

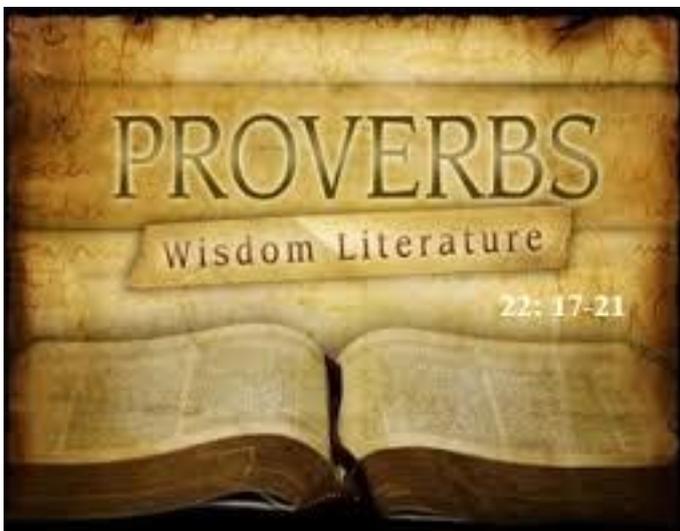
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Prologue to Thirty Sayings of the Wise

22: 17-21

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 passage serves as an introduction to a new section of **thirty sayings of the wise**, which conclude with **24:22**. As an introduction to a major section of the book of **Proverbs**, these verses serve essentially the same function as the introduction to the whole book (**to see link click [Ai](#) - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom**), giving insight into intentions of the composer/compilers of the material.



Motivating the son to hear (22:17-18): The introduction begins with an appeal to pay attention to the material that follows. We can be confident that the instruction is directed from **a wisdom teacher** to **a pupil**. However, anyone would be **wise** to pay attention. **Listen to the sayings of the wise, and apply your heart to knowledge (22:17 NLT)**. The reference to **the sayings of the wise** attributes the following **thirty sayings** to a group of unnamed **sages**. **Proverbs**

were often passed down anonymously, and so it is not likely that the writer of the prologue had specific people in mind. It is a way of saying that the following teaching had its origin in **the wisdom tradition**. If some **proverbs** happen to come to **Isra'el** by way of Egypt (as some propose), then we are not even to restrict **the "wise"** to a collection of **Israelite wisdom teachers**. However, even if **their** origin is foreign, **their** content is perfectly in keeping with **native Israelite wisdom**, and inspired by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, for **ADONAI** can even make **a donkey speak truth (Numbers 22:21-40)**. **Verse 18** begins to give the motive why **the students** should be receptive to the teaching. **For it is good to keep these sayings in your innermost being and always have them ready on your lips (22:18 Hebrew)**. **Their** lives will go better if these sayings are internalized. The term **innermost being** is literally "stomach." To **keep them** in your stomach is a picture of integrating them into the innermost part of a person's being. The integration of the sage's wisdom needs to come before it can be used in the student's own life. In other words, appropriation into the student's character is then followed by their own ability to express **wisdom: have them ready on your lips**.⁴⁴⁴

Janus (22:19): I am teaching you today, yes, you, so that you will trust in ADONAI (22:19 NLT). The center line functions as a janus, named after the Roman god of endings and beginnings, symbolized by having two faces - one looking back toward the past and one looking forward toward the future. Thus, this verse looks back its focus on **the son** in **22:19a** and looks forward its focus on **the father** in **22:19b**.

The father's purpose (22:20-21): I have certainly written thirty sayings for you, filled with advice and knowledge. In this way, you will know the truth. These sayings are trustworthy, unshakable **advice**, having insight into the morality of the students. In sum, **the sages** aim through these **thirty sayings** to ground the character and social structure of **Isra'el** by teaching these **sayings** that demand trust in **ADONAI** into the belly of **Isra'el's** covenant **sons** and placing **them** on **their lips, so that they may accurately answer those whom they serve (22:20-21 NLT)**. Through these sayings, **the king** ensures that the entire chain of within **his** administration will be honest, making decisions on the basis of truth, not lies.⁴⁴⁵