

The Book of *Proverbs*: Guidelines

We are thrilled to be presenting *The Book of Proverbs* Mini-study Units. This new initiative—in the works for the past year—is now ready for you to implement at your Sisterhood meetings in the upcoming year. Since we began the Day of Study initiative two years ago, women have consistently expressed a desire for more guided study of Jewish texts. This study unit is a response to that desire.

The *Proverbs* project is designed as an alternative to the *davar Torah* that traditionally begins Sisterhood meetings. The standard *davar Torah* usually consists of one person delivering a brief study of text or commentary on a Jewish issue. For those listening, the process is entirely passive.

This material is a new approach to the *divrei Torah* concept. The material is designed to offer a 10-minute warm-up to your Sisterhood meetings, with prepared texts and study questions that will generate lively discussion as an effective lead-in to the Sisterhood program. Additionally, women will be involved in the *mitzvah* of study, and it will enable everyone to be actively engaged in the *davar Torah* process.

Why the book of *Proverbs*?

This book was selected because it contains material with which we are all familiar, even if we don't know where it came from. Proverbs like “haste makes waste”, “the early bird gets the worm”, “think before you speak” are well integrated into our value system and speech patterns. They reflect a tradition of wisdom literature that was introduced by Egypt, and later, the Bible. Every culture, both Eastern and Western, has its own proverbs and folk sayings that reflect or parallel biblical wisdom.

The universal values espoused in proverbs, such as prudence, humility and reticence, continue to resonate today. While we all recognize these proverbs as part of our common parlance, they are also manifest in all types of secular material, from the urbane literature of Shakespeare to the pop cultural phenomenon of cartoons.

Studying the book of *Proverbs* allows us to venture into the world of ideas, culture and self scrutiny. And be assured that whether it is a scribe from the ninth century B.C.E. who cautions us to think before we speak, or a cynical quip from a Far Side cartoon, it's the message, not the medium that counts.

How to use the *Proverbs* Mini-study Units

Each of the ten *Book of Proverbs* Mini-study Units contains:

- text with text and questions only
- leader's material containing the same texts with questions and answers

Before the Sisterhood meeting:

- Decide who will lead the discussion, and which unit to study.
- If you have a number of leaders, you might want to give each a copy of the background material and guidelines for study.
- Make enough photocopies so that every participant has her own text. Do not rely on having one copy read aloud. It is important in text study to have material in front of you.

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What is the order of the study sessions?

- There are ten study sessions, each of which should take only ten minutes. They are designed as discrete units of study, not dependent upon one another. You can decide which one to study and when.
- The ten study sessions are devoted to distinct themes:

the harmful effects of speech	relations with others
using speech wisely	harmony
humility	diligence
the deception of wealth	education/study
haste	prudence
- The only unit for which we recommended a month is “Ill Words” (September or the first meeting of the year) which addresses a theme and contains a wrap-up specifically devoted to the High Holidays.
- We also suggest that you use “Proverbs and Prudence” for your last meeting of the year.

How to use cartoons?

A good cartoon, it is said, has a *center of gravity* and a *center of levity*. Keep that in mind. The ability to laugh at ourselves is a great source of strength and immensely therapeutic.

General Guidelines for the Study Session

- Keep your eye on the clock. Ten minutes goes very quickly!
- Request that answers are kept short, and ask people to refrain from repeating what was already said.
- While we have provided questions and answers, they are not the only ones – or even the best ones. Encourage your presenter to think up additional questions.
- Encourage discussion. In text study, there is much room for interpretation.
- We have taken the liberty of making the original language more appropriate for an audience of women.
- Be sure to include the wrap-up. Use the one provided or offer your own.
- Always thank everyone for their enthusiasm, insight and *wisdom*.

Thank you for your participation in this new and exciting endeavor. We would love to hear your comments.

The Book of *Proverbs*: An Introduction

Background

The Hebrew name for the book of *Proverbs* is *Mishlei*, from the first word of the prologue: *Mishlei Shlomoh ben David Melekh Yisrael*, (proverbs of Solomon ben David King of Israel). The word *mashal* means proverb or saying.

