

## The Background of Proverbs

# THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

## The Background of Proverbs

### *authors & dates:*

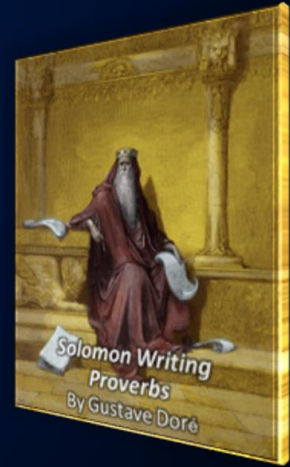
**Solomon** – (c. 950 BC) wrote 1:8-9:18; 10:1-22:16;  
25:2-29:7; probably collected 22:17-24:34

**Agur** – (unknown & undated) 30:1 - 33

**Lemuel** - (unknown & undated) 31:1-9

**“Men of Hezekiah”** – (715 - 686 BC) see 25:2;  
collected Solomon’s proverbs

**Final editor** – (perhaps postexilic) appended prologue  
(1:1-7) & epilogue (31:10-31); arranged final form



### Notes & Questions:

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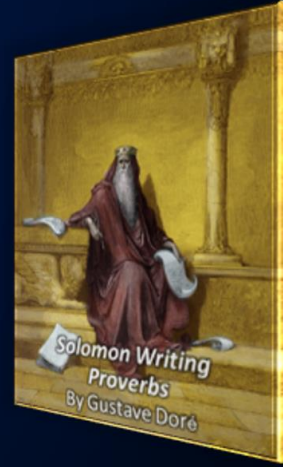
### THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

#### The Background of Proverbs

##### *The Structure of the Book:*

The book of Proverbs is a set of collections whose final structure has been arranged by a final editor/author.

We can (and should) presuppose the divine inspiration of this editor as much as Solomon and the additional authors.



#### Notes & Questions:

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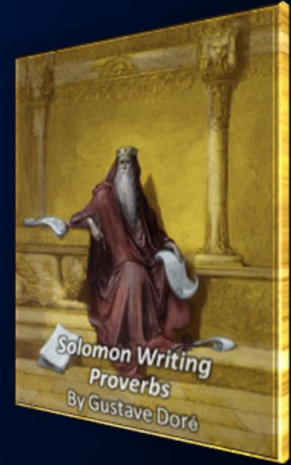
# The Background of Proverbs

## THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

### The Background of Proverbs

#### *The Structure of the Book:*

- I. Prologue (1:1-7)
- II. Exhortations from a father to his son (1:8 - 9:18)
- III. First collection of Solomon's proverbs (10: 1 - 22:16)
- IV. The collection of sayings of the wise (22:17 - 24:34)
- V. Proverbs of Solomon collected by Hezekiah (25:1 - 29:27)
- VI. The words of Agur (30:1-33)
- VII. The words of Lemuel (31:1 -9)
- VIII. The wife of noble character (31:10 -31)



#### Notes & Questions:

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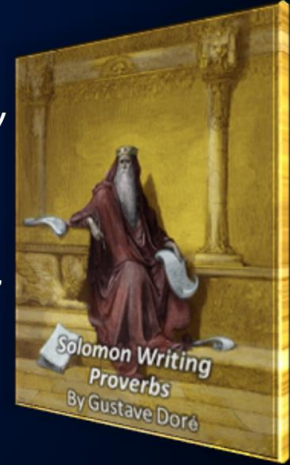
## The Background of Proverbs

# THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

## The Background of Proverbs

### *Forms & functions:*

*The book of Proverbs contains several different literary forms, including extended instructional discourses & exhortations (1:8-19), parable-like stories (7:6-27), personal reflections (4:3-9), and proverbs or "sayings."*



### Notes & Questions:

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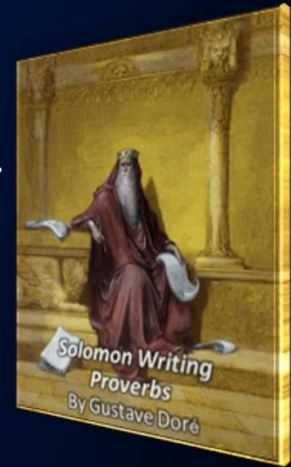
### THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

