

Wisdom Has Built Her House

“Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars” (Prov. 9:1)

When one builds a building (in particular, a house), the first thing that must be laid is a foundation. What is the foundation of His Wisdom? Fortunately, Scripture gives us the answer. The foundation of the house of wisdom is *“The fear of יהוה is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* (Proverbs 9:10). One does not finally reach Him through much study and the acquisition of much wisdom. Indeed, the reverence and respect for the Awesomeness that is יהוה is the very *beginning of wisdom*. Without a reverent trust (faith) in Him as the Creator and Redeemer, there can be no true wisdom. *“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to יהוה must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) In fact, there is no other foundation that can be laid except Him: *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshua the Messiah.”* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Now, erected upon His foundation and supporting all the superstructure in the *house of wisdom* are seven mighty pillars, or columns. What are these seven pillars? An answer is found in the *B’rit Chadasha’s* “Book of Wisdom,” the Book of *Ya’akov* (James), the brother of *Yeshua* and the first leader of the emerging Messianic Community (see Acts 15). Surprised? Is it not in this book where we are told: *“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of יהוה, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”* (James 1:5). He then tell us: *“Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him demonstrate it by his good way of life, by actions done in the humility that grows out of wisdom.”* (James 3:13). It seems reasonable to find seven pillars of Wisdom in a book that is all about Wisdom. Indeed we do!

Problems and Proverbs

If the book of Psalms teaches us how to get along with יהוה, then Proverbs teaches us how to get along with people. Psalms helps us in our devotional life, while Proverbs helps us in our practical life. Psalms brings us into the heavenly realm, while Proverbs sets our feet in the grass roots of human life.

Most Proverbs were written by *Sh’lomo HaMelech* (King Solomon), the wisest man who ever lived. He enjoyed great material wealth and a rich spiritual heritage, which was passed on to him from his father, King David. His advice on daily living is the practical advice of someone who struggled with problems—just as we do. In Proverbs, *Sh’lomo* opens the doors to his greatest treasure chamber, sharing with us the price, the Wisdom of יהוה that was given to him.

Mishlei begins by listing the benefits of studying these timeless maxims: *“¹The proverbs of Shlomo the son of David, king of Isra’el, ²are for learning about wisdom and discipline; for understanding words expressing deep insight; ³for gaining an intelligently disciplined life, doing what is right, just and fair; ⁴for endowing with caution those who don’t think and the young person with knowledge and discretion.”* (Proverbs 1:1-4)

The first benefit of studying Proverbs is that we will *learn wisdom and discipline*. Wisdom is looking at life from יהוה’s point of view or His perspective.

The second benefit is that we will learn to *understanding words expressing deep insight*. If wisdom is looking at life from the viewpoint יהוה, understanding is responding to life from the viewpoint of יהוה. We are not prone to do this. In fact, the opposite is true. Our initial and human reaction is far from His Wisdom. *“⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways,” says יהוה. ⁹As high as the sky is above the earth are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isa. 55:8-9)

The third benefit is that we will *gain an intelligently disciplined life, doing what is right, just and fair*. The term receive suggests action or mobility. The Hebrew Word translated gain is the same terminology associated with *plucking grapes and taking them with you*. In this instance, it refers to instruction that is to be plucked and taken like succulent fruit from a vine.

The fourth benefit is that we'll gain *caution those who don't think (i.e., prudence) and the young person with knowledge and discretion*. Notice that *Sh'lomo* specifically includes youth in this benefit. How many times, as you were growing up, can you remember hearing those squelching words, *You're not old enough!*" King Solomon, however, puts no age limit on who can benefit from the study of this book.

Young people today are constantly bombarded with the world's wisdom—why not give them some wisdom from *יהוה*, from His Word? Companies exist whose sole purpose is to study young people so that they can manipulate what they will eat, drink, wear, think, and do. And the media, on which so many of our children are being raised, is not exactly scriptural when it comes to values. We must not only encourage our young people to learn from the Book of Wisdom, we must model it ourselves.

Scriptural Observations about Wisdom

Near the end of Chapter 1, *Sh'lomo* takes the abstract principle of wisdom and turns it into a person, a woman who cries out in the noisy streets of life. Before we walk past her, lost in our own thoughts, let's lift our heads to hear her voice. From what she says, we can make three important observations.

Wisdom is available.

Wisdom shouts in the street, not in the secret corners: ²¹*she calls out at streetcorners and speaks out at entrances to city gates:* ²²*How long, you whose lives have no purpose, will you love thoughtless living? How long will scorners find pleasure in mocking? How long will fools hate knowledge?* ²³*Repent when I reprove - I will pour out my spirit to you, I will make my words known to you.*" *Adonai* did not empty His supply of wisdom on Solomon. It is still available to us every time we open our Bibles.

Wisdom can be rejected.

²⁴*Because you refused when I called, and no one paid attention when I put out my hand,* ²⁵*but instead you neglected my counsel and would not accept my reproof.*" Our problem is not exposure to wisdom—our problem is experiencing it. We march by wisdom's outstretched hand every day, tossing a careless *No, thank you* over our shoulders as we crane our necks to find something more exciting.

When wisdom is rejected, the results are always bitter.

