

Is The Proverbs 31 Mother
the Template for Mothers Today?
Proverbs 31:10-31
MOTHER'S DAY 2017

INTRODUCTION

The insight on the "Proverbs woman" is seen as "the insights of an unknown king to whom his mother addressed the prudential maxims contained in some of the Proverbs 1"

This proverb is written to describe the ultimate Jewish wife -- the ultimate contrast to the strange woman with whom Solomon was well acquainted. She is both a business woman and an organizer over her household. A literal interpretation of the text prevents this woman from being the model of mothers today, though there are some similarities. Arno Gaebelein in his commentary on Proverbs states it this way:

"The virtuous woman, who is far more valuable than rubies, is described in her home as a faithful wife, a painstaking mother and the competent mistress of her household. There is no need to allegorize this description and apply it to the Church, as some have done. But this virtuous woman stands out in prominent and bright relief--a relief against the descriptions of "the strange woman," the adulteress so repeatedly mentioned in Proverbs" -- Arno Gaebelein

Today, we will consider this mother and contrast the differences between her and mothers in the dispensation of Grace.

I. LEMUEL IS WARNED BY HIS MOTHER CONCERNING BAD WOMEN vs.3.

A. He is warned not to give his "strength" (khah - yil)

1. Khah - yil is used of riches, might, power. Cf. Ps. 33:17 (of the strength of a horse)
2. Khah - yil is used of sexual power.
3. Pulpit Commentary -- "***vigour," the bodily powers, which are sapped and enervated by sensuality; the prince is enjoined not to surrender his life, conduct, and actions to the influence of women, who, both by the dissipation and sensuality which they occasion, and the quarrels which they provoke, and the evil counsels which they give, often ruin kings and states.***"
4. E.W. Bullinger -- "***The English use of this word limits it to one kind of excellence. The meaning of the Hebrew is wider: hayil = strong in all moral qualities. Ruth is the only one so called in the O.T. May it not be that we have here Bathsheba's or Solomon's (and David's) commendation of Ruth?***"

B. He is warned not to give his "ways" (derek) to that which destroys kings.

1. "Ways" can be used in Scripture of "inclinations cf. Hos. 10:13 (of Israel trusting in their own way)

2. The results is that which “destroyeth” (mawkhaw -- wipes out; blot out” -- Strongs lexicon) out kings

C. He is warned about strong drink. Vs. 4-7

D. He is admonished to plead the cause of the unfortunate. Vs. 8-9

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROVERBS 31 MOTHER ARE LISTED.

A. The word for “virtuous” is the word khah - yil -- a woman of strength.

1. Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies note the word meaning “strength; moral, good quality, integrity, virtue.
2. Keil & Deil -- ***“the idea of bodily vigour is spiritualized to that of capacity, ability, and is generalized; in virtus the corresponding transition from manliness, and in the originally Romanic “Bravheit,” valour to ability, is completed; we have translated as at Proverbs 12:4, but also Luther, “a virtuous woman,” is suitable, since Tugend (virtue) has with Tüchtigkeit [ability] the same root-word, and according to our linguistic [German] usage designates the property of moral goodness and propriety, while for those of former times, when they spoke of the tugend (tugent) of a woman, the word combined with it the idea of fine manners.”***
3. Pulpit Commentary --K.D.J. -- It is used of both moral and physical attributes in Scripture. Cf. Ruth 3:11 (Ruth displayed by making good judgement)

B. “Household” is used in Scripture of more than just mother, father and children, but also included servants. Cf. Gen. 17:27

C. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. Vs. 11

1. “Safely”
2. “Trust” is (baw-takh) -- “to feel safe, trust; be full of confidence.” cf. Deut. 28:52 (used to note safety from physical danger).
3. “Spoil” is ***“booty, spoil of war, of all kinds incl. Garments, gold, silver; fabrics and woven ; flocks and herds; food and drinks.”*** -- Brown, Driver & Briggs
4. He so trust in her he sits at the city gates with the elders of the land. Vs. 23

D. She seeks and works. Vs. 13

1. “Seeketh”
2. “Works willingly with her hands.

E. She bringeth her food from afar. Vs. 14

F. She rises while it is night

1. She gives meat to her household
2. She gives a portion to her maidens.

G. She deviseth a plan to buy a field and plants a vineyard. Vs. 16

H. The activities she engages in cause her body to increase with strength. Vs. 17

I. She works persistently. Vs. 18

J. She provides clothing for her family. Vs. 19

1. She provides for those in need. Vs. 21
2. She provides for the clothing of her family. Vs. 22
3. She makes fine linen and sells it.

K. She is characterized by two things. Vs. 25

1. Strength -- oz -- **power, might**. Cf. Jud. 14:18 (of the strength of a lion); 2 Sa. 22:18 (of the strength of an enemy)
2. Honour -- hawdawr -- respect for one's abilities. Cf. Ex. 14:17 (of Jehovah)

L. She can rejoice in a day to come. Vs. 25

M. Her moral character is made evident through her speech. Vs. 26

1. She displays wisdom -- Chochmah -- "technical skill, aptitude" cf. 1st Kings 7:14 (of those skilled in work of bronze)
2. She displays "kindness" -- checed -- "obligation to the community in relation to relatives, friends, guest, master & servants." -- Holladay lexicon.

N. Her focus is upon her household. Vs. 27

1. "Household" is used in Scripture to note a place with servants.
2. This woman was over the servants.

O. Her children show proper respect, as does her husband. Vs. 28

P. She exceeds other virtuous women. Vs. 29

Q. She fears (yare -- fear of harm; cf. Gen. 32:12 -- of fear of Esau) the Lord. vs. 30

R. The result of her virtuousness is praise in the city gates. Vs. 31

1. "Fruit of her hands"
2. "Her works"

3. "The gates" -- these were the centers of the public life. Here the markets were held (2Ki_7:1), and the special commodities in these gave names to the gates (Neh_3:1, Neh_3:3, Neh_3:18). In particular, the "gate" was the place of the legal tribunals (Deu_16:18; Deu_21:19; Deu_25:7, etc.), so that a seat "among the elders in the gates" (Pro_31:23) was a high honor, while "oppression in the gates" was a synonym for judicial corruption (Job_31:21; Pro_22:22; Isa_29:21; Amo_5:10). The king, in especial, held public audiences in the gate." -- ISBE

CONCLUSION