

# Proverbs - Introduction & Background

## Title

The Hebrew title of the book is taken from the first two words of the opening verse. These words are *Mishle Shelomah* or the "Proverbs of Solomon." The LXX entitles the book *Paroimiai Salamantos*, which also means "Proverbs of Solomon." This same meaning is also found in the Vulgate's title, which is *Liber Proverbiorum* or "the Book of Proverbs." This Latin title actually means *pro verbiorum* or "many words." It demonstrates the propensity of proverbs to concentrate many words or thoughts into just a few words. Rabbinical writings called the book *Sepher Hokmah*, which means "the Book of Wisdom." The English title "Book of Proverbs" is derived from the Latin title.

## Structure

The Book of Proverbs represents an anthology or a collection of proverbial sayings organized into eight distinct units. The first section describes the purpose of the Book of Proverbs (1:1-7). The second section consists of twelve lessons from Solomon to his son or sons (1:8—9:18). Each lesson in this section is delineated through the repetition of the term "my son" or "my sons."

The third section consists of the Proverbs of Solomon (10:1—22:16). While this section is difficult to organize topically, its two major subdivisions consist of contrasts between the wicked and the righteous (10–15) and the advocacy of Godly living (16:1—22:16). The fourth section consists of the sayings of the wise (22:17—24:34). This section can be further subdivided between the thirty sayings of the wise (22:17—24:22) and an additional six wise sayings (24:23–34). The former subdivision is reminiscent of the thirty sayings of the Egyptian wise man Amenemope (1200–600 BC).

The fifth section consists of Solomon's proverbs that were collected, copied, and edited by Hezekiah's men (25–29). This section can be further subdivided between sixteen groups of Proverbs on a variety of subjects (25–27) as well as miscellaneous assembled proverbs contrasting the righteous and the wicked (28–29). The sixth section consists of the words of Agur (30). The seventh section consists of the words of Lemuel (31:1–9). The eighth section contains the acrostic describing the excellent wife of wisdom (31:10–31).

Altogether, Solomon composed 3000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32). Some of these Proverbs are found in the book's third (10–15) and fifth (25–29) sections. A total of 375 Proverbs are found in the book's third section. 184 Proverbs are found in 10–15 and 191 proverbs are found in 16:1—22:16. An additional 137 proverbs are found in the book's fifth section (25–29). Thus, a grand total of 512 of Solomon's proverbs are found in the Book of Proverbs. Therefore, 17% of Solomon's 3000 proverbs are recorded in the Book of Proverbs.

## Authorship

Although Solomon is the book's primary writer, different individuals wrote the book's different sections. Solomon's name (1:1; 10:1; 25:1) appears at the beginning of each of the sections that he authored (1–9; 10:1–22:16; 25–29). Solomon is a logical candidate for authorship of the book since he not only wrote 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32) but also asked for (1 Kings 3:5–9) and received (1 Kings 4:29–31) divine wisdom. Because of his wisdom, Israel prospered under his reign until his latter years (1 Kings 11:4). His wisdom was superior to that possessed by all of the wise men of the East and Egypt (1 Kings 4:30). Foreigners came from many miles to learn from his wisdom (1 Kings 4:34; 10:1–13,24). In fact, Solomon's wisdom was only exceeded by the wisdom possessed by Christ (Matt 12:42). Many have also noted that the 375 proverbs found in the book's third section (10:1–22:16) also evidence Solomonic authorship since the *gematric* equivalent of the Hebrew consonants of Solomon's name totals 375 (sh = 300; l = 30; m = 40; h = 5).

Regarding the book's fifth section (25–29), while Solomon originally authored these proverbs, they were also collected and edited by Hezekiah's sages (25:1). The revival in Hezekiah's day apparently gave him an interest in capturing and synthesizing Solomon's proverbial truth. Because Isaiah and Micah prophesied during Hezekiah's reign, some believe that these prophets were also instrumental in this compiling and editing process. Regarding the book's fourth section (22:17–24:34), if the wise men (*hakhamin*) lived before Solomon's era, Solomon may have been the compiler and editor of their proverbial sayings. On the other hand, if they lived during or after Solomon's time, then they could have been the compiler and editor of Solomon's proverbial sayings. It is also possible that their sayings were produced independent of Solomon and added by an anonymous editor. Because the first part of this section (22:17–24:22) is so similar to the work of the Egyptian wise man Amenemope (1200–600 BC), many have concluded that this section of the Book of Proverbs was borrowed from this Egyptian sage.

Most scholars have noted this, and many have gone beyond this observation to draw attention to similarities they perceive to exist between this composition and an Egyptian wisdom text known as 'The Wisdom of Amenemope' (written around 1200 BC). The two works have a number of common themes and expressions. Also 'Amenemope' consists of thirty chapters, and Prov 22:20 [NIV] asks, 'Have I not written thirty sayings for you?'

The Book of Proverbs may have borrowed and adapted some of these sayings in Amenemope, or perhaps both Proverbs and Amenemope borrowed from some earlier writings. At any rate, this does not compromise the integrity of the biblical passage as the inspired word of God, for extra-canonical and even non-Israelite writings are commonly cited by biblical authors (for example, Joshua 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18; 1 Kings 11:41; Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). Much of the wisdom of the ancient Israelite teachers was

common to the ancient Near East world. The present text, then, may indeed consist of aphorisms known in Egypt as well. The Holy Spirit, however, guided in their being selected and included in the Scriptures.

This position is buttressed by the fact that elsewhere Solomon implies that he adopted the proverbial material of others (Eccl 12:9). Furthermore, wise men of his era were known to seek out and hear one another.

