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Proverbs Chapter 2

Proverbs 2:1, "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you."

In this verse, David is exhorting Solomon to "accept," which is the kal future of LAQACH, which means "to receive, to take what is given; or in a possession or heritage; to receive as good, pleasing, and acceptable."⁷⁹ The term is translated "heritage" in Job 27:13, where it is used as BEING FROM THE HAND OF GOD (EL), "This is the lot of wicked men from God, the oppressor's heritage from Shaddai's hand." Thus, the 'heritage' of wicked men is judicial death, whereas, in Prov. 2:1, the 'wisdom' is the 'heritage' of those who choose to "receive" it.

Interestingly, the Hebrew term for "store up" in the NIV is the same as the Hebrew term used in Prov. 1:18 for "lie in wait." It is the kal future of TSAPAN, and when used to describe the person who has chosen to receive 'wisdom,' it means "to lay up;"⁸⁰ thus, this person also "lies in wait," but not to brutalize, but rather to "receive" 'wisdom.' The resemblance is striking, to say the least. For both parties are "lying in wait" to gain treasure; however, in 1:18 the treasure is illicit plunder, while in 2:1 the treasure is 'wisdom.'

Proverbs 2:2-4, "Turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure."

The Hebrew term for "heart," LEB, or LEBAB, needs to be explored to fully comprehend this passage, and others, in Scripture. LEB, in its abstract or figurative use, refers to "the totality of man's inner or immaterial nature."⁸¹ The "heart," then, is the thinking part of the human spirit, that which is immaterial yet crucial to mankind's thought processes. For it is here that God's word, or spiritual information, is deposited, stored, and brought to bear upon life.

This is where the REAL PERSON resides. "The heart, according to Scripture, not only includes the motives, feelings, affections, and desires, but also the will, the aims, the principles, the thoughts, and

⁷⁹Wilson, William. Old Testament Word Studies; page 342.

⁸⁰Ibid.; page 216.

⁸¹Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament; vol. i, page 466.

the intellect of man. In fact, it embraces the whole inner man, the head never being regarded as the seat of intelligence. Whilst it is the source of all action, and the centre of all thought and feeling, the heart is also described as receptive of influences both from the outer world and from God Himself. The wisdom of the wise-hearted was given them by the Lord."⁸²

And just as personified 'wisdom' "called aloud" and "cried out" in the streets and gateways of the cities, cf. 1:20,21, so also the wise man "cries out" for 'wisdom' in 2:3. This, then, would be prayer to God for 'wisdom.'

The term for "search" in verse 4 is CHAPAS; and the original meaning of the word was "to dig." And in the kal stem the word is used metaphorically, and means to "search diligently," as one would search for, and excavate for, silver or buried treasure. The wise man, then, desires or covets, or even pants after 'wisdom.'

Our Lord spoke of this desire for 'wisdom' in Matt. 13:44, and He utilized the same analogy: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Proverbs 2:5, "Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

The receiving of 'wisdom' results in "fear" of the Lord and in a complete understanding of Who and What God is. "Fear" here is reverence, respect, awe, worship, and veneration of God in His perfect essence. Through 'wisdom,' the wise man comes to see or behold God. And once God has been detected and perceived, then an empirical knowledge of God can be a reality. And by empirical is meant an actual, existent relationship with God may take place. In other words, prayers will be answered, provision will be made, and light will be given to the one that sees God.

God's word, then, or 'wisdom,' is not just theories and recipes in a book. Verse 5 is stating directly that God's word can be EXPERIENCED. This is not something that is merely played at, 'wisdom' is not a hobby, it is not a theory to be debated. In reality, 'wisdom' becomes a part of you -- it ACTIVELY AND ACTUALLY HAPPENS in your

⁸²Girdlestone, Robert B. Synonyms of the Old Testament; page 65-66.

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life! Isaiah 35:7 states that “the mirage becomes a pool.” This is not, then, something that is ‘out there’ to be discussed and analyzed, but rather it is to be EXPERIENCED, RELISHED, SAVORED AND LIVED!

At the present juncture in history, in the modern world, very few people become literally thrilled and agog about anything. But the wise man is pictured in Proverbs chapter 2 as seeking wildly for ‘wisdom.’ He is depicted as suffering from ‘treasure fever;’ he is obsessed by ‘wisdom’ and her discovery. He pursues her (‘wisdom’) as other men pursue money. And when he finds her, the result is an intimate, personal, cogent relationship with God -- a relationship that is not a mirage, as in Isaiah, but is substantive and tangible, like the pool of water in Isaiah. It can be touched, felt, swallowed; and it can refresh and invigorate.

