


# AWOMAN OF VIRTUE

## PROVERBS 31

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**It has to be noted that chapters 30& 31:1-10 are missing from the LXX**

Bathsheba's song 1

**The words of a king dedicated to God.** (*Hebrew la wml*) **The "uplifting" which his mother taught him** (*Hebrew Piel of rsy "to instruct and warn"[singing] over and over again.*) There is no need to posit a king by the name of LEMUEL or suggest a mother by the name of MASSA or Edom.

**First**, the point being made is that the king is "dedicated" by his mother and his God is "EL" the strong one of Israel.

**Second**, the poetry is after the Hebrew alphabetical material. It would seem fitting that the wife of David tried her hand to some song writing after the style of her husband creating what Toy calls "The ABC of the perfect wife".

**Third**, the repetitive teaching method and the poetry virtually require song and the word MESSA in the text is not vocalised MESA' but MASSA' giving the lie to "a proper name" interpretation (i.e. the name of the king's mother) and warranting rather a participial noun "lifting up"(i.e. the song of Bathsheba whom I understand to be the "mother" in question)

It is most appropriate that Solomon's mother should be remembered for her care and love in dedicating him to God and for her kind and serious training of the heir apparent. It is like Solomon to say frankly, "my mother made every early endeavour to set me on the right way". That she should consider advising her son with deep earnestness in the light of her own sad experience in the loss of Uriah and early experience of David is absolutely understandable. The words that follow would be sung by and possibly spoken or sung along with his mother so Solomon could retail them in detail in later life and hence they appear as his capstone of the book-this is the explanation of the first lines of the chapter.

### A good Queen's great questions 2

**What of my son and what of the son (or what a son) of my womb?** Every woman asks the question, "What will become of my son. My own mother asked it in poetry, showing her affection for the little child the LORD gave her. She wrote: "And when thou art to manhood grown and all your manly ways are known then will I wistful try to trace the boy you once were in your face". The Queen was deeply proud of her son and self effacing too. That deep within her the LORD formed a child was so wonderful-one to replace that little one who died-such complex circumstances too-what of the princely child?

Neither warrior nor playboy 3

**Do not give your "hurling (of yourself)" or your "dancing "***(a possible allusion to the harvest festivities where women are chosen)* **or "palpitation" for wives (plural)** *Solomon is being advised not to "hurl himself at " or "palpitate" for many wives* **nor your ways of life to (women) destroying kings or simply to destroying kings** *Bathsheba does not wish Solomon to become a warrior always given to battling other kings neither a man enticed with many women to his ruin.*

Much wine renders kings careless of right 4-5

**It does not belong to kings, O dedicated one (to God) It is not for kings to drink or banquet on wine nor is intoxication for princes lest they drink and forget the statutes and change the defence of all the sons of affliction**

The dedicated mouth of Solomon 6 -9

**Give strong intoxicating drink** *(Hebrew rkv )* **to the one perishing in death** *(as an anodyne)* **and wine to those who are bitter or sorrowful in soul** *(those who mourn or have undergone trial)* **Let him drink and forget his need and not remember his travail or wretchedness any more. The opening of your mouth (should be) for the silent widows and for the sons whose parents are passing away. The opening of your mouth is justice for the righteous and for the defence of the afflicted and the abysmally poor. Bathsheba gave Solomon 5 objectives-she deterred him from opening his mouth to consume large quantities of wine and appealed that he should instead open it to protect and alleviate the widow, the orphan, the righteous, the afflicted and the poor.**

## EULOGY OF THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN 10-31

### A

**ENDURANCE** Who will find a woman of valour (Hebrew lyj -a word used for the "space surrounding the temple"-its "fortification" also of "strength of integrity" and of "endurance") her bridal price is a great distance or far beyond rubies.

