

# **Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs is Different from the Rest of the TANAK/Old Testament Resources from NotebookLM**

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

## **1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs is Different from the Rest of the TANAK/Old Testament, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This presentation by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt argues that the Book of Proverbs is a unique literary genre within the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), distinct from other sections like the Torah, historical narratives, and prophetic books. He supports this claim by highlighting thirteen key differences, such as the absence of personal names, tribal groups, geographical locations, and common biblical themes like the Exodus, covenants, and idolatry. Hildebrandt emphasizes the importance of recognizing the distinct genre of Proverbs to properly interpret its content. He contrasts the sentential nature of Proverbs with the narrative structures of other Tanakh books. Finally, he suggests that understanding these differences is crucial before exploring intertextual connections between Proverbs and the rest of the Tanakh.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Hildebrandt, Proverbs is Different from the Rest of the  
TANAK/Old Testament – 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).**



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### 3. Briefing Document: Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs is Different from the Rest of the TANAK/Old Testament

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's presentation on the Book of Proverbs.

#### **Briefing Document: The Uniqueness of Proverbs**

##### **Introduction:**

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's presentation focuses on how the Book of Proverbs differs significantly from the rest of the Tanakh (Old Testament). He emphasizes that genre is crucial for interpretation, just as different sections of a newspaper or types of books require different reading expectations. The core argument is that Proverbs is unique and, therefore, should not be interpreted using the same lens as historical narratives, prophetic books, or psalms.

##### **Key Themes & Ideas:**

#### **1. Genre Sensitivity is Essential:**

- Hildebrandt stresses the importance of genre in interpreting texts. Just as we interpret a news article differently from a sponsored ad, or a sci-fi novel differently from a cookbook, so too should we approach different books of the Bible. "So, genre, or literary class of information, affects then your expectations when you open it, and when you read it."
- Understanding the literary class impacts our expectations and how we interpret meaning. This is especially true with the Book of Proverbs, which is distinct in its genre within the Tanakh.

#### **1. Absence of Personal Names (Outside of Titles):**

- Unlike other books of the Tanakh, Proverbs almost entirely lacks personal names within the text itself. Personal names (e.g., Solomon, David, Agur, Lemuel) appear only in the titles or introductions to certain sections. "While personal names are found throughout the Old Testament in Proverbs, they're listed just basically in the titles."
- In contrast, books like Ruth are filled with personal names throughout the narrative. For example, the book of Ruth introduces Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon,

Chilion, Orpah, and Ruth within the first five verses, names which flow naturally as part of the story.

- Other books like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Exodus, and Nehemiah mention many personal names like Moses, Samuel, Noah, Daniel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. "Personal names are ubiquitous in the rest of the Tanakh..."
- This difference underscores that Proverbs is not about specific individuals or their historical context; instead, it focuses on universal principles and general wisdom.

#### **1. Lack of Tribal/National Groups & Place Names:**

- Proverbs does not mention tribal groups (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Philistines, etc.) or nations (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt) which are common in the rest of the Tanakh. The only exception is a mention of "Egyptian linens" in the context of seduction. "In much of the Old Testament, you've got cities upon cities, you've got regions mentioned. And in the book of Proverbs, there's nothing basically, very little of that kind of cities, cities, or places mentioned that are ubiquitous in the rest of the Old Testament, but not in Proverbs zero."
- The absence of these geographical and ethnic references emphasizes that Proverbs is not tied to a particular historical setting, but rather deals with truths relevant to all people in all times.
- Again, in contrast, many other books (e.g., Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) are filled with such tribal, national, and geographical identifiers. The Book of Numbers for instance, mentions the 12 tribes of Israel.

#### **1. No Divine Calls or Specified Vocations:**

- Proverbs lacks any mention of divine calls or vocational specifications for individuals. In contrast, other books record God calling individuals like Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jonah. "There is no call of a particular individual. And these calls are sprinkled through the Old Testament where individuals called, the call isn't found in the book of Proverbs at all. Nobody's called or their vocation specified. Proverbs is different."
- The focus is on general wisdom applicable to any person, not on specific divine appointments.

