

*"A city is exalted by the blessing provided from the upright, but it is destroyed by the counsel of the wicked. The one who denounces his neighbor lacks wisdom, but the one who has discernment keeps silent. The one who goes about slandering others reveals secrets, but the one who is trustworthy conceals a matter. **When there is no guidance a nation falls, but there is success in the abundance of counselors.**" (Proverbs 11:11–14 NET)*

Last week we looked at the first three verses of the above passage. My emphasis was on the power of the words we speak and the importance of thinking before you speak. We as a gathered people (a family, shul, city, state, or nation) will rise or fall based upon the kind of counselors we accept.

The Hebrew word *tachbulot* ("guidance") can be comparable to steering a ship or the skill one needs to lead people. Proverbs 1:5 advises those with understanding to acquire counsel (*tachbulot*) as well as wisdom. Wise people do not reject the counsel of others. Of course, this assumes that the counselors themselves are wise. God's plans are worked out in families and communities. He has a people whom He is seeking for His own possession (Titus 2:14). The wisdom we are to learn should be viewed as "body wisdom" (that is—wisdom that is realized/exercised in the relationships of the body of the Messiah). When we separate ourselves and try to follow our own version of wisdom we are in danger of missing God's desires.

*"He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom." (Proverbs 18:1 NAS95)*

Who is fit to lead? Wise counselors are characterized by wisdom. Proverbs 26:7 says, *"Like legs that hang limp from the lame, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools."* We should seek counselors who not only speak the truth but also demonstrate by their lives the fruit of wisdom. The Greeks exalted philosophers as statesmen. It is true that those who devote themselves to the study of philosophy and critical thinking develop valuable skills, but it is possible to have a worldly wisdom that would not bring success in God's terms. The second thing I mentioned as a goal for our study of Proverbs is discernment. Learning to know the difference between a godly counselor and a worldly one is part of reaching that goal.

What about theologians? How important is it for us as a community to support scholarship and scholars? In regards to "theologians," I am thinking about Psalm 1 and 119. Listen to the words of these songs and consider them as songs of our community. Have we made these songs our songs?

*"How blessed is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of scoffers! Instead he finds pleasure in obeying the LORD's Torah; he meditates on His Torah day and night." (Psalms 1:1–2)*

*"Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments. You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness and exceeding faithfulness. My zeal has consumed me, because my adversaries have forgotten Your words. Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it. I am small and despised, yet I do not forget Your precepts. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your Torah is truth. Trouble and anguish have come upon me, Yet Your commandments are my delight. Your testimonies are righteous forever; Give me understanding that I may live.*

*I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD! I will observe Your statutes. I cried to You; save me and I shall keep Your testimonies." (Psalms 119:137–146 NAS95)*

*"Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors." (Psalms 119:24 NAS95)*

As disciples of Yeshua we are to pray that God's kingdom will come. Our desire to see His will done on Earth as it is Heaven is His desire also! We join with Him and bring His kingdom into our own lives when we pray and trust in God to do what He said He would do.

*"Then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning; after that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city." (Isaiah 1:26 NAS95)*