Proverbs 2:6, “For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”

The term for “the Lord” is the tetragrammaton, JHWH, and this word denotes the God of covenant and provision. And He gives (NATAN) ‘wisdom’ to the heart of believers; and this statement is confirmed by Job 32:8, “Surely a spirit dwells in mortal man, and Shaddai’s breath makes them to understand.” Here, then, is the Holy Spirit imparting ‘wisdom’ to the heart or human spirit. James 1:5 relates the same concept: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

The Hebrew word for “mouth” is PEH, which when applied to God refers to the God who speaks. And it should be remembered that the mouth expresses the character and disposition of one’s inner thoughts. Thus, ‘wisdom’ refers to the thoughts of God; this is WHAT and HOW God thinks -- the epistemology of God!

In fact, according to Scripture the ‘mouth’ of God speaks, the mouth of God creates (through the verbalization of thought), the mouth of God executes judgment, and the mouth of God ‘commands.’

And in Proverbs 2:6, what issues forth from the mouth of God? “Knowledge” and “understanding;” DA’AT, is the word for “knowledge,” and it is defined as “to know that

which was not known before.”⁸³ And “understanding” is TEBUNAH, which means “the act or skill of understanding,” i.e., the exercise or use of ‘wisdom.’ Thus, according to this verse, ‘wisdom’ is not alone just to be understood and placed on a shelf as a collector’s item, to be occasionally dusted off. ‘Wisdom’ is to be understood and utilized! ‘Wisdom’ dynamically energizes the mentality, the very being, the life of the one who uses it. ‘Wisdom,’ then, being the very thoughts of God, is power; power to choose correctly, power to enjoy life, power to love, power to be successful and prosperous!

Proverbs 2:7, “He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless.”

Once again, the Hebrew word for “in store” is the qal perfect of TSAPAN, and the verb is in the third person masculine singular, which designates God as the One storing up or “laying up treasure for the upright.” And the term for “upright” is the masculine plural adjective YASHAR, which means “rightness, of a way, evenness, hence happiness.”⁸⁴ This, then, is a believer whose way of life is based upon ‘wisdom.’ What is it that God treasures up for the wise man? TUSHIAH, which is a difficult word to define. Some scholars understand it as ESSENTIA or existent being, and they render the translation as “that which is,” in Job 11:6. Other scholars render the word as “substance.” Harris, Archer and Waltke, Eds., define the word as “sound judgment, wisdom that leads to practical success.”⁸⁵ And for what it is worth, the author supports this rendering. For Job 5:12 states that God baffles the calculatingly sly man in his reach for success: “And doth frustrate the schemes of cunning men; so that their plans they cannot bring to pass.” Thus, the NIV rendering of “victory” is most apropos.

Additionally, and most fascinating, God is declared to be a “shield.” The Hebrew term for shield is the masculine singular noun MAGEN, which refers to the round shield carried by light infantry and officers in the ancient world. And God is constantly referred to in the Old Testament as the One who “protects,” GANAN, His people, and GANAN may also be translated “put a shield

⁸³Wilson, William. Ibid.; page 240.

⁸⁴Ibid.; page 463.

⁸⁵Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; vol. i, page 413.

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about." Thus, God is called the 'shield' of Israel in Deut. 33:29; He is a shield about his servants in Genesis 15:1; and He is a shield about the house of Aaron in Psalm 115:10. Furthermore, the term MAGEN is used figuratively of rulers as defenders of the kingdom in Psalm 89:18, 47:9, and Hosea 4:18. "And Dahood has argued that the meaning of MAGAN means 'bestow a gift,' that the noun refers to the giver of gifts, the suzerain, the benefactor."⁸⁶ Thus, God protects those whose "walk is blameless." And the term for "walk" is the qal participle, masculine plural construct of HALACH, and means "way of life," or "journey through life." And their "way of life" is described as "blameless," which is TOM, in the Hebrew. TOM is defined as "integrity," but implies "completeness or wholeness." In other words, this believer's way of life is whole and healthy; it is, then, NORMAL. Thus, 'wisdom' and success are typical of the wise man or the wise woman. As well, there is the hidden coloring of SANITY in this word.

Proverbs 2:8, "For he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones."

For He, God, "guards the course of justice;" the Hebrew word for "guards" is the qal infinitive construct of NATSAR, which means "to keep in view, to look at, to guard or preserve," and the underlying concept is that of the One keeping loyal love (CHESED), which brings into view the idea of covenant. This, then, is God actively guarding the way of justice. This is God guarding His word, His oath in covenant.

And He "protects the way of his faithful ones." The Hebrew term, here, for "protects" is the qal imperfect of SHAMAR, and "the basic idea of the root is 'to exercise great care over.'"⁸⁷ And the implication is that God, very lovingly, "takes care of," or "guards" the "way of His faithful ones," i.e., those He has a relationship with through Christ. "The way" is DERECH, which means "course of life, a way of living, conduct."⁸⁸ And the word for "faithful ones" is CHASID, which may be rendered "holy ones" or "faithful ones." However, CHASID signifies "not only the reception but also the exercise of CHESED ([loyal love or] mercy). It has been held by distinguished

scholars that CHASID primarily signifies a RECIPIENT of mercy. It is a remarkable fact that the word CHASID, when applied to man, has usually a possessive pronoun affixed to it, so as to indicate that the persons who are exercising this disposition belong in a special sense to God. They are 'his merciful ones' (his saints)."⁸⁹ These "faithful ones," then, are those who through faith in Christ have received salvation, and that continue to receive mercy, or grace in action, from God.

