

Proverbs 15:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.

Analysis

The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. Orach chayyim lema'alah lemashkil (אָרֶךְ חַיִּים לְמַעַלָּה לְמַשְׁקֵיל) the path of life upward for the wise). The wise walk an upward path toward life. Lema'an sur mishe'ol matah (לְמַעַן סָרֵר מִשְׁאָוֹל מְפֻה, in order to turn from Sheol below). This upward path's purpose: avoiding She'ol (שָׁאֹול, grave, realm of death) below. The imagery is spatial but theological—the wise pursue life heavenward, escaping downward death. Jesus is the way upward (John 14:6), and believers are raised with Him (Colossians 3:1-2).

Historical Context

Ancient cosmology pictured Sheol beneath the earth, while life and blessing came from above. This proverb uses that framework to teach that wisdom's path ascends toward God and life, while folly's path descends toward death. The New Testament clarifies—Christ descended to the grave and ascended to heaven (Ephesians 4:8-10), making a way for believers to ascend with Him.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Is your life trajectory upward toward God and life, or downward toward death?
2. What does it mean practically to set your mind on things above (Colossians 3:2)?
3. How does Christ as the way upward provide escape from the Sheol that awaits all who reject Him?

Interlinear Text

ס	וְ	לֹמַדְךָ	יְלַמֵּד	לִמְעָן	לִמְשָׁךְ	יְלַמֵּד	לִמְעָן	אֶת	רֵחֶם
The way	of life	is above	to the wise	H4616				that he may depart	
H734	H2416	H4605	H7919					H5493	
מִשְׁא	מִתְּהָ								
from hell	beneath								
H7585	H4295								

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 16:11 (Parallel theme): Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Philippians 3:20 (Parallel theme): For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Matthew 7:14 (Parallel theme): Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

John 14:6 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Proverbs 6:23 (Parallel theme): For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

Proverbs 7:27 (Parallel theme): Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Proverbs 23:14 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

Proverbs 5:5 (Parallel theme): Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.

Proverbs 2:18 (Parallel theme): For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

Jeremiah 21:8 (Parallel theme): And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.