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## Closer than a Brother 18:22 to 19:23

**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.**

**A. Poverty, wealth, and friends (18:22 to 19:7):** After an introductory **proverb** about the **man** and **his wife**, **18:23** to **19:7** are about the moral uncertainties of **wealth**. **The rich** attract **friends**, but **the poor** person loses **them**. Words for **the poor person** occur as bookends of this unit in **18:23** and **19:7**, as well as **9:1** that introduces the subunit of **9:1-3**, and **19:4**, that introduces the subunit of **19:4-7**. The other key word is **“friends,”** meaning **people** who pretend to be **a friend**, but actually are not. The connection of these three sub-units suggests that **the “friend”** in view is not **wise**; **they** can be bought (**18:23**, **19:1-3**, and **4-7**), and it is foolish to depend on **them** (**18:24**). **The poor** person’s only hope is to find **a true friend who sticks closer than a brother** among **the wise**. The reference to **seeking favors of a nobleman** in **verse 6** prepares the way to **wisdom in the court and in the home** (**19:8-15**).<sup>371</sup>

**Introduction (18:22):** **He who finds a wife finds a good thing and receives favor from ADONAI (18:22 CJB).** The book of **Proverbs** as a whole has much to say about the right **woman**, though much of the teaching is about avoiding the wrong **woman**, and is primarily found in **Chapters 5-7**. This particular verse underlines the importance of **a good wife** by claiming that **she** is **a divine gift**. The difference between **a good wife** and **a seductress** reflects the difference between the figurative language of **Lady Wisdom** and **Madam Folly** (**to see link click [Br](#) - Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly**). Finding **a good woman** anticipates the final pages of the book (see **[Dz](#) - Wisdom for Women**).

**Wealth and pseudo-friends (18:23-24):** **The poor plead for mercy; the rich answer with insults (18:23 NLT).** One’s social status determines the

tone of one's voice. The contrast is between **the poor** and **the rich** man. **The poor** man **pleads for mercy** because **he** has no choice but to ask. **The rich** man, however, often spews **insults** as **he** has hardened **himself** against such appeals because of relentless demands.<sup>372</sup> Other **proverbs** condemn **the rich** man for making **wealth his fortress**. For example: **The rich man's wealth is his fortress, but the poverty of the poor is their ruin (10:15)**. These are not unrelated. Since **the rich** man's own security depends on **his wealth**, not on **ADONAI**, **he** must defend **his fortress** against **their** cries. **The poor** have no choice but to speak pleadingly, but **the rich** have an option how to answer and so are held accountable. By contrast, **God** hears the pleas of **the needy (Psalm 28:2 and 6, 34:6 and 15, 116:1)**, and the B'rit Chadashah teaches: **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matthew 5:7)**.<sup>373</sup>



**Some "friends" pretend to be friends, but a true friend sticks closer than a brother (18:24 CJB).** You might have many **"pseudo-friends"** who will let you down, even when everything is on the line. But you can also have one **Super-Friend who sticks closer than a brother**. When **Paul** was put on trial before Caesar, all of **his** so-called **"friends"** abandoned **him**. But that was okay with **the apostle**. **He** was not even angry. Why? **ADONAI stood by me and strengthened me (Second Timothy 4:17)**. **Proverbs 18:24** is saying, true **friends** are not found in quantity but in quality. And no one offers us higher quality **friendship** than **Yeshua Messiah**. C. S. Lewis, in his essay on **friendship**, says that a new **friendship** starts out like this, "What? You

too? I thought I was the only one.” **Friends** do not need to be alike. **They** just discover how much **they** have in common. Guess what you have in common with **Messiah**? Everything you care about the most. **He** cares about you. **He** cares about your **sin**. **He** cares about your future. **He** thinks about you. **He** understands you. **He loves** you. You are not alone. **He** is here. You can talk to **Him** right now. Will you let the eternal **friendship** begin for you today?<sup>374</sup>

The Bible says **that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (First Corinthians 15:3b-4)**. If you believe that and have never asked **Yeshua** to be your **Lord** and **Savior** would you pray this simple prayer today: **God, I admit that I have sinned. I believe Jesus Christ died for my sins, and I want to trust Him to save me right now**. It is important that you understand that repeating this prayer does not save you. It is only faith in **Messiah** as your **Lord** and **Savior** that saves you. Now you need to find a good messianic synagogue or church that teaches **the Word of God** faithfully so you can grow in your faith and have fellowship with other believers. Why should **ADONAI** let you into **His** heaven? That’s right. **Messiah** died for all your **sins** . . . past, present and future!

