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Obey Your Parents

1: 8-9

A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

This **first teaching** (to see link click [Aj - Proverbs to the Youth](#)) follows a structure that will become familiar. It begins with an exhortation for **the son** to **hear the teaching of your father (1:3); don't neglect the instruction of your mother (1:8b)**, accompanied by a motivating sentence: **For what you learn from them will crown you with grace and be a chain of honor around your neck (1:9 NLT)**. The message follows, which concludes with a summarizing statement (**1:19**). The Hebrew word for **here** denotes more than the simple act of hearing . . . it implies obedience. **The son** must act on that instruction, not merely learn about it. The message of this particular teaching is to avoid association with **evil people** (see [Ai - Bad Company Corrupts Good Morals](#)), who are defined as those who seek gain at the expense of others, even their lives.



The first teaching begins with a call to attention. **The son** is called upon to **hear** (Hebrew: *sh'ma*, meaning *to pay attention to*, or *put into practice*) **the father's instruction (1:8a Hebrew)**. See [First Corinthians Ay - Marks of a Spiritual](#)

Father. The Hebrew word means more than the simple act of **hearing**, it implies **obedience**. **The son** must act on the teaching that follows, not just learn it as a simple fact. Two words are used to refer to the teaching that follows.²⁴ **In connection with the father, the sterner Hebrew word instruction** (Hebrew: *musar*) **is employed. It implies the threat of corporeal punishment if the son does not obey the words of instruction. The tender address, my son, implies that the father considers his son as his spiritual heir, not merely his biological offspring (4:3).** The second word is **teaching** (Hebrew: *torah*). **The mother's instruction is denoted as Torah since she usually limits herself to verbal counsel. The book of Proverbs has more to say about the love and respect due to the mother than any other book in the TaNaKh.**

And do not forsake your mother's teaching (1:8b Hebrew). The mother's teaching regarding girls and women is also very important. For **she** needs to protect **her son** from other ungodly **girls** (see **Bj - Avoid the Seductress**). Many **boys** and **young men** are like lambs to the slaughter. You see, **her son** can't be fooled by other **boys**. **Boys** can't fool **boys**. They know all the tricks and schemes prone to all **boys**. And girls can't be fooled by girls. They know all the tricks and schemes prone to all girls. But just as girls *can* be fooled by **boys**; **boys** and **young men** can *definitely* be fooled by girls. This is why **the mother's** protection is so important. **The son** needs to obey **his mother's teaching** regarding girls and girlfriends growing up. **She** can sense when a girl is acting ungodly, and will only end up hurting **her son**. Thus, **the son** needs to trust **his mother**, knowing that **she** only has good intentions and is only trying to protect **him**. This is **wisdom** (see **Ai - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom**), and to rebel against **his mother** only hurts **himself** and leads to suffering.

The parents' desire is that **the children obey** what **they** have learned, so that the truth of **ADONAI** will become like a lovely ornament to beautify **their** lives. **What you learn from them will be a wreath to grace your head, and a chain of honor around your neck (Proverbs 1:9 Hebrew).** The **wreath** mentioned here is *levyah*, a rare Hebrew word in the TaNaKh. In fact it is only used here and in **4:9**. The Hebrew scholar Franz Delitzsch reports that this word is related to a word in Arabic for *twisting*. The idea is of a twisted **wreath** of flowers with light branches worn on the head. Later, in the Greek Olympic games, laurel branches were woven with flowers to form a wreath for the heads of athletes who won their games (**First Corinthians 9:25**).

Two things will be **a graceful wreath to grace their heads and a chain of**

honor around their neck: the instruction/discipline of the father and the Torah teaching of the mother. Suggested in these phrases is the ideal of both **parents** being involved in **the son's** rearing. That the father is granted the role of discipline and the mother the role of teaching is not accidental, but the result of practical consideration in an agricultural society. Young **children** and extended family stayed at home with their mother, who cared for the home while the father worked the fields. This **proverb** is directed at **young men** who are growing and entering a new world of responsibility. To such **a young man, wisdom** says, “Don’t forget **the wisdom** you learned from **your parents**. It will be a source of **grace** in your life.”