### B

**CONFIDENCE** The heart *(judgement, design, will, reasoning, fears, sorrow, conscience & guilt)* of her husband confides in her. And he will not lack spoil or booty or hunted prey *(to eat)* or gain *What wealth she can bring to the union by her industry she will delight to supply*

### C

**CHERISHING** She shows him good and not evil all the days of his life. *The Hebrew word lmg means to "benefit in such a way as to cherish. The radical meaning is "warm" or "cherish" The love she affords lasts all of a lifetime and is used also of ripening fruit so that the relationship becomes more lovely and mature.*

### D

**APPLICATION** She keeps moving around or keeps seeking sheared off fleece and flax (*stalk*) and sets her hands to work with ardour or delight (*Hebrew xpj*) This woman is out visiting the farms where she can purchase raw materials for garments. Then she sets to with joyful inclination to card wool and spin linen and produce materials.

## W

**SHOPPING** She is like the merchant ships -bringing her food from afar. In those days the ships of Tarshish were plying the Mediterranean and bringing foodstuffs from Spain and the West and vice-versa. Solomon would one day have a navy that outdistanced and outsourced these ships

## Z

**EARLY RISER** She rises in the house of the night and gives fresh plucked food (*Hebrew prf*) to her household (the word here is Chaldee perhaps reflecting the fact that Bathsheba being Hittite was familiar with that linguistic medium) and a portion (*Hebrew qj*) for her maidservants The quality of the woman is seen in this that she rose before her maids and set them their tasks and made sure they were properly nourished.

## M

**ENTREPRENEUR** She considers or proposes a field of her own and takes possession of it. This does not necessitate that she buys it. It may be a family field which she sets to work. What she gets is a meadow or field ploughed and sown. From the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. From the "gain" of working that field-possibly undertaking the harvesting of what is already planted she has enough to purchase vines and plant a vineyard to multiply her profits.

## Heth

**PHYSICAL FITNESS** She girds her loins with strength This restraint enables the lady, who may be continuing to bear children simultaneously, to lift heavy weights to her head and she continues to strengthen her forearms (*Hebrew Piel of xma*) She has been used to the spindle but now is working in the field

## T

**DISCRETION** She tastes and sees (*Hebrew mff*) that her produce is good Psalm 34.9 uses this phrase which is applied here to "wine-tasting" to the LORD. She is very discerning-not just of her product but the danger of imbibing too-so she "tastes"-nothing more. Her lamp will not be extinguished in the night. She works longer hours still than when she was engaged in spinning weaving and needlework v15. It has to be remembered that women lived and slept in different quarters from men in the Hebrew home.

## Y

**SKILLED** She spreads her hands to the distaff and reaches to take hold of the whirling spindle There is a deftness and swift ambidextrous alacrity which we associate with pianoforte in this lady. She has through long practice developed enviable skills

## K

**COMPASSION** She opens the hollow of her hand to the afflicted *The valiant woman has a very compassionate heart and shows care by benevolence and great generosity toward those going through sorrow or pain. She gives them what they need and she sends out her hands to the abysmally poor She not only gives them what is needed but she opens her arms and heart and doors to these poor ones.*

## L

**PROVIDENT & LOOKS AHEAD** She will not fear what snow would be like for her household for all those of her house are clothed in double and changes of garment. *(Hebrew mynv means that they have "change of clothing" and they have layered clothes)*

## M

**HOLINESS** She makes coverlets or bedspreads and /or neck collars for herself. Her clothing is fine linen and purple *This lady is suited to be the wife of a poor man or a king. Here she is discovered producing items which were made to adorn the temple. The temple of her life is adorned with white linen and purple robes. She makes her own accessories. She is deft with needle and embroidery. She is coloured beautiful in religious colours for holiness is seen in her life as in the house of God.*

## N

**HELDMET** Her husband will become known in the gates because he keeps the day of rest with the elders of the land. *The skill and industry of this lady are such that she will be chosen by a man of calibre and spirituality. Even if her husband were not in his own right outstanding he would obtain reputation from such a wife so that people would say, "He is the husband of that woman of valour"*