Proverbs 2:9, "Then you will understand what is right and just and fair -- every good path."

This verse is introduced by the adverb "then," which designates that that which follows is a logical conclusion or expression of recognizing that God is 'wisdom' and the source of 'wisdom.'

And the word for "understand" is the qal imperfect of BIN, which means "to know with the mind." This "knowing with the mind" will understand TSEDEQ, or "what is right" according to God's way of thinking, and the term implies a love for what is right. Inherent in this term, TSEDEQ, is righteousness imputed to mankind and, more importantly, in context, what 'should be thought and done.' Moreover, this individual will also understand what is "proper," MISHPAT, and "the straight way," YASHAR, and "the good path," or the "good track."

The latter phrase, the "good path," requires further explanation. The Hebrew word for "good" is the adjective TOB, which is defined as "good;" but the term connotes moral good, and 'superior in quality' in an abstract sense. And more, the term also connotes practical benefits, such as success, hospitality and friendship, beneficial guidance, economic prosperity, and God's intentions. And in context, the word also connotes the practical benefit of "true happiness" as a result of following the "good track," or course of conduct. All these benefits, then, are the logical conclusion and expression of 'wisdom' in the soul of the believer.

Proverbs 2:10, "For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul."

Verse 10 utilizes the figure of speech called METONYMY OF SUBJECT, which is "when the subject is put for the adjunct: e.g., as when the

⁸⁶Ibid.; vol. i, page 169.

⁸⁷Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; vol. ii, page 939.

⁸⁸Wilson, William. Ibid.; page 475.

⁸⁹Girdlestone, Robert B. Synonyms of the Old Testament; page 113.

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place, or thing CONTAINING it, is put for that which is contained."⁹⁰ And herein, "heart" is put for "understanding in the soul or the human spirit," because it is referred to as the location of 'wisdom' and understanding.

The Hebrew word for "will enter" is the qal imperfect of BO, which means "to go into, to enter."⁹¹ And the subject of the verb is the feminine substantive CHAKMAH, which is 'wisdom' personified as a Lady. The two terms together connote an entrance into specific relations with; this, then, is 'wisdom' actually entering the soul of the believer and having a dynamic, intimate relationship with the believer.

Where does 'wisdom' reside in the believer? In the "heart;" and the Hebrew word is, once again, LEB, the masculine noun, construct suffix, and the term refers to "the heart, the inner being." This is the seat of the individual's intellect.

"And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul." The term for knowledge is DA'AT, which means "knowledge, knowing, intelligence." The word also implies knowing that which was not known before; and Gesenius "considers the primary meaning to be, to see."⁹² Thus, this would suggest 'seeing' mentally something that was not seen before. And this new perception is the result of 'wisdom' entering the soul. Thus, 'wisdom' opens the windows of the mind and allows light to enter, i.e., a new knowledge and understanding of life and God. "Will be pleasant" is the qal imperfect verb NA'EM, which means "be pleasant, sweet, delightful, beautiful."⁹³ And in context this word definitely supports the idea of an intimate, close and dear relationship. For the word is used in Song of Songs 1:16 and 7:6 to describe the physical beauty of two lovers, and in II Sam. 1:26 the word describes the friendship of David and Jonathan.

Thus, this word connotes a pleasantness that is real, active and potent. Indeed, the word might even be rendered "charming." And this "pleasantness" is said to be in the "soul." The term for "soul" is NEPHESH, and this is indeed a fascinating term. Robert Thieme defines NEPHESH as "the soul's fully formed, immaterial

essence which is provided by God at the moment the spark of life is given."⁹⁴ And Harris, Archer and Waltke, Eds., define NEPHESH as "breath."⁹⁵ They also suggest that the term carries shadows or colorings of desire or cravings. Whereas Robert Girdlestone defines the word as "the animating principle of the body; in other words, it is the life. Hence the need of atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11)."⁹⁶ And E.W. Bullinger states, "the Hebrew word NEPHESH occurs 752 times, and is translated in 44 different ways, which may be thus grouped in four great classes. I. 'Creature.' II. 'Person.' III. 'Life' and 'Lives.' IV. 'Desire.'" Dr. Bullinger also notes that "'my soul' IS THE SAME AS 'me,' OR 'myself.'"⁹⁷

What is the NEPHESH, then? It is, in context, the living soul of a human being; a human soul which has the 'breath of life' (NESHAMAH) in it. And this living human soul 'desires' that which is 'pleasant;' and 'wisdom' is that which is 'pleasant' or 'sweet' to the soul. In effect, then, 'wisdom' provides the human soul with 'refreshment.' Dr. Unger summarizes verse 10 as follows: "the knowledge of God and His Word and ways becoming pleasant to the person thus spiritually renewed, in contrast to the wicked and the fool, who hate that knowledge."⁹⁸

Proverbs 2:11, "Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you."

