

# Triennial Torah Study – 6<sup>th</sup> Year 09/05/2015



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Lev 1-2	Jer 19-21	Prov 14	Acts 11
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## Introduction to Leviticus (Leviticus 1)

Moses evidently wrote much of Leviticus sometime in the first month [Abib or Nisan on the Hebrew calendar, corresponding to March-April] of the second year of the wandering of Israel (compare Exodus 40:17; Numbers 1:1; 10:11)—perhaps putting it in its final form shortly before his death nearly 40 years later. The book's Hebrew name, *Wayyiqva*, meaning "And He Called," is taken from the first words of the book. The Greek title, from the Septuagint, is *Leuitikon*—Latinized in the Vulgate as *Leviticus*—which means "pertaining to Levites." However, this title is somewhat misleading as the book does not deal with the Levites as a whole but more with the priests, the family of Aaron, a segment of the Levites. (The Levites as a whole are not sanctified until the book of Numbers.) Perhaps more appropriate titles for the book would be those found for it in the Jewish Talmud—"The Law of the Priests" and "The Law of the Offerings."

The Aaronic priesthood was divinely ordained by God as a mediator between Him and the nation of Israel. As this book directed, the priests were to officiate over an elaborate system of sacrifices and rituals. The book of Hebrews tells us that "all this is symbolic, pointing to the present time [of Messiah's redemption]. The offerings and sacrifices there prescribed cannot give the worshipper inward perfection. It is only a matter of food and drink and various rites of cleansing—outward ordinances in force until the time of reformation" (9:9-10, New English Bible)—that is, the time of Messiah's death and resurrection followed by the giving of the Holy Spirit to the New Testament Assembly. Nevertheless, the sacrificial system was from God—and served a valuable purpose in that it was part of what was ultimately intended to lead people to Messiah (see Galatians 3:24-25). Indeed, there will again be sacrifices after Messiah returns (see Ezekiel 46:1-15).

Yeshua has, of course, become the true sacrifice for all mankind. Thus, there is no need for the sacrifice of animals at this time: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He [Yeshua] came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God."' Previously saying, 'Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them' (which are offered according to the law), then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of

the body of Yeshua Messiah once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:4-12).

It should also be noted that the Melchizedek priesthood of Yeshua Messiah has now taken over from the Aaronic priesthood. Yeshua is now the Mediator between God and man (see Hebrews 7-10). And, in fact, *Messiahians* are now *priests* serving under Him (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Indeed, the ultimate sacrifice of Yeshua Messiah was not the only thing typified in the various sacrifices of the Old Testament. They also represented our following Messiah’s example today, presenting *ourselves* as offerings: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Realizing this amazing fact, as *The Nelson Study Bible’s* introductory notes on this book explains, “modern Messiahians can learn much from Leviticus. The holiness of God, the necessity of holy living, the great cost of atonement and forgiveness, the privilege and responsibility of presenting only our best to God, the generosity of God that enables His people to be generous—these are only some of the lessons. Leviticus reveals the holiness of God and His love for His people in ways found nowhere else in the Bible.

Ultimately, Leviticus calls God’s people of all ages to the great adventure of patterning life after God’s holy purposes.”

Before looking at each of the five main offerings detailed in the first seven chapters of Leviticus, it is recommended that those wishing to study them in much greater depth read a 19th-century book by author Andrew Jukes titled *The Law of the Offerings*. It is available to order through the Internet or you can probably find it at your local library or Messiahian bookstore, as it is considered the standard work on this topic. While we would not agree with Jukes’ book in a number of particulars, it is biblically sound in many important respects and offers some incredible insights into the subject. Be warned, however, that because of its older and somewhat elevated style, it does not always make for easy reading.