But all too often there is little or no **parental** involvement from which **sons** can draw **wisdom**. In the growing number of homes with absentee fathers, godly discipline is completely absent. **Malachi**, the last of the prophets before the 400 years of silence until John the Baptist, gave evidence of **God's** concern with this problem of estranged fathers. **Malachi** wrote that **Messiah** would **turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and hearts of the children to their fathers (Malachi 4:6)**. Nor do many **mothers** have the time or the will to teach **their children** godly behaviors. For some it is nearly impossible, because single mothers must serve two roles: provider and mother. For others, their duty is neglected by default in a society that hands its children over to strangers for teaching. Implicit in **wisdom's** direction to young men is also **wisdom's** direction to their **parents: Discipline and teach your boys and young men.**

But the main application here is for young men and older men who have neglected the **wisdom** of their upbringing. Often, when a **parent** sees **a young man** going astray they ask, “Is that how your **parents** raised you?” This is a good question that many of us could stand to ask ourselves. Of course, many will have to look hard to see any values in the upbringing they were given, a sad fact that breaks **God's** heart.²⁵

My **parents**, while loving me, gave me no insight into godly living. They were both unbelievers. Although **my father** was a good provider, **he** was absent, climbing the ladder to supposed “success.” There was never a Bible in our house (although I do remember that my grandmother had a huge, dusty, King James Bible sitting on a table in her dining room), and **God's** name was never mentioned. We didn’t go to church as a family and by the time I was a teenager, I was hormones with legs. Basically, I had no moral compass, like a lamb to the slaughter. I ended up having to get married at 19, and was **a father** by the time I was 20. I thought I was Mr

Mature, but I was Mr Stupid. I eventually got saved in my 30's and changed. But my wife didn't like the change, had an affair with a guy at work and deserted our family. This, in turn, had a devastating result on our two **children** who were not saved. Thankfully, I eventually remarried to a godly woman who I met at church and we have just celebrated our forty-second wedding anniversary. We have one **son**, who is also saved.

Without a doubt, there are some **parents** whose insensitivity and unloving actions have hurt **their children** deeply. What if you had a **father** or a **mother who was** physically or psychologically abusive? What about the **parent** who has chosen **to be a friend of the world** and therefore become **an enemy of God (James 4:4)**? That **parent** loves everything that **God** hates. How can you **honor** that **parent**? I know that from a human perspective some **mothers and fathers** don't appear to deserve **honor**. I am not saying **their** actions were not hurtful, nor am I rationalizing the negative effects **they** may have caused over the years. And if you are in physical danger, of course you need to get to a safe place away from **them**. You don't have to subject yourself to abuse. However, I am saying that the only way to be free from the hurt is to **honor them**. Because every time we lower their value and cut **them** down, *we're dishonoring a part of ourselves*. So, if you are in that situation, what can you do? **You can make an unconditional decision to treat them (or their memory) as a valuable treasure, and grant them a position of respect and honor in your life.** It's not always easy, but the alternative isn't very good either. In that way you can stop chasing past hurts and be at peace in the present.²⁶

All **parents** make mistakes. But **the wise** will find what is good and grow from it. When we do this, it becomes **a graceful wreath to grace our heads and a chain of honor around our neck.** Torah's command to **honor your parents** is a fitting promise: **Honor your father and your mother just as ADONAI your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and it may go well with you in the land of ADONAI your God is giving you** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bp - Honor Your Parents**).²⁷

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being the best **Father** ever! How wonderful that nothing can separate me from **Your** love. **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).***

Because **Your** love is so great, **Your wisdom** so infinite and **Your** power so Almighty - the **wisest** thing for me to do is to obey **You** in all **You** say. Obeying **You**, which includes obeying **parents**, with a loving heart brings the reward of inner peace and comfort. **Your** love tenderly cares for me and seeks to pour out eternal peace and joy on me. **I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10)!**

Your authority **Father God** is higher authority and to be obeyed over any government or **parent** authority. Governments and **parents** are to be obeyed, except when they teach to do anything that is contrary to **Your Holy Word**. **Peter** chose to not follow the rulers when **he** was ordered not to speak of **Messiah Yeshua (Acts 4:8-20)**.

Wisdom obeys and prays for **parents** to be wise and to train their **children** in godly ways that bring eternal peace and joy. **Now this is the confidence we have before Him - that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have the requests we have asked from Him (First John 5:14-15)**.

Thank you for being the perfect and loving heavenly **Father**, whom I can have peace about obeying at all times, for **You** always want the **wisest** and best for me! In **Messiah's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen