

Triennial Torah Study – 2nd Year 12/11/2011

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Lev 1-2	Jer 19-21	Prov 14	Acts 11
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Leviticus 1-2

Introduction to Leviticus (Leviticus 1)

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 Christ'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 Christ's death and resurrection followed by the giving of the Holy Spirit. 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 Christ (see Galatians 3:24-25). Indeed, there will again be sacrifices after Christ returns (see Ezekiel 46:1-15).

Jesus 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 [Jesus] 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 Jesus Christ 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 Jesus Christ has now taken over from the Aaronic priesthood. Jesus is now the Mediator between God and man (see Hebrews 7-10). And, in fact, believers are now priests serving under Him (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Indeed, the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ was not the only thing typified in the various sacrifices of the Torah. They also represented our following Christ'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 believers 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 Christian 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)

We often think of the sacrifices as simply typical of Christ'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 offerer. Thus, in the first class—that is, the Burnt-offering, the [Grain]-offering, and the Peace-offering—the offerer 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 offerer 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 offerer 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 Christ 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]. Jesus... 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 Christ lived His life on earth 2,000 years ago that is pictured here. Rather, Christ 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).

Jesus, 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 Jesus these were all surrendered, and all without spot or blemish. Had there been but one affection in the heart of Jesus 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 Jesus 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 Christ living His life in us today.

Grain Offerings (Leviticus 2)

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 offerer. The offerer, 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. Yahshua 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 Yahshua, 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 connection 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 Yahshua 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.

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 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 Yahshua our Messiah and His followers proclaimed (Mark 13:13; Matthew 10:22; 1 Corinthians 13:7; James 1:12; Hebrews 10:36).

Jeremiah 21

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.

To cover the Proverbs we missed these past weeks, we will cover Proverbs 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 together now.

First Part of Major Solomonic Collection Mostly Antithetical (Proverbs 10)

1. Subheading (10:1a)

The subhead of Solomon's major collection, containing the attribution, is found in Proverbs 10:1. Of this core section of the book (10:1-22:16), the first part (chapters 10-15) is made up mostly of antithetical proverbs, highlighting the choice between the way of wisdom and the way of folly.

2. A Diligent Son and a Lazy Son (10:1b-5)

"TYPE: THEMATIC, INCLUSIO....Verses 1b-5 form a collection marked off by the inclusio [a section that begins and ends similarly] of 'wise son / foolish son' (v. 1) and 'wise son / disgraceful son' (v. 5). The theme of the collection is that a family will thrive if the children are diligent in their work but collapse if they are lazy or resort to crime" (NAC).

It is interesting, after the nine-chapter prologue presented as a father's counsel to his son to choose wisdom over folly, that the first compact saying in Solomon's major collection concerns the impact a son's decisions in this regard has on his parents. Actually, "son" here can be understood as "child," whether son or daughter. "The tense of the verbs suggests that time after time a wise child gladdens parents, and time after time a foolish child brings distress to parents" (Nelson Study Bible, note on 10:1).

Verse 2 is very similar to 11:4. Righteousness delivering from death should be viewed in light of the whole of scriptural revelation. This is generally applicable to life in the here and now, in that wise choices promote physical longevity (see also 3:2; 10:27; 12:28). But of course, as noted previously, the verse should not be read as a rule or promise that righteous people won't die or won't die prematurely. God may decide to allow His faithful followers to die at a relatively young age. Jesus Christ, after all, died at 33. Yet in an ultimate sense, the verse, and others like it, can be understood to speak of deliverance from the second death, and thus the inheritance of eternal life.

In Proverbs 10:5, laziness characterized by oversleeping when there is work to be done is shameful (compare 6:9-11; 19:15; 20:13). Our time is our life. We must make good use of it.

3. The Mouth of the Wicked (10:6-11)

"TYPE: INCLUSIO, PARALLEL....Verses 6 and 11 form an inclusio as indicated by the repetition of the line, 'But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence' [NIV]. Within this inclusio vv. 7-10 are arranged in parallel (A B A B); v. 7 and v. 9 parallel each other (the fate of the righteous versus the fate of the wicked), and v. 8 and v. 10 parallel each other (both contain the line 'a chattering fool comes to ruin' [NIV]). The repetition of two lines in this section, both of which concern the mouth of the wicked, points to the major emphasis of the collection" (NAC).

