

Summary Handout

“Happy is the Man That Findeth Wisdom”

Lesson
31
Summary

Proverbs; The first section, chs. 1 - 9, is the most poetic and contains an exposition of true wisdom. Chs. 10 - 24 contain a collection of proverbs and sentences about the right and wrong ways of living. Chs. 25 - 29 contain the proverbs of Solomon that the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out. Chs. 30 and 31 contain the “burden” of Agur and Lemuel, the latter including a picture of the ideal wife, arranged in acrostic form. (Bible Dictionary)

Ecclesiastes; A Greek translation of the Hebrew Kōbeleth, 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 (Ecl. 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” (Ecl. 1: 1). (Bible Dictionary)

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The Wonder of the Word: In Judaism, books, words and letters have a distinctive value and afford 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.

Solomon, the Author: “In his youth King Solomon wrote the lyrical Song of Songs, in his maturity the wisdom of Proverbs (traditionally considered to be his), 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.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Objective of Proverbs: “. . . is to develop the habits of piety and ethical practice by training the mind . . . two methods are used: one is *musar*, the training and instruction in do's and don'ts by parent and teacher; the other is *ezrah*, 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. “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.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Wisdom Often Connected with Respect for the Aged: It is something that is inherited, learned and taught: “Respect for the aged is always a *mitzvah*: ‘You shall rise before gray hairs, and show respect to the old man’ (Leviticus 19:32) . . . speaks of disrespect for the aged as a sign of a corrupt generation (3:5).” “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.*)

Wisdom Learned, Wisdom Earned: In a rabbinic discussion, scholars are enjoined 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.” “. . . 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.” “Despite . . . teaching and learning, however, wisdom ultimately remained a divine gift rewarding those who desired it enough to submit to its discipline.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Value of a Word: 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, . . . paper or metal disks with inscriptions . . . which would protect the bearer from sickness, the “evil eye” and other troubles . . . 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 . . . power of certain words.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Bible Writing: “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.*)

Latter-day Saints Counsel on Pride: 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 consider the highest compliment and honor as stated in the scriptures. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (*Matthew 17:5*)

Tower of Babel–Pride: “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.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) The moral of the story is applicable today.

Friendship or Friendly? One of my Jewish-Orthodox friends 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 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.*)

Respect of Aged over Children Not Judeo-Christian: This became apparent when Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel. The drought stricken peoples they left would preserve and feed the oldest first, leaving the children to perish, opposite of 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 . . . usually on the Sabbath . . . followed by a festive meal . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish Commentary on Children: “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 . . . must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.” “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*)

Time to Update Your Will: “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.*)

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