

PROVERBS 9 – TWO WOMEN, TWO INVITATIONS, ONE CHOICE**INTRODUCTION: WHO’S TALKING IN PROVERBS 9?**

- To rightly interpret Proverbs 9, the reader must pay close attention to the pronouns used throughout the chapter, as these reveal the identity of each speaker.
- This chapter is structured around a triadic exchange of voices: Solomon as narrator, Lady Wisdom, and Lady Folly.
- The narrator speaks in third-person terms, such as “she,” “he,” and “whoso,” and never refers to himself or his audience with “I” or “you.”
- Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly each speak in the first person, with direct appeals using “I,” “my,” and implied or explicit “you.”
- The shifts in pronoun usage provide a structural roadmap for determining who is speaking at any given moment.
- Verses 4 and 16 contain identical lines, “Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither,” and though they appear to be part of the women’s speeches, the grammar and voice suggest these are Solomon’s introductions to their invitations.
- Recognizing the speaker is critical, for Proverbs 9 presents not just literary imagery, but a theological confrontation that demands discernment between truth and deceit.

PERSNICKETY PRONOUNS: THE CLUES THAT KEEP US HONEST

- Solomon maintains consistent third-person narration throughout the chapter, avoiding any self-reference and speaking as an external observer and commentator.
- Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly, by contrast, shift into first-person speech, directly addressing the simple and presenting their invitations in intimate terms.
- The use of identical introductory lines in verses 4 and 16, both in the narrator’s voice, shows deliberate symmetry between the two invitations, designed to highlight their external similarities and internal divergence.
- These textual signals warn the reader that though both women call from similar locations and to the same audience, their houses and their ends are polar opposites.
- Misidentifying the speaker is more than an interpretive error—it risks leading the reader to heed the wrong voice and suffer spiritual ruin.

PROVERBS 9 BY SPEAKER AND PRONOUN PATTERN

- The chapter is structured as follows:
 - Verses 1–4a: Solomon introduces Lady Wisdom using third-person pronouns.
 - Verses 4b–6: Lady Wisdom speaks using first-person terms.
 - Verses 7–12: Solomon resumes narration and commentary in third-person and direct address.
 - Verses 13–16a: Solomon introduces Lady Folly in the same third-person voice.
 - Verses 16b–17: Lady Folly speaks briefly using implied second-person and first-person pronouns.
 - Verse 18: Solomon concludes with a final third-person warning about the result of heeding Folly’s call.

LADY WISDOM’S HOUSE AND CALL (VERSES 1–12)**SOLOMON INTRODUCES LADY WISDOM (VV. 1–4A)**

- Solomon opens by describing Lady Wisdom as a builder, stating that she has hewn out her seven pillars, suggesting a complete and weight-bearing structure.
- The phrase “seven pillars” does not appear elsewhere in Scripture and should not be interpreted through artificial or devotional lists, but through biblical symbolism: seven represents completeness, and pillars signify strength and stability.
- Lady Wisdom’s house is orderly, solid, and covenantal—she prepares a place suitable for instruction, habitation, and spiritual fellowship.
- In contrast to Lady Folly, who builds nothing, Wisdom’s actions are constructive and purposeful.
- Verse 2 describes her sacrificial preparations, including the killing of beasts and the mingling of wine, which evoke the imagery of Torah-based covenant meals.
- “Killed her beasts” recalls the peace offering of Leviticus 3, a shared meal symbolizing restored fellowship with God.
- “Mingled her wine” alludes to wine’s symbolic role in joy, worship, and thanksgiving as seen in Psalm 104:15 and Numbers 15.
- “Furnished her table” brings to mind sacred hospitality and covenant affirmation, evoking scenes from Exodus 24 and Psalm 23.
- In verse 3, Wisdom commissions her maidens to deliver her message publicly, suggesting that her truth is not hidden or esoteric but proclaimed from the high places, accessible to all.
- These maidens may serve as poetic representations of God’s prophetic voices in Israel, who faithfully echoed the message of Torah wisdom.
- Verse 4 introduces the target audience: the simple. Solomon uses identical language later for Lady Folly to create intentional contrast.
- The simple (Hebrew *pethiy*) are not yet hardened in their folly; they are moldable and in need of instruction.
- Solomon’s introduction to Wisdom’s call is carefully framed as a turning point, a cue to listen to the upcoming speech and decide which voice to follow.