The Hebrew word for "discretion" is the hiphil participle of MEZIMMAH, and the word does mean "discretion" in the sense of one of the results or 'purposes' of 'wisdom.' Thus, one of the purposes of 'wisdom' is to produce discretion in the soul of the individual who chooses to let 'her' enter. MEZIMMAH, then, is the liberty or power of deciding and acting according to one's own thought processes and judgment, and precludes external control or suasion, the suasion of 'evil' and the 'world.'

And "discretion protects you;" the term for "protect" is SHAMAR, the qal imperfect, which means "to protect with great care." In addition,

⁹⁰Bullinger, E.W. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; page 567.

⁹¹Wilson, William. *Ibid.*; page 190.

⁹²*Ibid.*; page 239.

⁹³Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. *Ibid.*; vol. ii, page 585.

⁹⁴Thieme, Robert. *The Origin of Human Life*; page 18.

⁹⁵Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. *Ibid.*; vol. ii, page 588.

⁹⁶Girdlestone, Robert B. *Synonyms of the Old Testament*; pages 56-58.

⁹⁷Bullinger, E.W. *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the Greek New Testament*; pages 720-721.

⁹⁸Unger, Merrill F. *Commentary on the Old Testament*; vol. i, page 986.

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“understanding” (TEBUNAH), which is the “act of understanding,” “will guard (NATSAR) you.” And NATSAR connotes that God, JEHOVAH JIREH, “the God that sees and provides,” will keep looking at the soul that has ‘wisdom,’ and that He will preserve or “guard” that soul. Here, then, are two direct results of ‘wisdom’s’ intimacy: discretion, and the act of understanding and choosing; and the implication is that both these qualities will preserve the living soul within the believer. And all this is because God “sees and provides,” indeed, He IS the ‘wise man’s’ PROVISION.

Proverbs 2:12, “Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse.”

“Will save” is the translation of the hiphil infinitive construct from the verb NATSAL, which means “to deliver, rescue, or save.” And since the hiphil stem is causative, a “literal personal salvation or deliverance (often physical but not without spiritual overtones or application) is involved.”⁹⁹ Thus, “saving” or “rescuing” is most appropriate. This, then, is God, JEHOVAH JIREH (the God Who sees and provides), protecting and rescuing the “pupil of his eye,” His people. For Deut. 32:10 states the principle and the promise: “In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the pupil (apple) of his eye.”

And from what will the ‘wise man’ be saved? From the DERECH, “the way of life, the conduct, the way of living,” of “wicked men.” The Hebrew term for “wicked” is the adjective RA’, and the word is defined as “evil, or wicked;” and “more often RA’ indicates moral deficiencies, moral qualities that injure oneself or others, or a condition that is below par. The measure of these qualities is God’s evaluation.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, ‘wisdom’ will rescue the ‘wise man’ from the conduct of “evil men.” And these men are declared to be speakers of “perverse words.” The Hebrew term for “perverse” is the substantive TAHPUKA, which “is a sin connected mostly with the mouth, and also with the heart; and the mind.”¹⁰¹ And the word is rendered “perversity;” and it is interesting

to note that the root of the word, HAPAK, is used to describe the symptoms of leprosy in Leviticus 13:3,4,10,13,16,17,20,25,55. Thus, the ‘ways’ of evil men might be compared to a deadly, degenerative disease. And ‘wisdom’ provides immunity, even rescue, from this ailment.

And verse 12 cites the first of four activities of ‘evil men:’ 1) they speak perverse words; 2) they abandon uprightness for darkness; 3) they rejoice in evil and delight in perversity; 4) they their way of life is crooked. These activities or qualities will be examined in verses 12 through 15.

Proverbs 2:13, “Who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways.”

The Hebrew word for “leave” is the qal participle of ‘AZAB, and the basic meaning of ‘AZAB is “to depart, to abandon, and to loose.”¹⁰² And in context, the word is used to indicate the abandonment of ‘good,’ i.e., to apostatize. Indeed, the same term is employed by Isaiah to urge the ‘evil’ to forsake their lifestyle of ‘evil.’ “Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” And Ephesians 4:18 describes, in New Testament terminology, these ‘wicked men:’ “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”

Thus, they have “abandoned” the “way” (ORACH) of “evenness” or “what is right.” Instead, they “walk in dark ways.” The Hebrew term for “dark” is the substantive of CHOSHEK, and “in about half of it eighty occurrences it means literally the opposite of light.”¹⁰³ This is the curse of spiritual darkness; the souls of such as these cannot see, they are non-functional. And William Wilson defines CHOSHEK as used in this verse as “unbelief and the pursuit of sin.”¹⁰⁴

It should be remembered, too, that these ‘wicked men’ have voluntarily, through their own free-will, CHOSEN the dark path. Spiritual darkness, then, is the desire of their souls; this is what they WANT.