## **Burnt Offerings (Leviticus 1)**

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We often think of Old Testament sacrifices as simply typical of Messiah’s death. But there is far more to it than that. As Andrew Jukes explains, offerings were “divided into two great and distinctive classes—first, the sweet savour offerings, which were all... oblations for acceptance; and secondly, those offerings which were *not* of a sweet savour, and which were required as an expiation for sin. The first class, comprising the Burnt-offering, the [Grain]offering, and the Peace-offering—were offered on the [bronze] altar which stood in the Court of the Tabernacle. The second class—the Sin and Trespass-offerings—were not consumed on the altar: some of them were burnt on the earth without the camp; others the priest ate, having first sprinkled the blood for atonement. In the first class, sin is not seen or thought of: it is the faithful Israelite giving a sweet offering to [the Eternal]. In the Sin-offerings it is just the reverse: it is an offering charged with the sin of the offeror. Thus, in the first class—that is, the Burnt offering, the [Grain]-offering, and the Peace-offering—the offeror came for acceptance as a worshipper. In the second class, in the Sin and Trespass-offerings, he came as a sinner to pay the penalty of sin and trespass. In either case the offering was without blemish.... But in the [sweet aroma offering], the offeror appears as man in perfectness, and in his offering stands the trial of fire—that is, God’s searching holiness; and accepted as a fragrant savour, all ascends a sweet offering to [the Eternal]. In the other, the offeror appears as a sinner, and in his offering bears the penalty due to his offences” (pp. 55-56).

In the case of the burnt offering, we are not “to consider Messiah as the Sin-bearer, but as man in perfectness meeting God in holiness. The thought here is not, ‘God hath made Him to be sin for us’ [2 Corinthians 5:21], but rather, ‘He loved us, and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour’ [Ephesians 5:2]. Yeshua... both in the Burnt-offering and Sin-offering, stood as our representative.... We have here what we may in vain search for elsewhere—man giving to God what truly satisfies Him” (pp. 56-57). But it is not only the way that Messiah lived His life on earth 2,000 years ago that is pictured here. Rather, Messiah lives in us today as the same burnt offering. Thus, we are enabled to present *ourselves* as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1)—offering a “sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (Philippians 4:18) by giving ourselves wholly to Him (compare 2 Corinthians 8:5). Indeed, the burnt offering was wholly consumed, symbolizing “that the worshiper must hold nothing in reserve when coming to God; everything is consumed in the relationship between God and the sincere worshiper” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on Leviticus 1:3).

Yeshua, of course, set the perfect example in this. Jukes explains: “Man’s duty to God is not the giving up of one faculty, but the entire surrender of all.... I cannot doubt that the type refers to this in speaking so particularly of the parts of the Burnt-offering; for ‘the head,’ ‘the fat,’ ‘the legs,’ ‘the inwards,’ are all distinctly enumerated. ‘The head’ is the well-known emblem of the thoughts; ‘the legs’ the emblem of the walk; and ‘the inwards’ the constant and familiar symbol of the feelings and affections of the heart. The meaning of ‘the fat’ may not be quite so obvious, though here also Scripture helps us to the solution [Psalm 17:10; 92:14; 119:70; Deuteronomy 32:15]. It represents the energy not of one limb or faculty, but the general health and vigour of the whole. In Yeshua these were all surrendered, and all without spot or blemish. Had there been but one affection in the heart of Yeshua which was not yielded to His Father’s will... then He could not have offered Himself or been accepted as ‘a whole burnt-offering to [the Eternal].’ But Yeshua gave up all: He reserved nothing. All was burnt, all consumed upon the altar” (pp. 63-64). This is the same end to which we strive—through Messiah living His life in us today.

## Grain Offerings (Leviticus 2)

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The King James Version of the Bible labels these as “meat” offerings. However, this Elizabethan English word simply means “food.” Sometimes also called “meal” offerings, they consisted of grain. This all makes sense when we consider that man’s most consistent source of sustenance, the “staff of life,” has been bread. In this symbolism, we may perhaps observe that the grain offering symbolized worship of God through providing for fellow man. Messiah has done this perfectly as the “bread of life” that came down from heaven, which we are to eat of as our food (see John 6; Matthew 4:4). Indeed, this offering provided a major portion of the food for God’s priests. It was not wholly burned upon the altar as the burnt offering was. For rather than symbolizing total devotion to God, it, again, included the service of fellow man as part of that devotion. And yet, though it was not wholly burnt, it was totally consumed—by the fire of God as well as by the priests—with nothing left for the offeror. The offeror, as in the burnt offering, was to give of himself completely.

Let us examine, then, some of the ingredients of the grain offering. First is flour. “Bread flour must be ground” (Isaiah 28:28)—or “bruised,” as the King James has it. “Messiah our staff of life is here represented as the bruised One. The emblem, [grain] ground to powder, is one of the deepest suffering.... The thought is one of bruising and grinding; of pressing, wearing trial.