**Wealth and ethics (19:1-3)**: The unit now turns from **the friendless poor** to the spiritually worse-off **wealthy**, escalating the latter’s unethical behavior against **his** neighbor. **His lies (verse 1)** and **his greed (verse 2)**, to **his own downfall** and continued **anger** against **God (verse 3)**. **Verses 1** and **2** form a **proverb** pair connected by the theme of what is **not good**, involving the catchword *tob*, meaning *pleasant, agreeable, or good*, by characterizing **the wealthy sinner** by **his** misuse of **his lips** and **feet**.<sup>375</sup>

This **proverb** continues the topic of **the poor** man and **his speech (18:23)**, but turns from **his** failed social relationships to **his** successful ethics. **Better** (Hebrew: *tob*) **to be poor and honest than one whose lips are crooked and is a fool (19:1 Hebrew)**. **“Better-than” proverbs** communicate relative values. The sages would certainly say that it was **better to** have some **wealth**, if not be **rich**, than to be **poor**. However, ethical qualities are more important than material possessions. This **proverb** affirms the principle that **folly** is an ethical concept. **Fools** are not only dull minded and do stupid things, **they** are also **evil people**. Specifically, according to this **proverb**, **they tell lies** (whose lips are crooked)

**Also, it is not good** (Hebrew: *tob*) **for a person to be without knowledge; how much more will the one who hurries [with his feet going] down the wrong path (19:2 Hebrew).** This **proverb** reminds us of the well-known English saying, “Haste makes waste.” If one is impulsive, not thinking before acting then one is going to commit errors.<sup>376</sup> To **hurry down the wrong path** means to miss **the way** or **the goal (Judges 20:16; Job 5:24; Proverb 1:10).** This points to a lifestyle that fails the standard of conduct demanded of Ha’Shem, a crime that deserves **His** punishment (**11:31, 13:6, 14:22**). **Proverbs 20:2** declares: **The king’s fury is like a lion’s roar, to rouse his anger is to risk your life.** In that light, how much better is **the poor** person who walks in total dedication to **ADONAI** and **His** teachings than a condemned **sinner** who enriches **himself** through **lies**.<sup>377</sup>

**The foolishness of a man ruins** (Hebrew: *tesallef*, meaning *to twist, pervert, or overturn*) **his path, but then he gets angry at God (19:3 Hebrew).** The **fool** gets it backward. Instead of repeating the **sins** that caused **his** own **ruin**, **the fool** is so convinced that **his sinful** way of life is right that **he gets angry at God**, holding **Him** accountable for not getting what **he foolishly** wanted. **The feet** that were made to go straight, walks so *crookedly* that **his** tracks can only be traced with a *corkscrew*. **ADONAI** missed none of this and will see that justice is done.<sup>378</sup>

**Wealth and friends in court (19:4-7):** The final subunit in section **A**. **Poverty, wealth, and friends**, returns to the moral uncertainty of “**friends**” and **wealth**, with a particular focus on **the king’s court** and **noblemen**. **Verse 6** elaborates on the notion of **18;24** that **wealth** attracts “**pseudo-friends**,” and **verse 7** develops the idea of **19:4b** that **the poor** lose even **their** close **friends**.<sup>379</sup>

**Wealth makes many “friends,” but the poor drive them away (19:4 NLT).** Everyone wants to be a **friend** of **the rich**, but no one wants to associate with **the poor**. **The poor**, after all, have problems and may need help or even generous gifts to survive, whereas **the wealthy** at least give the appearance of being able to help. Indeed, **Qoheleth, the Teacher of Ecclesiastes**, understood that **wealth** attracts **people**, but also made it clear that these “**friends**” were leeches. **The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what good is wealth - except perhaps to watch it slip through your fingers (Ecclesiastes 5:11 NLT)!**

**A false witness will not go unpunished** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Bt - Do Not Give False Testimony**), **whoever breathes out lies will not escape (19:5 CJB)**. The teaching in **Proverbs** on **lying in court** is extensive (especially see **6:19, 12:17, 14:5** and **25, 19:9, and 21:28**) and clear. This particular verse emphasizes the certain negative fate of those who engage in such speech. Though the primary setting is clearly legal, the principle applies to all speech.

