

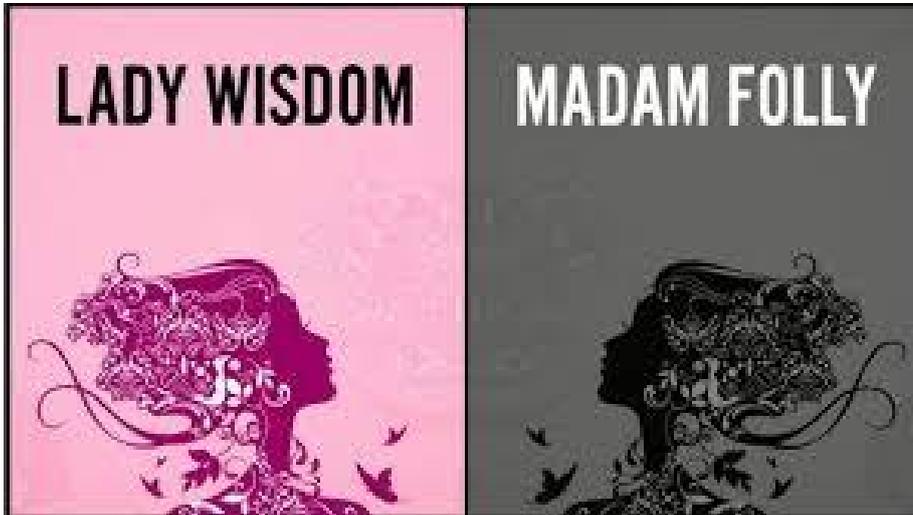
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## Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly

### 10: 1-16

**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 title, **the proverbs of Solomon (10:1a NIV)**, implies that this begins a distinct collection, ending **22:16**. No longer are there relatively long discourses of **a father** or **Lady Wisdom** to **a son**, but now we have a collection of **proverbs**. Even though **Chapters 1-9** constitute a different section from what follows in **Chapters 10-31**, we are to understand the theological message of those earlier **chapters** as casting **their** long shadow across the individual **proverbs** in this second major section of the book.<sup>215</sup> Even though the topic heading is the same as the opening of the entire book **1:1** and drapes **his** covering over the entire book, there are sections within the book that **he** did not author, as evidence in the titles in **22:17**, **24:23**, **30:1**, and **31:1**. Yet, this section can be attributed to **him** in the sense that **he** authored many of **them**, adopted and adapted **others**, and gathered still more to give a comprehensive set of cameos that tell it like it is. **Solomon** wrote about 84 percent of the book, all of it of course being inspired by the divine **Author, the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**.<sup>216</sup>



**A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother (10:1b NIV):** What we see here is a contrast between a **wise son** and a **foolish son**; the **wise son** has chosen to listen to **Lady Wisdom** (to see [link click Bn - Lady's Wisdom's Invitation to Life](#)), and the **foolish son** has chosen to listen to **Madam Folly** (see [Bo - Madam Folly's Invitation to Death](#)). The **wise son** is contrasted with a **foolish son** in **13:1** with a  **mocker**, and in **15:20** with a  **foolish man**. A  **son** who has become  **wise**, by heeding  **his parents' teachings** (see [Ak - Obey Your Parents](#)),  **brings joy to his father**, a fact stated several times in  **Proverbs (15:20, 23:15 and 24, 27:11 and 29:3)**. A  **foolish son (1:7)**, on the other hand,  **brings grief to his mother**. This does not mean that a  **foolish son** does not  **grieve his father**, as is clearly stated in  **17:21 and 25, and 19:13**; nor does it mean that a  **mother's** heart is not filled with  **joy** by  **her son's wisdom**. The use of " **father**" in the first part of the verse and " **mother**" in the second part of the verse is typical of proverbial literature. Both  **parents** experience either  **joy** or  **grief**, just as both are involved in teaching  **the son (1:8, 4:3-4, and 6:20)**.<sup>217</sup> This  **proverb** is a good illustration of an antithetical (contrasting)  **proverb**, constructed mainly from antonyms ( **wise/foolish; glad/sorrow; father/mother**).

**Prosperity and want (10:2-5):** These  **proverbs** all concern  **wealth** and  **want**. While  **God's** overt involvement in causing  **the righteous** to  **flourish** is usually not explicitly mentioned, it is a theological belief of the book that  **ADONAI** always sustains the order of creation. This makes it appropriate to introduce this idea early.<sup>218</sup>  **Wealth gained by wickedness does not profit, but righteousness delivers from death (10:2 NLT)**. At first glance, the connection between cola 1 (a

single unit of poetry) and cola 2 seems vague. While **wickedness** and **righteousness** are opposites and provide a kind of contrast, the first cola appears to be about wealth, whereas the second does not. However, a closer look shows that the two parts of the verse are related and combine to say that there is something more valuable than **wealth**. And wealth cannot save us **from death**.<sup>219</sup>