Yeshua was not only tried by ‘fire’; God’s holiness was not the only thing that consumed Him. In meeting the wants of man, His blessed soul was grieved, and pressed and bruised continually. And the bruising here was

from those to whom He was ministering, for whom He daily gave Himself” (Jukes, p. 80). And, of course, there was His actual physical bruising as a service to mankind. “And what a lesson is there here for the believer who wishes to give himself in service to his brethren! [—to be a food offering!] This scripture, as in fact all Scripture, testifies that service is self-surrender, self-sacrifice. Messiah, to satisfy others, was broken: and bread [grain] must still be bruised: and the nearer our ministry approaches the measure of His ministry—immeasurably far as we shall ever be behind Him—the more we shall resemble Him, the bruised, the oppressed, the broken One” (p. 83). Jukes also brings out the fact that fine flour, as it was supposed to be, has no unevenness—just as with Messiah, who was consistent in being fully godly in all areas.

He goes on to explain the oil in the grain offering as symbolic of God’s Holy Spirit, which, in the burnt offering, was represented as water (Leviticus 1:9). “The third ingredient of the [Grain]offering is frankincense—’he shall put frankincense thereon’; in connexion with which, and yet in contrast, it is commanded—’ye shall burn no honey unto the Lord.’ These emblems, like all the others, are at once simple yet most significant. Frankincense is the most precious of perfumes, of enduring and delightful fragrance: fit emblem of the sweetness and fragrance of the offering of our blessed Lord. Honey, on the other hand, though sweet, is corruptible; soon fermented, and easily turned sour. In frankincense the full fragrance is not brought out until the perfume is submitted to the action of fire. In honey it is just the reverse; the heat ferments and spoils it. The bearing of this on the offering of Yeshua is too obvious to comment. The fire of God’s holiness tried Him, but all was precious fragrance. The holiness of God only brought out graces which would have escaped our notice had He never suffered. Yea, much of the precious odour of His offering was the very result of His fiery trial” (p. 88).

The fourth and last ingredient of the grain offering was salt—in contrast to leaven, which was forbidden to be offered on the altar. “The import of these emblems is obvious: the one positively, the other negatively.... ‘Salt,’ the well-known preservative against corruption, is the emblem of perpetuity and incorruptness; while ‘leaven,’ on the other hand, composed of sour and corrupting dough, is the as well-known emblem of corruption” (pp. 89-90). A case in which leaven *could* be offered was that of the “offering of the firstfruits” (2:12)—that is, in the leavened loaves offered at Pentecost (23:15-21). But it could not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma (2:12). These leavened loaves represented the Assembly, still beset with sin (compare 1 John 1:8-10) yet finding acceptance through Messiah’s sacrifice and His living within its members. Just as Messiah did, we are to offer ourselves as food for the world around us—serving our fellow man as an offering to God (compare Matthew 25:31-46).

Also, the sacrifice mentioned in Leviticus 7:13, which is called, “the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering” was made with leaven. Here again, this sacrifice was not burned on the altar.

## **The Broken Flask; Jeremiah Put in the Stocks (Jeremiah 19-20)**

Chapter 19 contains the sign of the smashed clay flask. “Like the previous oracle this is an acted parable. The place is significant, the valley of Ben-hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, i.e. the rubbish tip [garbage dump] for broken crockery” (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verses 1-2). Indeed, Jeremiah escorts a number of elders and priests out to the trash dump to witness what is to become of Jerusalem. Some of the prophecy here regarding Tophet and the Valley of Hinnom, it should be noted, is repeated from Jeremiah 7:31-33. Tophet was the place in the Valley of Hinnom where children were sacrificed in pagan ritual, one of the most abhorrent customs the Israelites adopted from the Canaanites. Josiah had destroyed this place and it was now just a big trash pile in the valley.

Many innocents had died here, but now many guilty would die or be cast here—the corpses of the people of Jerusalem thrown out onto this heap. The dead would thus be given over to wild animals, causing the desecration of their remains (19:7). Compounding the horror, the people of Judah would sink to cannibalism out of desperate hunger during the coming Babylonian siege (verse 9), as God had pronounced at the time of Moses in the curses for disobedience to His laws (see Deuteronomy 28:52-57).

