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*The Wanderer's Hávamál* Reflection

The poem *Hávamál* reminds me of Proverbs in the Bible. Although there are several differences between the content of the passages, both are texts that inform people about how to operate in our society. The author of the book, Jackson Crawford, summarizes the poems as “largely made up of stanzas that use pithy, concrete language to encourage wise and practical living” (Crawford xi). Likewise, the first three verses of the book of Proverbs say: “The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair;” (Proverbs 1:1-3 NIV). One thing that I found similar is the fact that both Proverbs and *Hávamál* say that when a fool keeps his mouth shut, he could be mistaken for wise. Another similar part is when describing grudges. In the *Hávamál*, it says that “Kind, brave people live best, they never nurture a grudge.” (Crawford 48). The book of Proverbs describes that “A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” (Proverbs 19:11 NIV)

In addition to these similarities, both texts warn about treacherous friendships. One thing that I find very intriguing is how older writings tend to have a lot of similarities in history. In all of our class readings, I was able to make a biblical connection. These connections are not only interesting, but they help to reaffirm my faith. One question that I have is why these texts are so similar. How are two completely different cultures and times hold almost identical values? I

wonder how the people who wrote the *Hávamál* were able to come to these conclusions while believing in Odin and magic.