

~PROVERBIAL SAYING (293)

[Hebrew, *ma-shal'*]

- The **Hebrew** term translated, proverbial saying or proverbial utterance, *ma-shal'* is generally thought to be derived from a root word meaning, be like or be comparable.
- And yet earthling man, though in honor, cannot keep lodging, he is indeed comparable with the beasts that have been destroyed. (**Psalms 49:12**)
- And indeed, many **proverbial** sayings employ likenesses or comparisons. Some scholars relate the expression, **proverbial saying**; to the **Hebrew** verb meaning, **rule**, so it could be construed at times to be a saying of a ruler, an expression that carries power, or **one that indicates superiority in mental action**.
- Consistent with this view is the fact that King Solomon, who was known for his wisdom, **could speak 3,000 proverbs** and recorded many of these proverbial sayings.
- And he could speak three thousand **proverbs**, and his songs came to be a thousand and five. (**1 Kings 4:32**)
- Among the Israelites there were popular or frequently used expressions that were full of meaning because of the circumstances that surrounded them. Generally, these **proverbial sayings** were concisely stated.
- Then a man from there answered and said; But who is their father? That is why it has become a **proverbial** saying; Is Saul also among the prophets? (**1 Samuel 10:12**)
- Not all of them expressed proper viewpoints, however, and there were some with which Yehowah specifically took issue.
- Son of man, what is this **proverbial saying** that you people have on the soil of Israel, saying; The days are prolonged, and every vision has perished? (**Ezekiel 12:22**)
- Therefore say to them, This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said; I shall certainly cause this **proverbial saying** to cease,

and they will no more say it as a proverb in Israel. But speak to them, The days have drawn near, and the matter of every vision. (Ezekiel 12:23)

- What does it mean to you people that you are expressing this **proverbial saying** on the soil of Israel, saying; Fathers are the ones that eat unripe grapes, but it is the teeth of the sons that get set on edge? (Ezekiel 18:2)
- As I am alive, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah, it will no more continue to be yours to express this **proverbial saying** in Israel. (Ezekiel 18:3)
- Some sayings became common expressions of ridicule or contempt for certain people.
- Will not these very ones, all of them, lift up against him a **proverbial saying** and an alluding remark, insinuations at him? And one will say; Woe to him who is multiplying what is not his own, O how long! And who is making debt heavy against himself! (Habakkuk 2:6)
- In such cases even the object of the scorn, whether a person or something inanimate, was said to be a **proverbial saying**. Thus the Israelites were warned that if they failed to listen to Yehowah and obey his commandments, both they and their temple would become a proverbial saying among the nations.
- And it must occur that if you will not listen to the voice of Yehowah your God by taking care to do all his commandments and his statutes that I am commanding you today, all these maledictions must also come upon you and overtake you. (Deuteronomy 28:15)
- And you must become an object of astonishment, a **proverbial saying** and a taunt among all the peoples to whom Yehowah will lead you away. (Deuteronomy 28:37)
- I will also cut Israel off from upon the surface of the ground that I have given to them, and the house that I have sanctified to my name I shall throw away from before me, and Israel will indeed become a **proverbial saying** and a taunt among all the peoples. (1 Kings 9:7)

- I will also uproot them from off my ground that I have given them, and this house that I have sanctified for my name, I shall throw away from before my face, and I shall make it a **proverbial saying** and a taunt among all the peoples. (**2 Chronicles 7:20**)
- The attitude expressed toward a nation that became a **proverbial saying** is well indicated in the Bible in the accompanying expressions, which show that Israel would become a **reproach, an object of derision, of jeering, of humiliation, and of taunts**.
- You set us as a reproach to our neighbors, a derision and jeering to those all around us. (**Psalms 44:13**)
- You set us as a **proverbial saying** among the nations, a shaking of the head among the national groups. (**Psalms 44:14**)
- All day long my **humiliation** is in front of me, and the shame of my own face has covered me. (**Psalms 44:15**)
- I will also give them over for quaking, for calamity, in all the kingdoms of the earth, for reproach and for a **proverbial saying**; for a **taunt** and for a **malediction**, in all the places to which I shall disperse them. (**Jeremiah 24:9**)
- Individuals who became **proverbial sayings** thereby became the subject of the songs of drinkers of intoxicating liquor and someone in whose face others would spit.
- When I made sackcloth my clothing, then I became to them a **proverbial saying**; (**Psalms 69:11**)
- Those sitting in the gate began concerning themselves about me, and I was the subject of the songs of drinkers of intoxicating liquor. (**Psalms 69:12**)
- And he has set me forth as a **proverbial saying** of peoples, so that I become someone into whose face to spit. (**Job 17:6**)
- Clearly, one who became a **proverbial saying** was reduced to a very low state.
- Not all **proverbial sayings** were expressed in one or two short, pithy sentences. In (**Isaiah Chapter 14**) is recorded a more extensive one, portraying vividly and with apt comparisons the disastrous effects

of the pride of the king of Babylon. With biting sarcasm it heaps ridicule on the one who thought of himself as the shining one, son of the dawn.