## S

**VISION** She makes loose wide undergarments and she will sell them and she provides belts for the Canaanite merchants or Phoenician traders. *Some of her produce finds local market and she gets into belts or broad girdles with pockets which are more exclusive and sought both by traders and the rich. She has cornered two significant markets-that for underclothing and that for girdles which may include ladies girdles and men's belts complete with pockets*

## Ayin

**REPUTABLE & PRAISEFUL** Strength and reputation for splendour are connected to her garments *The work she turns out lasts and those who buy it get good wear out of it. Her clothes are also well made and enjoy a reputation for taste and artistic loveliness. She will smile with approval for the future or enjoy laughter or play music and dance in her latter day This lady has no need to fear the future for she is fully provided for and her family. Her later days will bring her much joy from the experiences of earlier hardship and developing links with the wider world. Her music will doubtless like that of David and Jeremiah (1Chron 13.8, 15.29 and Jer 31.4) include thanksgiving to the LORD for his providence during her life.*

## P

**SPIRITUAL** She opens her mouth in Spiritual wisdom and Torah of covenant love is on her tongue. *With all her work this lady has retained her spirituality and she*

*is down to earth (Hebrew mkj) and practical in her religion. Besides this she holds to the commandment as one who loves the word of the LORD and His covenant with His people*

### **Tsaddi**

**VIGILANT & PRAYERFUL** *She continues to look out for the goings out and in of her family on the watchtower (Hebrew hpx "watches" and "expects" as a concerned mother and "keeps watch by prayer" Ezek3.17)) She not only observes her family but looks to God expecting help for her family from that source and she does not eat the bread of the idle ones. She will not spend time with the slothful for her scene is one of purpose and commitment to family.*

### **Q**

**HAPPY & APPRECIATED** *Her sons rise up and continually bless her. This is the custom in Jewish households when the family worships and remembers God's provision. Also as her sons rise to distinction they commend their excellent mother. Her husband also constantly sings her praise.*

### **R**

**Lots of daughters have done valiantly -you yourself "lead" them all or are "blossoming" or "ascending" higher than them all.** *The words of the husband commend this lady as the best example of virtue and valour ever. All past examples of character in the fairer sex fade before her. This might be the tribute David gives to Bathsheba and it is very sure that every man possessed of a delightful and wise wife as intrepid and caring as this will count her unequalled.*

### **Shin**

**SPIRITUAL WORSHIP AND CONTRITION** *Grace of life is deceiving In the sense that you cannot exactly read a person from what they give and from apparent generosity or more especially from the favour others bestow on them by way of reputation and beauty is but a breathe-a vapour-or a comment of the mouth -a wife reverent of the LORD-she will have been praised over and over again. It is fear or awe of the Living LORD that is the basis of wisdom-in a life that departs from sin and evil.*

### **Tau**

**Give her of the fruit of her hands and let the things she has made over and over again be her praise in the gates where they are marketed** *Give her the worth of her work for in the gates it receives unstinting praise constantly. The judges praise her there; the traders praise her there. She has the praise of her family and eventually she receives the praise of her city and nation. The gates of Jerusalem in this day were the gates of the first city of wisdom faith and prosperity in the whole world so this final encomium could hardly be surpassed.*

### **FINIS**

#### **Epilogue**

So the book of Spiritual Wisdom comes to a conclusion although its effect shall never end while the world stands. Solomon cast truths in memorable mould much in the style

of Shakespeare and seeded the Hebrew language and subsequently the speech of Christian people with a currency of wisdom in sound bites. Please refer to Chapter 25 for further background.

*A ditty composed by the Author 11.11.2008 to accompany the Commentary on  
"Proverbs"  
& declaring the intent of Solomon*

Solomon Ben David wrote them  
In the hope that all would quote them  
When tilling fields and guarding walls  
At City gates and market stalls  
To send them rolling off the tongue  
As sweet as any song that's sung.

*Bob Coffey  
Aramaic Bible Companion*