#### **1. Absence of "Thus Saith the Lord," Divine Dreams, or Theophanies:**

- Proverbs does not contain phrases like "thus saith the Lord" ("Kol Amar Yahweh"), nor does it record divine dreams or appearances (theophanies), unlike other parts of the Tanakh. "There's no, "thus saith the Lord," Kol Amar Yahweh. No, "thus saith the Lord." There are no divine dreams where God communicates to his people by dreams or visions."
- Other books are filled with examples of God speaking directly through prophets, dreams (e.g., Jacob's ladder, Joseph's interpretations, Daniel's visions), and theophanies (e.g., the burning bush, the angel of the Lord). The fact there are none in Proverbs further solidifies that it should be read differently.

#### 1. **Sentential Nature vs. Narrative Structure:**

- Proverbs is characterized by its short, self-contained sentences (sentential structure). "In Proverbs, "a wise son brings joy to a father," that happens a million times a year, every year. And so, it's just very different." These short sentences stand alone and offer general, applicable wisdom. "Proverbs are more sentential. In other words, it's a short sentence and that's it."
- Other books are built on historical narratives that are grouped into paragraphs and pericopes or in the Psalms case strophes. These narrative-based books tell complete stories, while Proverbs offers condensed, universal truths.

#### 1. **Lack of Mention of Key Religious Elements:**

- The book makes no mention of the Temple, although it mentions kings. And even when it discusses kings, the discussion is about how kings should rule, not named kings.
- It also lacks mentions of priests, named prophets, or the Sabbath, religious feasts and other religious markers that are central to much of the Tanakh.
- Hildebrandt underscores that there are no mentions of the covenants (Abrahamic, Sinaitic, Davidic), nor are the important stories of these covenants mentioned.

#### 1. **Absence of Condemnation of Idolatry:**

- Despite the pervasiveness of idolatry being condemned in other books of the Tanakh, it is notably absent in Proverbs. "In much of the Old Testament, God is condemning idolatry. Israel has a propensity, maybe all people have a propensity toward idolatry. Idolatry is ubiquitous in the Old Testament... It's not mentioned in Proverbs."

- The lack of discussion on this, underscores again that Proverbs is operating on a different plane.

#### 1. **No History:**

- Proverbs lacks any narrative of the historical events that shape the rest of the Tanakh. There is no mention of the Exodus, the conquest of the promised land, the stories of the judges, the narratives of the kings, the exile to Babylon, or the return. "There is no history in Proverbs."
- The focus of Proverbs is on timeless wisdom, not specific historical moments or the actions of God in history.

#### 1. **Statistical Differences:**

- Hildebrandt also backs up his claims through a quantitative lens. He notes that when comparing the number of mentions of personal names, place names, and tribal/national names, Proverbs is at about 1% of the other books, and often even less (0.3%).

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Hildebrandt concludes that Proverbs is unique within the Tanakh due to its distinct lack of personal names, tribal/national groups, place names, divine calls, prophetic dreams, theophanies, historical narrative, and specific religious references. This difference is significant, emphasizing that Proverbs should not be read as a historical narrative but rather as a collection of universal wisdom. He underscores this difference by noting the sentential structure and absence of historical events. He argues that to interpret Proverbs properly, readers must recognize its unique genre and adjust their expectations accordingly. The key to understanding Proverbs is to recognize that it is primarily about general, applicable wisdom, not about the specifics of Israel's history.

## 4. Study Guide: Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs is Different from the Rest of the TANAK/Old Testament

### Proverbs: A Unique Book in the Tanakh

#### Review Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the source material.

1. How does Dr. Hildebrandt use the analogy of a newspaper to explain the importance of genre when reading scripture?
2. According to Dr. Hildebrandt, why is the lack of personal names in the main text of Proverbs significant?
3. How does the book of Ruth contrast with Proverbs in the use of personal names?
4. What is meant by “a call” of an individual in the Old Testament, and why does Dr. Hildebrandt point out its absence in Proverbs?
5. How does Dr. Hildebrandt describe the unique structure of Proverbs compared to other books in the Tanakh, such as Psalms?
6. What is the significance of the phrase, "thus saith the Lord," in the Old Testament and why is it notable that it's missing in Proverbs?
7. What are some examples of theophanies (appearances of God) or miracles that Dr. Hildebrandt discusses as found in other books but not in Proverbs?
8. According to the source material, why is the lack of references to idolatry in Proverbs noteworthy?
9. How does Dr. Hildebrandt use the example of the Exodus motif to illustrate a key difference between Proverbs and other Old Testament books?
10. What does Dr. Hildebrandt mean when he says proverbs are “sentential”?