The book of *Proverbs* is part of *Ketuvim* (Writings), the third division of the Hebrew Bible. Within *Ketuvim* the books of *Psalms*, *Proverbs* and *Job* are usually grouped together because of their similar tone and literary style.

Despite the traditional attribution of Solomonic authorship, it is acknowledged by Bible scholars that *Mishlei* is a compilation of proverbs collected over hundreds of years, reflecting a variety of social situations, and including collections from folk wisdom, the royal court and village scribal schools.

Similarly, there are many problems with ascribing a particular date, or even biblical period, to the writing of the book. Notwithstanding the prologue's attribution to King Solomon (tenth century BCE), different strata of the book indicate that the editing and/or compilation process was done in stages beginning in the early monarchy to the Hellenistic period (late fourth century BCE). In any event, it was completed before the book of *Ben Sira* which dates from the early second century.

Wisdom Literature

The material contained in the book of *Proverbs* belongs to the international Wisdom tradition that began some two thousand years earlier in Egypt. This popular tradition was widely disseminated in Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia, as well as in Egypt, during the third and second millennia B.C.E. The book of *Proverbs* belongs in the category of didactic Wisdom literature (the other category being speculative) that presents teachings, observations and admonitions intended to inculcate proper attitudes and behavior. Some of the Egyptian Wisdom literature so closely parallels material in the

book of *Proverbs* that numerous scholars suggest a direct influence.

Biblical Proverbs

Wisdom (Hebrew *hokmah*) was an ideal for over two millennia. It describes the highest knowledge attainable by men as well as the most appropriate patterns of human behavior. With the exception of the highly idealized *Eshet Hayil*, the last half of the last chapter of the book (31:10-31), there is scant mention of women. When mentioned, women are viewed as either mothers to be revered or irritants. The absence of women, however, does not diminish the value of the material as a prescription for proper behavior for all of Israel, male and female alike.

The book of *Proverbs* employs a variety of words for proper conduct: understanding, knowledge, planning/design, expertise, shrewdness, discipline, and cunning. But the term wisdom/*hokmah* reflects the highest degree of knowledge and skill in any domain. It combines powers of reason with knowledge (communicable information which is known and can be learned). Wisdom can manifest itself through craftsmanship; knowledge gained through study and experience; ability to understand and interpret signs and situations; skill in planning; and good judgment in behavior and moral decisions.

The book of *Proverbs* serves neither a ritual nor liturgical function, nor does the material purport to be revealed or spoken by God. Rather, the speaker/author is often a father addressing a son, admonishing him about his behavior and offering guidance for living a moral life of wisdom and understanding.

A wide variety of works, from *Kobelet* (Ecclesiastes) to the apocryphal books *Ben Sira* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, from the Dead Sea Scrolls to *Pirke Avot* (collections of rabbis in the Mishnaic period), were influenced by the book of *Proverbs*. Jewish ethical wills of the middle ages can also trace their roots to the book of *Proverbs*.

September

Ill words are bellows to a slackening fire.

18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue;
those who love it will eat its fruit.

13:3 She who guards her tongue preserves life,
She who opens wide her lips, it is her ruin.

15:4 A healing tongue is a tree of life,
But a devious one makes for a broken spirit.

(Armenian)

What the sword cuts will heal;
what the tongue cuts will not.

Shakespeare (*Othello*)

“But words are words.
I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart
was pierced through the ear.”

Sir Thoman Vaux (*Of a Contented Mind*)

“Companion none is like
Unto the mind alone;
For many have been harmed by speech,
Through thinking, few or none.”



Discussion Questions

1. What is the subject of this set of proverbs?
(Speech has the capability of healing or harming. It can either soothe and cure, or cause great damage, sometimes fatal.)

2. What are some examples of each? How can speech heal? How can it inflict harm?

3. What does the Armenian proverb suggest?
(There are obvious and clinical treatments for physical wounds, while damage done by speech, hurt feelings or worse, is subjective and not easily remedied.)