Jeremiah then smashed the clay flask as he was instructed, rendering it no longer useful (Jeremiah 19:10-11). It is interesting that this imagery followed the previous chapter, wherein God as the potter declared that He could refashion the people if they were willing. But they had refused—and therefore they will be smashed and, like this clay flask, cast into the refuse of Hinnom. God explained that just as Tophet, a place of pagan sacrifice, had been destroyed and turned into a garbage dump, so Jerusalem—the whole of which was a place of pagan sacrifice—would be destroyed in like manner (verses 12-13).

Some people today in their arrogance criticize God for being unfair. They fail to realize how great God is and how insignificant all mankind is by comparison. The potter analogy is a reminder of stark reality. As our Creator, God may shape us as a potter shapes clay. Like the potter, He can keep and use a vessel (a person) able to be shaped into a form of His choosing. Or, like the potter, He can simply discard the vessel that cracks or becomes misshapen in the process of His working with it. Of course, this is merely an analogy, which serves to illustrate a limited point. It does not convey the loving family relationship God seeks with mankind or the full spiritual potential He plans for it. Nonetheless, it remains a sober reminder of how insignificant a human being is compared to God, as well as of the fact that God will destroy the rebellious in *gehenna* (the Valley of Hinnom), a trash dump.

Jeremiah then proclaims the message of doom right in the temple court (verses 14-15)—with the elders and priests who returned with him probably explaining to others what they had just seen him do.

Pashhur, the “chief governor” of the temple—a priest who was head of security, being over the temple guards—takes action against Jeremiah for his pronouncements (20:1-2). Pashhur had evidently proclaimed, perhaps even in God’s name, that Jerusalem would not be destroyed (see verse 6). He is incensed at Jeremiah’s preaching, perhaps viewing him as an insurrectionist. As it stood, things were going quite well under Babylonian vassalship.

Whatever his motive, Pashhur “struck” Jeremiah (verse 2)—meaning either that he personally hit him or had another guard do so, perhaps to arrest him, or that he had the prophet beaten. This is the first recorded instance of actual physical violence against Jeremiah. Pashhur then had God’s prophet put into the stocks. “The Heb[rew] word (*mahpeket*) means ‘causing distortion,’ and the stocks forced arms, neck, and legs into an extremely painful position” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verses 1-6). While Jeremiah had escaped punishment a few years earlier by a council ruling, Jehoiakim may have overturned that ruling by his killing of Urijah (see Jeremiah 26). Or perhaps Pashhur had authorization to hold anyone temporarily at his own discretion until a higher order was issued.

In any event, Pashhur’s treatment of God’s prophet led to a pronouncement of divine judgment, which Jeremiah delivered when he was brought out of the stocks the next day—showing that the prophet had suffered in them overnight. Jeremiah declares that Pashhur, whose name meant “Large” or “Free,” which implied safety and security such as he proclaimed for Jerusalem, would instead be called *Magor-Missabib*, meaning “Fear on Every Side” (20:3). Pashhur, his family and his friends would all be dragged away captive to die in Babylon (verse 6).

The rest of chapter 20 shows the personal anguish Jeremiah experienced. In verse 7, the word the King James Version renders “deceived” is better translated “enticed,” “persuaded” or, as in the New King James Version, “induced.” God had called Jeremiah with a strong appeal and, though Jeremiah gave some resistance, the urging of God was just too strong to deny. But in following His call and commission, the prophet was mocked every day. It got so bad that Jeremiah tried to cease prophesying (verses 8-9). But that was even harder to endure, so powerful was the urge to declare God’s message when it so very much needed to be said (verse 9)—particularly with all the taunting that just continued anyway (verse 10).

We find the scorners making fun of what Jeremiah had proclaimed regarding the new name of Pashhur, “Fear on Every Side” (same verse). However, Jeremiah is confident that God is with him and will judge these mockers (verse 11). He prays for God’s intervention (verse 12) and then rejoices in God’s deliverance (verse 13) in terms reminiscent of Psalm 109:30-31.