However, Archer presents four reasons as to why Amenemope borrowed his material from Semitic sources rather than the other way around. First, "there are proportionately far more Semitism in Amenemope's Egyptian text than in any other Egyptian work on morality."

Second, "numerous cases of Egyptian words garbled or otherwise unknown can be successfully explained as textual corruption from an earlier text which translated the Hebrew terms employed in the corresponding passages in Proverbs." Third, "there are several instances where the Egyptian translator has misunderstood the corresponding Hebrew word...while satisfactory reconstructions of the Egyptian can be made on the basis of the Hebrew original, it is never possible to reconstruct the Hebrew text on the basis of the Egyptian original." Fourth, "...only one third of the material in Prov 22–24 shows any relation to the text of *Amenemope*; the latter seems to have drawn much of his material from non-Hebrew sources."

Regarding the book's sixth and seventh sections, little is known of Agur (30) and Lemuel (31). Apparently Agur was an oracle (30:1) and Lemuel (31:1) was both a king and an oracle. These men were probably non-Israelites and possibly the latter was of the Arabian nationality. Unlike Agur whose history is unknown, "The sayings of King Lemuel are certainly of non-Israelite origin, but it is reasonable to suppose that he was a North Arabian prince, living possibly in an area not far from Uz, who still cherished a faith in the one true God."

Regarding the book's eighth section (31:10–31), although many understand it as a continuation of Lemuel's words, it is probably best to see it as emanating from the hand of a distinct, anonymous writer. Archer observes that as far as "Prov 31:10–31 is concerned, it is ambiguous whether this beautiful description of the perfect wife is attributed to King Lemuel or to some other. The fact, however, that it is composed as an acrostic or alphabetic poem of the twenty-two lines shows that it is a separate composition and its style bears little resemblance to the first nine verses of chapter 31." In sum, while Solomon is the dominant author, compiler, and editor of the Book of Proverbs, he was not the book's exclusive author. Some of the book's different sections seem to have been composed by different individuals.

### **Date**

Just as the book's different sections are attributable to different writers with the bulk of the book being written by Solomon, the different sections of the book were composed at

different times while the bulk of the book was composed during Solomon's reign (971–931 BC). Because Solomon wrote the book's second, third, and fifth sections, they were obviously written during his reign. It is likely that they were written in the middle of his reign before his character began to decline (1 Kings 11:4). While Solomon wrote The Song of Solomon during his young marital years and the Book of Ecclesiastes toward the end of his life, he probably wrote the Book of Proverbs toward the middle of his life.

Regarding the book's fifth section, Hezekiah's sages collected these proverbs of Solomon during his reign (715–686 BC) about 230 years after the Solomonic era. The rest of the material in the book that was written by other authors is difficult to date with precision since there is no way of knowing with certainty when these writers lived. As a result some have opted to date the book's final form as late as the fifth century. They contend that such a post-exilic date is justified on the basis of alleged Greek influence (8:22–31) and Aramaisms (10:1–22:16) found within the book. However, similar influences are also detectable in extra-biblical material that is dated early. Thus, a date of 700 BC at the latest for the book's final form would not be far from wrong.

### **Audience**

Solomon addressed the book to his son. The phrase "my son" appears about 23x throughout the book (1:8,10,15; 2:1; 3:1,11,21; 4:10,20; 5:20; 6:1,3,20; 7:1; 19:27; 23:15,19,26; 24:13,21; 27:11; 31:2). This phrase could refer to Solomon's filial son Rehoboam or his philosophical son who was one of his pupils in the Solomonic school of wisdom. Under this latter view, Solomon taught students his wisdom in a formal setting the same way Samuel formally taught his pupils who were members of his school of the prophets (1 Sam 19:20). Geisler observes, "Elijah was teacher to Elishah and referred to his pupil as his 'son.' Hence, the 'son' to whom Proverbs is addressed may have been a learner in the school of Solomonic wisdom." This academic arrangement may explain why elsewhere Solomon refers to himself as the preacher or *Qōhelelet* (Eccl 1:1,12; 7:27; 12:8–10).

The references to the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom (1:7; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27) also indicate that the book was written to the Jewish covenant community. However, the trans-covenantal nature of the Book of Proverbs may indicate that the divine author had all believers everywhere as His target audience. Some of the unknown writers mentioned in the book such as Agur (30) and Lemuel (31:1–9) likely initially wrote to non-Jewish audiences. However, their writings became redirected toward the covenant community as they were incorporated into the Book of Proverbs.

### **Place of Writing**

The primary place of writing seems to have been within Judah in general and from Jerusalem in particular. Both Solomon (1:1) and Hezekiah, who likely had his sages collect

Solomon proverbs during a time of spiritual revival (25:1), ruled the nation from Jerusalem. This city "...was not only the political but also the spiritual and educational capital of Israel."

### **Genre**

The word Proverb comes from the verb *mashal* ("to rule") conveying a governing principle of life. "Proverb" means a comparison, similarity, or parallel. Thus, a proverb uses a comparison or an analogy in order to create a pithy, terse, distilled maxim or observation about life. This distillation causes the reader to reflect on what has been said. Such profundity is produced by virtue of the fact that proverbs are compact, memorable, and transferable. Proverbs not only explain what life is like but also make ethical exhortations regarding how life should be lived. Because proverbs capture the repetition and regularity of life through the power of observation, the habitual imperfect form of the Hebrew verb is most commonly used in proverbs.

Because the most common form of the book is poetic, parallelism dominates the Book of Proverbs. Parallelism occurs when the second line completes or contrasts the thought begun in the first line. The Book of Proverbs displays a wide variety of parallelism such as synonymous parallelism where the second line repeats or is similar to the thoughts begun in the first line (16:18), antithetical parallelism where the second line contrasts with the first line (15:1), formal or completive parallelism where the second line completes the first line either in result (3:6) or description (15:3) or preference (15:17), synthetic parallelism where the second line amplifies or continues the thought of the first line (16:4), and emblematic parallelism where the second line (or vice versa) explains the first line through the mechanism of a figure of speech known as a simile or metaphor (11:22). Other proverbs are categorized as "better than" proverbs since they are based upon comparisons (16:8). Some proverbs have three (1:22), four (23:15-16), six (1:24-26), and eight lines (2:12-15). In addition to parallelism, other literary devices are employed in the book. They include clusters where a group of proverbs present a common subject or theme (25:2-7), a personification that ascribes human attributes to something inanimate (8), and an acrostic where letters are placed at the beginning of consecutive lines of a stanza or verses to form the alphabet, a word, or a phrase (31:10-31). Other sub-genres found within the book include parables, terse questions, short stories, and general instruction (1-9).

The overarching concept of wisdom literature must also be taken into consideration when discussing the genre of the Book of Proverbs. Three groups within Judaism communicated divine truth to the people (Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26). The priests communicated the Law, the prophets communicated divinely given oracles and visions, and the sages communicated practical wisdom learned by observation. Solomon participated in this third type of communication through his involvement in the school of wisdom, which taught other sages knowledge.

Israel's wisdom tradition seems to have also arisen within the context of the home. Such a context can be seen through the repetition of various terms found in the book such as "son" (used in 41 verses), "father" (used in 15 verses), and "mother" (used in 11 verses). Furthermore, husband and wife are to practice monogamy and share equally in the training of children. "Sins which attack the order of the home are straightforwardly exposed."<sup>13</sup> Israel was not the only nation in the ancient Near East that followed a wisdom tradition. Evidences of other wisdom traditions include an Egyptian victory hymn (3200 BC), the triumphant hymn for Pepi I (2300 BC), the Hymn of Aten, the Egyptian Love Song 31, and the Teachings of Amenemope. However, these other wisdom traditions lacked important concepts found within Judaism. Examples include the notions that wisdom begins with faith in and fear of Yahweh (1:7; 9:10), that all areas of learning are to be brought into the covenant context, and that God's perfect character demands righteous behavioral standards. This emphasis explains why the word *Yahweh* or "Lord" appears 87x in the Book of Proverbs. Despite these differences, other ancient Near Eastern wisdom traditions are still helpful in establishing a pre-exilic date for the Book of Proverbs, the historical credibility of the Book of Proverbs, and the breadth of the theology associated with the wisdom concept.

### **Hermeneutics**

Because proverbs represent a unique genre, they demand their own principles for proper interpretation. First, ***proverbs are general maxims describing how life normally works based upon observation. Thus, they are not mechanical, ironclad promises.***

Therefore, exceptions to the general maxim must be taken into consideration. For example, 10:27 equates righteousness with a long life. Yet Christ, the most righteous person who has ever lived, represents an obvious exception to this rule since He died in His early 30s.

Second, ***the limitation upon the writer's intention for the meaning and application of certain proverbs can be ascertained by studying what all of the proverbs on the same subject have to say. Thus, a topical approach for understanding the context of a proverb is warranted.*** Third, the principle of the proverb must be extracted without taking the proverb's imagery in an exact sense. For example, 15:19 says, "The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns." The general principle of the proverb is that laziness brings problems. Thus, the proverb is not teaching that thorn bushes block every lazy person's path.

### **Message**

The Book of Proverbs seeks to educate a disciple ("son") regarding how to fear God (1:7) by learning from His divine maxims that impact every area of life (his relationship toward others, toward God, and toward himself) so that he can experience life (12:28a). This message is reinforced through the warnings to the fool who will not fear God or learn from

His proverbial truth but instead orders his life without God and consequently experiences death (12:28b).

### **Purpose**

The primary purpose of the Book of Proverbs is to "help readers live wisely and skillfully." Interestingly, "wisdom" or *hokomah* (1:2-7) is used elsewhere in Scripture to denote the skill of Tabernacle workers (Ex 35:25), temple technicians (1 Kings 7:14), goldsmiths (Jer 10:9), craftsmen of idols (Is 40:20), sailors (Ezek 27:8), singers (1 Kings 4:31), military leaders (Is 10:13; 35:25), mourners (Jer 9:17), administrators, and advisers. Thus, the same type of skill involved in performing these functions is the same type of skill that the Book of Proverbs seeks to engender in the readers thereby enabling them to live successfully in relation to themselves, others, and God. Therefore, the purpose of Proverbs is unique in comparisons to the other canonical wisdom books. For example, while Psalms involves walking before God in one's devotional life, Proverbs involves walking before God in one's daily life. While Job answers the question "what good is life?" and Ecclesiastes answers the question "What is good in life?" Proverbs answers the question "how to have a good life?"

### **Themes**

Several theological themes recur throughout the Book of Proverbs. First, the book focuses upon God. His attributes of sovereignty, faithfulness, holiness, omniscience, omnipotence, and justice are frequently seen in the book. The name "Lord" or *Yahweh* occurs 87x in the book. Thus, the book uses God as the basis for the wise man's relationship with himself, others, and his creator. In other words, the Book of Proverbs represents an instruction manual for daily living written from the divine perspective.

