

## Dr. Knut Heim, Proverbs, Session 16, Proverbs 28-29

### Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

#### 1. Abstract of Heim, Proverbs, Session 16, Proverbs 28-29, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Knut Heim **analyzes** Proverbs 28 and 29, focusing on **parallelism** in specific verses (12 and 28 in chapter 28, and 2, 16 in chapter 29). He **challenges** traditional interpretations of these verses, particularly regarding the meaning of the Hebrew word *rabah*, arguing that existing translations and analyses based on strict parallelism are **overly simplistic**. Heim **proposes** a more nuanced understanding of these proverbs by carefully considering the specific context and subtle differences in word choice. He suggests that the proverbs offer **complex insights** into the relationship between righteous and wicked individuals within society and their impact on leadership and governance.

**2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Heim, Session 16 – Double click icon to play in Windows  
media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and  
click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms &  
Wisdom → Proverbs).**



**Heim\_Prov\_Session  
16.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Heim, Proverbs, Session 16, Proverbs 28-29

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided source, "Heim\_Prov\_EN\_Lec16\_Prov28\_29.pdf":

#### Briefing Document: Proverbs 28-29 Analysis by Dr. Knut Heim

##### 1. Overview:

This lecture focuses on Proverbs chapters 28 and 29, specifically examining repeated proverbs (variants) and their nuances. Dr. Heim argues against traditional interpretations that rely heavily on "strict parallelism," where corresponding elements in poetic lines are assumed to be precise synonyms or antonyms. He advocates for a more nuanced and imaginative approach that considers the broader context, metaphorical language, and subtle differences in wording. The lecture specifically interrogates the commonly-held idea that the Hebrew verb "rabah" (usually meaning "to increase") can also mean "to become powerful."

##### 2. Main Themes:

- **Leadership & Society:** The lecture highlights that Proverbs 25-29 are particularly addressed to leaders or those in positions of influence, guiding them to become competent community representatives.
- **Challenging Traditional Interpretation:** Dr. Heim critiques the traditional interpretation of Hebrew parallelism (strict or precise parallelism), which assumes a direct correspondence between terms in parallel lines (synonyms or antonyms). He believes this rigid approach often leads to oversimplified and inaccurate interpretations.
- **Nuance and Detail:** A central theme is the importance of paying close attention to the subtle nuances in the wording of the proverbs, including the precise meaning of words and the grammatical structures. These subtle differences hold significance in understanding the proverb.
- **Re-evaluation of "rabah":** A significant portion of the lecture is dedicated to challenging the accepted notion that the Hebrew verb *rabah* can mean both "to increase in number" and "to become powerful." Dr. Heim argues that the supposed meaning of "become powerful" is a result of applying strict parallelism principles where they may not be applicable.

- **Contextual Analysis:** Heim emphasizes the need to consider the broader context when interpreting proverbs. He notes how the repetition of similar sayings helps create a cohesive message across the chapters.
- **Application to Leadership:** Dr. Heim implies that understanding the nuances of these proverbs can provide valuable insights into effective leadership, the dangers of corruption, and the importance of fostering virtue within society.

### 3. Key Ideas & Facts:

- **Proverbs 28:12 & 28:28 (Variant Repetitions):** These two proverbs are used as a starting point for Dr. Heim's analysis.
- **28:12:** "When the righteous rejoice, great glory. But when the wicked arise, people take cover."
- **28:28:** "When the wicked arise, people hide. But when they perish, the righteous increase."
- He demonstrates that, while seemingly straightforward, these verses have a more subtle parallelism. The "rejoicing" of the righteous is a metonymy for their good social standing, while the "hiding" of the people corresponds with an oppressed society when the wicked are in power. The verbs "arise" and "perish" are not exact opposites and carry a meaning beyond just rising or falling.
- He challenges the assumption that "increase" in 28:28 means to rise to power.
- **Critique of Roland Murphy's Interpretation:** Dr. Heim analyzes Roland Murphy's interpretation, representative of traditional views, showing how Murphy's interpretation primarily expands on the perceived obvious meaning, while glossing over nuances. He notes that Murphy glosses "come into the open" with "they are many, that is, they emerge and prosper. They are now in positions of some power."
- He finds Murphy's interpretation unpersuasive because it:
  - Interprets "when the wicked arise" as "wicked authorities."
  - Interprets "humanity hides" as "one goes into hiding."
  - Interprets "when they perish" as "downfall of the wicked," when it clearly implies death.