But then he sinks back into terrible depression (Jeremiah 20:14-18)—perhaps because God has not yet put an end to the mocking. It just goes on and on and on. Perhaps he had even been thrown back into the stocks for a time. Whatever the case, we again see the humanity of Jeremiah. Subject to constant ridicule, dire threats and now humiliating punishment, he felt so alone. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* states, “He had encountered more opposition from more enemies than any other O[ld] T[estament] prophet” (introductory notes on Jeremiah). Perhaps we can identify with the feelings he must have had to some extent. Other heroes of the Bible experienced similar moments. In wishing that he had never been born, he was echoing the cry of one of God’s great servants, Job (see Job 3). Of course, this is a passing phase that Jeremiah does overcome. In times of severe suffering, human beings think and say things that are not complete thoughts, but fragments of feelings and emotions that well up from deep inside. Indeed, all of us vent occasionally with outbursts due to frustrations, and what we say at such times isn’t necessarily what we truly mean or think.

God’s people do stumble at times, but they rise to go forward again and again (Proverbs 24:16), as Jeremiah certainly did. We should not be too hard on him here, but should rather learn a lesson about the need for endurance—a need Yeshua Messiah and His followers proclaimed (Mark 13:13; Matthew 10:22; 1 Corinthians 13:7; James 1:12; Hebrews 10:36).

## **Zedekiah Sends a Delegation to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 21; 34:1-7)**

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The prophet Jeremiah had warned incessantly of Babylonian invasion, calling on the nation of Judah and its leaders to repent. God, in fact, decreed through him that the nation should submit to Babylon. Zedekiah had not heeded. Instead, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, prompting swift retaliation, as we’ve seen.

In chapter 21, with the siege of Jerusalem underway, we see Zedekiah sending a delegation to Jeremiah to ask that he inquire of God regarding the outcome of the siege (verses 1-2). This delegation consists of Zephaniah the priest (earlier shown to have been sympathetic to Jeremiah in 29:24-28) and a certain Pashhur son of Melchiah (or Malchiah). He is not the same as Pashhur son of Immer, mentioned in Jeremiah 20, who long before had placed Jeremiah in the stocks. As we continue the story in the next few readings, we will find the king making further inquiries—yet, as we will see, he just cannot bring himself to do what he should.

Instead of giving Zedekiah the answer he wants here, the message to the king is that God will fight against Jerusalem Himself (verses 4-6). God had shown immense mercy over many generations, always correcting His people and then blessing them again as they repented. But many in Judah, including the king, showed

that they were hardened against God's way. There was no room left for minor corrective measures. God would now have to deal a final, decisive blow to their rebellion.

"The metaphor of the outstretched hand and mighty arm had been used many times (Deut 4:34 et al.) of God's miraculous intervention on Israel's behalf in Egypt. But now it is used to express God's opposition to his people. Their doom was inevitable and the defeat total. Jerusalem would be crowded with refugees who, with their cattle, will have fled from the surrounding areas" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verse 5). God is incredibly patient with human weakness, but the Bible makes very plain that He will not tolerate prolonged rebellion against Him. The fact that there is indeed a "last straw" of human sin that exceeds the limits of God's patience and willingness to extend mercy has ominous implications for today's sin-riddled societies. (Of course, even in His punishment God is showing mercy since the real cruelty would be to let humanity continue to grow more and more corrupt.)

God gives His people an ultimatum—choose life or death—defect or remain in the city (verses 8-10). To remain was too painful to imagine—famine and disease and then, weakened, to wage war to the death.

The royal house is then addressed with an appeal, even at this late stage, that the justice system be reformed—that the oppressed among the populace be delivered (verses 11-12). Otherwise God's judgment would fall (same verse). The clear implication is that a turn to righteous judgment, even now, would avert calamity. But a real turn doesn't come.

God says He is against the "inhabitant of the valley" and "rock of the plain" (verse 13)—references to Jerusalem. "In reply to the claim that 'rock of the plain' (KJV, RSV) is not suitable for Jerusalem [which sits on a hill], it can be shown that the Hebrew may be rendered 'level rock' or 'rock of the level place,' since *misor* denotes 'plateau'... (cf. Ps 27:11 {'straight path'}; 143:10 {'level ground'}). It would refer, then, to the level 'rocky plateau' (so NIV) on which Jerusalem stood. The valley could be the Tyropeon, between Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, an appropriate designation in that the royal residence was located on Mount Zion... [One] early archaeologist... understood the 'rocky plateau' to be Mount Zion, where there is a level tract of considerable extent. Finally, because the city was surrounded by high hills, it could appropriately be called a valley (Isa 22:1). Thus the words of the text are explicable" (*Expositor's*, footnote on verse 13). It should also be considered that, figuratively speaking, the land of Judah was, in terms of its political power at this time, a valley between the two mountains, or great kingdoms, of Babylon and Egypt.

