

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

“Wisdom has built her house. She has carved out her seven pillars...”

A wise woman builds her house, but a foolish one tears it down with her own hands” (Prov. 9:1, 14:1)

When one builds a house the first thing that must be laid is a foundation to hold the structure. What is the foundation of the Lord’s Wisdom? Scripture gives us the answer – the foundation of the house of wisdom is: *“The fear of Adonai is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10)*. 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: *“⁶Now without faith it is impossible to please God. For the one who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6)*. In fact: *“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshua the Messiah” (1 Corinthians 3:11)*.

There is much wisdom in the Proverbs. If Psalms teaches us how to relate to God, then Proverbs teaches us how to get along with people. Psalms helps us in our devotional life, but Proverbs helps us in our practical life. Psalms brings us into the heavenly realm, but Proverbs sets our feet in the grass roots of human life.

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote most of 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, Solomon opens the doors to his greatest treasure chamber, sharing with us his great price, the Wisdom of Adonai that was given to him. *Proverbs (Mishlei in Hebrew) begins by listing the benefits of studying these timeless maxims: “1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ²to acquire wisdom and discipline, to understand the words of insight, ³to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and fairness, ⁴to give discernment to the naïve, knowledge and discretion to the youth⁵ (let the wise listen and increase learning” (Proverbs 1:1-5a)*

The first benefit of studying Proverbs is that we will *acquire wisdom and discipline*. Wisdom is looking at life from Adonai’s point of view or His perspective. The second benefit is that we will learn to *understand the words of insight*. If wisdom is looking at life from the viewpoint Adonai, then understanding is responding to life from the viewpoint of Adonai. We are not prone to do this. In fact our initial and human reaction is far from His Wisdom (Isa. 55:8-9). The third benefit is that we will *receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and fairness*. The fourth benefit is that we’ll gain *discernment to the naïve, knowledge and discretion*. Notice that Solomon specifically includes young people in this benefit. How many times as you were growing up, can you remember hearing the words, *“You’re not old enough!”* Solomon puts no age limit on learning from Proverbs.

People today are constantly bombarded with the world's wisdom. Why not obtain wisdom from Adonai and from His Word? Companies exist whose sole purpose is to study people’s habits so that they can manipulate what they eat, drink, wear, think, and do. The diet that so many (and their) children are being raised in (the media) is not Scriptural in their values. Let us encourage others to learn from the Book of Wisdom as we do.

Near the end of Proverbs 1, Solomon 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.

1. Wisdom is Available: Wisdom shouts in the street, not in the secret corners: *“²¹She cries out above the commotion. At the entrances of the city gates, she utters her speech: ²²“How long will you naïve ones love simplicity, you scoffers delight in scoffing, and you fools hate knowledge? ²³You are repulsed at my rebuke. Behold, I pour out my heart to you. I will make my words known to you” (Prov. 1:21-23)*. Adonai did not empty His supply of wisdom on Solomon. It is still available to us every time we open our Bibles.

2. Wisdom can be rejected: *“²⁴Because you refused when I called, and did not pay attention when I stretched out my hand, ²⁵since you ignore all my advice and would not accept my rebuke” (Prov. 1:24-25)*. Our problem is not exposure to wisdom, but instead is experiencing it. We march by wisdom's outstretched hand every day, tossing a careless *No, thank you* over our shoulders as we hoist our necks to find something more exciting.

3. **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 calamity. I will mock when dread comes on you, ²⁷ when your terror comes like a storm and your calamity sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when trouble and distress overwhelm you! ²⁸ Then they will cry out to me, but I will not answer! They will earnestly seek me, but will not find me. ²⁹ Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Adonai, ³⁰ they would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof, ³¹ so they will eat the fruit of their own way and be filled with their own schemes. ³² For the backsliding of the naive will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them"* (Prov. 1:26-32).

When we've spurned wisdom's healthy counsel week after week, month after month, and year after year and gorged ourselves on the world's artificially sweet advice, we can expect to experience some discomfort. But Adonai 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.

How Do We Become People of Wisdom?

Wise people are *willing listeners* (see also Prov. 12:15, 13:1, 15:31-32, 19:20). Solomon 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"* (Paul Tournier). Solomon (not Simon) says: *A wise man will hear.*

Wise people desire to *learn and grow* (see also Prov. 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. 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: *"Where no counsel is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety"* (Prov. 11:14) They don't take just anybody's advice, however; they exercise discernment. Solomon says: *seek out wise counsel.* Therefore let us strive to read our **Daily 5 Psalms and 1 Proverb** (Day 1 Ps. 1,31,61,92,121 and Prov. 1, Day 2 Ps. 2,32,62,92,122 and Prov. 2, etc. On day 31 we then read Ps. 119 and Prov. 31).

Now, focusing on *Yeshua* {*"² focusing on Yeshua, the initiator and perfecter of faith"* (Heb. 12:2)} in His foundation we have seven mighty pillars or columns that support the superstructure in the "house of wisdom". What are these seven pillars? One set is found in the *New Covenant* "Book of Wisdom", i.e., the Book of James (*Ya'akov*), the brother of *Yeshua* who was the first leader of the early Messianic Community (see Acts 15). Are you surprised? In this book where we are told: *"⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5). He also tells us: *"¹³ Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct let him show his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom"* (James 3:13).

These seven pillars of wisdom are listed in James 3:17: *"¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, not hypocritical"* 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 *meeek* 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 Adonai 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