We may casually cast wisdom aside, but the consequences are anything but casual. He goes on to describe what happens when we hear wisdom's voice and reject it: ²⁶*I, in turn, will laugh at your distress, and mock when terror comes over you -* ²⁷*yes, when terror overtakes you like a storm and your disaster approaches like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble assail you,* ²⁸*Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will seek me earnestly, but they won't find me.* ²⁹*Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of יהוה,* ³⁰*they refused my counsel and despised my reproof.* ³¹*So they will bear the consequences of their own way and be overfilled with their own schemes.* ³²*For the aimless wandering of the thoughtless will kill them, and the smug overconfidence of fools will destroy them.*"

When we've spurned wisdom's healthy counsel week after week, month after month, year after year and gorged ourselves on the world's artificially sweet advice, we can expect to experience some discomfort. But *יהוה* doesn't offer drive-thru wisdom that can plop-plop-fizz-fizz our problems away. It'll take a careful new diet and strenuous exercise to shape up those sour situations and distorted values.

Who Are Those Who Spurn Wisdom?

Verse 22 labels three types of people whose common characteristic is the refusal of wisdom: mainly, the **naive** (**simple** or **thoughtless**), **scoffers** and **fools**.

The Simple

The word naive or simple carries the idea of a *wide open door*. The simple person is wide open, easily influenced, gullible. This person lacks discernment, becoming an easy target for someone such as the harlot described in Proverbs chapter 7. The simple are easily enticed because they lack understanding and are therefore unaware of danger.

Solomon tells us in Proverbs 22:3 that the simple also never learn from their mistakes. The original Hebrew conveys the idea that they are making the same mistakes today that they were five years ago and will be making five years from now.

Proverbs 1:4a adds one further insight: without prudence the simple are unable to look beyond the surface of things to see what's really there. They are easily enchanted by the music of pied pipers, following them wherever they're going without question.

The Scoffer

The word scoff means **to turn aside, to mock, to reject with vigorous contempt, to refuse, to show disdain, to be disgusted**. Scoffers don't simply agree to disagree; they seem driven to scorn and ridicule anything that opposes their ideas. Wisdom warns us against our natural impulses when dealing with these kinds of people: ⁷*He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself.* ⁸*Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.* (Prov. 9:7-8) No amount of counseling will change this person's attitude. No amount of exposure to Biblical truth will penetrate this person's thick crust of skepticism (see Proverbs 14:6).

The Fool

Typically, when we think of the word fool we picture someone who lacks intelligence. But the biblical meaning of *fool* is **not so much one lacking in mental powers, as one who misuses them; not one who does not reason, but reasons wrongly**. No greater example can be found than by comparing Psalm 14:1a, which says: *"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"* to Proverbs 1:7: *"The fear of יהוה is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."* The word fool also carries with it the connotation of wickedness.

Imitating One Who Embraces Wisdom

Now that we've explored three types of people who reject wisdom, let's look at someone who embraces it. Of the 186 different characters *Sh'lomo* uses to parade wisdom's truths in the book of Proverbs, one stands out above the rest. This is the **wise man**, who is first mentioned in verse 5: *"A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel."* If we take a moment to study this verse, we'll see that at least three traits characterize wise people.

First: **Wise people** are **willing listeners** (see also Prov. 12:15, 13:1, 15:31-32, 19:20). *Sh'lomo* begins with hearing, but sadly, this is often last on the list for many people today, as Paul Tournier affirms: *"Listen to all the conversations of our world, those between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf. Each one speaks primarily in order to set forth his own ideas, in order to justify himself, in order to enhance himself and to accuse others."* *Sh'lomo* says, **A wise man will hear**.

Second: *Wise people desire to learn and grow* (see also Proverbs 9:9, 10:14). Too often in our culture we concentrate all our learning in our school years and figure we're through with it when we graduate. But this should not be the case. Learning new things and expanding the horizons of our minds should be a lifelong pursuit. Solomon says, *Increase in learning*.

Third: *Wise people eagerly seek out and accept wise counsel* (see also Proverbs 12:15, 13: 10). Rather than taking an I-can-do-it-myself attitude, wise people realize that they don't know everything and take to heart Solomon's advice in Proverbs 11:14 “*Where no counsel is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*”

They don't take just anybody's advice, however; they exercise discernment and seek out *wise counsel*. Through the daily application of wisdom's principles, we, too, can become mature, wise people.

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

Where do we find these Seven Pillars alluded to in Proverbs? They are listed in James 3:17: “*But the wisdom from above is, first of all, pure, then peaceful, kind, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*” The first in the list, that is, the central column (the center branch of the *Wisdom Menorah*), carrying more weight than any of the other columns in the structure, is *purity*. Then there are six outside pillars. One is *peaceableness*; the next is *gentleness and kindness*; then comes *reasonableness* (*easy to be entreated*). The next phrase, *full of mercy and good fruits*, connotes *helpfulness*. The term for *without partiality* actually means *meek*, and then the final pillar is *sincerity*, that is, *without hypocrisy*. Thus a life of genuine wisdom is a life founded upon the fear of יהוה and supported by *genuine purity, peaceableness, gentleness, reasonableness, helpfulness, humility, and sincerity*. A house built this way **WILL NEVER FALL!**

Humble Reasonable Gentle Pure Peaceable Helpful Sincere