Sadly, even in the face of actual siege, the people of Jerusalem remain foolishly confident that God will not allow His holy city to be breached (verse 13). They are, of course, gravely mistaken (verse 14).

In chapter 34, God sends Jeremiah to deliver the message of Jerusalem's fall to Zedekiah in person (verse 2). The king himself was not to die in the battle, but would be taken captive to later die in Babylon.

*The Macmillan Bible Atlas* says of this period: "The cities of Judah were destroyed one after the other. In various excavations, such as at Ramat Rahel, Beth-zur, Beth-shemesh, Lachish, Arad, and En-gedi, absolute destruction is apparent. The last of the fortified cities of Judah to fall were Lachish and Azekah (Jer. 34:7) The sentence: 'We are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah,' in one of the Lachish Letters (no. 4), was obviously written after the fall of Azekah [which was soon to come]" (Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, 1977, p. 105).

The "Lachish Letters" were military communications inscribed on potsherds—a common means of recording messages at the time—uncovered in 20th-century excavations of the Jewish stronghold of Lachish. They

provide dramatic archaeological corroboration of the biblical account of this tumultuous time. Regarding what they document about this period, *Expositor's* adds: "Evidence for the Fall of Azekah (Letter IV), written soon after Jer 34:7, is particularly revealing. As well the report of Judah's sending of a high army official to Egypt (Letter III) and of the unrest in Jerusalem (Letter VI) are illuminating, as is the mention of 'the prophet' (= Jeremiah? Letter VI)" (footnote on 2 Kings 25:2).

Egypt will respond to Judah's call for help, as revealed in our next reading.

## First Part of Major Solomonic Collection Cont'd (Proverbs 14)

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### 23. Self-Protective and Self-Destructive Behavior (14:1-3)

"TYPE: INCLUSIO" (*The New American Commentary*). "Verses 1 and 3 go together as signaled by the repetition of 'wise' and 'fool/foolish'; the difference between the two [types of people] is explained in verse 2" (*The NIV Application Commentary*, note on verses 1-7). Verses 1 and 3 show that the wise will ultimately benefit from their right choices but the foolish ultimately hurt themselves and those close to them. Verse 2 shows that what makes the difference is one's attitude toward God. It also makes clear that how one lives shows whether one properly reveres God or not.

Verse 1 is paraphrased in the New Century Version (NCV) as: "A wise woman strengthens her family, but a foolish woman destroys hers by what she does."

In the NIV, verse 3 opens with the words, "A fool's talk brings a rod to his back...." The NCV has "Fools will be punished for their proud words...." However, the Jewish *Soncino Commentary* points out: "The word [translated 'rod'] is found again only in Isa. [11:]1, where it signifies a new branch growing from the trunk of a tree. If rod was intended, as a symbol of punishment, another Hebrew word, *shebet*, would have been more appropriate. It is better, therefore, to translate: 'a branch (producing) pride.' From the fool's mouth issues haughty speech which has the effect of getting him into trouble" (note on verse 3). In either case, the implication is that the emergence of pride is ultimately self-destructive—especially given the contrast in the verse in which the wise are preserved by their own carefully chosen words.

### 24. A Worthwhile Investment (14:4)

"TYPE: SINGLE BICOLON PROVERB" (*NAC*). Where the KJV has "crib," the NIV has "manger" and the NKJV has "trough"—the object here being the feed-trough for oxen. *Soncino* comments: "This animal was employed for ploughing and threshing the corn [i.e., grain] (Deut. [22:]20, [25:]4). The point of the verse is neither the importance of agricultural work...nor the value of work as opposed to slothfulness.... As sometimes happens with a proverb, the abstract thought is presented by means of a concrete example. So here, the ox is used as an illustration. Having no ox is, from one point of view, an advantage because a man is then freed from attending to its care; but as against that there is the great advantage of having an ox for the provision of essential food. Consequently, the disadvantage of having to look after the animal is far outweighed by the benefits which accrue from its employment in the field" (note on verse 4).