Adding to the poetic parallelism, the Hebrew verb for "will fall" (verses 8, 10) or "comes to ruin" (NIV) comes from the same root as the verb translated "will rot" in verse 7 (Nelson, note on verse 8).

The one who "winks with the eye" in verse 10 denotes a person acting slyly with a hidden agenda. Thus two wrongs are contrasted here, rather than a right and a wrong as in most proverbs of this section. The silent deceiver is able to succeed in his schemes for a time while a chattering fool will get nowhere. This signals no approval of the deceiver, marking only the fact that he at least knows to choose his words carefully (compare 12:23). Eventually, as other passages show, he will meet judgment as well.

4. Seven-Proverb Collection (10:12-18)

"TYPE: INCLUSIO WITH TWO-PROVERB PAIRS.... Verses 12 and 18 form an inclusio...and vv. 13-14 and 15-16 are proverbial pair; catchwords are also used ["destruction" ("ruin" or "terror") in verses 14-15 and "to life" in verses 16-17]. Themes include wealth and poverty, wisdom and folly, and contentiousness" (NAC).

The apostle Peter essentially quoted from Proverbs 10:12 in 1 Peter 4:8. Some have taken "love covers all [or a multitude of] sins" to mean that showing love to others covers one's own sins before God. Yet in context, the clear meaning is that love is shown to others by covering their sins, that is, burying their past mistakes and not bringing them up, either to them (generating strife) or to others. Proverbs 11:13 speaks of not airing secrets (which include private past mistakes) as an act of faithfulness. Implicit in covering sins is forgiving them, as God does in Psalm 32:1. Of course, in the sense used there, only He can completely cover sins.

Proverbs 10:18 has caused some confusion. It is usually understood as synonymous parallel. In that case, however, all the proverbs of this section are in antithetical or contrasting forms except this one. It should be noted that the "and" here could be rendered "but," so that this proverb would be contrasting as well. In that case, as with 10:10,

two negatives would be contrasted. The Expositor's Bible Commentary takes this view, saying in its note on verse 18: "In this comparison two errors are given, the second being climactic: hypocrisy is bad enough, slander is worse. At least in the first one, the 'lying lips', one keeps hatred to himself."

5. On the Tongue, Personal Security, and Laziness (10:19-32)

"This section is a chiasmus [i.e., concentric arrangement] made up of four separate collections with a single proverb standing at the center as a somewhat humorous 'bridge.' The structure is: ABCBA

? "THREE-PROVERB COLLECTION. Type: Thematic, with One Proverb Pair (10:19-21)The use of the tongue is the theme of this collection, and each verse is merismatic [or antithetical in form]. Verses 20-21 closely parallel each other and can be regarded as a proverb pair. Verses 19 then is an ironic heading to vv. 20-21: Although the wise person gives sound advice, wisdom is found more in those who are silent than in those who are verbose!...

? "FOUR-PROVERB COLLECTION. Type: Thematic Parallel (10:22-25)... Only through righteousness and wisdom can one attain real security in life. The righteous can have wealth without the trouble that often goes with it (sycophants, legal problems), whereas the wicked will ultimately be brought down by the disaster they fear (vv. 22,24). And while the wicked find great amusement in their crimes, they will not withstand a real calamity when it comes (vv.

23,25). Verse 25 may be behind Matt 7:24-27....

? "SINGLE PROVERB. Type: Tricolon (10:26)" (NAC). The comparison here involves things that are unpleasant and irritating.

? "FOUR-PROVERB COLLECTION. Type: Thematic Parallel (10:27-30). The four proverbs of this collection all deal with the theme of long life for the righteous and destruction for the wicked. In addition, the proverbs are in an A-B-A-B pattern. This pattern is found in vv. 27 and 29, which are parallel with each other linked by the motif of the Lord, while vv. 28 and 30 are linked by the motif of the righteous. All four verses are linked by the motif of the fate of the wicked...and those who do evil" (NAC).

As with Proverbs 10:2, verse 27 about righteous living prolonging life and wickedness shortening it should be understood as: (1) a general principle of physical life, all else being equal (recognizing that circumstances in God's purview sometimes allow the opposite to occur in this world); and (2) in the context of eternal life for the righteous versus eternal death for the wicked, which is the most important context to bear in mind.

Next observe the similarity of language in 10:28 and 11:7 nearby.

