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Lady Wisdom's Call

8: 1-11

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.

The great paired images of **the Seductress of Chapter 7 (to see link click [Bi - Avoid the Seductress](#))** and **Lady Wisdom of Chapter 8 (see [Am - Lady Wisdom's Rebuke of the Foolish](#))** are contrasted by the concluding warning to **stay far away from the seductress (7:24-27)**. Although very different in style and substance, these pictures of the **adulterous wife** and personified **Lady Wisdom** form two parts that are intended to be seen as one. **The seductress** moves covertly at **twilight** and speaks falsely; while **Lady Wisdom** moves publicly and speaks truthfully. Unlike **the smooth, seductive, but deceptive** speech of **the adulterous wife, Lady Wisdom is straight, right and true, not twisted or crooked. The seductress leads her victims into slavery, impoverishment, and death; whereas Lady Wisdom's words lead her followers into kingship, wealth, and life. The unfaithful wife inhabits the earthly and the mundane; but Lady Wisdom sores in heaven above space and time. Both rub shoulders in the city and appeal for the love of the uncommitted, gullible youth - the seductress physically, Lady Wisdom spiritually. The house of the adulterous wife is a death trap; while the mansion of Lady Wisdom leads to abundant life. The critical decision to love Wisdom like a member of his family (7:4) before entering the city is seen as a desperate warning to the simpleton (1:4) to avoid the seductress at all costs, as Lady Wisdom extols her virtues and rewards. Chapter 8 is the Second interlude from Lady Wisdom: Wisdom's call to the Simpleminded (8:1-36).**¹⁸³

The father says (8:1-3): The passage begins with the third person voice of **the father**, who has been speaking throughout the book, introducing **Lady Wisdom**. In the first **three verses he** uses a figure of speech called personification. As **he** writes, **he** takes on the persona of **Lady Wisdom. He** encourages **the young men**

to **listen** and take **her** message to heart by asking a question: **Does not Lady Wisdom call out and Understanding raise her voice (8:1 NLT)**! This question demands a positive answer. The first question is, **“Does not Lady Wisdom call out?”** We know that **she** does because **she** has already called out in **Chapters 1-7**. The second question, **“Does not understanding raise her voice?”** is quite similar to the first. In fact, **they** are so similar that it is hard to catch any difference between **them**. However, the general picture is clear. **Lady Wisdom**, also called **Understanding**, is shouting loudly. We must wait to discover **her** audience and **her** message. Beginning with such a rhetorical sentence grabs our attention, so we press on to find the answers.

The next **two verses** tell us of **her** location. **Lady Wisdom calls out on the heights along the path (8:2a NLT)**. First, we note that **she calls out along the path**. Up to this point in the book, **the path** has been a frequent metaphor. **It** stands for a life journey, and the reader, who is identified with the implied reader (**the son**), is walking on **the path**. By mentioning **the path** in this way, **Solomon** informs us that as we live our lives, we will encounter this **adulterous wife** (or **husband**). But more than that, we hear that **she is on the hilltop**. Here and elsewhere, we see that **Lady Wisdom** is associated with **the heights**. When we get to **9:1-6**, the significance of this aspect of **her** location will be developed further, but it is critical to fully understand **her** personification. The fact that **she calls out** from **the heights** near **a path** means that **she** is going to be heard by all those who pass by. **She** speaks fervently, with conviction. **She** doesn't shut **herself** up in a monastery, or even at home, but **she takes her stand at the crossroads (8:2b NLT)**, a place where many people will travel. We envision a large, energetic audience for **Lady Wisdom** as **she** delivers **her** message. **By the gates at the entrance to the city**, a place where important decisions were made, **on the road leading in, she calls out aloud (8:3 NLT)**. Like **the crossroads, the city gates** were a busy, public place.¹⁸⁴



Lady Wisdom calls (8:4-11): These verses may be called the preamble of **Lady Wisdom's** speech. A new section begins in **verse 12**, signaled by a typical Near Eastern autobiographical introduction (see [Bk - Those Who Seek Me Will Find Me](#)). **Her** first **words** here, though, are intended to garner the attention of **the sons of men, or the young men**, that **she** addresses, so **they** will listen to **her words**. **Verse 4** transitions from third-person *about Lady Wisdom*, to a first-person speech *by her*. **She** speaks directly to **the young men**, who, from **verse 4** to the end of **Chapter 8** are called **fools** and **simpleminded**. **She** begins in a way that enables us to identify **her** audience: **I call to you, men, to all of you! I raise my voice to the sons of men (8:4 Hebrew)**. After her autobiography, as **she** again implores **her** audience to hear **her**, **she** refers to them as **"sons."** Therefore, the audience presumed up to this point in **Proverbs** continues: **young men** who are beginning **their** professional and marital lives. **They** are at an impressionable crossroads, so **the words** of **Lady Wisdom** are especially timely.

Verse 5 provides another nuance to **their** identification. **They** are **simpleminded** and **foolish**. **You who are simpleminded, use good judgment; you who are foolish, show some understanding (8:5 NLT)**. Obviously, as is clear from the first term, **they** are not hardened fools or "mockers." **They** are naïve, immature, those who are capable of responding to **her** message appropriately. **She** wants them to understand **prudence**. As explained more fully in **1:4a**, **prudence** describes one's ability to use reason, in context and under **the fear of ADONAI**, to

navigate the problems of life. **Prudence** carefully considers a situation before rushing in. It implies coolheadedness and is closely associated with **wisdom** and is the cure for **foolishness**.

In the next few verses we are struck by the ethical quality of **Lady Wisdom**. **She** raises **her voice** with a sense of urgency, declaring: **Listen to me! For I have important things to tell you. Everything I say is right. For I speak the truth and detest every kind of wickedness. All the words of my mouth are righteous; none are crooked or perverted. To the discerning all of them are right; they are upright to those who have found knowledge (8:6-9 NIV)**. **She** uses words like **truth** and **righteous**. **She** distances **her words** from things that are **crooked** or **perverted**. **She** despises **wickedness**. Many proverbs to follow in **Chapters 10-31** will concern speech, and we will see that the **wise** person emulates **Lady Wisdom** in this regard. Specifically, that means that **they** avoid speech characterized as gossip, rumor, lies, and slander. And by describing **her** speech in such a way, **Lady Wisdom** prepares the reader to receive the words that will follow in the rest of the chapter.¹⁸⁵

The last two verses in this section utilize a motif that is most fully developed in **Job 28**. **Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than pure gold (8:10 NIV)**. See the similar metaphor used to accentuate the value of **God's** reign in the B'rit Chadashah (see [The Life of Christ Fo - The Parable of the Pearl](#)). When **silver**, a metaphor for **wealth**, is the reward of **wisdom**, **it** edifies; but when **it** is made the aim of one's life, **it** corrupts (**First Timothy 6:9-10**). **The words of Lady Wisdom** are seen in terms of the most valuable things imaginable. **For wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her (8:11 ESV)**. The idea that **wisdom's** value exceeds material **wealth** is described in **8:18-21**, which states that **wisdom** is needed to gain and appreciate **wealth**. Also, **wisdom** contributes to a person's integrity and peace, something **silver**, **gold**, and **rubies** cannot do. And in **Proverbs** those qualities are of greater value than anything one could ever buy.¹⁸⁶