*The New American Commentary* takes it a step further: "The point is that one must make an investment (obtain and feed the oxen) to get a large return" (note on verse 4).

### 25. Look Who's Talking (14:5-7)

"TYPE: THEMATIC....One should evaluate what a person says on the basis of his or her overall credibility (v. 5). Similarly, one should not expect to get sound advice from a person who shows no respect for the precepts



of wisdom (vv. 6-7). In short, the character of the speaker serves as a warning about whether his words are true or wise" (NAC).

Verse 5 is similar to verse 25.

The counsel in verse 7 does not mean we must immediately leave a room if a foolish person is in it. The point is that we should not associate with foolish people as much as is reasonable—and certainly not look to them for guidance. "Once again, the proverbs recognize that the company one keeps will have its influence. Taken together [with related proverbs], one can learn better alone than with the help of a fool" (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 7; compare 13:20).

#### 26. Appearance and Reality (14:8-15)

"TYPE: CHIASMUS....Life is often deceptive, and the text here implicitly exhorts readers not to be taken in by appearances [or how things might seem]...This series of proverbs is a carefully balanced chiasmus [or concentric arrangement]:

"The meaning of 'the folly of fools is deception' (v. 8 [NIV]) is not immediately evident, but the parallel in v. 15 implies that the naiveté of fools is in view" (NAC). Verse 15 shows that the simple are gullible while the wise proceed cautiously—to borrow from a modern proverb, they look before they leap. On the word in verse 8 translated "deceit" or "deception" (NIV), *Soncino* notes: "The verb from which this noun is derived, means 'to mislead'" (note on verse 8). The NRSV renders the verse this way: "It is the wisdom of the clever to understand where they go, but the folly of fools misleads." The wise know that things are not always as they seem.

"Verses 10, 13 likewise observe that no one knows the inner life of another's heart and that the appearance of happiness can be deceptive" (NAC).

Verse 9 is somewhat difficult to translate and the King James and New King James are probably incorrect here. The NIV has a likelier rendering: "Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright." Thus, "verse 9 states that the wicked believe they can avoid making restitution, but v. 14 [in concentric parallel] gives assurance of divine retribution. In other words, the appearance of getting away with a crime is belied by a justice that is not obvious or quick but is certain.

"In vv. 11-12, at the heart of the chiasmus, the apparent success of the wicked is short-lived.... The message of the whole is to avoid a superficial analysis of the lessons of life" (NAC).

Verse 12, repeated in 16:25, is crucial to always keep in mind. People the world over often act according to what they personally think is right—but not according to the way of life God reveals in His Word. Thus they all march headlong down the broad road to destruction (compare Matthew 7:13)—in dire need of true education and God's salvation. We must be sure to always look at things through the godly lens of Scripture and not mere human reason, living by faith and not by sight (compare Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

#### 27. A Patient Spirit (14:16-17)

"TYPE:...THEMATIC" (NAC). As pointed out in verse 15, a wise man thinks before he acts. Contributing to his reasoned patience is, as verse 16 notes, a healthy fear of the consequences of evil. This contrasts with the foolish self-confidence behind rashness and impulsive anger.

28. A Crown of Wisdom, An Inheritance of Folly (14:18-24)

TYPE: INCLUSIO, CHIASMUS, PARALLEL PROVERBS. “This text promises that the righteous will be crowned with wisdom and see fools bow before them. The passage also gives a few specific guidelines for right behavior, including compassion and personal diligence” (NAC).

Verses 18 and 24 are tied together through the wise receiving a crown or reward and the foolish inheriting only folly. The NIV captures the sense of verse 24: “The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly.” This is not a promise of wealth for the godly in this age. It merely expresses the principle that wealth is gained and sustained through wisdom and prudence, while the foolishness of fools leads to an outcome of more foolishness. Of course, the godly will be richly rewarded in the ages to come.

“Verses 20-23 fall between these verses and are themselves bound together in a complex manner. Verses 20 and 23 both deal with wealth and poverty, and vv. 21-22 both contrast those who are kind with those who plot evil. Viewed in this manner, vv. 20-23 are in a chiasmic pattern. On the other hand, vv. 20-21 both concern the different ways a ‘neighbor’ is treated, and vv. 22-23 both concern the respective gain or loss that comes to the good/diligent as opposed to the evil/lazy. Viewed in this manner, vv. 20-23 are two sets of parallel proverbs. Both the chiasmus and the parallel pattern may be viewed as follows:

“The full text deals with the recompense that accompanies wisdom or folly. Ethical issues here [that impact the outcome] include concern for the poor, diligence in work, and integrity in dealing with others” (NAC, note on verses 18-24).