Second, the book routinely contrasts and even personifies the two paths of prudence and folly as a method for influencing one's life choices. Third, the book is a polemic against secular wisdom by claiming that true wisdom can only be gained through fear of (respect for) God (1:7; 9:10; 15:33), trust in God, a proper relationship to God, submission to God (Gen 3:5), and dependency upon divine revelation. Along this same line of thinking, the book speaks of wisdom's role in creation (8:22-31). Thus, only through such wisdom can a person comprehend life as the creator originally intended it.

### **Unique Characteristics**

The Book of Proverbs boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, the book is one of the most practical in the entire Bible. Second, the book is inclusive since it offers wisdom in virtually every area of life. Third, the book's pithy statements make it conducive to easy memorization.

Fourth, the book's practical insights are timeless transcending the covenant community and OT dispensation. Fifth, the book is one of the few that offers its readers a clear purpose statement (1:2-6). Sixth, the book places little emphasis upon the afterlife since the benefits of wisdom and the repercussions of folly are immediately experienced in this

life. Seventh, many of the book's literary devices are unique such as the personification of lady wisdom (8) and the concluding acrostic (31:10-31).

### **Christ in Proverbs**

Solomon's wisdom seems to typify the wisdom possessed by his greater son Jesus Christ (Matt 12:42). Some have also seen in the personification of wisdom (8) a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ since Christ epitomizes wisdom (1 Cor 1:22-24; Col 2:3). Of course, the danger here is drifting into Arianism since Solomon could be implying that lady wisdom is a created being (8:22-24). However, Laney draws this relationship in a more careful manner when he says, "In Proverbs 8:22-31, we see that wisdom is presented as an attribute of God that is singled out for particular display through His creation. The wisdom of God points ultimately to God's wisdom in Jesus Christ."

### **Outline**

#### **I. Purpose of the book of Proverbs (1:1-7)**

- (1) Authorship (1:1)
- (2) Purpose (1:2-7)
  - (A) The acquisition and application of wisdom (1:2-6)
    - (a) Know (1:2a)
    - (b) Discern (1:2b)
    - (c) Acquire (1:3)
    - (d) Give (1:4)
    - (e) Increase (1:5)
    - (f) Understand (1:6)
  - (B) Theme: Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (1:7)
    - (a) Wisdom equals the fear of the Lord (1:7 a)
    - (b) Foolishness equals despising wisdom (1:7b)

#### **II. Solomon's 12 lessons of wisdom to his son(s) (Prov 1:8—9:18)**

- (1) Lesson 1: Get wisdom (1:8-9)
  - (A) Appeal (1:8)
  - (B) Wisdom to act as an adornment (1:9)
- (2) Lesson 2: Avoid bad company and rejecting wisdom (1:10-33)
  - (A) Avoid bad company (1:10-19)
    - (a) Exhortation to avoid bad company (1:10)
    - (b) Temptation to associate with bad company (1:11-14)
    - (c) Consequences of associating with bad company (1:15-19)
  - (B) Avoid rejecting wisdom (1:20-33)
    - (a) Wisdom's invitation to all (1:20-21)
    - (b) Wisdom's invitation to the foolish (1:22-23)
    - (c) Wisdom's invitation rejected (1:24-30)



- (i) Rejection described (1:24-25)
  - (ii) Consequences of the rejection (1:26-28)
    - (a) Mocking of calamity (1:26-27)
    - (b) No one to heed the call of distress (1:28)
  - (iii) Motivation for the rejection (1:29-30)
    - (a) Hatred of knowledge (1:29)
    - (b) Hatred of reproof (1:30)
  - (iv) Life with and without wisdom (1:31-33)
    - (a) Fool's destroyed (1:31-32)
    - (b) Wise secure (1:33)
- (3) Lesson 3: Wisdom brings protection (2:1-22)
  - (A) Receive wisdom (2:1-4)
  - (B) Ensuing results (2:5-22)
    - (a) Protection (2:5-19)
      - (i) General protection (2:5-11)
      - (ii) Specific protection (2:12-19)
        - (a) From the evil man (2:12-15)
        - (b) From the evil woman (2:16-19)
    - (b) Guidance in the way of good (2:20-22)
      - (i) The upright to live in the land (2:20-21)
      - (ii) The wicked to be cut off from the land (2:22)
- (4) Lesson 4: Trust and honor God because of wisdom's value and blessings (3:1-20)
  - (A) Trust and honor God (3:1-12)
    - (a) First cycle (3:1-2)
      - (i) Command: Do not forget my teaching (3:1)
      - (ii) Reward: Longevity and peace (3:2)
    - (b) Second cycle (3:3-4)
      - (i) Command: Be kind and truthful (3:3)
      - (ii) Reward: Favor and good reputation (3:4)
    - (c) Third cycle (3:5-6)
      - (i) Command: trust God (3:5-6a)
      - (ii) Reward: Divine guidance (3:6b)
    - (d) Fourth cycle (3:7-8)
      - (i) Command: Reject pride and evil and fear God (3:7)
      - (ii) Reward: Health (3:8)
    - (e) Fifth cycle (3:9-10)
      - (i) Command: Worshipful giving (3:9)
      - (ii) Reward: Prosperity (3:10)