#### Answer Key

1. Just as different sections of a newspaper, like the cartoon section versus the classifieds, require different interpretive approaches, so too do different genres within the Tanakh. The genre impacts how one should interpret the information being presented.

2. The lack of personal names in the main text of Proverbs is significant because it demonstrates a focus on universal wisdom rather than specific historical events or people. The names appear only in titles, indicating their connection to authorship or collection, not as subjects of the proverbs themselves.
3. The book of Ruth naturally incorporates personal names into its narrative, introducing characters and detailing their relationships. In contrast, Proverbs restricts personal names almost exclusively to titles, reinforcing its generic and universally applicable nature.
4. A “call” refers to a specific divine summons or commission of an individual for a particular purpose, such as a call to be a prophet or a leader. Dr. Hildebrandt highlights the lack of a call in Proverbs to emphasize its general instruction rather than specific personal divine appointments.
5. Proverbs is composed of short, independent sentences, each a complete unit of wisdom. Unlike Psalms, which are structured into strophes and poems, Proverbs lacks this organization and instead presents wisdom in single, standalone sentences.
6. The phrase “thus saith the Lord” signifies direct divine revelation. Its absence from Proverbs suggests that the book's wisdom is not based on specific divine pronouncements but on general, experiential understanding.
7. Theophanies or miracles include God’s appearance to Jacob in a dream, the parting of the Red Sea, and Elijah calling down fire on Mount Carmel. These supernatural events or appearances of God are not found in the book of Proverbs.
8. The absence of references to idolatry in Proverbs is noteworthy because idolatry is a pervasive issue addressed elsewhere in the Old Testament. The lack of any mention of it highlights how different Proverbs is from other sections of scripture.
9. The Exodus motif, the foundational narrative of God’s liberation of Israel from Egypt, is echoed throughout the Old Testament. Its absence in Proverbs indicates that the book focuses on timeless wisdom rather than specific redemptive history.
10. Dr. Hildebrandt describes proverbs as “sentential” to emphasize that they are presented as individual, self-contained sentences. This structure stands in contrast to the paragraph-based stories or strophic poems found elsewhere in the Tanakh.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions using the source material to support your claims.

1. Discuss the claim that the book of Proverbs is different from the rest of the Tanakh (Old Testament) by using at least three of the main points Hildebrandt makes in the text. Be sure to explain how these differences affect how we should approach reading the book of Proverbs.
2. Explore the significance of personal names, place names, and tribal names within the Old Testament and their absence in Proverbs. What does the presence or absence of these features suggest about the nature and purpose of each text?
3. Analyze the absence of both a call of individuals and “thus saith the Lord” in Proverbs. What implications does this have for the book's authority and understanding of its message in the context of the Old Testament?
4. Compare and contrast the literary structure of Proverbs with either Psalms or historical narratives in the Tanakh. How does the structure impact the reader's experience and interpretation?
5. Considering Dr. Hildebrandt's arguments, how would you define the literary genre of the Book of Proverbs, and what role does this genre play in understanding its wisdom?



## Glossary of Key Terms

**Genre:** A category of literary composition, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter (e.g., historical narrative, poetry, wisdom literature).

**Tanakh:** The Jewish canon of the Hebrew Bible, comprised of the Torah (the Law), Nevi'im (the Prophets), and Ketuvim (the Writings).

**Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God to humankind, often accompanied by supernatural phenomena.

**Sentential:** Characterized by being expressed in short, self-contained sentences or sayings.

**Pericope:** A self-contained passage or section of text that forms a complete unit, often a story or narrative.

**Strophe:** A structural division of a poem or a song; often used in Hebrew poetry as a grouping of verses.

**Exodus Motif:** The narrative framework and themes related to the Israelite deliverance from slavery in Egypt, a key event that permeates the Old Testament.