- Reinterprets "they increase" as "the just come into the open" and "they are many," forcing it to be a precise antonym of "hide."
- Assumes the righteous gain power.
- He argues that Murphy was influenced by the old paradigm of precise parallelism and by the context of 29:2 and 29:16.
- **Challenging the Double Meaning of "rabah":** Dr. Heim specifically targets the claim that *rabah* can mean "become powerful." He examines verses cited as support (Genesis 7:17-18, Daniel 12:4, Proverbs 28:28, 29:2, and 29:16).
- He demonstrates that, in the first three (Genesis, Daniel), *rabah* clearly means to increase, not to gain power.
- He then argues that the remaining three are also not instances where *rabah* means become powerful and the meaning is often imported from an assumed meaning due to the strict parallelisms.
- **Analysis of Proverbs 29:2:** Dr. Heim provides his own literal translation: "When the righteous increase, the people will be happy, but when a wicked man rules, the people groans."
- He argues the verb "to rejoice" refers to the inner feeling of joy and contentment and the use of "a wicked man" (singular) is not the same as the "the wicked" (plural).
- He emphasizes the significance of the definite article "the" before "people" in the second half of the verse, indicating a specific population rather than just general people.
- He argues the verse needs to be interpreted in light of the role of a ruler in encouraging or discouraging virtue among the population.
- **Analysis of Proverbs 29:16:** He challenges the supposed parallelism between "when the wicked increase, transgression increases" and "but the righteous will observe their collapse," and how the connection is often forced by assumptions.
- He argues the verb "rabah" in the verse does not mean grow powerful, but maintain its meaning to increase.
- **Comparison of Multiple Proverbs:** Dr. Heim compares Proverbs 11:10, 28:12, 28:28, 29:2, and 29:16, highlighting both their similarities and subtle differences.

He says these differences allow for nuanced interpretations on the exercise of rule in government.

- He notes how the descriptions of wicked people's fortunes can be divided into "arising, ruling, and increasing," showing subtle differences and complexities.
- He notes different reactions from groups such as "the city", "people", "a people" and "the righteous," implying different sections of society and their particular roles.
- He demonstrates that the different verbs employed, such as "take cover" and "hide," and "revelry", "increase," and "observe" all carry significantly different meanings.
- **Lexicographical Implications:** Dr. Heim concludes that dictionary definitions based solely on strict parallelism need to be re-evaluated because they potentially assume synonyms and antonyms when the connection between the words is not exact.

#### 4. Key Quotes:

- "Again, it would be easy to read over these verses quickly and think, oh yeah, okay, that makes sense, straightforward, obvious, not worth mentioning any further or reflecting further on. It seems all straightforward."
- "The old paradigm of precise parallelism has exerted a powerful, if probably unconscious, influence on his interpretation."
- "In particular, I want to question the procedure of assigning specific lexical meanings to Hebrew words on the basis of the rigid application of precise parallelism."
- "I just repeat in the English translation what the Hebrew actually says, and not what I think it says, which is what everybody else does."
- "The more detailed comments in this, my final set of verses that I have analyzed in my book, showcase the fact that subtle differences between similar expressions in proverbial poetry matter."

**5. Conclusion:**

Dr. Heim's lecture emphasizes the need for careful, nuanced, and imaginative interpretation of biblical proverbs. He challenges the traditional reliance on strict parallelism and encourages a deeper examination of contextual, linguistic, and metaphorical aspects of the text. His analysis suggests that these proverbs, often seen as simple truisms, contain profound insights into human behavior, leadership, and the complexities of society.

## 4. Study Guide: Heim, Proverbs, Session 16, Proverbs 28-29

### Proverbs 28-29 Study Guide

#### Short Answer Quiz

1. According to Heim, what is the traditional interpretation of the parallelism in Proverbs 28:12 and 28:28, and what is his critique of this interpretation?
2. How does Heim explain the metaphorical correspondence between "great glory" and "people hide" in Proverbs 28:12?
3. What are the three aspects of parallelism in Proverbs 28:28 that Heim highlights?
4. How does Heim challenge the traditional interpretation that the Hebrew verb *rabah* means "to become powerful" in Proverbs 28 and 29?
5. In his interpretation of Proverbs 28:28, how does Heim explain the meaning of "the righteous increase?"
6. What are some examples of textual evidence Heim provides to support his claim that *rabah* is not meant to mean "to become powerful" in the verses discussed?
7. According to Heim, what is the significance of the word *adam* ("people") in Proverbs 28:28?
8. How does Heim distinguish between the meanings of the verb "rejoice" in his analysis of Proverbs 29:2?
9. In the context of Proverbs 28-29, what role do variant repetitions play according to Heim?
10. How does Heim describe the differences in responses to the fate of the wicked throughout Proverbs 28-29?