- (f) Sixth cycle (3:11-12)
    - (i) Command: do not despise divine discipline (3:11)
    - (ii) Reward: divine correction and love (3:12)
  - (B) Wisdom's value and blessings (3:13-20)
    - (a) Her value (3:13-15)
    - (b) Her blessings (3:16-18)
    - (c) Her role in creation (3:19-20)
- (5) Lesson 5: be wise in relation to others (3:21-35)
  - (A) Keep wisdom (3:21-26)
    - (a) Command to keep wisdom (3:21)
    - (b) Benefits of wisdom (3:22-26)
  - (B) Wisdom in relation to others (3:27-35)
    - (a) Do not withhold good (3:27-28)
    - (b) Do not plan evil (3:29-30)
    - (c) Do not envy the violent (3:31-35)
      - (i) Command (3:31)
      - (ii) Reasons (3:32-35)
- (6) Lesson 6: Avoid the path of the wicked (4:1-19)
  - (A) Father's exhortation to his sons to acquire wisdom (4:1-9)
    - (a) Father's exhortation (4:1-2)
    - (b) Father's experience (4:3-4)
    - (c) Father's concluding exhortation to acquire and love wisdom (4:5-9)
  - (B) Follow the path of the righteous (4:10-19)
    - (a) Past guidance (4:10-12)
    - (b) Heed instruction (4:13)
    - (c) Avoid the path of the wicked (4:14-17)
    - (d) Follow the path of the righteous (4:18-19)
- (7) Lesson 7: Watch over your behavior (4:20-27)
- (8) Lesson 8: Avoid the adulteress (5:1-23)
  - (A) Avoid the wayward woman because her conduct is destructive (5:1-6)
  - (B) Avoid the wayward woman because her consequences are destructive (5:7-14)
  - (C) Sexually enjoy your wife (5:15-23)
    - (a) Blessings of the marital union (5:15-19)
    - (b) Reasons to avoid adultery (5:20-23)
      - (i) Senselessness of adultery (5:20)
      - (ii) God is watching (5:21)
      - (iii) Adultery captures and binds (5:22)
      - (iv) Adultery brings death (5:23)

(9) Lesson 9: Avoid surety, laziness, worthless persons, and the things God hates (6:1-19)

(A) Suretyship (6:1-5)

- (a) Condition of suretyship (6:1-2)
- (b) Command to be freed from suretyship (6:3)
- (c) Speed at which a person should be freed from suretyship (6:4-5)

(B) Laziness (6:6-11)

- (a) Sluggard should observe the ant (6:6)
- (b) Description of the ant's activity (6:7-8)
- (c) Consequences of laziness (6:9-11)

(C) Avoid the worthless person (6:12-15)

- (a) His character (6:12-14)
- (b) His consequences (6:15)

(D) Avoid the seven things God hates (6:16-19)

- (a) Pride (6:17a)
- (b) Lying tongue (6:17b)
- (c) Murder (6:17c)
- (d) Evil scheming (6:18a)
- (e) Participation in evil (6:18b)
- (f) Lying witness (6:19a)
- (g) Strife (6:19b)

(10) Lesson 10: Avoid adultery (6:20-35)

(A) Heed parental instruction (6:20-23)

- (a) Exhortation (6:20-21)
- (b) Benefits (6:22-23)

(B) Avoid the adulteress (6:24-35)

- (a) Exhortation not to be ensnared by her (6:24-25)
- (b) Consequences of adultery (6:25-35)
  - (i) Poverty (6:26)
  - (ii) Consequences (6:27-29,33)
  - (iii) Repayment (6:30-31)
  - (iv) Senseless (6:32)
  - (v) Provoking a jealous husband (6:34-35)

(11) Lesson 11: Avoid the adulterous woman and embrace the woman of wisdom (Prov 7:1— 8:31)

(A) Avoid the adulteress (7:1-27)

- (a) Plea for the acquisition of wisdom (7:1-5)
- (b) The adulteress personified (7:6-23)

- (i) Naïve victim (7:6-9)
  - (ii) Adulteress's traits (7:10-12)
  - (iii) Adulteress's methods (7:13-23)
- (c) Concluding exhortation (7:24-27)
  - (i) Exhortation (7:24-25)
  - (ii) Consequences that the exhortation is predicated upon (7:26-27)
- (B) Embrace Lady wisdom (8:1-31)
  - (a) Her call (8:1-4)
  - (b) Her virtues (8:5-11)
  - (c) Her rewards (8:12-21)
  - (d) Her role in creation (8:22-31)
- (12) Lesson 12: Embrace the feast of wisdom and reject the feast of folly (Prov 8:32—9:18)

- (A) Opening exhortation (8:32-36)
- (B) Embrace the feast of wisdom (9:1-12)
  - (a) The feast's preparation (9:1-3)
  - (b) Invitation to attend the feast (9:4-6)
  - (c) Differing results for the scoffer and the wise man (9:7-12)
    - (i) Scoffer's closed mindedness (9:7-8a)
    - (ii) Wise man's teachability (9:8b-11)
    - (iii) The wise man benefits and the scoffer does not (9:12)
- (C) Reject the feast of folly (9:13-18)
  - (a) Her traits (9:13)
  - (b) Her location (9:14)
  - (c) Her invitation (9:15-16)
  - (d) Her allurements (9:17)
  - (e) Her destiny (9:18)

### III. Solomon's Proverbs (Prov 10:1—22:16)

- (1) Contrast between the wise righteous and the wicked foolish (Prov 10:1—15:33)
  - (A) Proverbs contrasting the wicked and the righteous son (10:1-14)
    - (a) Righteous and wise living (10:1-3)
    - (b) Laziness and diligence (10:4-5)
    - (c) Results of righteousness and wickedness (10:6-7)
    - (d) Integrity and foolishness (10:8-9)
    - (e) Talking (10:10-14)
  - (B) Contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous (10:15-32)
    - (a) Wealth and poverty (10:15-16)
    - (b) Reproof (10:17)