**Idolatry:** The worship of idols or images, often foreign gods; often condemned in the Old Testament.

**Call:** A divine summons or commission of an individual for a specific purpose or vocation.

**"Thus saith the Lord" (Kol Amar Yahweh):** A phrase used to introduce words or commands that are directly from God.

## 5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Proverbs, Proverbs is Different from the Rest of the TANAK/Old Testament, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on the Uniqueness of Proverbs in the Tanakh

1. **How is the book of Proverbs distinct from other books in the Tanakh (Old Testament)?** The book of Proverbs stands out due to its unique literary genre, which differs significantly from the historical narratives, prophetic writings, and poetic expressions found in the rest of the Tanakh. Unlike other books that are structured around stories or poems, Proverbs is primarily composed of short, individual sentences that convey timeless truths. This sentential structure, along with a lack of specific historical context, personal names, tribal groups, or national references, sets it apart from the rest of the Tanakh.
2. **Why are there so few personal names mentioned in the main text of Proverbs?** Unlike other books of the Tanakh, where personal names play a central role in narratives and genealogies, personal names in Proverbs are largely restricted to the titles of the various sections. The purpose of this lack of specific personal names is that the proverbs are applicable in many situations, and not tied to the history of any particular person. While names like Solomon, Agur, and Lemuel appear in titles, they are absent from the body of the proverbs, highlighting the focus on general principles rather than specific historical figures. Even the few mentions of a name in the text, like "Lemuel" are presented in the context of general advice and not historical narrative. This lack of personal names is one of the ways that Proverbs is different.
3. **How does the absence of place names in Proverbs contribute to its uniqueness?** In contrast to books that are replete with references to specific cities, regions, and geographical locations, Proverbs contains virtually no place names. The absence of references to places like Jerusalem, Egypt, Sinai, or Babylon, which are ubiquitous in the rest of the Tanakh, underscores the universal and timeless nature of the wisdom offered in Proverbs. Proverbs is not tied to a specific location and therefore the proverbs can be seen as applicable in any place.

4. **What is the significance of the lack of tribal and national group references in Proverbs?** While the rest of the Tanakh mentions various tribal and national groups such as Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Philistines, and Egyptians, such references are conspicuously absent from the book of Proverbs. This deliberate omission further sets Proverbs apart, emphasizing the universal applicability of its wisdom rather than being tied to specific cultural or ethnic groups. There are not tribes or nations mentioned in Proverbs. Proverbs is for all peoples, not just a particular tribe or nation.
5. **Why are there no vocational callings or divine calls of individuals in Proverbs?** Unlike many other books in the Tanakh where individuals receive specific callings from God (e.g., Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah), Proverbs contains no mention of divine calls or vocations. This absence underscores its focus on general principles and wisdom applicable to all people, regardless of their specific role or calling in life. It is about wisdom and not about specific characters of the Old Testament.
6. **What is meant by the statement that there is "no 'thus saith the Lord'" in Proverbs?** The phrase "thus saith the Lord" (Kol Amar Yahweh) is absent from the book of Proverbs. This is significant because it indicates that unlike the prophetic books, Proverbs does not present its wisdom as direct divine pronouncements. This absence emphasizes a focus on the practical wisdom observable in life rather than explicit revelation from God.
7. **How does the absence of divine dreams, theophanies, and miracles in Proverbs contribute to its distinctiveness?** Unlike other parts of the Tanakh, which are filled with stories of divine dreams, appearances of God or angels (theophanies), and miraculous events, Proverbs is marked by their absence. The lack of such encounters with the divine reflects its focus on wisdom and everyday life rather than accounts of supernatural intervention. It relies on natural and earthly wisdom rather than heavenly occurrences.

8. **What is meant by "Proverbs are sentential rather than narrative" and how does that affect their interpretation?** The book of Proverbs is described as "sentential" meaning that it comprises individual short sentences that stand alone. Unlike other books of the Tanakh that are structured around stories grouped into paragraphs or poems grouped into strophes, each proverb is an individual unit. This is very different from books of history or books like the Psalms, each which contains related text grouped into stories and poems. Because proverbs are sentential, each one stands alone and should be considered as a singular piece of wisdom. This means that the interpretation needs to focus on each proverb as a statement of general wisdom and not as part of a larger narrative.