⁹⁹Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; page 594.

¹⁰⁰Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; vol. ii, page 855.

¹⁰¹Ibid.; vol. i, page 222.

¹⁰²Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; vol. ii, page 658.

¹⁰³Ibid.; vol. i, page 331.

¹⁰⁴Wilson, William. Ibid.; page 108.

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Proverbs 2:14, "Who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil."

The Hebrew word for "delight" is the adjectival form of SAMAK, which means "to rejoice, to be glad." And in what do they rejoice? In "doing wrong." 'ASAH, is the Hebrew verb for "do;" and here exists in the qal infinitive construct. And the term means to make something out of something; and in context, it refers to producing evil actions out of evil thoughts. Not only do they "delight" in producing evil, but more, they "rejoice in the perverseness of evil;" the word for "rejoice" is the qal imperfect of GIL, whose root meaning is "to circle around; the root meaning is more applicable to vigorous, enthusiastic expressions of joy."¹⁰⁵ And put simply, this is exultation. What do they exult in? "In the perverseness of the evil (man)," which is endorsement and support of others who do likewise. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 1:32 spoke of such as these and their end: "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them." And I Kings 21:25 describes two people who exulted in the evil of others: Ahab and Jezebel. "There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife."

The Hebrew word for "perverseness" is, once again (see verse 12), TAHPUKA, which in context might best be rendered "deceit" or "fraud." They exult, then, in the deceit of evil men and their ways. In other words, these individuals take pleasure from the fact that they are able to maliciously manipulate, disable and destroy others. For by so doing, they feel and believe that they are superior, i.e., that they are number one, that they are right, that the universe is theirs and they are omnipotent. And they feel strong and expanded, invincible even, in their power. But, of course, this is a fantasy, a lie, a denial of reality. For God IS, He IS the Creator, and they are the created.

Proverbs 2:15, "Whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways."

Their "paths are crooked," which should perhaps be rendered, "who are crooked in their manner of life." And the Hebrew term for "crooked" is the adjective 'IQQESH, whose root "is a descriptive

¹⁰⁵Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; vol. i, page 159.

term in hamartiology that emphasizes the perversion and twisted nature of sin."¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the word is used of women braiding their hair; and in this manner men also twist their behavior.

The word for "devious" is the niphal participle of LUZ, which means "to turn aside, to depart," in the sense of those who rather than trusting in 'wisdom' and God, trust in their own schemes and abilities. Figuratively, then, these wicked men have deviated from God and God's Will, God's Plan, and God's Methodology.

Proverbs 2:16, 'It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words.'

In verses 16 through 19, Lady 'wisdom' is portrayed as likewise protecting young men from 'the adulteress,' which is literally 'a strange woman' (ZARA), and ZARA is an euphemism or nice-nellyism for ZONA, which is an 'harlot.' And this 'strange woman' is also called 'foreign' (NOKRIYYA), whose person, i.e., body, belongs to another man, and whose soul belongs to a foreign god. This verse is echoed in Prov. 5:20, which says, 'Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?' However, it is fascinating to note that Solomon did not heed his father's advice in this regard. For I Kings 11:1-8 relate that foreign women who worshipped other gods enticed and entrapped Solomon.

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter -- Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, 'You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.' Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.' (I Kings 11:1,2) Indeed, Solomon's misbehavior in this particular realm was infamous, and his infamy was cited throughout the history of Israel, e.g., Neh. 13:26, which says, 'Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women.'

The term for 'seductive words' is interesting to note. The Hebrew term is the hiphil perfect of the

¹⁰⁶Harris, Archer, Waltke, Eds. Ibid.; vol. ii, page 693.

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verb CHALAQ, which is defined as 'to smooth, to smooth the tongue or lips; to flatter to deceive.'¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the term implies assigning a portion of something to someone; thus, this woman uses 'smooth' words, words from her smooth lips, to seduce; but she only gives a portion of her words, she conceals her true thoughts, and thus is guilty of 'flattering' or 'deceit.'

Proverbs 2:17 'Who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.'

This seductress has 'left the partner' ('ALLUP), 'the husband' of her youth, which means that she is an adulteress in a literal sense, and she is also a spiritual adulteress to God because she worships other gods. And she has abrogated or 'ignored' the marriage 'covenant,' i.e., her marriage vows, those words she spoke at her wedding binding her to one man (and spiritually to one God). In other words, this woman is totally untrustworthy. For she is disloyal to her wedding vows, she is faithless to her husband, and she is recreant to her spiritual relationship to God. This woman is incapable of any type of relationship, even that of one with herself. Once false, she will be false again unless some inner essential change takes place.

Exodus 20:14 states the position clearly: 'You shall not commit adultery.' Thus, this woman has broken two Covenants: 1) that of marriage to a man and, 2) her covenant with God.