**Many seek favors from a nobleman; everyone is a friend who gives gifts (19:6 Hebrew)**. The **proverb** is in the form of an observation. **People** present themselves positively to those from whom they expect to gain favors. **Noblemen** are usually **wealthy** and have positions of influence, and thus **people** are nice to **them**, at least to **their** faces, hoping to gain favor. The same is true with anyone else known to bring gifts. This verse makes a similar point to **19:4: Wealth makes many “friends,” but the poor drive them away**.

**The relatives of the poor despise them; how much more will their “friends” hate them!** The first two cola are quite clear in meaning and in keeping with the message of **19:4**. No one likes to be around poor **people**, not **their relatives** nor **their “friends.”** **Though the poor plead with them, their friends are gone (19:7 NLT)**. **The poor** are too much trouble, and **they** are no help to others. Neither **their relatives** nor **their friends** are there when **the poor** try to speak to **them** about **their** problems.<sup>380</sup> It is important to note that **proverbs** are not promises; **they** are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

**B. Wisdom in the court and in the home (19:8-15):** The addition to the noted links between the first two subunits (**18:22 and 19:7**) the repetition of **19:5** and **19:9**, the contrasting of **hate** at the end of the first (**19:7**) and of **love** in the second (**19:8**) also ties **them** together. Although **the poor** is hated by everybody and not presently experiencing **“good,”** yet by keeping these teachings, **he** will preserve **his** life and is **better off than the fool**.<sup>381</sup>

**Introduction (19:8): Those who acquire “heart” love themselves; those who guard competence find good (19:8 Hebrew)**. This observation serves as motivation to work at acquiring **wisdom**. **“Heart”** implies character, in my opinion. Many scholars believe that **“heart”** points specifically to one’s mind, and certainly parallel with **competence**, a word formed from the verb to

*understand* would help support this idea. However, the second colon does not provide an exact parallel to the first colon but, rather, more carefully details the meaning. Thus, I understand the first colon as saying that those who want to improve their character want the best for **themselves**, and the second colon as more specifically talking about one aspect of character: **competence**, practical knowledge.<sup>382</sup>

**Wisdom in the court (19:9-12):** These verses pertain to the public arena, beginning with the punishment of **the false witness (verse 9)** and ending with **the king's wrath and favor** toward all (**verse 12**). **Verses 11 and 12** are a **proverb** pair commending **patience** and **restraint** with **wrath**. **Verses 9 and 10** are linked by *lo* (Hebrew: *not*) and pertain three things that are not appropriate: **false witnesses are not acquitted (verse 9)**, **fools do not live in luxury (verse 10a)**, and indentured **slaves do not rule over princes (verse 10b)**.

**A false witness will not go unpunished, whoever breathes out lies will perish (19:9 CJB).** Perjury is the first folly that must not be tolerated to acquire **good**. This is emphasized by repeating **19:5: A false witness will not go unpunished, whoever breathes out lies will not escape**. The only difference is that it replaces the positive: **will perish** (see **10:28**), with the negative: **will not escape**. The contexts of the subunits probably assume that **YHVH** is the ultimate **Sovereign** who upholds justice through **His** proxy **king (verse 12)**. Repeating the sequence of **16:1-9: Dependence on ADONAI**, and **10-15: The king's respect**.<sup>383</sup>

**It isn't fitting for a fool to live in luxury, and even less for a slave to rule over princes (19:10 CJB).** **Solomon** had a definite sense of what was appropriate in terms of social arrangements. From the perspective of **wisdom**, the first colon is obviously true. It is not **fitting for a fool to live in luxury**. However, that such a comment needed to be made alerts us to the fact that **he** knew that sometimes **fools** did **live in luxury**. The second colon seems to indicate a certain rigid idea of social stratification. **Slaves** serve. **They** do not **rule**, and if **they** did, it wouldn't turn out very well. This teaching is similar to that found in **Ecclesiastes 10:5-7**, which also comments negatively on the reverse situation - **kings, nobles**, and **the wealthy** having low social positions.<sup>384</sup>