4. Shakespeare's play *Othello* deals with the disastrous outcome of tale-bearing that results in the death of Othello's wife, Desdemona. How does this quote speak to the issue?
(The tongue — not the ear — is the organ most capable of inflicting the greatest damage. Words, once spoken, can be an instrument of destruction.)

5. **If time allows:** How does the Vaux statement speak to this issue?

(As long as words remain unspoken, only in one's thoughts, their caustic potential is preempted.)

6. This cartoon presents a comical view of this subject. It actually seems to imply the *opposite* of the proverbs – that *acting nice* results in death. What are some possible readings of it?

Wrap-up: As we enter the period of repentance, we can be mindful of the fact that the majority of the sins we confess relate to improper, indiscrete and hurtful speech. When reciting these confessions, let us think about how we should use words to heal rather than harm, to soothe rather than chafe and to create harmony rather than discord in our lives.

Better one word less than one word too many.

17:27 A knowledgeable person is sparing with words;
A person of understanding is reticent.

15: 28 The heart of the righteous person rehearses her answer
But the mouth of the wicked blurts out evil things.

17:28 Even a fool, if she keeps silent, is deemed wise;
Intelligent, if she seals her lips.

Spinoza (*Ethics*)

“Surely human affairs would be far happier if the power in men to be silent were the same as that to speak. But experience more than sufficiently teaches that men govern nothing with more difficulty than their tongues.”

(*Turkish*)

To the big mouthed, the ladle is a spoon.



Discussion Questions

1. What is the general theme of these proverbs?

We should use speech thoughtfully and sparingly.

2. What is the benefit of such behavior?

That we will be regarded by others as intelligent – not one who talks, just to hear herself speak.

3. What does Spinoza (17th century Jewish philosopher) observe about this matter?

That control of speech is one of the most difficult disciplines for people. The inability to restrain speech negatively affects human affairs.

4. What is the implication of the Turkish proverb?

To an undisciplined person, a normal eating utensil is too small for her oversized (indiscrete) mouth. Only an over-sized ladle will suffice.

5. What commentary does this cartoon provide for Proverbs 15:28?

Think before you shoot [think before you speak]. Not doing this can be counter-productive.

Wrap-up: How can we apply these proverbs to our lives?

Prudence and moderation in speech is a worthwhile goal – whether with our families, our colleagues, or at meetings.

Pride and grace never dwell in one place.

(English)

16:18 Pride goes before ruin,
Arrogance before failure.

18:12 Before ruin a man's heart is proud;
Humility goes before honor.

13:10 Arrogance yields nothing but strife,
Wisdom belongs to those who seek advice.

25:26 It is not good to eat much honey,
Nor is it honorable to search for honor

Italian)

Pride went out on horseback and returned on
foot.

(Chinese)

Pride invites calamity; humility reaps its harvest.

Ernest Lawrence Thayer (*Casey at the Bat*)

And now the leather-covered sphere
came hurtling through the air,
and Casey stood a-watching it in haughty
grandeur there.

Close by the sturdy batsman the ball
unheeded sped-

“That ain’t my style,” said Casey. “Strike one!”
the umpire said.

Discussion Questions

1. How can we characterize the biblical view of
pride?

It is negative and it leads ultimately to ruin.

2. What other negative attributes or behaviors are
synonymous with pride and are similarly criticized?

● *arrogance: in 16:18 pride and arrogance are parallel to
each other*

● *seeking honor: 25:26 views seeking honor as arrogant*

3. What does the book of *Proverbs* regard as the
opposite attributes of pride/arrogance?

humility and wisdom

4. Does the book of *Proverbs* have a conflicting
opinion about attaining honor?

*The bestowal of honor can be the reward for humility
(18:12). It disapproves, however, of actively seeking honor
(25:26), which is not an act of humility.*

5. In 13:10, what specifically arrogant behavior is
condemned?

*The individual has all the answers and cannot learn from
someone else. This inability to take direction or heed caution
can often lead to trouble.*

6. What is the relationship between eating too much
honey and seeking honor?

*Eating too much honey is harmful to physical well-being, and
actively seeking honor is harmful to spiritual and emotional
well being. Both of these unfortunate results are preventable
by self discipline.*

7. What is the meaning of “pride went out on
horseback...”?

*The imagery is of an army, full of itself marching out to war
on horses – returning humbled, on foot. Similarly, prideful
(arrogant) behavior results in a reversal of fortune.*

8. How does the Chinese proverb reiterate the
biblical characterization of pride?

Pride and humility are opposite sides of the same coin; pride results in disaster, humility is rewarded by success.

