OECD. 2014)** "The religious person employs his heart, his soul, and all of his might in an attempt to build a relationship with his Creator. This feeling is strengthened when one speaks God's words as he sits in his home and when he is traveling, when he lies down and when he rises **(Deuteronomy 6:7)**. This personal relationship is transferred from generation to generation when one

teaches the words diligently to one's children. By determining to love God, and to seek His ways, the worshiper engages in an act called by the rabbis *kabbalat ol malkhut shamayim* ("acceptance of the duty of God's kingship"). This means that he will conduct his life as an obedient servant of God who has commanded him to pursue justice, love the stranger and his neighbor, as well as God." "A Jewish custom developed of planting a tree at the birth of a child (a cedar for a boy and a pine for a girl) and then cutting the trees down when the children married, to be used in the construction of the bridal canopy." "In the Middle Ages it was quite common for great rabbis or thinkers to leave a document—to be read after death—for their children in which they pointed out the correct way the children should live and even giving instructions with regard to specific ethical or religious behavior." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**