- When the likeness or comparison embodied in a **proverbial saying** was at first somewhat obscure or puzzling, it might also be called a riddle.
- In a **proverbial saying** I will open my mouth. I will cause riddles of long ago to bubble forth. (**Psalms 78:2**)
- That was true of the one that Ezekiel was inspired to tell Israel in which he likened the course of the nation in relation to Babylon and Egypt to a vine planted by one eagle that later reached out hungrily to another.
- Son of man, propound a riddle and compose a **proverbial** saying toward the house of Israel. (**Ezekiel 17:2**)
- And you must say; This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said; The great eagle, having great wings, with long pinions, full of plumage, which had color variety, came to Lebanon and proceeded to take the treetop of the cedar. (**Ezekiel 17:3**)
- He plucked off the very top of its young shoots and came bringing it to the land of Canaan, in a city of traders he placed it. (**Ezekiel 17:4**)
- Furthermore, he took some of the seed of the land and put it in a field for seed. As a willow by vast waters, as a willow tree he placed it. (**Ezekiel 17:5**)
- And it began to sprout and gradually became a luxuriantly growing vine low in height, inclined to turn its foliage inward, and as for its roots, they gradually came to be under it. And it finally became a vine and produced shoots and sent forth branches. (**Ezekiel 17:6**)
- And there came to be another great eagle, having great wings, and having large pinions, and, look! This very vine stretched its roots hungrily toward him. And its foliage it thrust out to him in order for him to irrigate it, away from the garden beds where it was planted. (**Ezekiel 17:7**)

- To a good field, by vast waters, it was already transplanted, in order to produce boughs and to bear fruit, to become a majestic vine. (**Ezekiel 17:8**)
- Say, This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said; Will it have success? Will not someone tear out its very roots and make its very fruit scaly? And must not all its freshly plucked sprouts become dry? It will become dry. Neither by a great arm nor by a multitudinous people will it have to be lifted up from its roots. (**Ezekiel 17:9**)
- And, look! Although transplanted, will it have success? Will it not dry up completely, even as when the east wind touches it? In the garden beds of its sprout it will dry up. (**Ezekiel 17:10**)
- And the word of Yehowah continued to occur to me, saying; (**Ezekiel 17:11**)
- Say, please, to the rebellious house, Do you people actually not know what these things mean? Say; Look! The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and proceeded to take its king and its princes and bring them to himself at Babylon. (**Ezekiel 17:12**)
- Furthermore, he took one of the royal seed and concluded a covenant with him and brought him into an oath, and the foremost men of the land he took away. (**Ezekiel 17:13**)
- In order, that the kingdom might become low, unable to lift itself up, that by keeping his covenant it might stand. (**Ezekiel 17:14**)
- But he finally rebelled against him in sending his messengers to Egypt, for it to give him horses and a multitudinous people. Will he have success? Will he escape, he who is doing these things, and who has broken a covenant? And will he actually escape? (**Ezekiel 17:15**)
- As I am alive, is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Yehowah, in the place of the king who put in as king the one that despised his oath and that broke his covenant, with him in the midst of Babylon he will die. (**Ezekiel 17:16**)
- And by a great military force and by a multitudinous congregation Pharaoh will not make him effective in the war, by throwing up a siege rampart and by building a siege wall, in

order to cut off many souls. (**Ezekiel 17:17**)

- And he has despised an oath in breaking a covenant, and, look! He had given his hand and has done even all these things. He will not make his escape. (**Ezekiel 17:18**)
- Some **proverbial utterances**, such as those of Job, were set out in poetic style.
- And Job proceeded again to lift up his **proverbial utterance** and went on to say. (**Job 27:1**)
- And Job proceeded again to lift up his **proverbial utterance** and went on to say. (**Job 29:1**)
- The ideas that Job was inspired to express were not put down in the concise style characteristic of most proverbs but were developed into highly instructive poems filled with figurative speech.
- God also caused Balaam to make a series of **proverbial utterances**, and these, too, are put down in the form of poetry.
- Then he took up his **proverbial utterance** and said; From Aram Balak the king of Moab tried to conduct me, from the mountains of the east; Do come, do curse Jacob for me. Yes, do come, do denounce Israel. (**Numbers 23:7**)
- At this he took up his **proverbial utterance** and said; Get up, Balak, and listen. Do give ear to me, O son of Zippor. (**Numbers 23:18**)
- Hence he took up his **proverbial utterance** and said The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, and the **utterance** of the able-bodied man with the eye unsealed. (**Numbers 24:3**)
- So he took up his **proverbial utterance** and said; The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, and the **utterance** of the able-bodied man with the eye unsealed. (**Numbers 24:15**)
- When he got to see Amalek, he carried further his **proverbial utterance** and went on to say; Amalek was the first one of the nations, but his end afterward will be even his perishing. (**Numbers 24:20**)

- When he got to see the Kenites, he carried further his **proverbial utterance** and went on to say; Durable is your dwelling, and set on the crag is your abode. (**Numbers 24:21**)
- And he carried further his **proverbial** utterance and went on to say; Woe! Who will survive when God causes it? (**Numbers 24:23**)
- Far from expressing any scorn for Israel in these **proverbial utterances**, Balaam blessed them to the limit, though he did prophesy woe for other peoples.
- At this Balak said to Balaam; What have you done to me? It was in order to execrate my enemies that I took you, and here you have blessed them to the limit. (**Numbers 23:11**)
- The **proverbial** aspect here is not because of any popular repetition of what Balaam said nor because his statements were concise expressions of wisdom.
- Rather, these are termed **proverbial utterances** because of the power and rich meaning of what was said; along with his use of a variety of likenesses or comparisons in some of his statements.