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Madam Folly's Invitation to Death

9: 13-18

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.



We now come to the climax of the first **nine chapters**. Previously, we have spoken of **a path** on which **the son** is encouraged to walk. That **path** represents life's journey. **The son** has received instruction to stay on **the right path** and not to go astray on **the crooked path**. The previous **chapters** have warned of violent ambushes from **evil men** and the amorous advances of **flattering women**. These instructions have come to **him** from **his parents**, voiced by **his father** and from **Lady Wisdom**. In **Chapter 9** a choice presents itself to **him**, and to us.²⁰⁷ The passage portrays two **houses**, one on either side of the road. On one side, **a house** stands open, with an elegant **lady** named **Wisdom** inviting us into **her house** of holiness. On the other side of the road, another **house** stands open, with a seductive **woman** (or **man**) named **Folly** inviting us into **her** macabre manor. It is

decision time for **the son** and **the simpleminded**. Will they embrace **Lady Wisdom of Madam Folly?**²⁰⁸

The woman named Madam Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without a moral compass (9:13 Hebrew). Unlike **Lady Wisdom (to see link click [Bn - Lady Wisdom’s Invitation to Life](#)), Madam Folly** hasn’t prepared very much. **She** has no food to give and sends out no servant girls. Instead, **her** character is outlined, whereas **Lady Wisdom’s** character was only implied by **her** words and actions. **Madam Folly** personifies the rejection of **wisdom** based on **the fear of ADONAI** (see [Ai - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom](#)). In an attempt to cover up **her** insecurities, **she** is pictured as being **loud**; attractive but unruly. Here, as elsewhere, **Madam Folly** offers immediate gratification, whereas **Lady Wisdom** offers long-term satisfaction.

Unlike **Lady Wisdom**, who prepared and searched out **her** guests, **Madam Folly** merely sat **in her doorway on the heights overlooking the city (9:14 NLT)**. **She** has temporarily left **her house** on the street and ascended to **the heights of the city** so that **she** might attract more suiters. Opposed to **Lady Wisdom**, whose **house** is given some description, **Madam Folly’s** gets no depiction. Without a **moral compass**, **she** lacks any desire to leave **her** undisciplined state to seek out righteousness. Opposed to **the woman of noble character** (see [Dy - Wisdom for Women](#)), **she** embodies **foolishness**.

She calls out to men passing by who are minding their own business, inviting **them** to **her** home **(9:15 NLT)**. Frequently, in **Chapters 1-9** we have encountered the metaphor of the path as a reference to one’s life journey. So **her** invitation comes to those who are living life; **she** speaks specifically to the simpleminded **(1:4)**. In other words, **Madam Folly** appeals to the same **immature group** as **Lady Wisdom**. **They** are rivals for the attention of the same group of gullible **young men**, thus creating the need for a decision.²⁰⁹

“Come in with me,” she urges the simpleminded. These are the same words **Lady Wisdom** used to invite **the young men** into **her house** of life. **She** is calling out for **them** to turn aside to **her** and what **she** has to offer. **Her** tempting offer is based on the assumption that what is forbidden or hidden must be better than what is offered by **Lady Wisdom**. **To those who lack good judgment, she says, “Stolen water is sweet.”** **Stolen water** is a subtle way of referring to adultery, stealing what belongs to another, as in **5:15-17** where water is used for sexuality. This is depicted as sweet and attractive. **“And bread eaten in secret is tasty”**

(9:16-17 Hebrew) is parallel with **stolen water**, and suggests that what is done in **her house** will not be made known to others. It happens in private, away from prying eyes. This echoes the seductive words of **the adulterous woman** earlier in the book (see **Bi - Avoid the Seductress**). **Her** invitation started off in the same way as **Lady Wisdom’s** in **verse 16**, but now in **verse 17**, it sounds more appealing, as **she** offers forbidden fruit.²¹⁰

The last verse of this section, though, shows the horrific consequences that will result from choosing **the house** of **death**. **But** (indicating that the wrong impression given by **Madam Folly’s** words will now be corrected) **he doesn’t realize that the dead are there, and that those who accept her invitation are in the depths of sh’ol** with no way out (**9:18 CJB**). **Those** who accept **Madam Folly’s** invitation go expecting to find life and renewed energy, but find **death**. While **her** invitation sounded very appealing, it is dangerously deceptive.