Proverbs 2:18,19 'For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.'

This siren's 'house' promises physical ecstasy and exhilarating love, but in reality her 'house' bows down or prostrates (SHACHACH) itself before death. And the Hebrew word for 'death' is the substantive MAWET, which is 'a universally used Semitic root (MUT) for dying and death.'¹⁰⁸ And in context, the word may be taken as either metaphorical, i.e., the death of wisdom, e.g., Job 12:2, or the term may be interpreted as the personification of Death, i.e., the worship of that which is contrary to 'wisdom' and results in, first, spiritual darkness, and, second, in physical death. Too, the word may refer to Sheol, the realm of the

dead, for in Isaiah 38:18 we read: 'For Sheol cannot praise you, death cannot celebrate you; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth.'

The term for 'spirits of the dead' clarifies the matter. REPAIM, is the substantive used for 'spirits of the dead,' and it refers to the 'dead ones' that inhabit Sheol, the Hebrew hell. Thus, verse 18 is a complicated parallelism of has been termed a 'staircase' parallelism, i.e., 'foolish men'//to ghosts. Both this word, REPA'IM and MAWET are of Ugaritic origin. And the reference is to Sheol and its inhabitants. Sheol, then, is the abode where all such worshippers of 'darkness' finally reside; and the only exceptions are those who escape by a 'miracle of omnipotent grace.'¹⁰⁹ In other words, by turning to God and His ways. For as verse 19 states, 'None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.' And the Hebrew word for 'life' refers to 'life, having vital energy, the preservation of life.'¹¹⁰ This, then, is prosperity, true happiness and success in history, in time, in one's life and, more, it is life after physical death occurs -- being face to face with God in eternity.

Self-Sufficiency, Sin, and Abel: Practical Application of 'Wisdom'

The author keeps utilizing the term 'self-sufficiency' as regards the 'fool' or the 'wicked men' in Proverbs. This topic, along with some practical application will now be discussed. So let's get very un-academic for a few pages, and get down to where we really live.

Genesis 4:1-8 will help clarify the term self-sufficiency. And Hebrews 11:4 is the parallel verse in the New Testament. In the book of Genesis we have the 'beginnings' of the Gospel, God, and our understanding of life. Mankind's whole understanding of his world, his God and his walk with God begins in Genesis. And the story of Cain and Abel is the story of the 'beginning' of how God tells us to approach Him, the way to be accepted, the way to walk in relationship with Him, the way to be connected with God.

And these two young men represent the two ways that mankind has sought to approach God. The first way, Abel's, is the way that God gave to mankind to approach Him; this way is a gift from

¹⁰⁷Wilson, William. Old Testament Word Studies; page 168.

¹⁰⁸Archer, Harris, Waltke, Eds. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament; vol. i, page 496.

¹⁰⁹Unger, Merrill F. Commentary on the Old Testament; vol. i, page 987.

¹¹⁰Wilson, William. Ibid.; page 251.

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God. The other way, Cain's way, is the way of human logic and human intelligence, the way that the book of Proverbs says, 'Seems right to man, but the end is the way of death.'

In chapter 3 of Genesis, sin came into the human race. And we need to understand the concept of sin to understand the difference between the 'way of Cain' and the 'way of Abel.' And in the modern world the concept of 'sin' has been trivialized; sin has almost become a joke. Sin has become the doing of physical things: going certain places, having certain habits, wearing certain clothes, has become sin, as it were. Sin, however, is not in places, behavior, or clothes. Sin is in the 'heart' of mankind, and this is where sin originates. Sin, then, is a matter of declaring to God, 'I can handle life by myself.' Sin is mankind's self-sufficiency. Sin is mankind's independence from God. Sin may recognize God, but sin does its own thing, and does it out of its own strength, and power. Sin means 'self for self,' i.e., a person living out of himself and for himself. And the harvest of this way of thinking is 'sins' as mankind knows them, i.e., the 'doing of certain things,' such as bitterness of thought, war, rage, anger, hatred, etc. This is me for me, and my way.

Sin, then, is mankind 'breaking off,' or 'fracturing' himself from God. If God is the source of life, the unbegun fountain of life, and if He Himself is the sustainer and nourisher of life, then to 'break off' from God or declare independence from Him, is to separate from Life: life in every aspect, emotional, mental, physical, and the life of being, i.e., that life that resides in the soul (NEPHESH, VIDE SUPRA). And what is the opposite of life? Death! The only alternative to life is death. And when mankind separated from God, mankind became aware of what inner death was, that death that ultimately ends up in physical death.

Remember, God is love! And when God created the universe and the world as we know it, He created out of a desire to share love. And mankind was placed on the planet earth so that God could love them. This is the meaning of mankind's existence; mankind should be the focus and the receivers of God's love. This is how mankind functions -- knowing that they are the beloved of God.