? "TWO-PROVERB COLLECTION. Type: Thematic, Parallel (10:31-32)....The theme of this pair is the use of the tongue. The cola are in an A-B-A-B pattern, but note the inclusio using 'mouth' in v. 31a and v. 32b" (NAC).

6. What the Lord Abhors (11:1-21)

"In 11:1-21 a group of proverb collections are held together by the inclusio formed by 'the Lord abhors' and 'he delights' in vv. 1,20 [NIV].

? "MORAL INTEGRITY AND GOD'S JUDGEMENT. Type: Chiastic (11:1-4)....Verse 1 describes God's abhorrence of fraud, and v. 4 answers it with the promise that the wrongfully gained wealth of the wicked will do them no good in the day of judgment. Between these verses vv. 2-3 assert that humility and integrity, rather than their opposites, are the best guides in life" (NAC).

In its note on verse 1, The Bible Reader's Companion says: "Leviticus 19:35-36 forbids the use of 'dishonest standards,' weighted to favor the merchant rather than the seller [he buys from] or buyer [to whom he sells]. The

Jewish Talmud calls for meticulous efforts to keep this command, decreeing that ‘the shopkeeper must wipe his measures twice a week, his weights once a week, and his scales after every weighing,’ to keep any substance from throwing them off. We can’t be too careful trying to be fair with others.”

As previously noted, the language of Proverbs 11:4 is similar to that of 10:2.

? “SALVATION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS. Type: Thematic, Parallel Proverb Pair (11:5-6)These two proverbs parallel each other and describe the respective fates of the righteous and the wicked...

? “DEATH OF A SINNER. Type: Inclusio, Proverb Pair (11:7-8)....As the text stands, these two proverbs are bound by the inclusio of the word ‘wicked’ in v. 7a and v. 8b.... In addition, these verses assert that God brings utter destruction to the wicked and imply a promise of eternal life to the righteous” (NAC).

As earlier noted, v. 7 contains language similar to that of 10:28.

? “DESTRUCTIVE LIPS. Type: Chiastic, with an Afterward (11:9-13)....Verses 10-11 are an obvious pair in parallel, whereas vv. 9,12 are bound by the theme of the slanderous gossip of the wicked against restrained silence of the righteous....Verse [13] is an afterword on the subject of the tongue” (NAC).

Verse 10 may seem odd in light of the unpopularity of God’s servants among the nations of the world. However, despite persecution, it does make sense that others rejoice when the righteous are doing well: “Why should the community rejoice in the prosperity of the righteous? Because both the way a righteous man gains his wealth and the way he uses it benefits society. The righteous businessman employs others, supports schools and government with his taxes and in the O[l]d T[estament] tradition, shares generously” (Bible Reader’s Companion, note on verses 10-11). And often people enjoy seeing justice where the good guy wins.

? “NATIONAL AND PERSONAL PRUDENCE. Type: Parallel (11:14-15)....Both proverbs here follow the pattern ‘imprudent action brings disaster / prudent action gives security,’ but the first involves national matters where the second concerns personal business” (NAC).

Verse 14 explains that it’s vital to get counsel from a number of sources than can be weighed together in making important decisions (see also 15:22; 20:18; 24:6).

Proverbs 11:15 should also be read in light of the next listed proverb in verse 16. “These two proverbs balance each other. The first warns against rashly giving surety or a pledge for a stranger. The second praises generosity [as being ‘gracious’ or ‘kindhearted’ (NIV) surely includes]; generosity begets honor” (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 15-16). Verse 16, discussed next, should also be read in the context of the next verse, with which it is parallel.

? “KINDNESS AND CRUELTY. Type: Parallel (11:16-17)....The pattern of these two proverbs is ‘kind woman / cruel man // kind man / ruthless man.’ By itself v. 16 could be read cynically (‘A kind woman gets respect, but a cruel man gets rich’...to justify unscrupulous behavior. In conjunction with v. 17, however, the self-destructive nature of the ‘hard-nosed’ approach to life is apparent....

? “THE WAGES OF SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. Type: Chiasmus (11:18-19)....This pair has the chiastic pattern [in this case a-b-b-a] ‘wicked man / he who sows righteousness / righteousness / he who pursues evil’Note that this pair has links to vv. 16-17. The wealth of the cruel man corresponds to deceptive wages as the honor given a kind woman is genuine.

Also the health/self-inflicted pain of v. 17 corresponds to the life and death of v. 19.