**People with good sense are slow to anger (patience), and it is their**

**glory to overlook (show restraint) an offense (19:11 CJB).** Church father Augustine of Hippo (354 to 430 AD), said, “Anger is the seed; hate is the tree.” **Anger** is a dangerous emotion that is easy to start and hard to stop. In many ways, **anger** is the opposite of **love**. **Paul** says **love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs (First Corinthians 13:4-5).** But **anger** is impatient and unkind. It is exceedingly jealous and proud. **Angry people** are often very rude. **Anger** stems from selfishness and keeps a strict **record of wrongs**.<sup>385</sup> Those with **wisdom** avoid conflict. Here they do so by controlling their emotions. Sometimes when responding to an annoying offense, **people** make more trouble for themselves than is necessary. The phrase, “Making a mountain out of a mole hill” comes to mind. Therefore, **the wise** are not quick to respond **angrily** to someone. **ADONAI Himself** is slow to take offense (**Exodus 34:6** and **Micah 7:18**).<sup>386</sup>

**The king’s rage is as terrifying as a lion’s roar, but his favor is like dew on the grass (19:12 Hebrew).** **Amos** found the height of uncontrollable **fear** in the sudden **roar** of a **lion (Amos 3:8)**. **Lions** were at home in Palestine from earliest times to the end of the Crusades, about 1200 AD. **Samson (Judges 14:5)**, **David (First Samuel 17:34-35)**, and **Benaiah (Second Samuel 23:20)** all fought with **them**. The second colon of this **proverb** doesn’t contrast the animal world, but from weather. **The king’s favor** is compared to **the dew** that refreshes **the grass** and all other vegetation. Between the rainy seasons, the impact of **dew** in Palestine is absolutely essential to the growth of **grass** for grazing animals and leafy vegetables for **the people**. **Oh, how good, how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in harmony. It is like the dew of Mount Hemon that settles on the mountains of Tziyon. For it was there that ADONAI ordained the blessing of everlasting life (Psalm 133:1 and 3).**<sup>387</sup>

**Wisdom in the home (19:13-15):** The setting now shifts from the public arena (**19:9-12**) to the private home. **Verses 13-14** pertain strictly to the home: **son** and **wife (verse 13)** and **wealth** and **wife (verse 14)**. **Verse 13** presents a dysfunctional home; **a foolish son**, a man’s closest male companion (**10:1, 12:1, 15:20 17:21** and **25**), and **a nagging wife (21:9 and 19, 25:24, and 27:15)**, a man’s closest female companion. **Verse 14** presents a functional home; **his** household and property and **prudent wife**.

**The son** who squanders **the** family **inheritance (verse 13a)** and **the contentious wife (verse 13b)** stand in contrast to **the father's inheritance** and **prudent wife (verse 14b)**.<sup>388</sup>

**A son who is a fool, is his father's ruin; and a nagging wife is like dripping water that just won't quit (19:13 Hebrew).** This **proverb** combines two concerns individually addressed in other **proverbs**. The perspective is that a father deals with two important relationships. On the one hand, a son who makes foolish decisions is a disaster to the father (10:1). After all, **a foolish son** ends up in all kinds of trouble that affects **the father** greatly because of **his love** for **his child**. The second intimate relationship that can be the source of annoyance is **his wife (21:9 and 19, 25:24)**. **Nagging** here likened to the torture of **dripping water**. It is not an overwhelming force, but it can wear one down.

**A house and wealth are inherited from ancestors, but a prudent (1:14) wife is from ADONAI (19:14 CJB).** Good things (**a house and wealth**) come **from ancestors**, but this is nothing compared to the gift that can only come from **ADONAI: a wise wife**. This **proverb** balances the previous one, which speaks of **a nagging wife**. **Proverbs** do not pick on **women as women**, only on those who disrupt social harmony in the family. **Proverbs** reserves **its** highest praise for virtuous **women** (see [Dz - Wisdom for Women](#)).