- (c) Talking (10:18-21)
- (d) End results (10:22-30)
- (e) Talking (10:31-32)
- (C) Contrast between the wicked and the upright (Prov 11:1— 12:28)
  - (a) Honesty in business (11:1-3)
  - (b) Adversity (11:4-8)
  - (c) Societal relationships (11:9-15)
  - (d) Rewards (11:16-31)
  - (e) Stability (12:1-4)
  - (f) Character, behavior, and results (12:5-8)
  - (g) Domestic relationships (12:9-12)
  - (h) Speaking (12:13-23)
  - (i) Industriousness (12:24-27)
  - (j) Reward of life (12:28)
- (D) Contrast between the wise and the wicked (Prov 13:1— 15:33)
  - (a) Speaking and industry (13:1-4)
  - (b) Honesty and security (13:5-9)
  - (c) Patience (13:10-12)
  - (d) Receiving wisdom (13:13-18)
  - (e) Consequences of foolishness (13:19-20)
  - (f) Wealth and poverty (13:21-23)
  - (g) Domestic life (Prov 13:24—14:4)
    - (i) Childrearing (13:24)
    - (ii) Provision (13:25)
    - (iii) Wise wives (14:1)
    - (iv) General conduct (14:2)
    - (v) Punishment (14:3)
    - (vi) Agrarian revenue (14:4)
  - (h) Lying (14:5)
  - (i) Wisdom (14:6-9)
  - (j) Bitterness (14:10)
  - (k) End results (14:11-14)
  - (l) Wise and naïve (14:15-19)
  - (m) Poverty and labor (14:20-24)
  - (n) Security and life (14:25-28)
  - (o) Anger and inner tranquility (14:29-30)
  - (p) Political issues (14:31-35)
  - (q) The tongue (15:1-2,4)

- (r) Divine omniscience (15:3)
- (s) Conduct (15:5-7)
- (t) Divine hatred and love (15:8-9)
- (u) Reproof (15:10-12)
- (v) Human heart (15:13-15)
- (w) Strife (15:16-18)
- (x) Laziness (15:19)
- (y) Prudence and foolishness (15:20-22)
- (z) Speech (15:23)
- (aa) Attributes of the righteous (15:24-33)
  - (i) Life (15:24)
  - (ii) Security (15:25)
  - (iii) Purity (15:26)
  - (iv) Honesty (15:27)
  - (v) Caution (15:28)
  - (vi) Prayerfulness (15:29)
  - (vii) Cheerfulness (15:30)
  - (viii) Accepting reproof (15:31-32)
  - (ix) Fear of God (15:33a)
  - (x) Humility (15:33b)
- (2) Proverbs promoting Godly living (Prov 16:1—22:16)
  - (A) God's sovereignty in human affairs (16:1-9)
  - (B) King's responsibilities before God (16:10-15)
    - (a) Justice (16:10)
    - (b) Honesty (16:11)
    - (c) Righteousness (16:12-13)
    - (d) Acknowledge wisdom (16:14)
    - (e) Favor others (16:15)
  - (C) Wise and wicked conduct (Prov 16:16—22:16)
    - (a) Wicked and proper living (16:16-17)
    - (b) Arrogance and humility (16:18-20)
    - (c) Speaking (16:21-24)
    - (d) Human philosophy (16:25)
    - (e) Industry (16:26)
    - (f) Poor words and conduct (16:27-30)
    - (g) Results of righteous living (16:31-33)
    - (h) Strife and peace in various areas of life (17:1-20)
    - (i) Foolishness and prudence (17:21-28)

- (j) Characteristics of a fool (18:1-9)
  - (i) Self-centeredness (18:1)
  - (ii) Pride (18:2)
  - (iii) Contentious (18:3)
  - (iv) Talkative (18:4)
  - (v) Unjust (18:5)
  - (vi) Uncontrolled speech (18:6-8)
  - (vii) Lazy (18:9)
- (k) Security (18:10-11)
- (l) Pride and foolishness (18:12-15)
- (m) Resolving disagreements (18:16-19)
- (n) Speech (18:20-21)
- (o) Companionship: wife, poor, friends (18:22-24)
- (p) Foolishness (19:1-3)
- (q) Illegitimate friendships (19:4-7)
- (r) Wisdom brings blessings and foolishness brings curses (19:8-12)
- (s) Family relationships (19:13-14)
- (t) Laziness and carelessness 19:15-16)
- (u) Kindness (19:17)
- (v) Childrearing (19:18)
- (w) Anger (19:19)
- (x) Advice and plans (19:20-21)
- (y) Life (19:22-23)
- (z) Folly (19:24-29)
- (aa) Folly (20:1-4)
- (bb) Counseling (20:5)
- (cc) Integrity (20:6-12)
- (dd) Laziness (20:13)
- (ee) Integrity (20:14-17)
- (ff) Speech (20:18-20)
- (gg) Patience (20:21-22)
- (hh) Integrity (20:23)
- (ii) Path of the righteous (20:24)
- (jj) Haste (20:25)
- (kk) Justice (20:26-27)
- (ll) Fortitude (20:28-29)
- (mm) Punishment (20:30)
- (nn) Righteousness (21:1-3)