#### Answer Key

1. The traditional interpretation sees antithetical parallelism in these verses, expecting every word in the first half-line to have a semantic counterpart in the second. Heim critiques this, arguing that the correspondences are not always exact opposites or synonyms, but rather are more nuanced and metaphorical.
2. Heim explains that "great glory," in the context of a just society, envisions open celebrations, while "people hide" reflects the fear and avoidance behavior that is prompted by wicked people being in power.

3. The three aspects are: (1) the phrases in the first set of correspondences are not exact opposites (rise vs. death), (2) the second set contains contrast, but not direct opposites (hide vs. increase), (3) the third set of corresponding terms (people and righteous) are not synonyms.
4. Heim argues that the traditional interpretation is based on a rigid application of strict parallelism. He analyzes the verses and finds that the context does not support the idea that *rabah* means "to become powerful," rather it retains its basic meaning of "to increase."
5. Heim explains that "the righteous increase" refers to an increase in the number of people who are virtuous, have character, and seek the good of society, which naturally follows the demise of the wicked and the societal improvement that follows.
6. Heim shows that in Genesis 7:17-18 and Daniel 12:4, where *rabah* is used, it is translated in its standard meaning of increase in quantity or number, not in power.
7. Heim says that *adam* in this context does not mean *all* people. Rather, it speaks of those who withdraw from public life, while others will align with the wicked.
8. Heim distinguishes between the inner feeling of great joy and the outward display of great happiness, arguing that an inner contentment over the growing number of the righteous is more fitting for 29:2a, rather than an open celebration which would be more closely parallel to "groan" in 29:2b.
9. According to Heim, the variant repetitions play an editorial role, indicating a structure in Proverbs 28-29, potentially serving as a manual for future leaders, teaching how to lead righteously.
10. Heim points out that responses to the fate of the wicked differ. In some verses, people hide, in others, the righteous increase, and in yet others there is an opportunity for the righteous to witness the downfall of the wicked, showcasing the nuance of the verses.



## Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast Heim's interpretation of Proverbs 28:12 and 28:28 with the traditional interpretation based on strict parallelism. How does Heim's approach to parallelism change our understanding of these verses?
2. Discuss the significance of the Hebrew verb *rabah* in Proverbs 28-29. Analyze Heim's arguments against the traditional interpretation that *rabah* means "to become powerful," and explain the implications of his reinterpretation for our understanding of the text.
3. Explain how Heim uses contextual analysis to interpret Proverbs 29:2 and its broader significance in the education of future leaders. How does he demonstrate the importance of considering the context when interpreting biblical texts?
4. Analyze how the repeated proverbs in chapters 28 and 29 of Proverbs, when read in relation to one another, paint a more nuanced picture of the dynamics of society. How do these comparisons reveal a complex and sophisticated political and social understanding of power and rule?
5. Discuss the broader implications of Heim's analysis for the study of biblical poetry and lexicography. How does his work challenge conventional methods for understanding meaning, and what insights does his approach provide?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Antithetical Parallelism:** A type of parallelism where the second part of a verse contrasts with the first, expressing an opposite idea.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for another that is related (e.g., using "the crown" to mean "the king").
- **Lexicography:** The process of compiling dictionaries.
- *Rabah*.\* A Hebrew verb, traditionally interpreted as meaning both "to increase" and "to become powerful" in certain contexts. Heim argues its basic meaning is "to increase."
- **Zadiqim:** The Hebrew word for "righteous," often contrasted with the wicked.
- **Adam:** The Hebrew word for "people" or "mankind," whose meaning in Proverbs 28:28 Heim argues to not be all people, but a portion of the population.
- **Hegemony:** The dominance of one group over another, often culturally or politically.
- **Variant Repetitions:** Repeated proverbs or phrases used in different contexts that shed light on one another.
- **Chiastic Frame:** A literary structure where the ideas or words are arranged in an "ABCCBA" pattern, often used to highlight specific ideas.