**Lazy people sleep soundly, but idleness leaves them hungry (19:15 NLT).** This **proverb** is one of a series of sarcastic statements about **laziness** (see [Dk - The Lazy Person](#)). **Solomon** believes that **the lazy person** has adopted a foolish strategy for living, which will lead to **their** own demise. Here, **the lazy person** would rather **sleep** than **work**. Not even **their hunger** will motivate **them** to go out and work. **They'd** rather starve to **death**.<sup>389</sup>

**C. Educating the son to show kindness to the needy (19:16-23):** The educational **proverbs** in **verses 16** and **23** frame the third subunit. Both mention the reward of **life (verses 16a and 23a)**, but **23b** enhances **the father's command (16a)** to **fear ADONAI**. The subunits' core, **verses 18-21** consists of two pairs of **child rearing proverbs**. To reach the educational goal it requires hard **discipline (verses 18-19)**. The unit is punctuated with sayings about **ADONAI (verses 17, 21, and 23)**, who upholds a moral order that rewards the kind with abundant life (**verses 17** and **23**) and that punished the ruthless with **death**.<sup>390</sup>

**Introduction: keep the father's commandment to live (19:16): He who keeps the mitzvot (guidelines) keeps his life, but he who doesn't care how he lives will die (19:16 Hebrew). The mitzvot of ADONAI are protective.** Whether in the TaNaKh or in the B'rit Chadashah, **the guidelines of ADONAI** are intended to keep us safe.<sup>391</sup> Keeping the mitzvot of the Torah as well as keeping the advice of the father allows one to live life in a way that minimizes the possibilities of premature **death**. However, **death** will come to those who ignore the strategy of **wisdom** living.

**ADONAI will reward kindness to the poor (19:17): If you are gracious to the poor, it's as if you lent (whatever you gave them) to ADONAI, and He will repay you for your good deed (19:17 Hebrew).** This **proverb** uses the metaphor of credit to commend generous behavior to the poor. To give to the poor is like a loan to **God Himself**, who will reward those who do it. It suggests that the main type of **gracious** behavior in mind is in terms of material goods. Those who give food **to the poor** will find **their** own material possessions increase, though it is possible that other nonmaterial rewards are also included (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Cy - The Year of Release**).

**Warnings to the father to discipline his son and the hothead (19:18-19): Discipline your child while there is hope, but don't lose your head and get so angry that you kill him (19:18 CJB).** Discipline, a term that implies physical punishment, is the key to **wisdom**. **Children** are not naturally wise but must be trained **in wisdom**. The sages put a lot of emphasis on the urgency of instructing **the young** in the ways of **wisdom**. If **they** are allowed to grow old without being influenced by **wisdom**, then **they** will end up being **fools**, and **folly** leads to **death**.

**A hothead must pay the penalty. If you rescue them once, you will have to do it again (19:19 NLT).** This **proverb** makes an observation about **people** who are normally **angry**. They grow angry and bring **people's** resentment on themselves. The observation is actually addressed not to **those** who cannot control **their anger**, but to **those** who try and help them get out of **their** arguments/fights. It is a reminder that the problem is habitual. Perhaps the implicit message is not to try to rescue such **people**; like **the fool** who does not deserve a response (**26:4**), **the angry person** should not be helped.

**Warnings to the son to accept his father's discipline and counsel (19:20-21): Listen to advice, and accept discipline, so that in the end you will be wise (19:20 CJB).** Becoming wise is not an overnight or an automatic thing. One must listen to other **wise people** and accept their correcting instruction. Over time, then, a person grows in **wisdom**. This **proverb** may seem most naturally addressed to the young men and women at the beginning of **their** life-long sanctification process, but it can be followed by even the most mature.<sup>392</sup>