? “DIVINE JUDGMENT. Type: Parallel (11:20-21)....God’s attitude toward individuals (disgust / pleasure) in v. 20 corresponds to the outcome of their lives (inescapable trouble / deliverance) in v. 21” which also impacts their children (NAC).

7. Beauty Without Discretion (11:22)

“TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB”(NAC).

8. Generosity and Selfishness (11:23-27)

“TYPE: INCLUSIO....Verses 23,27 closely parallel each other and form an inclusio around vv.

24-26, all of which center on the theme of generosity and selfishness. The inclusio states the general truth that one receives back according to one’s own behavior while vv. 24-26 deal with the concrete issue of hoarding [and refusing to sell currently at a fair price]” (NAC).

The picture of the one who scatters abroad increasing more; the generous person being made rich; is similar to Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.” The good we do will be returned to us in different ways. Just on a human level, a selfish, stingy person will likely make enemies, a factor that will probably hurt him later; even financially perhaps. The generous person will make friends who will be there to contribute to his prosperity and well-being later. But there is more to the universe than that; as there is a real God who blesses generosity and curses greed and selfishness.

Jesus likewise taught: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

Of course, the passages here are not a promise of material wealth in this lifetime in return for being generous. The greatest riches are spiritual ones; though this does include the promised hope of possessing the entire universe as co-heirs with Christ.

9. The Source of Life (11:28?12:4)

“TYPE: INCLUSIO....The structure of this collection is complex. Proverbs 11:28 has a close parallel in 12:3; both concern the flourishing of the righteous and failure of the wicked to establish themselves through wealth and cunning. Proverbs 11:29, which concerns a son’s behavior in the family (see 17:2), is answered by 12:4, which deals with the wife’s contribution to the family. Proverbs 11:28-29 and 12:3-4 thus form an inclusio around 11:30?12:2.

“Proverbs 11:28-29 and 12:3-4 teach that a man cannot provide for the security of his family through any means that violate basic principles of right and wrong. Rather than focus his attention on making as much money as possible, a man should give thought to the choice of a good wife and then to the spiritual nurture of his children. Above all else, he must conduct his own life with integrity if he expects the same from his family.

“The two pairs?11:30-31 and 12:1-2?each deal with behavior (11:30; 12:1) and its reward or punishment (11:31; 12:2).

The reference to “winning souls” as a wise course of action in 11:30 is to “to capturing (loqeah ‘to lay hold of, seize, conquer’) people with ideas or influence (2 Sam 15:6)” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary, note on Proverbs 11:30).

Verse 31 in the NIV reads: “If the righteous receive their due on earth / how much more the ungodly and the sinner!” Expositor’s notes on this verse: “Retribution for sin is certain, for the righteous and especially for the sinner. The proverb uses a ‘how much more’ argument; if this be true, how much more this (argument from the lesser to the greater). The point is that divine justice deals with all sin; and if the righteous suffer for their sins, certainly the wicked will. The LXX [Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures] introduces a new idea to the verse: ‘if the righteous be scarcely saved’; this is recorded in 1 Peter 4:18.” We will consider this further when we come to this New Testament verse.

Proverbs 12:1 in the KJV and NKJV appears to state the obvious: “Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge...” Yet the word for “instruction” can be translated, as in other versions, as “discipline”; paralleling the “correction” in the latter part of the verse.

The Hebrew words in verse 4 translated “excellent wife,” or by some as “noble woman” or “virtuous woman,” are the same as those used in the well-known ode of Proverbs 31:10-31.

10. Plans and Schemes (12:5-7)

“TYPE: THEMATIC....The unity of this collection is indicated in the Hebrew structure. These three proverbs follow a logical progression: the righteous make plans that are just, but the wicked scheme with deceitful counsel (v. 5); the wicked attempt to ambush the righteous with their lies, but the righteous are delivered by their integrity (v. 6); the wicked are totally destroyed, but the righteous stand secure (v. 7)” (NAC).

11. Earned Respect (12:8)

“TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB” (NAC).

12. On Providing for One’s Needs (12:9-11)

“TYPE: INCLUSIO....The well-earned prosperity of the righteous contrasts with the feigned wealth, the acts of exploitation, and the idle plans of the foolish and wicked” (NAC).