LADY WISDOM SPEAKS (VV. 5–6)

- Lady Wisdom invites the simple to “Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled,” an invitation that signifies more than sustenance—it is an offer of covenantal fellowship.
- Her meal, composed of bread and wine, mirrors moments in Scripture where God affirms covenant, such as Melchizedek’s blessing in Genesis 14 and the Sinai covenant in Exodus 24.
- She follows this invitation with a command: “Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.”
- This call to separation from fools is consistent with Torah injunctions to avoid ungodly counsel and pagan practices (Psalm 1; Deut. 12:30).
- The invitation is not passive—it demands rejection of folly and active pursuit of understanding.
- Lady Wisdom’s table is not for those who want to sample wisdom while staying in the company of fools. It is for those ready to leave foolishness behind and live according to Torah principles.

SOLOMON’S COMMENTARY (VV. 7–10)

- Solomon interjects with a warning about how people respond to correction: scorners reject and shame reprovers, while the wise receive correction and grow.
- In verses 7–8, he advises that confronting a scorners will likely bring contempt and abuse, not repentance.
- In contrast, verse 9 emphasizes that a wise man will become wiser still when corrected, and a just man will increase in learning.
- Wisdom is marked not by initial knowledge, but by humility and responsiveness to instruction.

- Verse 10 reiterates the foundation of true wisdom: “The fear of the LORD.” This parallels Proverbs 1:7 and underscores that reverence, not intellect, is the root of understanding.
- Without fear of the Lord, no amount of correction will lead to wisdom. Without knowledge of the holy, there is no true discernment.

LADY WISDOM CONCLUDES (VV. 11–12)

- Wisdom closes her speech by linking herself directly to the results of obedience: “By me thy days shall be multiplied.”
- This echoes the covenant blessings of long life given in Deuteronomy for those who keep God’s commands (Deut. 5:33; 6:2).
- She emphasizes personal responsibility: “If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.”
- The wise reap the benefits of their wisdom, and the scorner reaps the destruction of his own choices.
- This matches Solomon’s earlier statement that rebuke reveals a person’s heart—wisdom works only for those who embrace it.
- Proverbs 8:35–36 affirms the same principle: those who love wisdom find life; those who reject her love death.
- Wisdom is not abstract; her rewards and consequences are personal, individual, and unavoidable.

LADY FOLLY’S HOUSE AND DECEPTION (VERSES 13–18)

SOLOMON INTRODUCES LADY FOLLY (VV. 13–16A)

- Solomon now describes Lady Folly in stark contrast to Wisdom: she is clamorous, simple, and ignorant (v. 13).
- “Clamorous” implies noise and chaos; she is not productive or insightful but demanding and disruptive.
- She sits idly at the door of her house in the high places (v. 14), mimicking the setting of Lady Wisdom, but without the substance.
- Her posture is one of passivity and exhibitionism, not proclamation.
- In verse 15, her target audience is especially alarming: she calls to “passengers who go right on their ways.”
- She seeks to derail the upright, not merely to indulge the wicked. Her temptation is aimed at pulling the righteous off course.
- In verse 16, Solomon again uses the phrase “Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither” to introduce Folly’s imitation invitation.
- By using identical language to Lady Wisdom’s call, Solomon shows that Folly’s appeal often sounds legitimate at first, making discernment all the more critical.
- Folly’s method is to counterfeit wisdom, using the same format but a radically different outcome.

LADY FOLLY SPEAKS (V. 17)

- Lady Folly offers a brief and seductive invitation: “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”
- Her appeal is not based on truth, fellowship, or covenant, but on secrecy, thrill, and selfishness.
- She tempts with what is forbidden and hidden, suggesting that sin is more enjoyable precisely because it is illicit.
- This echoes the lie of Eden—that forbidden fruit is better fruit.
- Her invitation offers no transformation, no growth, no life—only indulgence and concealment.

- It is the anti-Torah: pleasure without sacrifice, secrecy without fellowship, gratification without consequence (or so it seems).

SOLOMON GIVES THE FINAL WORD (V. 18)

- Solomon ends the chapter with a stark reality check: “But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.”
- Lady Folly’s house is not a banquet hall but a tomb. Her guests are not dining—they are already dead.
- The Hebrew term for “hell” is *Sheol*, the realm of the dead, underscoring the finality and severity of the outcome.
- The foolish do not recognize the danger until it is too late.
- Solomon offers no appeal at the end—only the facts. Each voice has spoken. Now the listener must choose which house to enter.