**You can make many plans, but ADONAI's purpose will prevail (19:21 NLT).** This thought is similar to that in **Chapter 16** (see **Cn - We Plan, but God Determines Our Steps**). This discourages the idea that human strategy can lead to success. We must depend on **God**. Nevertheless, **ADONAI** has given us free will, so, to that end, we should develop a purpose statement, or **a statement that summarizes God's purpose for your life**. As Rick Warren describes in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, it's not a list of goals. Goals are temporary, purposes are eternal. **His plans endure forever; His purposes last eternally (Psalm 33:11 TEV). It's a statement that points the direction of your life.** Writing down your purposes on paper will force you to think specifically about the path of your life. **Know where you are headed, and you will stay on solid ground (Proverbs 4:26 CEV). It's a statement that defines "success" for you.** It states what you believe is important, not what the world says is important. It clarifies your value. **Paul said: I want you to understand what really matters (Philippians 1:10 NLT). It's a statement that clarifies your roles.** You will have different roles at different stages in life, but your purposes will never change. They are greater than any role you will ever have. **It's a statement that reflects the unique ways God made you to serve Him.**

Take your time writing out your life purpose statement. Don't try to complete it in a single setting, and don't aim for perfection in your first draft. Just write down your thoughts as fast as they come to you. It's easier to edit than to create. Also write down any scriptures that come to mind as you are writing. Here are five questions you should consider as you prepare your statement.

1. What will be **the center** of my life? This is a question of worship. Who are you going to live for? What are you going to build your life around? You can center your life around your career, your family, a sport or hobby, money, having fun, or many other activities. These are all good things, but they don't

belong in the center of your life. None are strong enough to hold you together when life starts breaking apart. You need an unshakable center. You need to put **Messiah** at the center of your life.

2. What will be **the character** of my life? This is the question of discipleship. What kind of person will you be? **God** is far more interested in what you *are* than what you *do*. Remember, you will take your character into eternity, but not your career. Make a list of the character qualities you want to work on and develop in your life.

3. What will be **the contribution** of my life? This is a question of service. What will be your ministry in **the Body of Messiah**? Knowing your combination of spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences, what would be your best role in the family of **God**? How can you make a difference? Is there a specific group that I'm supposed to serve?

4. What will be **the communication** of my life? This is the question of your mission to unbelievers. You should include your commitment to share your testimony and the Good News with others. If you are a parent, part of your mission is to raise your children to know **Messiah**, to help them understand **His** purposes for their lives.

5. What will be **the community** of my life? This is the question of fellowship. How will you demonstrate your commitment to other believers and connection to **God's** family? Where will you practice the "**one another**" commands with other believers (see the commentary on **Romans Af - The List of "one another" Commands**)? To which church family will you join and function as a member.<sup>393</sup>

**The poor desire unfailing kindness, not selfishness (19:22):** Sandwiched between **ADONAI proverbs (verses 21 and 23)**, this **proverb** instructs **the son** specifically to show unfailing **kindness** to the needy, and not to be selfish. **What a person desires is unfailing love; better to be poor than a liar (19:22 NIV).** The first colon states that **people** desire **kindness** (see the commentary on **Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed**), a term that describes the heart of the covenant relationship. **Chesed** can refer to either the divine-human or human-human relationship, and it is likely that the latter is meant here. The second colon gives a "**better-than**" **proverb** that favors integrity over **wealth**. Again, it does not demean **wealth** but just presents relative

values. The connection with the first colon would then be a matter of sharpening the focus of **covenant love**. **Chesed** entails many virtues, one of which is integrity, faithfulness in the area of relationships. Those in a covenant relationship must stay true to their word. **Lying** is a fundamental breach of trust, often spoken against in **Proverbs (6:16-19, 13:5, 14:5, 25:18)**.

**Conclusion (19:23): The fear of ADONAI leads to life** (see [Ai - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom](#)); **one who has it is satisfied and rests untouched by evil (19:23 CJB)**. It drives out all other fears and **leads to life** (also see colon 1 of **14:27**) and not to **death**. The specific fear in view in colon 2 seems odd but may be illustrated by a couple of well-known stories in the TaNaKh. In **Genesis 9** and in **Judges 19**, we have stories of travelers who lodge for the evening in a strange town and face incredible **evil**, even though they have sought refuge in someone's home. These stories inform us that travel in the ancient world was not a secure matter, and only sure recourse was **ADONAI**.<sup>394</sup>