

PROVERBS 31: A Mother's Lessons to Her Child (Part 1)

¹ The words of King Lemuel,

King WHO?:

- Jewish legend: Lemuel = Solomon; mother = Bathsheba. There is no factual basis for this tradition. Lemuel means “devoted to God.”
- “utterance” = massa → Massa = son of Ishmael.

King of WHERE:

- “The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, with which his mother instructed him.”
- Massa may have been a north Arabian tribe (Gen 25:14; 1 Chr 1:30) and that several Aramaisms appear in the text.

the utterance which his mother taught him:

- Active Influence of a Mother
- Range of Topics of a Mother's Instruction

² What, my son?
And what, son of my womb?
And what, son of my vows?

1. Teach About Origin

- Sense of belonging
- Sense of connection
- Sense of direction

³ Do not give your strength
to women [*ishshah*],
Nor your ways
to that which destroys kings.

2. Teach About Purity

- Do not give over your power
Women = plural (cp. V.10)
Pursuit of pleasure, not a spouse
- Do not give over your purpose
Ways = time, habits, focus
Destroys

⁴ *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel,
It is not for kings
to drink wine,
Nor for princes
intoxicating drink [*shekar*];

⁵ Lest they drink
and forget the law,
And pervert the justice
of all the afflicted.

3. Teach About Sobriety

Restrictions

- Wine
- Intoxicating (“strong”) drink

Reasons

- Forget the law
- Pervert the justice

⁶ Give
strong drink [*shekar*]
to him who is perishing,
And wine
to those who are bitter of
heart.

⁷ Let him drink
and forget
his poverty,
And remember
his misery no more.

4. Teach About Mercy

Prescription

- Strong drink → One dying
- Wine → One bitter of heart

Purpose (medicinal)

- Wine → Relaxant / Sleep aid
- Strong drink → Pain killer

⁸ Open your mouth
for the
speechless,
In the cause of all
who are appointed to die.

⁹ Open your mouth,
judge righteously, And
plead
the cause of the
poor and needy.

5. Teach About Justice

What

- See
- Speak Up
- Sort Out (“judge righteously”)

Who

- Those that have no voice
- Those that have no hope
Lit. “children of passing”
- Those that have no help

¹⁰ Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth *is* far above rubies.
¹¹ The heart of her husband safely
trusts her; So he will have no lack
of gain.

¹² She does him good and not evil
All the days of her life.

6. Teach About Matrimony

- Seek one wife [*ishshah*]
- Seek a virtuous wife
- Value of a virtuous wife
- 11-12 opposite of *destroys* (v3)
- 11-31 The type of woman to look for