And once this love is received, then mankind is to become an expressor of that love in God's creation.

But if mankind is separated from God, then mankind is separated from the source of love. Thus, mankind finds only 'self for self,' and an emptiness that screams for love exists in mankind's inner soul. And mankind cannot find the love to fill this void because it can only be found in God. 'Self for self,' then, is death, real death.

And in our modern world, such talk of sin and death is viewed as exaggeration or caricature. To say, 'sin equals death,' is viewed as a fantasy. And this is because mankind has become callused or hardened to it. Mankind lives in a world that is cut-off from God, where 'self for myself' is exalted as the only way of life. But mankind is so immersed in it that he has gotten used to it -- sin doesn't bother mankind anymore.

But the REALITY is this: whether mankind feels it or not, sees it or not, or knows it or not, that to live independent of God is DEATH. And this is not merely a case of God being mean or unreasonable and dispensing a punishment, it is a natural consequence. For if you are separated from life, you are dead. And if life is love, then to separate from the source of love is death. And this death finds its expression in that hideous void in mankind's soul.

However, God kept on loving mankind. God came to mankind in the Garden of Eden and stated that One would come and smash the head of Satan, and that this One would reverse the curse. Furthermore, God stated that another would die instead of mankind. And God gave them an animal to die in their place.

God separated out the lambs from the other animals. And Adam and Eve witnessed death by the shedding of blood for the first time. And when God did this, He was saying, 'This is you. You are dead.' But God provided a substitute to take their place. God killed the animals instead, and mankind's death was given to the animals. This was God's gift to mankind. God was the Priest; God volunteered the lambs, God killed them.

Then Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. But they did come back to the gates of the Garden of Eden, for it stood for 2000 years, until the Flood came. The gates were guarded by Cherubs and none could enter, it was a precursor of the Tabernacle and Temple, as it were, for God resided therein. But mankind came

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before the gates, it was called 'coming before the Lord,' and here mankind offered their animal sacrifices as prescribed by God.

And this is where Cain and Abel enter the picture. They have been taught to make their sacrifices at the gates. Cain is a grower, a businessman, and his business was huge, for before the Flood mankind was vegetarian, according to Scripture. Abel is a rancher, he raises sheep for wool and for sacrifices. Both have free-will, the ability to choose for themselves.

Thus, according to Gen. 4:3, 'in the course of time' (literally, 'the end of days'), which was some type of cycle based, probably, on 'seven,' Abel offered his sacrifice. And Abel, according to Hebrews 11, offers his lamb 'because of faith.' And 'faith' is not force of will, or dynamic impetus; 'faith' is responding to that which God initiates. Thus, 'faith' is REST, it is not effort or work. It is response to what God has done. God did it and invites mankind to respond.

Abel, then, has seen that he is dead, that he is spiritually dead. Abel has understood that God had given him a substitute, and that it is a gift. So Abel is taking the gift that God has given, and giving it back to God. Abel is saying, 'I trust in your gift.' Abel offers the lamb by FAITH. In effect, then, all Abel does is 'watch.' Just as Moses and David said, 'Stand and watch the deliverance of the Lord.'

To Cain, however, this is not sensible. Death, blood, sacrifice -- this is not positive thinking. To Cain this was repugnant; he thinks independently. Cain brings a gift of himself. A gift that is the result of all his hard work -- all the vegetables he has grown. He is giving God what he has done. A monument to his talents as a man.

His motivation is not faith. His motivation is human logic. He will impress God with his best gift. Cain is proud of his production, his talents. This is a gift of himself to God. Whereas Abel has offered God's gift back to God. God gave the gift of a substitute to mankind. Abel believes and understands that apart from God's gift he cannot stand before God because he is dead. Cain took himself and offered himself in the symbol of vegetables.

And God 'looked with favor' (literally, 'gave testimony to it') upon Abel's sacrifice. The animal

was probably devoured by fire as a symbol of judgment. But Cain's was rejected.

Cain's 'face was downcast,' according to Gen. 4:5b. And you almost have to feel sorry for Cain; for he was confused, he cannot be faulted, humanly speaking, for doing his best. He did his best and nothing happened. He sincerely felt that this was a better way to approach God. He did his best; he tried to worship God. But nothing happened because it was a gift of himself to God, his self-satisfaction, his smugness. He was, in effect, giving God his pride. All the way through the narration, Cain is aware of only himself, and that's why he gave of himself.

Abel on the other hand gives God's gift back to God. Abel is aware of God's love and God's grace. Cain is frustrated, he feels rejected. He tried. However, it is to be remembered that with God you are either right or you are wrong. God's standards are absolutes. And in I John 3:12, the Apostle John comments on Cain. And John says that Cain 'was of the evil one' and that his 'deeds were evil.' And John is not referring to the murder of Abel. John is referring to the offering of vegetables to God. Scripture, then, is saying that this was an evil deed. Why? Because in making this offering, Cain was rejecting God's gift, Cain was saying he didn't need God's gift, Cain said I have a better idea, a better offering. So the issue is not behavior. The issue is not how Cain lives, the issue is how do you sacrifice. The issue is how do you associate with God?