The Jewish Soncino commentary notes on verse 9: “The interpretation of the verse depends on the way this phrase [‘and hath a servant’ (KJV)] is understood. One possible reading is: Better to be held in low social esteem by not living beyond one’s means, and yet possess a slave to do the menial work and so have a comfortable life, than make a pretence of wealth, mixing with the rich and spending what is necessary for food on maintaining a place in such society. This yields a satisfactory meaning and a sensible admonition which many need today. On the other hand, the words and hath a servant may signify ‘and is a slave to himself,’ i.e. he does for himself the humble tasks which are usually relegated to a slave, and spends the money on feeding his body well. In either case, the point is the futility of inflicting [de]privations upon oneself to preserve an outward show of affluence which does not correspond with reality.”

Verse 10 shows that the consideration and care of a righteous man extends to not just other people, but to his animals as well. Cruelty to animals; or cruelty in any form, for that matter; is totally contrary to God’s will.

13. On Fruit and Snares (12:12-14)

“TYPE: THEMATIC....This collection employs two metaphors of gathering food: hunting with snares (symbolizing the wicked) and laboring to raise crops (symbolizing the righteous)” (NAC). The wicked trap themselves, and the righteous, through proper words and acts, receive blessings in return. This is another way of expressing the principle of reaping what one sows (see Galatians 6:7).

14. Able to Take Advice (12:15)

15. The Use and Abuse of Words (12:16-22)

“TYPE: LINKED PARALLELISM AND CHIASMUS....These seven verses are made up of four verses arranged in parallel (vv. 16-19) conjoined by a common verse to a four-verse chiasmus [i.e., concentric arrangement] (vv. 19-22).

16. A Wholesome Life (12:23-28)

“The six proverbs of this section do not have a single theme but describe types of activity that may promote or undermine a wholesome life” (NAC).

Proverbs 12:23 shows the importance of being careful in what one reveals to others and of not making a show of knowledge.

Verse 24 is ironic in that a lazy person, lacking diligence, fails to advance in life and ends up having to do the menial labor he wants to avoid. In verse 27, the lazy man is humorously portrayed not roasting the food he went to the trouble of catching; and thereby letting it go to waste and failing to benefit from it. The idea is that he doesn't complete tasks; and loses out because of it.

Verse 26 makes it clear that we can choose who our friends are; and that it's important that we do and that we choose wisely. Compare with 13:20.

In Proverbs 12:28, we again see the future of life for the righteous; and, indeed, of "no death."

According to Soncino: "To reproduce the original [Hebrew], the words should be hyphenated 'no-death.' This can only be an allusion to immortality which follows the ending of a righteous life upon earth" (note on verse 28). The NIV here has "immortality."

17. The Use of the Mouth (13:1-4)

"TYPE: CATCHWORD....A number of words and concepts bind this text together. The 'mockers' corresponds to the one who 'speaks rashly,' while shutting one's mouth corresponds to receiving instruction (vv. 1,3). Verses 2-3 refer to the mouth, and the nepes [or nephesh, referring to one's physical being] is mentioned in vv. 2-4" (NAC).

Proverbs 13:1, concerning a wise son heeding his father's instruction, harkens back to the first of the compact sayings (10:1) and the book's prologue (chapters 1-9).

18. Action and Reaction (13:5-6)

"TYPE: PARALLEL, CATCHWORD....These two proverbs are set in parallel on the basis of 'righteous' and 'wicked' in v. 5 and 'righteousness' and 'wickedness' in v. 6" (NAC).

19. The Ambiguity of Riches (13:7-11)

"TYPE: THEMATIC....The acquisition, possession, and use of money dominate vv. 7-8, 11.

Verses 9-10 do not refer to money, but the overall context throws new meaning on these proverbs as well" (NAC).

Proverbs 13:7 is often interpreted to refer to a poor person pretending to be rich and a rich person pretending to be poor. But that is not what is meant here. The New American Commentary rightly states: "There is more to v. 7 than that some people deceitfully pretend to be rich or poor. More profoundly, things are not always what they seem. One person may appear rich (and may or may not have money) and yet on a more fundamental level have nothing, and the reverse is true as well. This is illustrated in v. 8, in which the point is made that although the rich have some protection from their money, the poor have little need for such protection since they have nothing worth stealing [and they 'hear no threat' (NIV)]. Wealth is thus a prison, and the one who appears rich has nothing enviable. Similarly, if one has not acquired wealth properly, that wealth will soon disappear (v. 11). The apparent wealth of those who acquired money without learning the lessons of financial prudence is fleeting" (note on verses 7-8). Also compare verse 7 with 11:24-25.