#### The Background of Proverbs

##### *Forms & functions:*

*A proverb is a short, artfully constructed, “saying” or “slogan” that encapsulates a generally accepted truth.*

- 1. **Observational** proverbs provide insight into human life & behaviors without emphasizing morality.*
- 2. **Didactic** proverbs make clear moral distinctions between wise/righteous and foolish/wicked behaviors.*



#### Notes & Questions:

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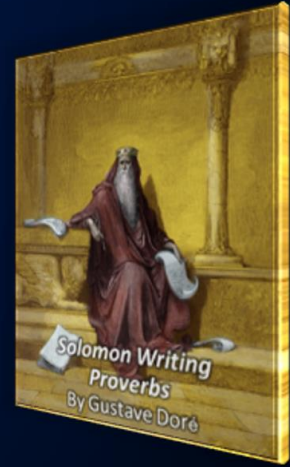
**The Background of Proverbs**

**THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

The Background of Proverbs

***Forms & functions:***

*Proverbs provide essential guidance for navigating life wisely, but they are neither inviolable promises nor “magical words that if memorized and applied in a mechanical way automatically lead to success and happiness” (Longman). The right understanding & application of a proverb are contextual; requiring discernment of the relevant time, place, and person (15:23).*



**Notes & Questions:**

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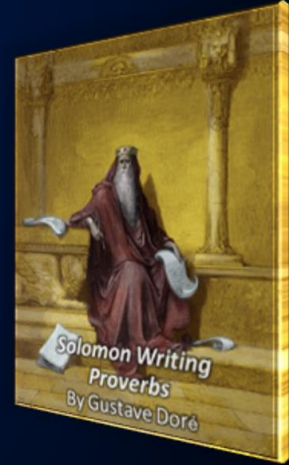
#### **"Contrary" proverbs**

A few proverbs seem to contradict other proverbs. A prominent example is Proverbs 26:4 -5 –

*<sup>4</sup> Do not answer a fool according to his folly,  
or you will be like him yourself.*

*<sup>5</sup> Answer a fool according to his folly,  
or he will be wise in his own eye."*

Encountering such examples reminds us that the meaning and application of a proverb depends on the life situation in which we find ourselves.



#### Notes & Questions:

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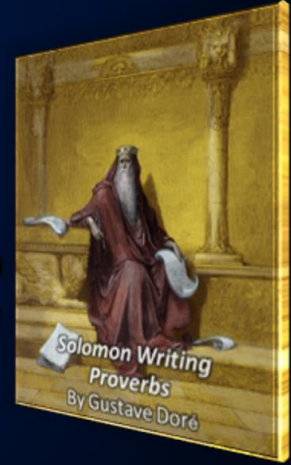
# The Background of Proverbs

## THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

### The Background of Proverbs

#### *Order & disorder in Proverbs chs. 10 -29*

At first glance the proverbs in chapters 10 – 29 appear to have been collected and recorded randomly. Amidst this “disorder” there is order and purpose, though. *First*, the varying topics are presented to us in the same way we might encounter them in the flow and flux of real life. *Second*, the arrangement of the proverbs teaches us that “while reality and truth are not irrational, neither are they fully subject to human attempts at systematization” (Garrett).



#### Notes & Questions:

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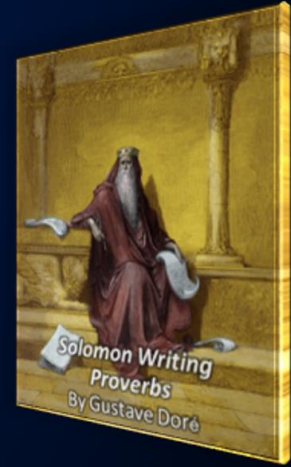
## The Background of Proverbs

### THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

#### The Background of Proverbs

##### *Order & disorder in Proverbs chs. 10 -29*

*Third*, many individual proverbs are grouped around a common word or idea into “mini -collections” that provide context and expanded meaning (e.g., 11:16 -17; 15:31-33; 25:28 – 26:12). *Finally*, we should remember that Proverbs was produced by and for a primarily oral culture, and memorization was a key learning method. Proverbs was originally meant to be memorized and recited in its entirety.