Abel trusted the substitute; Cain trusted his own sweat. Cain did not, then, trust God. He trusted himself.

Then God asked Cain a question. And God's questions always make mankind fidget. God, of course, is omniscient and knows the answer, but the asking requires mankind to think, to reorient mentally.

God asks, 'Why are you angry?' And God adds some of the most frightening words of Scripture: 'sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you.' God is stating, then, that the only deliverance from sin and its power is in the gift that God has provided. And then Cain and Abel go out and talk. Cain, though, cannot stand it any more. He must silence his brother's voice! He kills Abel.

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Yet no animal can take the place of a human. SOMEONE, some human being must volunteer to take mankind's place. But the reluctant animal portrays undeservedness; for the lamb did not deserve to die, it had done nothing. And this, of course, is a picture of Christ's impeccability; for he, too, had done nothing wrong. He was incapable of sin, and he did not sin.

So the animal sacrifices were not the real thing; they were a shadow, an anticipation of something or SOMEONE that was coming. The animal sacrifices were a type of IOU. And that is why John the Baptist saw our Lord and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'

This is the MYSTERY of the Gospel: that Jesus became true or complete humanity, while continuing to be complete or true God. This is a real human being Who Is God. So this One human being, then, Who is God, is at least equal to His entire creation -- and more! Here is one man who in the worth of His person is equal to every person who has ever been, is now, or ever will be. And as a human being, not drawing on His power as God, He chooses righteousness, and overcomes Satan, and is Holy in His own right. And that One chose, freely, to become the sacrifice for the sins of every moral, choosing, human being.

This is THE Lamb! And on the Cross, as the Lamb is being sacrificed, and the blood is being shed, Who is the priest? Isaiah 53 says it is God the Father. It is He who put Him to grief! So just as God took the first lamb and killed it, now when the final Lamb comes, God the Father again sheds the blood of His own Son. The IOU's have been paid. And this is the good news!

And mankind's problem is this: that having trusted in Christ the only sacrifice, mankind then turns back and wants to sacrifice vegetables. Surely, mankind must become involved here somewhere!!? This is what mankind thinks. And it doesn't work, just like Cain's didn't.

All we can offer God is His Son that died for us. We can never offer the fruit of our labors. In Exodus 28:42-43, the priests are described as wearing underwear made of linen. Why? Exodus answers, linen 'because then they will not sweat,' ('not incur guilt' in the NIV translation). Again, why? Because there must be no 'sweat' in the Holy Place. In other words, no 'works' are allowed in

the Holy Place. To walk with God, then, requires no work or sweat; it is only 'rest,' or 'watching.'

Thus, mankind cannot try to be like Christ. Christ Himself must actually live in us. We cannot do it. Only He can, just as only He could be our substitute.

There are two ways, then: one way is God's gift, and the other way SEEMS right to man because it sounds logical. But it ends in death; it is called 'evil deeds.' So our trust must be in the Lamb, Who not only died for us, but lives our life.¹¹¹

And these two ways, the 'way of Cain,' and the 'way of Abel,' are equivalent, in the book of Proverbs, to 'the path leading to death' (Prov. 2:18), or the 'way of the fool,' or the 'way of the wicked,' and the 'way of 'wisdom.'

Proverbs 2:20-22, 'Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the unfaithful will be torn from it.'

Proverbs 2:20 joins back to verse 11, 'Discretion will protect you and understanding will guard you' that 'you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous,' thus eluding the evil men of verse 12-16 and the evil woman of verses 17, 18, and 19. And the 'upright,' or those who receive wisdom into their hearts, i.e., their thinking and way of life, will dwell in the 'land,' whereas those who are 'wicked' will be 'cut off from the land.' The Hebrew term utilized for 'land' is *Crx*, *ERETS*, which is generally rendered 'land.' However, the 'great difficulty which has to be dealt with in translating the word *ERETS* is to determine where it is used with reference only to a special territory, such as Canaan, and where it signifies the whole world.'¹¹² And in context, the word refers to the coming millennial dispensation as well as the eternal state. And in contrast, the 'wicked' will not only be cut off, but will be uprooted, according to Matt. 15:13, 'He replied, 'Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.'

¹¹¹ The above dissertation was gleaned, paraphrased and appended from Bishop Smith.

¹¹² Girdlestone, Robert B. *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, page 262.

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Matt. 5:5 is the New Testament reference to the millennial rewards to the 'wise man,' 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.' And Revelation 22:12 makes reference to the rewards of the eternal state, 'Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.' Thus, temporal rewards on earth, i.e., success, prosperity, and true happiness, along with future rewards, those of the millennial dispensation, and eternal rewards, those of the eternal state, await the 'wise man,' the one of 'discretion and understanding.'
