

Proverbs 30:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise:

Analysis

There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. Agur's final numerical proverb celebrates small creatures exhibiting extraordinary wisdom. Qetanim (קְטַנִּים, little/small) yet chakamim m'chukamim (חֲכָמִים מְחֻכָּמִים, wise, exceedingly wise). This proverb counters cultural assumptions equating size/power with significance. God often works through small, weak, despised things to accomplish His purposes (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

The phrase "exceeding wise" intensifies the superlative. These creatures display *sekel* (wisdom, prudence) beyond what their size suggests. The proverb teaches observational wisdom: study creation to learn spiritual principles. Romans 1:20 declares God's "eternal power and Godhead" are "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." Job 12:7-8 commands: "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee." Nature reveals wisdom to those who observe carefully. The following verses (25-28) detail four examples: ants, conies, locusts, spider.

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom literature frequently drew moral lessons from nature. Egyptian wisdom texts used animal behavior for instruction. Jesus employed natural observation: lilies, birds, fig trees, wheat and tares (Matthew 6:26-30, 13:24-30). The medieval bestiary tradition continued this approach, though sometimes allegorizing excessively. Modern culture, disconnected from agricultural life,

struggles with these metaphors. Yet the principle remains: creation reveals Creator; natural wisdom points to supernatural Wisdom. Paul uses it (1 Corinthians 9:9 citing Deuteronomy 25:4); so does Proverbs repeatedly (6:6-8, ants; 30:25-28, these four creatures). Observing God's design in nature cultivates humility, wonder, and practical wisdom.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What can you learn from observing nature carefully—seeing God's wisdom in design, providence, and natural order?
2. How does God's pattern of using small, weak things to accomplish great purposes encourage you when feeling inadequate or insignificant?
3. In what ways does modern disconnection from nature hinder spiritual formation, and how might you recover attentiveness to creation's wisdom?

Interlinear Text

אֲרֹבָּ עֹה	יְהִי	קִטְנִי	אֲרֹץ	יְהִי מֵהָ	חֲכָמִים יִם
There be four	H1992	things which are little	upon the earth	H1992	wise
H702		H6996	H776		H2450
מְחַכְמִים:					
but they are exceeding					
H2449					