## 5. FAQs on Heim, Proverbs, Session 16, Proverbs 28-29, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Proverbs 28-29

- **What is the main focus of Proverbs 25-29, and why is it significant?**
- Proverbs 25-29 is considered a collection specifically addressing leaders and those in positions of influence. The wisdom offered is meant to guide them in becoming competent representatives and supporters of their communities. This is significant because it emphasizes the critical role of leadership in shaping a just and flourishing society, showing how their actions directly impact the well-being of the population.
- **Why does Dr. Heim emphasize a close reading of the parallel structures in Proverbs 28:12 and 28:28?**
- Dr. Heim argues that traditional interpretations of these verses, based on strict parallelism (where each element has a direct semantic counterpart), are too simplistic. He demonstrates that while some elements are contrasting (like righteous and wicked), others, such as "rejoice" and "arise," are not exact opposites, or antonyms, but rather metaphorical parallels expressing different aspects of societal conditions. By looking at nuances, a deeper, more textured understanding emerges. For example, the "rejoicing" of the righteous isn't a direct antonym of the "arising" of the wicked but rather a related way of describing the overall social climate depending on which group is dominant.
- **How does Dr. Heim challenge traditional interpretations of "the righteous increase" when the wicked perish?**
- Dr. Heim critiques the traditional interpretation that the "increase" of the righteous means they become powerful after the wicked's downfall. He points out that the Hebrew word *rabah* primarily means "to increase in number," not "to become powerful." He shows that when the verb has been interpreted to mean "to become powerful," it's been based on a rigid application of parallel meanings rather than an analysis of the text itself. He argues that the increase in numbers of the righteous after the downfall of the wicked signals a resurgence of virtue and societal well-being, not necessarily their rise to power. This makes it different from saying the righteous "arise" as the wicked "arise" at other times.

- **What is the significance of the term "people" (*adam*) in these proverbs, particularly in Proverbs 28:12 and 28:28?**
- In Proverbs 28:12 and 28:28, "people" (*adam*) refers to the general population and not to any specific group. This demonstrates that the whole community is affected by the actions of both the wicked and the righteous, and that when the wicked are in control, everyone hides out of fear. Further, it is important that even though "the righteous" and "the wicked" are in the opposite parallel, that "people" in the first part is juxtaposed with "the righteous" in the latter part. This signals that not all "people" are righteous or that "the righteous" are not just a subset of people.
- **How does the meaning of "people" change in Proverbs 29:2, and why is this important?**
- In Proverbs 29:2, the word "people" changes subtly. In the first half of the verse it is an indefinite term, whereas in the second half of the verse it is a definite term ("*the* people"). This subtle distinction suggests that the first part is about people generally, while the latter part refers to citizens under a specific ruler. This highlights how the actions of a king or ruler impact *their* people, specifically. This is also significant because it highlights that the word for "wicked" is a single person who rules, thus creating a dichotomy between the general flourishing when the righteous increase and the oppression under a wicked ruler. This emphasizes the responsibility and significant impact that those in leadership have on those they lead.
- **What does Dr. Heim argue about the verb *rabah* in relation to Proverbs 29:2 and 29:16?**
- Dr. Heim insists that *rabah* in Proverbs 29:2 and 29:16 maintains its primary meaning of "to increase in number" rather than "to become powerful." He argues that the traditional interpretation of "to become powerful" came from a forced, preconceived reading based on strict parallelism with ruling and similar verses. In 29:2 it signals an increase in the numbers of the virtuous, and in 29:16, it describes an increase of the wicked which leads to their own downfall. He emphasizes that forcing a parallel meaning onto the word overlooks its literal significance and that these passages don't necessarily mean the righteous acquire power.

- **Why does Dr. Heim emphasize the context of Proverbs 28-29 as instruction for future rulers?**
- Dr. Heim highlights the context of Proverbs 28-29 as a "manual for future monarchs." This understanding suggests the verses aren't just general wisdom but are aimed specifically at those who would govern. They are advised to promote virtue, for this will bring contentment, whereas the unjust will bring discontent. The verses serve as warnings, emphasizing that a ruler's actions have dire consequences not only for their people but also for their nation's well-being. Thus the verses act as an important instruction to the ruler.
- **How do the subtle differences between similar proverbs, such as 11:10, 28:12, 28:28, 29:2, and 29:16, matter to Dr. Heim?**
- Dr. Heim argues that each of these verses, while similar in structure and some themes, carries unique nuances. He notes that responses to wicked rule differ (hiding vs. groaning), the objects of action differ (city rejoicing vs. general population hiding vs. specific people groaning), and the verbs in relation to the wicked differ (arising vs. ruling vs. increasing). He shows that this nuanced view highlights a complex understanding of good governance. In short, no two verses are the same, and each should be analyzed precisely in order to properly understand it. The differences between these verses reveal a sophisticated and insightful exploration of social dynamics and the impact of leadership, and these differences matter significantly to the proper understanding of the whole picture.