Pride has been called "the mother of all sins." It certainly leads to contention, as verse 10 tells us.

20. A Hope Fulfilled (13:12-19)

"TYPE: INCLUSIO....The Bible goes beyond the secular wisdom of relating success to hard work [and trustworthiness] and more fundamentally ties it to the development of a mature, virtuous soul by submission to wise teachers....This text has a general inclusio pattern, but there are many cross-connections.

“Other cross connections include ‘tree of life’ (v. 12) and ‘fountain of life’ (v. 14) as well as ‘healing’ (v. 15). Also ‘rewarded’ (v. 13), ‘wins favor’ (v. 15), and ‘honored’ (v. 18) indicate that the concrete benefits of wisdom are in view. The peculiar bicolon of v. 19 is also significant. By itself v. 19b has nothing to do with v. 19a, but in the context of vv. 13,18 it summarizes the attitude of the obstinate. Surrounding the whole text is the idea of having one’s desires fulfilled (vv. 12,19); the point is that the deepest longings of the soul are filled only by integrity and wisdom, not by treachery.

“The structure of the text produces a coherent message. Verse 12 gives the premise that everyone rejoices to see their hopes and aspirations fulfilled. This sentiment is restated in the companion verse, v. 19a; but the second colon, v. 19b, asserts that fools will not turn from evil. The implication is that fools will not see their desires fulfilled. The intervening verses develop the thesis that life and happiness can only be obtained by wisdom.... The whole text [verses 12-19]...teaches that by learning from the wise, one can enjoy a life of fulfilled aspirations” (NAC).

21. Choice Companions (13:20-21)

“TYPE: CHIASTIC....Note...the chiasmic structure [?in this case a-b-b-a?] of ‘wise’ (v. 20a), ‘fools’ (v. 20b), ‘sinner’ (v. 21a), and ‘righteous’ (v. 21b)” (NAC).

Proverbs 13:20 highlights the importance of picking the right friends; as they influence the way you think and act and, therefore, the outcome of your life (compare 12:26; 1 Corinthians 15:33).

22. Provision for the Family (13:22-25)

“Type: Parallel....This text deals with providing for the needs of one’s family and is structured as a parallel text.

The inheritance left to children and grandchildren involves much more than material wealth and possessions. As The New American Commentary states: “All people desire to leave a good heritage for their children, and vv. 22, 24 speak, respectively, of providing for the material and moral needs of one’s descendants. Proverbs regularly keeps these two in balance. It emphasizes the need for moral training without deprecating the physical needs of family life.

“Verse 23 and v. 25 describe two reasons a family may be impoverished and hungry. On the one hand, it may be injustice in society (i.e., it is not the family’s fault, and their hunger points to a need for changes in the system). On the other hand, poverty may be a result of sin in the family. Addiction to alcohol, indolence, and financial irresponsibility are all potential causes of poverty, although the terms ‘righteous’ and ‘wicked’ imply divine favor or disfavor as well. Proverbs takes a balanced position: it neither dehumanizes the poor on the grounds that they are to blame for all their troubles nor absolves the individual of personal responsibility” (note on vv. 22-25).

The NIV Application Commentary makes these poignant comments in its concluding summary of chapter 13: “The proverbs of this chapter make clear that we are not called to leave an inheritance of wealth but a legacy that includes so much more, a way of life: ‘The righteous eat to their hearts’ content, but the stomach of the wicked goes hungry’ (13:25). But there is a caution: As we read, we may take the many contrasts of the chapter too lightly, putting ourselves on the path with the righteous too readily. These polarities are a teaching device, exaggeration to make a point, but we will miss the point if we fail to appreciate the various repetitions that we too are ‘prone to wander’ and can be tempted to take little shortcuts in order to preserve our accounts or our reputations. To the sages, outright rebellion is not the enemy so much as compromise. The fact that wisdom writers worked so hard to make these contrasts stark and clear shows that human nature often loses sight of their clarity and makes fuzzy choices.”

This gets us caught up on Proverbs, and Proverbs 14 goes with this week’s Torah Portion Study

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.

"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.

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 Jesus' 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 Elohim; 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.

Proverbs 14

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.

“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).

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Acts 11