9. In the famous poem, *Casey at the Bat*, the strutting and preening celebrity batsman strikes out, brought down by his own condescension. What is the intention of this passage?

His demeanor (“haughty grandeur”) paints a picture of the sneering player, convinced of his own greatness, too good to swing at any pitches sent him.

Wrap-up: These proverbs demonstrate that over-arching pride is a danger to the soul as well as to our physical being. Modern psychology, on the other hand, underscores the importance of healthy self-esteem for emotional well being. How do we reconcile these conflicting views? The book of *Proverbs* suggests that we have the ability to reconcile these traditional and contemporary values when positive feelings about self are tempered by wisdom and humility.

Wealth: It grows wings and flies away...

11:28 He who trusts in his wealth shall fall,
But the righteous shall flourish like foliage.

22:1: Repute is preferable to great wealth,
Grace is better than silver and gold.

23:4-5 Do not toil to gain wealth; Have the sense to desist.
You see it then it is gone; It grows wings and flies away
Like an eagle, heavenward.

Seneca (*Roman philosopher, first century C.E.*)
“A great fortune is a great slavery.”

(*English*)

He is not poor that has little, but he that desires
much.

Benjamin Franklin (*Poor Richard's Almanac*)

“He that is of the opinion money will do every-
thing, may be suspected of doing everything for
money.”

Discussion Questions

1. How is wealth characterized in these examples of biblical and universal proverbs?

- *wealth is not as important as a good reputation and righteousness (11:28; 22:1)*
- *wealth is fleeting (23:4-5)*
- *wealth is not [necessarily] dependable (11:28; 23:4-5)*
- *we become slaves to maintaining our wealth (Seneca, Franklin)*
- *wealth jades us by making us believe that it can solve or do anything (Franklin)*
- *wealth only increases the desire for more (Seneca, English proverb)*
- *wealth is not determined by material possessions, but by contentment in one's situation (English proverb)*

2. Do the biblical proverbs imply that money is evil or unnecessary?

No, they imply only that money is not more important than reputation and righteousness, and that the acquisition of wealth should not be the only purpose of meaningful labor.

The acquisition of respect and of perfecting a skill is also a goal of work. Wealth can be short-lived, but a good reputation and the mastery of a skill is not lost due to the fluctuations of the market.

3. Why should a great fortune make great slavery?

The desire to hold onto one's fortune, or expand it, can become tantamount. One can become driven to acquire more and more property, relegating other concerns such as family, reputation and even ethical behavior to secondary importance.

4. What does Benjamin Franklin see as the trap for the individual who thinks that money can achieve anything?

There is nothing that this person will not do for money, because its acquisition is more important than anything else. Additionally, every action, even acts of generosity and charity, will be interpreted as mercenary.

Wrap-up: These statements do not criticize money, per se. Rather, they criticize the quest for wealth as an ultimate goal. They articulate the view that wealth does not measure the worth of the individual; but rather characteristics such as reputation, grace and righteousness do.

In other parts of the book of *Proverbs*, the view is also expressed that charity and generosity are important values, as are righteous and appropriate outlets for those possessing wealth.

Haste makes waste

19:2 A person without knowledge is truly not good;
He who moves hurriedly blunders.

20:25 It is a snare for a man to pledge a sacred gift rashly
And to give thought to his vows only after they have been made.

