

The Hebrew Corner

The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about those who are identified as fools, or exhibit foolish behavior. As all of us may have a degree of this type of behavior in our lives, it is good that we consider various passages from Proverbs, and see how they apply to us, so that we can avoid these practices. First we examine Proverbs 1:7:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Foolish in Hebrew is oveel (אויל, oh-VEEL), here given as the plural eveleem, which means the foolish ones, or fools. These are described as people who do not value wisdom, including the wisdom of God, and do not seek out or accept instruction from others. They would then likely not have any interest in the wisdom provided in the book of Proverbs. Proverb in Hebrew is mashal (משל, mah-SHAHL).

Next for consideration is the following proverb (Proverbs 10:23):

“It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.”

Here a different Hebrew word for fool is used, k'seel (כסיל, kuh-SEEL), which can also mean a stupid person. This word is used primarily in Psalms and Proverbs. The implication is that the foolish person does not stay away from evil practices, but will do these things to have fun, even as a sport.

Next is a proverb concerning women (Proverbs 14:1):

“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.”

The general application is that the wise mother will make the house she lives in better for her and her family, while the foolish (oveel) one makes it less livable.

Next is a passage concerning eating habits (Proverbs 30:21-23):

“For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.”

Here another Hebrew word for fool is used, naval (נבל, nah-VAHL), which can also mean a churlish one. Here we see the connection between lack of control of eating, and foolish or churlish behavior.

Next is a proverb that gives wisdom about speech (Proverbs 29:11):

“A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”

Here the Hebrew word k'seel is used again to describe a person that does not limit his or her speech, holding back nothing.

So we see from the above passages that a general lack of control is characterized as foolish in these proverbs, whether it be eating, speech, or evil practices.

I pray blessings upon all of you, to grow in God's wisdom, and to have a month that is tov meod, or in English, very good.