As Tremper Longman III relates in his commentary on *Proverbs*, the final chapter of the first part of the book brings to end several major themes and demands that the reader make a fundamental life decision. Here and there in the first eight chapters, we have encountered the idea that there is a path on which we walk and that this path stands for one’s life journey. We have already heard from **Lady Wisdom**, and while **Madam Folly** is a new character in the drama of the book, **her** human counterpart, **the adulterous woman**, has anticipated **her**. Both **Lady Wisdom** and **Madam Folly** issue invitations. We must decide.

Who is **Lady Wisdom**? **Wisdom** is clearly a personification of **ADONAI’s** attribute of **wisdom**. However, **she** is also associated with **her** influence over men. After all, we hear about **the wise woman of Tekoa** (see the commentary on **the Life of David DI - The Wise Woman of Tekoa**), and **the queen of Sheba** (see **the Life of Solomon Bu - Solomon and the Queen of Sheba**). But if **Wisdom** is a personification of **ADONAI**, then who is **Madam Folly**? To start with, **she** is the personification of **foolish** thought and behavior, but more. **She** too, represents deity, but in **her** case **she** stands for all the pagan gods and goddesses who desire to lure **Isra’el** away from **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**. **She** stands for Marduk, Ba’al, Ishtar, Anat, Asherah, Chemosh, Molech – and the list can go on and on.

Again, the reader/**son** must make a choice, and this choice is fundamental for **wisdom**. In the final analysis, there is no wisdom apart from a relationship with **Lady Wisdom**, meaning **ADONAI**. In this regard, this metaphor reinforces the point

of the “motto” of the book: **The fear of ADONAI is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (1:7)**. There is no middle path. One is either **wise** or **foolish**, associated with one or the other of the two **women**. Furthermore, as we move into the second part of the book, **Chapters 10-31**, the very terms “**wisdom**” and “**foolish**” and **their** numerous related terms are full of theological meaning. For instance, **Proverbs 10:1** states: **A wise son makes a father glad, and a foolish son brings grief to his mother.**

We now recognize the meaning of this verse like this. It states that **a son** who makes **a father** (who stands for both **parents**) glad is **wise**. To be **wise** means that one acts like one who is in a relationship with **ADONAI**. On the contrary, those who bring sorrow to **the mother** (again standing for both **parents**) show **themselves** to be **fools**, and that means **they** are acting like worshippers of pagan deities. In this way, the **proverbs** have important theological significance even when **they** do not explicitly name **ADONAI** or some well-known theological concept. **Wisdom** and **foolishness themselves** are such theological concepts. **The two houses** of **Lady Wisdom** and **Madam Folly** stand behind **Yeshua's** teaching that contrasts **the house** built by **a wise** person and the one built by **the fool** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Dy - The Wise and Foolish Builders](#)). **The house** built by **Lady Wisdom** withstands assault, while that by **folly** leads to destruction.²¹¹

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **You** are full of steadfast love and mercy. **Wisdom** looks to the future and chooses to accept **Your** invitation of love, though trials may come. A future of eternal joy that never ends, is worth far more than any trials that may seem long and very hard now, in light of eternity, all earthly trials will be over in a blink! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. But **Madam Folly** looks like an easy way to fulfill sensual desires; but in reality, it is a trap/a bottomless pit into pain and suffering. Following **Madam Folly** or doing good deeds to be seen by others is foolish and senseless. May **Madam Folly's** words fall on deaf ears. May your loving call as **Shepherd** fall on ears that hear **You** and quickly to turn your love in faith - your steadfast love, almighty power, and never-ending mercy, love and care. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*