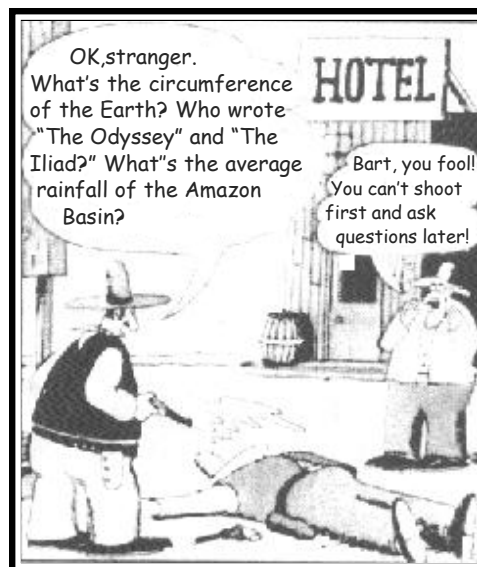
21:5 The plans of the diligent make only for gain;
All rash haste makes only for loss.

(Greek)

Make haste slowly.

(Moroccan)

Haste is the sister of repentance.



Discussion Questions

1. What do all three biblical proverbs imply about decisions made in haste?

- They are made by the uninformed (19:12)
- They are made by the undisciplined (20:25)
- They yield negative results (19:2; 20:25; 21:5)
- They are counter-intuitive: act and then think, rather than vice versa

2. What is problem with making vows rashly?

In ancient times, vows were sacred and breaking them was considered a sin requiring a sacrifice. Kol Nidrei, recited Erev Yom Kippur was introduced into the liturgy to release people from vows that were said in haste or were not fulfilled. The Bible thus cautions people to exert extreme care in making pledges.

3. Is this still applicable today?

Although we do not have the same theological constraints

against making vows today, there remains a strong moral imperative for fulfilling pledges.

4. How would you explain the oxymoron of making haste slowly?

Since haste is wasteful, we should not hurry to do it.

5. Why is haste the sister of repentance?

When things are not done carefully and thoughtfully, often they have to be undone and redone.

6. What is the cartoon's message?

Wrap-up: The best way to avoid the negative results of hasty decisions is the same as avoiding the pitfalls of indiscrete speech: we must think about the consequences of our actions *before we do them*, rather than after they are done.

Interpersonal Relations

Group I

9:11 A man shows intelligence by his forbearance;
It is his glory when he overlooks an offense.

Tennyson (*Lady Clara Vere de Vere*)
“Kind hearts are more than coronets,
[and simple faith than Norman blood.]”

Group II

24:26 Giving a straightforward reply
Is like giving a kiss.

(*Maltese*)
A well-timed reply is worth its weight in gold.

Group III

29:5 A man who flatters his fellow
Spreads a net for his feet.

Moliere (*Le Misanthrope*)
“The more we love our friends, the less we flatter them;
it is by excusing nothing that pure love shows itself.”

Discussion Questions

1. According to the book of *Proverbs*, what types of behavior contribute to effective interpersonal relations?

- *tolerance* (19:11)
- *honesty* (29:5)
- *straight-forwardness* (24:26)

2. All of these biblical proverbs suggest a kind of behavior that is difficult for many of us: overlooking mistakes of others and speaking in an honest and straightforward manner, regardless of the consequences. Do you think these are contradictory messages?

3. In Group I, what is the relationship between the biblical proverb and the Tennyson quote?

Both require a counter-intuitive behavior or set of expectations. Proverbs 19:11 suggests that there is greater good in being tolerant than right, and the Tennyson statement suggests that personal compassion has greater merit than rank — an unusual sentiment for an Englishman.

4. What is the subject of Group III?

Both see flattery as false and counter-productive.

5. Why is flattery like “spreading a net for the feet?”
What is the implication of this metaphor?

Flattery does not help a person, but rather is an impediment to self-awareness — a net is something in which a person can get tangled and stumble.

6. Is flattery always inappropriate? When is it appropriate?

7. The proverbs in Group II extol well-timed, straightforward responses. How are they similarly regarded?

One is like a kiss, one is like gold.

8. What is the value of such a response? What are some examples of this?

Wrap-up: All of these statements suggest that a key to successful relations with others is that we think and care about the consequences of our speech and actions. But we can see that there is contradictory advice about appropriate behavior. When do we speak honestly, and when do we ignore? Is kindness the most important goal, and does that trump everything else? How do we distinguish between flattery and compliments? These are questions that we all must answer, and the difficulty posed by the internal contradictions underscores that maintaining good human relations requires both thought and compassion.

