

Wisdom Has Hewn Her Seven Pillars

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

When one builds a supported structure (in particular, a house), the first thing that must be laid is a foundation to hold the pillars. What is the foundation of the Lord’s Wisdom? Scripture gives us the answer – the foundation of the house of wisdom is *“The fear (reverence, respect and awe) of יהוה is the beginning of wisdom”* (Proverbs 9:10a). We do not reach Him through study and the acquisition of much knowledge. Indeed, the reverence and respect for the awesomeness of God is the *very beginning* of wisdom. Without reverent trust and faith in God 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 God must believe that He is (exists) 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 Yeshua: *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshua the Messiah”* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Wisdom and Proverbs

Nearly everyone would agree that there is much wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. If Psalms teaches us how to relate to 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.

Sh’lomo HaMelech (King Solomon), the wisest man who ever lived, wrote most proverbs. 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 his great 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. A wise man will hear and increase in learning...” (Proverbs 1:1-5a)

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 (Isa. 55:8-9). The third benefit is that we will *gain an intelligently disciplined life, doing what is right, just and fair*. The fourth benefit is that we’ll gain *prudence, knowledge, and discretion*. Notice that Solomon specifically includes the youth in this benefit. How many times as you were growing up, can you remember hearing the words, *“You’re not old enough!”* Solomon, however, puts no age limit on who can benefit from Proverbs.

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, a diet that so many of our children are being raised in, 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.

Near the end of Proverbs 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.

Scriptural Observations about Wisdom

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? ²³Repent 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, ²⁵but 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 - ²⁷yes, when terror overtakes you like a storm and your disaster approaches like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble assail you, ²⁸Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will seek me earnestly, but they won't find me. ²⁹Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of יהוה, ³⁰they refused my counsel and despised my reproof. ³¹So they will bear the consequences of their own way and be overfilled with their own schemes. ³²For 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.

Becoming People of Wisdom

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.”* However, *Sh'lomo* says: *A wise man will hear.*

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.*

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. Solomon says: *seek out wise counsel.*

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

Now, erected upon *Yeshua* as His foundation we have seven mighty pillars or columns that support the superstructure in the *“house of wisdom”*. What are these seven pillars? A set is found in the *B'rit*

Chadasha's "Book of Wisdom", i.e., the Book of *Ya'akov* (James), the brother of *Yeshua* and the first leader of the emerging Messianic Community (see Acts 15). Are you surprised? In this book where we are told: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of **אֱלֹהִים**, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5). He also tells 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 the book that is all about Wisdom. Indeed we do!

There are seven pillars of wisdom 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 **peacefulness**; the next is **gentleness and kindness**; then comes **reasonableness/sensibility (easy to be entreated)**. The next phrase, **full of mercy and good fruits**, connotes **helpfulness**. The term for **without partiality** actually means **meek** or **impartial**, 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 **אֱלֹהִים** and supported by **genuine purity**, **peacefulness**, **gentleness**, **sensibility**, **helpfulness**, **impartiality**, and **sincerity**. A house built this way **WILL NEVER FALL!**

Impartial Sensible Gentle Pure Peaceful Helpful Sincere