(oo) Pride (21:4)  
(pp) Hastiness (21:5)  
(qq) Lying (21:6)  
(rr) Violence (21:7-8)  
(ss) Argumentative wife (21:9,19)  
(tt) Justice and injustice (21:10-15)  
(uu) Wickedness (21:16-18)  
(vv) Prosperity of the wise (21:20-22)  
(ww) Speaking, pride, laziness (21:23-26)  
(xx) Wickedness (21:27-29)  
(yy) The strength provided by God (21:30-31)  
(zz) Poor and rich (22:1-2)  
(aaa) Prudence and folly (22:3-5)  
(bbb) Childrearing (22:6)  
(ccc) Debt (22:7)  
(ddd) Sowing and reaping (22:8)  
(eee) Generosity (22:9)  
(fff) Speech (22:10-12)  
(ggg) Lethargy (22:13)  
(hhh) Folly (22:14-16)

#### IV. Sayings of the wise (Prov 22:17—24:34)

- (1) Part 1: Thirty precepts of the wise (22:17—24:22)
  - (A) Introduction (22:17-21)
  - (B) First precept: Do not rob the poor (22:22-23)
    - (a) Warning (22:22)
    - (b) Reason: God will take up their case (22:23)
  - (C) Second precept: do not associate with the hot tempered (22:24-25)
    - (a) Warning (22:24)
    - (b) Reason: You will learn his ways (22:25)
  - (D) Third precept: granting surety (22:26-27)
    - (a) Warning (22:26)
    - (b) Reason: poverty (22:27)
  - (E) Fourth precept: do not move borders (22:28)
  - (F) Fifth precept: be skillful (22:29)
    - (a) Warning (22:29a)
    - (b) Reason: promotion (22:29b)
  - (G) Sixth precept: do not be gluttonous before a King (23:1-3)
    - (a) Warning (23:1-3a)



- (b) Reason: avoid deception (23:3b)
- (H) Seventh precept: do not be materialistic (23:4-5)
  - (a) Warning (23:4)
  - (b) Reason: wealth is uncertain (23:5)
- (I) Eighth precept: do not eat with the greedy (23:6-8)
  - (a) Warning (23:6)
  - (b) Reason: He is insincere (23:7-8)
- (J) Ninth precept: do not speak to a fool (23:9)
  - (a) Warning (23:9a)
  - (b) Reason: he will despise your words (23:9b)
- (K) 10th precept: do not move the boundary marker (23:10-11)
  - (a) Warning (23:10)
  - (b) Reason: God will plead their case (23:11)
- (L) Interlude: Apply your mind to the following precepts (23:12)
- (M) 11th precept: do not withhold child discipline (23:13-14)
  - (a) Warning (23:13)
  - (b) Reason: discipline will save the child from Sheol (23:14)
- (N) Twelfth precept: Be wise (23:15-16)
  - (a) Warning (23:15)
  - (b) Reason: Gladness when the wise speak (23:16)
- (O) 13th precept: Do not envy sinners but instead fear God (23:17-18)
  - (a) Warning (23:17)
  - (b) Reason: eternal hope (23:18)
- (P) 14th precept: Do not associate with gluttons (23:19-21)
  - (a) Warning (23:19-20)
  - (b) Reason: Gluttons will come to poverty (23:21)
- (Q) 15th precept: do not despise your parents (23:22-23)
  - (a) Warning (23:22)
  - (b) Reason: they possess wisdom (23:23)
- (R) 16th precept: be wise (23:24-25)
  - (a) Warning (23:24)
  - (b) Reason: your parents will rejoice (23:25)
- (S) 17th precept: avoid the adulteress (23:26-28)
  - (a) Warning (23:26)
  - (b) Reason: she is a snare (23:27-28)
- (T) 18th precept: do not be a drunkard (23:29-35)
  - (a) Warning (23:31)
  - (b) Reason: Consequences of drunkenness (23:29-30,32-35)

- (U) 19th precept: do not envy sinners (24:1-2)
  - (a) Warning (24:1)
  - (b) Reason: their character is corrupt (24:2)
- (V) 20th precept: be wise (24:3-4)
  - (a) Warning (24:3a)
  - (b) Reason: wisdom brings blessing (24:3b-4)
- (W) 21st precept: get wisdom (24:5-6)
  - (a) Warning (24:5)
  - (b) Reason: Victory comes to the wise (24:6)
- (X) 22nd precept: do not be a fool (24:7)
  - (a) Warning (24:7a)
  - (b) Reason: fools lack influence (24:7b)
- (Y) 23rd precept: do not scheme to sin (24:8-9)
  - (a) Warning (24:8)
  - (b) Reason: sin is an abomination (24:9)
- (Z) 24th precept: do not be slack (24:10)
  - (a) Warning (24:10a)
  - (b) Reason: limited strength (24:10b)
- (AA) 25th precept: help victims (24:11-12)
  - (a) Warning (24:11)
  - (b) Reason: God judges (24:12)
- (BB) 26th precept: get wisdom (24:13-14)
  - (a) Warning (24:13)
  - (b) Reason: those who possess wisdom have hope (24:14)
- (CC) 27th precept: do not rob the godly (24:15-16)
  - (a) Warning (24:15)
  - (b) Reason: the righteous will rise (24:16)
- (DD) 28th precept: do not rejoice in your enemies' calamity (24:17-18)
  - (a) Warning (24:17)
  - (b) Reason: the Lord will stop punishing your enemy (24:18)
- (EE) 29th precept: do not envy sinners (24:19-20)
  - (a) Warning (24:19)
  - (b) Reason: sinners have no future (24:20)
- (FF) 30th precept: fear of the Lord (24:21-22)
  - (a) Warning (24:21)
  - (b) Reason: those who do not fear God will come to ruin (24:22)
- (2) Part two: six additional precepts of the wise (24:23-34)
  - (A) First saying: prohibition against partiality in court (24:23-25)