Let the work of our hands prosper

(Psalms 90:17)

13:11 Wealth may dwindle to less than nothing,
But he who gathers little by little increases it.

12:24 The hand of the diligent wields authority;
the negligent are held in subjection.

20:4 In winter the lazy man does not plow;
At harvest time he seeks, and finds nothing.

Benjamin Franklin (*Poor Richard's Almanac*)

“Never leave that till tomorrow which you can
do today.”

(Danish)

Diligent work makes a skillful workman.

(Moroccan)

Endurance pierces marble.

The Little Red Hen

Who will help me grind the wheat?” said the
little red hen.

“Not I” said the duck.

“Not I” said the goose.

“Not I” said the pig.

“Then I’ll do it myself,” said the little red hen.

And she did.

Discussion Questions

1. In this set of statements, what does diligence accomplish?

- *The increase of one’s holdings*
- *Authority*
- *Success in overcoming insurmountable obstacles*
- *Completing a task in a timely manner might mean the difference between success and failure*
- *Acquisition of skill*

2. All state explicitly that hard work yields *tangible* results. What are some of the less tangible gains that they imply as well?

- *Accomplishment contributes to a sense of self worth*
- *Diligence allows us to be self-sufficient, not reliant on others*
- *Diligence enables us to help others (who for some reason cannot help themselves)*

3. In *Proverbs* 13:11, what is the relationship between the two statements?

Wealth is not necessarily guaranteed if there is no desire and/or discipline to preserve it. Especially when inherited,

wealth can be easily squandered. However, a careful and industrious person can make even a small amount grow into something more substantial.

4. What are some bad consequences of putting off until tomorrow what can be done today?

- *We can forget to do it*
- *Enthusiasm wanes*
- *Change of plans*
- *Some other priority might pre-empt it*

5. In the story of the little red hen, the message is simple and effective: hard work pays off to those prepared to do the heavy lifting. How can we invest such a simple and obvious message with gravity?

Wrap-up: The diligence in this study unit, refers specifically to hard work. It necessitates that we remain focused, on-task and vigilant. Whether in the workplace or at home, or within our Sisterhood, we need to acknowledge that the measure of success is variable: sometimes it is in a fabulous program and sometimes it is in taking a first step. But it is clear that *action is necessary*; dreaming, no matter how creative or well-intentioned, yields nothing.

Learning: the bitter root that bears sweet fruit

(Czech)

13:14 The instruction of a wise man is the fountain of life,
Enabling one to avoid deadly snares.

16:16 How much better to acquire wisdom than gold;
To acquire understanding is preferable to silver.

18:15 The mind of an intelligent man acquires knowledge;
The ears of the wise seek out knowledge.

Disraeli

“Ignorance never settles a discussion.”

(Yiddish)

Learning cannot be inherited.

(Indian)

Learning is more substantial than accumulated riches.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the benefits of learning, as spelled out by this material?

- *Life-giving and preserving (“fountain of life”)*
- *It bestows a kind of non-material wealth*
- *It fosters effective communication skills (Disraeli)*

2. What does the metaphor “fountain of life” imply?

That learning fosters long life, and the ability to prevent calamities.

Do you agree with this?

3. How does Disraeli view education?

Disraeli was born Jewish – although he converted – and was Prime Minister of England during the reign of Queen Victoria. He understood that in the area of public (or private) discourse, the educated clearly have the upper hand.

4. What does the Yiddish proverb say about the process of education?

Learning, unlike wealth and biological traits, is not inherited. It is acquired through discipline and hard work. There is also the implication that learning is of greater value because it is an individual’s achievement, not gained by dint of birth.

5. Several proverbs characterize learning as the ultimate wealth – more valuable than gold and riches. In your experience, is this a valid assumption today?