Treatment of the poor (verses 20-21) is revisited in verse 31. In verse 20 the many friends of the rich are not true friends that can be counted on. Thus the New Living Translation rendering: “...the rich have many ‘friends.’” These are mostly parasitical, seeking handouts, personal advancement or notoriety through association.

29. An Honest Witness (14:25)

“TYPE: SINGLE BICOLON PROVERB” (NAC). As earlier noted, this verse is similar to verse 5.

30. The Fear of the Lord (14:26-27)

“TYPE: THEMATIC” (NAC). These proverbs focus on the fear of the Lord—the proper reverence and awe of God in His holiness and power through which the whole book of Proverbs is to be viewed and comprehended (compare 1:7). This perspective will protect us and our loved ones we influence, preserving us through various trials and keeping us from falling away to ultimate destruction. We will note more about this when we come to Proverbs 19:23.

31. National Security (14:28-35)

“TYPE: INCLUSIO [POSSIBLE CHIASM]...The health and well-being of a nation depends upon both the ruler and the governed. A ruler must be fair and above all must respect the rights of his people. The people, on the other hand, must have virtue in their lives or they will bring society into chaos. No government can succeed without the people, and no people can thrive if corruption and evil abound. The inclusio here is formed by v. 28, which describes a king’s need for a sizable populace, and v. 35, which obliquely asserts a king’s need for capable servants” (NAC).

In its note on verses 28-35, *The NIV Application Commentary* sees a possible chiasm here, based on the terms used:

Verse 29, which contrasts impulsiveness with patience, is followed by verse 30, which contrasts a sound heart or “a heart at peace” (NIV) with envy. Both verses show reasoned calm to be superior to uncontrolled emotion. In the latter verse, this calm is healthful while negative emotion is actually destructive to the body—facts borne out in modern medical science.

Verse 31, similar to verse 21, warns the powerful, such as national rulers, from oppressing the poor. To oppress the poor is to reproach God, since He has commanded that the poor be treated well. Those who honor God will obey Him in proper treatment of those in need. There may even be a hint here of Yeshua’ later teaching that as we treat people, so we treat Him (compare Matthew 25:31-46)—a principle more evident in Proverbs 19:17. See also 17:5.

Proverbs 14:32 says that the righteous has a refuge in death. Note again the refuge in the fear of the Lord in verse 26. While the wicked are swept away when calamity comes, the righteous ever have the refuge of God—even in death, showing hope beyond the grave (compare Isaiah 57:1-2). This is true in both an individual and collective sense.

The first colon of Proverbs 14:34 is inscribed above the entrance to a prominent American building—Los Angeles City Hall. That great city, and the nation at large—indeed all the world— would do well to heed this saying on the importance of the citizenry living according to God’s standard of righteousness and not descending into sin. Verses 34 and 35 are both linked by the theme of shame among those governed. “A people may wish for good character qualities in their leaders, but they ought to hold themselves to the same high standards. This may be a jab at the common assumption that honest and forthright character is always a good idea for someone else” (*NIV Application Commentary*, note on verse 35). Indeed, every person’s character contributes to the character of the whole community, so we should each take this as a personal responsibility.

## **Acts 11**

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Peter is given opportunity here in Acts chapter 11 to explain himself his dream of the descending sheet of unclean animals so there should be no doubt concerning the dream within our assemblies today. The dream was concerning the people of the nations – God has made them clean through His Set Apart Spirit. Therefore, they are clean and we may all worship and learn of Him together as One Man.

The preaching of the Good News went out successfully throughout Cyprus, Antioch, and Cyrene and many were joined unto Messiah and believed the missionary’s report. Barnabas is also sent out to Antioch and he also goes to Tarsus and retrieves Sha’ul from them to come to Antioch with him and they remain there teaching for a year. This is the first place that the believers and assemblies were called: Messianics.

A prophet Chagab prophesied a great scarcity of food over all the world and so the assemblies began preparing. As they gathered provisions, they also sent help to the assemblies in Jerusalem and Judea.