

Purpose of Proverbs, Exordium to Proverbs Chapter 1

Author: Dr. August Konkel | **Session 2**

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Proverbs, Exordium, Wisdom, Solomon, Fear of the Lord, Fools, Gullible Youth, Instruction, Hebrew Axioms

Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. August Konkel examines the introductory exordium of Proverbs 1:1–7, arguing that the title 'The Proverbs of Solomon' introduces four fundamental purpose statements for the entire biblical collection. He stresses that acquiring genuine wisdom requires 'the fear of the Lord' (Rosh / Tikila) as an indispensable starting point, without which high intellectual capacity degenerates into moral perversity. Konkel categorizes the book's audience into the historically wise, the literary wise, fools, and impressionable youth standing at a moral crossroads. Ultimately, the passage provides a foundational pedagogical guide designed to lead gullible listeners into divine reverence, practical prudence, and righteous living.

Outline

I. The Structure and Titles of Proverbs (1:1–7)

A. Distinct Titles throughout the Book

1. Proverbs of Solomon (1:1; 10:1)
2. Words of the Wise (22:17; 24:23)
3. Proverbs collected by Hezekiah's men (25:1)
4. Words of Agur (30:1)
5. Words of Lemuel from his mother (31:1)

B. The Exordium as Title and Purpose Statement

1. Hebrew versus English sentence structure (subject placement for emphasis)
2. Four infinitive purpose statements following the overarching title
3. Primary audience and intention of the book

II. The Core Audience: The Wise and the Gullible

A. Definition of 'The Wise'

1. Willingness to listen to instruction rather than mere length of experience
2. The 'literary wise' as readers actively seeking divine instruction

B. The Call to Callow and Gullible Youth

1. Impressionable individuals standing in the moral balance

2. Acquiring craftiness and prudence to navigate relationships and life

III. The Prerequisite of Wisdom: The Fear of the Lord

A. Linguistic Breakdown of 'Beginning'

1. Rosh (Proverbs 1:7): Temporal starting point, chief essence, and finest quality
2. Tikila (Proverbs 9:10): Unambiguous designation of 'first' or initial prerequisite

B. True Nature of Divine Fear

1. Beyond basic respect: deep awareness of divine majesty and judgment
2. Scriptural encounters: Mount Sinai boundaries and Isaiah's vision of holiness
3. Acknowledging human frailty and absolute dependence on the Life-Giver

IV. The Contrast: Fools and Autonomous Self-Reliance

A. Definition of 'Fools'

1. Lack of moral character and values rather than lack of intellectual intelligence
2. Sophisticated thinking directed toward moral perversity

B. The Fallacy of the Tree of Knowledge

1. Arrogant autonomous claim to define good and evil independently
2. The deceptive path that seems right to human eyes but leads to death