- (a) Warning (24:23)
  - (b) Reason: blessings upon impartial and curses upon partial (24:24-25)
- (B) Second saying: give honest answers (24:26)
  - (a) Warning (24:26a)
  - (b) Reason: honesty is pleasant (24:26b)
- (C) Third saying: cultivate your field (24:27)
  - (a) Warning (24:27a)
  - (b) Reason: your field will subsidize your house (24:27b)
- (D) Fourth saying: Prohibition against bearing false witness in court (24:28)
  - (a) Warning (24:28a)
  - (b) Reason: such behavior is deceptive (24:28b)
- (E) Fifth saying: prohibition against avenging oneself (24:29)
  - (a) Warning (24:29a)
  - (b) Reason: God judges (24:29b)
- (F) Sixth saying: prohibition against laziness (24:30-34)
  - (a) Warning (24:30)
  - (b) Reason: laziness yields poverty (24:31-34)

V. Solomon's proverbs that were either collected or copied by Hezekiah's scribes (Prov 25:1—29:27)

- (1) Part one: sixteen groups of proverbs (Prov 25:1— 27:27)
  - (A) Introduction (25:1)
  - (B) Related to Kings (25:2-7)
  - (C) Related to court cases (25:8-10)
  - (D) Related to speech (25:11-15)
  - (E) Related to excesses (25:16-17)
  - (F) Related to faithfulness and faithlessness (25:18-20)
  - (G) Related to personal enemies (25:21-22)
  - (H) Related to biting speech (25:23-24)
  - (I) Related to cool water and muddy streams (25:25-26)
  - (J) Related to pride and self-control (25:27-28)
  - (K) Related to fools (26:1-12)
  - (L) Related to laziness (26:13-16)
  - (M) Related to speech (26:17-28)
  - (N) Related to interpersonal problems (27:1-5)
  - (O) Related to friendships (27:6-10)
  - (P) Related to personal relationships (27:11-22)
  - (Q) Related to stewardship (27:23-26)
- (2) Part two: proverbs contrasting the righteous and the wicked (Prov 28:1—29:27)

(A) Miscellaneously assembled proverbs contrasting the attitudes of the wicked and the righteous toward the nation, the poor, the law, money, sin, parents, themselves, and others (28:1-28)

(B) Miscellaneously assembled proverbs primarily contrasting attitudes of the wicked and the righteous toward controlling anger, the nation, children, speaking, and the law (29:1-27)

#### VI. The words of Agur (Prov 30:1-33)

(1) Introduction (30:1)

(2) Agur looks up (30:2-9)

(A) Agur's inadequate human wisdom in comparison to divine wisdom (30:2-4)

(B) God's word is tested and complete (30:5-6)

(C) Agur prays for an absence of pride in relation to riches and an absence of temptation in relation of poverty (30:7-9)

(3) Agur looks around him: warnings and observations (30:10-33)

(A) Warning against slandering a slave to his master (30:10)

(B) Four types of sinners (30:11-14)

(a) Disrespectful (30:11)

(b) Hypocritical (30:12)

(c) Proud (30:13)

(d) Oppressive (30:14)

(C) Four insatiable entities (30:15-16)

(a) Introduction (30:15)

(b) Death (30:16a)

(c) Barrenness (30:16b)

(d) Land needing water (30:16c)

(e) Fire (30:16d)

(D) Warning against disrespecting one's parents (30:17)

(E) Four incomprehensible and mysterious items (30:18-19)

(a) Introduction (30:18)

(b) Eagle in the sky (30:19a)

(c) Serpent on the rock (30:19b)

(d) Ship on the sea (30:19c)

(e) Way of a man with a maiden (30:19d)

(F) Warning against involvement with the adulteress (30:20)

(G) Four unfair things (30:21-23)

(a) Introduction (30:21)

(b) Slaves becoming kings (30:22a)

(c) Fools filled with food (30:22b)

- (d) An unmarried and unloved woman (30:23a)
  - (e) Maid servant displacing a mistress (30:23b)
- (H) Four wise though small animals (30:24-28)
  - (a) Introduction (30:24)
  - (b) Ants (30:25)
  - (c) Badgers (30:26)
  - (d) Locusts (30:27)
  - (e) Lizards (30:28)
- (I) Four strutting entities (30:29-31)
  - (a) Introduction (30:29)
  - (b) Lion (30:30)
  - (c) Rooster (30:31a)
  - (d) Eagle (30:31b)
  - (e) King (30:31c)
- (J) Warning against pride and anger (30:32-33)

#### VII. Lemuel's mother's advice (Prov 31:1-9)

- (1) Introduction (31:1-2)
- (2) Abstain from drunkenness and immorality (31:3-7)
- (3) Promote justice (31:8-9)

#### VIII. Wonderful wife (Prov 31:10-31)

- (1) Her worth (31:10)
- (2) Her spouse (31:11-12)
- (3) Her tasks (31:13-21)
  - (A) Sewing (31:13,19,21)
  - (B) Cooking (31:14-15)
  - (C) Gardening (31:16-18)
  - (D) Philanthropy (31:20)
- (4) Her clothing (31:21-22)
- (5) Her spouse's reputation (31:23)
- (6) Her business ventures (31:24)
- (7) Her character (31:25-26)
- (8) Her industriousness (31:27)
- (9) Her reputation (31:28-31)