**ADONAI will not let the godly go hungry, but He refuses to satisfy the cravings of the wicked (10:3 NLT). The way of ADONAI is a stronghold to the upright, but destruction awaits those who do evil (10:29).** What is **Solomon's** point here? Actually, **He** is the unseen stronghold for **the upright**, for those who sincerely desire to please **God** and submit to **His** authority. **He** is an invisible obstacle in the way of **the wicked**, those who willfully reject **God's** will and intentionally try to frustrate **His** plans. But **Ha'Shem's** sovereign rule is so complete that **He** will accomplish **His** objectives and reward **the faithful** regardless of anyone's opposition.<sup>220</sup>

However, though the meaning of **the proverb** is clear, the urgent question is, "What connection does it have with reality?" Is it really true that **the righteous** are well cared for by **ADONAI** and **the wicked** are ignored? Can this **proverb** be a barometer of our relationship with **God**, so that if we starve, we must not really be believers? Of course not (**Psalm 37**). That view is totally undermined by the books of **Job** and **Ecc**. We must remember that **proverbs** are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

**Idle hands bring poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth (10:4 CJB).** This is part of a collection of proverbs in **Chapters 10-31** that describe the contrast between **laziness** and **hard work** (among other places see **6:6-11, 10:26, 12:11** and **24, and 24:30-34**). This is an antithetical (contrasting) **proverb** with an observation of the consequences of **laziness** followed by an observation on the consequences of **hard work**. The former leads to **poverty** and the latter to **wealth**. This is a consistent message throughout the book of **Proverbs**. **A wise son gathers in the summer, but he who sleeps during the harvest is a disgrace (10:5 CJB).** Insight is a quality of **the wise**; **disgrace** is a moral evaluation of **the fool**. The contrast is between **an industrious son** and a **slacker**. Reflecting on **10:3**, we may generally say that **the righteous** would be diligent workers and would therefore not **go hungry** because of their work. It is **ADONAI** who gives the believer **wisdom** and the drive to succeed. Again, this is a generalization, all things being equal.<sup>221</sup>

**The righteous and the wicked (10:6-7):** Both of these **proverbs** contain a contrast between **the righteous** and **the wicked**, linking **the righteous** with **blessing** (not just the hard work as in **verse 4**), and contrasting the enduring value of being **righteous** with the self-destructive **path** of **the wicked**.<sup>222</sup> **The godly are showered with blessings, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked (10:6 Hebrew).** The first colon associates **blessings** with **the righteous**. The word **blessing** is associated with the covenant in **Deuteronomy**. Indeed, one aspect of being **righteous** is being in a covenant relationship with **ADONAI (Deuteronomy 28:2). The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot (10:7 BSB).** There is a clear association between this **proverb** and the previous one. Here **memory** balances with **names** as synonyms, and **righteous** and **wicked** as antonyms. **Blessing** and **rot** play off each other as well.<sup>223</sup>

**The babbling fool (10:8-10):** These verses are tied together by the mention of **the babbling fool** coming to ruin at the end of both **verses 8** and **10**. **The babbling fool** is literally *the fool of lips*, implying that **fools** use their speech to promote **foolishness**. **The wise of heart are glad to be instructed, but babbling fools' lips will be ruined (10:8 Hebrew). Whoever walks with integrity walks securely, but those who follow crooked paths will be exposed (10:9 Hebrew).** Beginning in **1:10-19, Proverbs** has many allusions to the metaphor of life as **a path**. This proverb is an observation on the difference between those who live honestly and those who live deceptively. The point of the first colon seems to be that someone with a clear conscience allows one to live life openly and with boldness. The second colon issues a warning to those who live deceptively, **evil** lives that even though **they** pretend to be innocent, though **they** try to hide **it**, **their evil** will be found out. **Whoever winks at evil**, thus dismissing **it**, **causes trouble, and a babbling fool will be ruined (10:10 Hebrew).**

**The importance of speech (10:11-14):** These verses focus on the importance of speech for both **the wise** and **the foolish**. **Verse 12** does not directly refer to speech, but the explicit mention of speech or **the mouth** in the surrounding verses implies that **the hatred** and **love** of this verse probably also refer to these attitudes being expressed in words.<sup>224</sup> **The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.** As **a fountain** gives life-saving water, so **the mouth** of **the righteous** utters life-saving words. These might be words of encouragement or of rebuke to correct the errors of another. The life-giving words of the righteous are contrasted with the words of **the wicked**, which **conceals violence (10:11 Hebrew)**, a word

suggesting **death**.

**Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses (10:12 ESV).** The **hateful** person spreads rumors of his perceived adversaries, which **stirs up strife**. The wise person does not repeat such gossip, thus covering another person's transgressions with **love**. **Peter** would later quote this verse when **he** wrote: **Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sin (First Peter 4:8).** Readers of the B'rit Chadashah will also recognize **Paul's** comments on **love** (see **First Corinthians Cu - The Necessity of Love**).