Wrap-up: For Jews, education is one of the oldest and most sustained cultural traditions. Historically, we have revered our scholars and intellectuals, and we have revered knowledge and the process of acquiring it. Until this past century, study as an important occupation and avocation was expected only of men. Today, learning is equally valued and central to the lives of women. But our days are filled with a host of activities, and it is unfortunate that once most of us leave formal education behind, the process of active learning is circumscribed.

As members of an organization promoting Jewish education, we can be inspired by the statement in *Pirke Avot* about maintaining an ongoing commitment to study: “Say not, ‘when I have leisure, I will study’. Perhaps you will have no leisure.” (*Pirke Avot* 2:5)

Proverbs and Prudence: A Potpourri of Common Sense

21:16 A man who strays from the path of prudence
Will rest in the company of ghosts.

26:27 He who digs a pit will fall in it,
and whoever rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.

22:28 Do not remove the ancient boundary stone
That your ancestors set up.

25:16 If you find honey, eat only what you need,
lest, forfeiting yourself, you throw it up.

Shakespeare (*Hamlet*)

“Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what’s past; avoid what is to come.”

Shakespeare (*King Lear*)

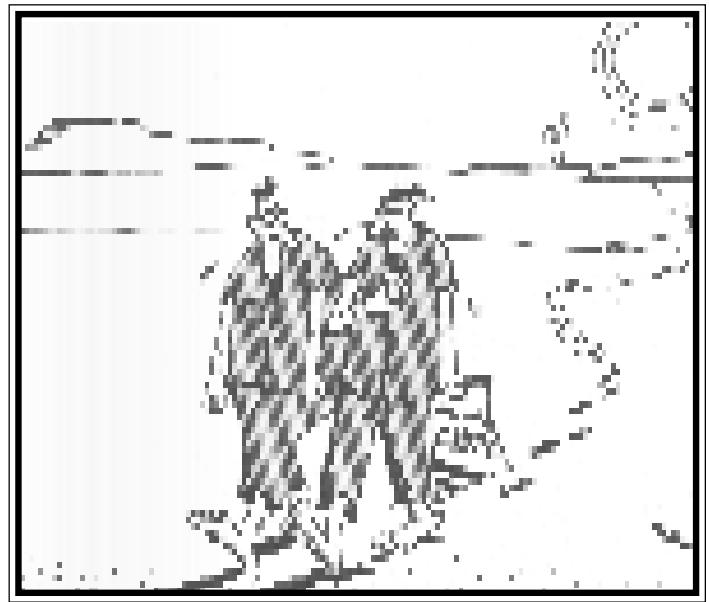
“Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest.”

(*English*)

An ounce of prudence is worth a pound
of gold.

Benjamin Franklin (*Poor Richard’s Almanac*)

“A spoonful of honey will catch more flies
than vinegar.”



**Uh-oh, I’ve got a feeling I shouldn’t have been munching
on these things for the last mile.”**

Discussion Questions

1. How can we define common sense?
2. What behaviors are prescribed by this material?
 - 21:16, *Be prudent; be careful (if you don’t you will “rest in the company of ghosts”)*
 - 26:27, *Think about the consequences of your actions*
 - 22:28, *Have respect for traditions*
 - 25:16, *Be moderate*
 - *Hamlet, Repent your sins and don’t repeat mistakes*
 - *King Lear, Be discrete; be humble; be wise with your possessions*
 - *Poor Richard, Be sensible in your speech*
3. What makes this behavior – that is commonly acknowledged as prudent and wise – so difficult?
4. What biblical message can we derive from this Far Side cartoon?

Wrap-up: The book of *Proverbs* offers a blueprint for living a moral life: be careful, be moderate, be humble, be kind, don’t repeat mistakes, play nicely with others. This is behavior that we all applaud and want to embrace. But our human frailties, that induce us sometimes to do what is counter-intuitive despite our teaching and experience, undermine our desire to be prudent. We laugh at the guy munching potato chips as he trudges through the desert and shriek: *What are you thinking?* But this question provides us with a model for an internal check system: before we act, we should ask ourselves: *Do I want people to say, “What was she thinking?” or do I want them to say “yi’shar koach”?*