#### Notes & Questions:

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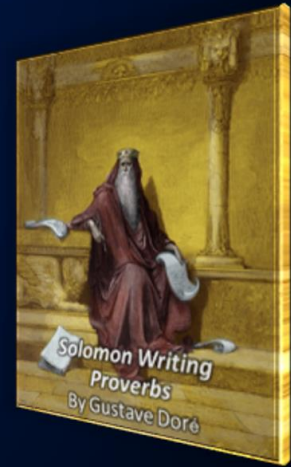
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## The Background of Proverbs

### THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

#### Themes & Theology in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs presupposes and emphasizes that the world is an orderly creation, whose existence and material & moral order are established by *Yahweh*, the covenant God of Israel. A prominent theme is the sharp distinction within this order between the path of wisdom and the path of foolishness. God rewards those who through diligence and the fear of the Lord seek to live wisely within the divinely established order of reality, and he punishes those who disregard the Lord and live foolishly.



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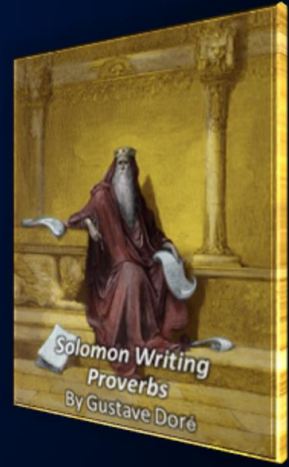
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## The Background of Proverbs

### THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

#### Themes & Theology in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is not primarily concerned with corporate or personal salvation. Instead, “wisdom tells its followers how to live in this world”. Nevertheless, “submission to the Lord ... stands at the very center” of Proverbs (Garrett). We see this both through the insistence that wisdom cannot come apart from the “fear of the Lord” and also through the dependence of many proverbs on the moral commandments of the law (1:18-19; 2:16-20; 3:29-30; etc.).



#### Notes & Questions:

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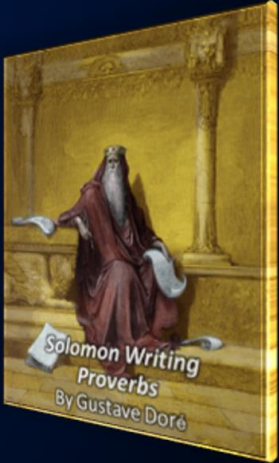
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## The Background of Proverbs

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#### Themes & Theology in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs provides guidance for when life is generally going right. It is aimed at both the immature, as well as wise, to enable them to gain (more) wisdom and avoid the pitfalls of the worldview and life practices of the foolish and immoral of any era. It is also a warning to fools (whether they heed it or not) that the path they are on leads to destruction.



#### Notes & Questions:

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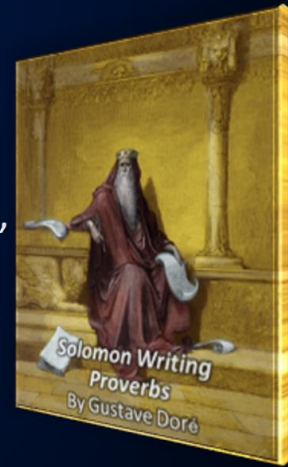
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# The Background of Proverbs

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### Themes & Theology in Proverbs

The book of Proverbs was written by and for a patriarchal society. This is not, in itself, as controversial as many think. However, since Proverbs is addressed to “sons” (1:8; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:1; etc.), it is appropriate and legitimate to understand how specific guidance would also apply to daughters. For example, chaps. 5–7 contain lengthy warnings to a young man to avoid “the adulteress.” Certainly, we would also do well to teach our daughters the wisdom of avoiding adulterers.



### Notes & Questions:

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