**Lady Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning (10:13a Hebrew).** Notice there is a connection between **discernment** and **wisdom**. The person who speaks **wisdom** is **prudent (1:4)** and first considers a matter before commenting on it. **Discernment** comes from a diligent study of **God's Word**, while **wisdom** comes from consistent obedience to **the Word**. The two operate together to give one **wise** speech. **But the rod is found on the back of those who lack understanding (10:13b Hebrew).** **Fools**, by contrast, do not consider **their** ways or examine **their** lives in light of **God's Word**. **Their** speech is therefore mere empty gibberish. **They** might consider themselves to be "wise," but the rod of correction awaits **them**. **The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin (10:14 NIV).** This **storehouse** is filled up from the study of **Scripture**. As our **storehouse** grows, **it** will overflow into **wise** words. **The fool** however, is quick to respond, even though **he** is devoid of **wisdom**. As a result, **his** words will bring about **his** own **destruction**.<sup>225</sup>

**The value of wealth (10:15-16): The rich man's wealth is his fortress, but the poverty of the poor is their ruin (10:15 NLT).** The point of comparing wealth to a fortress is to highlight how wealth can protect one against the dangers of life. A fortress can keep an invader out, so wealth can keep problems at bay. To give a modern example, take a plumbing example. If a pipe bursts, no problem. Just pay the plumber to fix it. On the other hand, if a pipe bursts in the home of the poor, what are they to do? Put it on their credit card and go down the road into debt? As we proceed through **Proverbs**, we will see that this is not the only perspective that **it** has on **wealth (3:9-10, 22:22 to 23:11, 28:1-11, and 28:12-28)**.<sup>226</sup>

**The wages of the righteous bring life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death (Proverbs 10:16 NIV); the profits of the wicked are deceptive (Hebrew: *shaker*); but those who sow righteousness gain true**

**reward (11:18 Hebrew).** As Derek Leman relates in his book *Proverbial Wisdom and Common Sense*, sitting around the table, the Jewish family observes the traditional Shabbat dinner. Mom lights the candles, saying the ancient Hebrew blessing as the family waits. The smell of the Shabbat meal tempts everyone as they wait. Dad lifts the cup and recites the prayer of sanctification. When he has finished drinking, mom says, *L'chayim* meaning *to life*. This is a short Jewish prayer, or a toast. It reflects one of the highest Jewish values: **the wages of the righteous bring life.**

Potentially, this could mean that the goal of the work of the righteous is their own life or the life of others. In other words, this verse could mean, “The righteous work to live,” or “The righteous work to help others live.” In either case, the contrast with the wicked would make sense, “The righteous are working to earn a living, while the wicked work to fund their sinful lifestyle.”

On the other hand, the work spoken here may refer to more than simply the occupational work of the righteous. It might also refer to voluntary labor, or any activity on behalf of others. Thus, the contrast would be, “The righteous spend their spare time promoting life, while the wicked spend their time enabling sin.”

A third possibility is that *L'chayim* refers to the favor of **ADONAI** in this **life**. **YHVH** bestows eternal life to **His** children. No one wants to be **blotted out** of **God's book of life**, which prior to its use in **Revelation 3:5** with regard to eternal life, was always understood as referring to *this life*. **Moshe** taught the people about **God's blessings** and **curses** with regard to the Sinai Covenant, and said that they had a choice between **life (blessing)** and **death (curse)** (see **Deuteronomy Fq - Choose Life**). Perhaps the **righteous** labor of rewards in this life.

Whichever the case, the question of motive is raised by this **proverb** and asks the question, “Are you working for **life** or for sinful pleasure?” Is your motive for going to work to live a life of wanton pleasure? Or are you working to provide a **life** for yourself, for others, to promote **life**, and perhaps to please **ADONAI** and find **His** favor in this **life**? If not, **Solomon** says you are working for an illusion. The word **deceptive** in **11:18** is *shaker*, which refers to a *lie, false hope, or uselessness*. In other words, **the wages** promise something that is not delivered. Stolen bread looks sweet, but afterward it tastes bitter.

The whole idea is best summed up by **Yeshua**, who said: **What will it benefit a person if he gains the whole world but forfeits his own life (Luke 9:25).**

**Messiah** tells of a rich **fool** whose crops prospered greatly one year. In considering what to do with **his** great wealth, **the rich man** decided to store it in silos. **He** wanted to live the easy life for the rest of **his** life. So, rather than using **his** excess to help others, **he** stored it up for **his** own comfort. But **he** was a **fool** because that was the very night that **Ha'Shem** was coming to claim **his** life. **He** would not enjoy the fruits of **his** selfishness. Our **Lord's** application is short but sweet: **That's how it is with anyone who stores up wealth for himself without being rich toward God (Luke 12:21).**<sup>227</sup>

Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your** gracious invitation to an eternal home of joy and peace for those who trust in **You**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** Wisdom chooses the path of eternal joy where there is no shame. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame" (Romans 10:9-11).** Great joy comes to all who believe in **You** and are adopted into **Your** family (**Ephesians 1:5, John 1:12**). It is so **wise** to make choices with eternity in view. An eternal life of joy and peace is of far greater value than any pleasures on earth that will vanish like smoke. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen