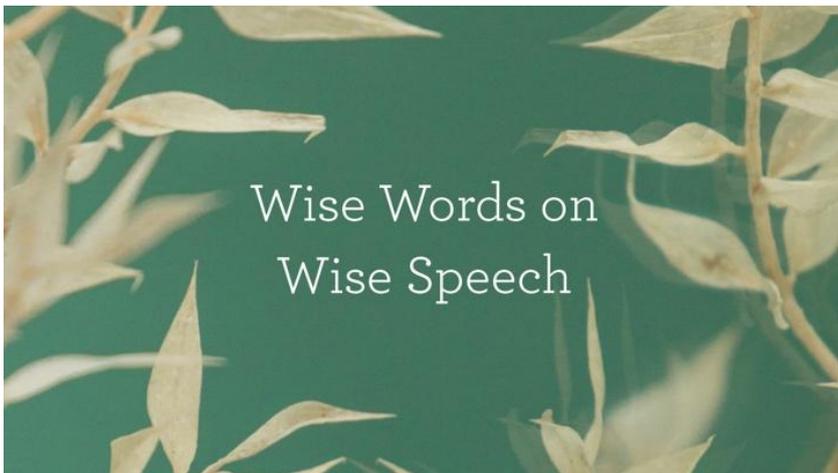


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## Wise Words on Wise Speech

### 10: 27-32

**A proverb is a short and memorable saying designed to be our blueprint for living in the world that ADONAI has created. It is important to note that proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.**



**The fear of ADONAI** is at the heart of **wisdom** according to **1:7** (also see **14:26-27, 15:16** and **33, 16:6, 19:23, and 22:4**). So again, this **proverb** contrasts the fate of **the wise**, who are **righteous**, with that of **the foolish**, who are **wicked**. One who **fears ADONAI** will act in a way that conforms to **His** will. Later **Yeshua** would say: **If you love Me, you will keep My commands (John 14:15)**. But **those** who do not (**the wicked**) will ignore **His commands**. Everything being equal, living in a way that conforms to **God's** will **adds length to life**. After all, such a one lives in conformity with the way **YHVH** set up the world at creation. To take one example, **the mitzvah** and **wisdom** of **Proverbs** insist that it is **Ha'Shem's** desire that sex be enjoyed within the commitment of marriage. **The rebels** who ignore this **command** bring great danger upon **their** lives, whether from sexually transmitted diseases (known in antiquity) or from the revenge of the other woman's husband (**6:30-35**). Though not specified by this **proverb**, it is possible that **the years of the wicked are cut short** by **Ha'Shem Himself**,

either through human means or divine intervention (**10:27 CJB**). The purpose of this proverb is to motivate people toward fear of **ADONAI**. But since all things are not always equal, sometimes **the righteous of the TaNaKh die** young.

Both **the righteous** and **the wicked** have **hope** for the future, but when the future comes, the **wicked's hope** is dashed, while **the righteous** experience **joy**. **The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing (10:28 NIV)**. This may be seen as a general statement, with the previous verse serving as an illustration. **Proverbs are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal**. Both **the righteous** and **the wicked hope** for long lives, but **the years of the wicked** can be cut short, thus, **their hope** is destroyed. On the other hand, the days of those who **fear ADONAI**, who are **righteous**, are lengthened, and therefore **their hope** leads to happiness. Again, the purpose of **the book of Proverbs** is to motivate toward **righteousness** and away from **wicked** actions. We see a similar idea in **10:24**.

**The path of ADONAI is a stronghold to the upright, but destruction awaits those who do evil (10:29 Hebrew)**. This proverb picks up on **the path** metaphor that is frequently encountered in **Chapters 1-9**. Typically, there is a contrast drawn between two **paths**: the straight and narrow **path**, provided by **ADONAI**, leads to **life**; and the other, a wide and crooked **path**, leads to **death** (see **The Life of Christ Dw - The Narrow and Wide Gates**). Reading this **proverb** in light of the previous descriptions of **the path**, we would have to say that the reason **the path of ADONAI** is a **ruin** for **those who do evil** is that **they** avoid **it** by choice. On the other hand, **the upright** used here is another term to refer to **the godly wise**, who find that **they** are protected, presumably from life's problems, including those perpetrated by doers of **evil (Psalm 27)**.

This is the fourth and last **proverb** in a row that contemplates the fate of **the righteous of the TaNaKh** and **the wicked**. **The righteous will never be moved, but the wicked will not remain in the Land (10:30 CJB)**. Here we have the question of relative stability. While **the righteous will never be moved**, or **shaken**, **the wicked** will be expelled from **the Land**. When one is **shaken**, it is the result of great trouble. Therefore, **the wicked** will live lives of great instability. In particular, **they** will not be allowed to grow roots **in the Promised Land**. We have seen this threat leveled against **the wicked** already in **2:21-22** (also see **10:25**). This **proverb** draws a relatively rare explicit connection between proverbial **wisdom** and **land** theology. The principle behind this **proverb** is developed further in **the Psalms** (see **Psalms Bq - Delight Yourself in ADONAI**).

Here we have a contrast drawn between **the wise** and **the foolish** (here called **the corrupt tongue**, which we also see in **2:12** and **14**). **The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the corrupt tongue will be cut off (10:31 CJB)**. The focus is on **their** respective **speech**, here represented by **the mouth** and **the tongue** (paired also in **15:2**, **21:23**, **26:28**, and **31:26**). **The righteous** are praised because **their speech** is **wise** and thus has the effect of **wisdom** in general . . . promoting **life** and avoiding **death**. However, **the corrupt tongue** meets its appropriate fate when it is **cut off (Psalm 12:3)**.<sup>237</sup> The term **cut off** means to be severely separated from the community and **God's** covenant, which could involve physical **death**, loss of inheritance, or excommunication. Being **cut off** from **Isra'el** is a recurring theme in the TaNaKh, appearing as a divine sanction against those who are unfaithful to **God**.<sup>238</sup>

**The lips of the righteous find favor, but the mouth of the wicked only knows deceit (10:32 Hebrew)**. **Solomon** had a lot to say about what we say. In fact, **tongue**, **mouth**, **lips**, and **words** occur almost 150 times in **Proverbs**. On average, a reference to **speech** appears five times in each of the thirty-one chapters. A key statement on the subject appears in **Proverbs 15:2: The tongue of the wise makes knowledge appealing, but the mouth of a fool only belches out foolishness**. Again, **the wise** is contrasted to **the foolish**. Interestingly, both types of **people** reveal **themselves** to others by how **they** use **their tongue/mouth**. But you and I realize that the root problem is not **the mouth**, but **the heart**. **The lips of the wise spread good advice, but the heart of a fool has none to give (15:7 Hebrew)**. **Yeshua** would later expound on **Solomon's words** when **He** taught: **The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart (Luke 6:45)**. Just as a bucket draws water from a well, so **the tongue** dips down and draws up whatever fills **the heart**. If the source is clean, that is what **the tongue** communicates. If it is contaminated, **the tongue** will expose it.

All of us, at some time or another, struggled to keep our **tongue** under control. Because we are fallen, selfish creatures, we naturally use words to serve our own interests – often at the expense of others. And, of course, all of us have suffered the cuts of another's verbal barbs. In his book of **Proverbs**, Charles Swindoll relates **four unhealthy ways an uncontrolled tongue reveals a depraved heart**. We all need to pay attention to them.

**1. Deceitful flattery: Food obtained by fraud may taste good, but later the**

**mouth is full of gravel (20:17). In the end, people appreciate honest criticism far more than flattery (28:23).**

What is flattery? Nothing more than insincere compliments spoken with deceitful motives. It is excessive praise verbalized in hopes of gaining favor in the eyes of another. The difference between affirmation and flattery is motive. If we hope to say something to another that will ultimately benefit ourselves, it's flattery. If we speak for the ultimate benefit of the hearer, we either affirm or rebuke, whichever the situation demands.

**2. Gossip and slander: A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about spewing crooked speech. Signaling their deceit with a wink of an eye, a nudge of the foot, or the wiggle of their fingers. Their perverted hearts plot evil, and they constantly stir up trouble (6:12-14). A fool's mouth is his ruin; his lips are the snare of his soul. Rumors are choice morsels that sink deep into one's heart (18:7-8).**

Who hasn't been hurt by **the** wagging **tongue** of a **gossip**? By **gossip**, I mean any talking that causes people to divide into camps. Usually this **speech** reduces someone in the estimation of the hearer. **Gossip** almost always conveys false or exaggerated information maliciously. Throughout Scripture, **ADONAI** reserves some of **His** harshest remarks for **gossip**. **He** hates this **sin**. When you receive information that could defame or harm another, consider these questions and responses:

Does this information involve you or affect you directly?

If not, let the chain of **gossip** end with you.

If so, discuss the matter only with the people directly involved.

What is the motive of the person who conveyed this information?

If it is not love, either rebuke that individual or remove yourself from the conversation. If the motive is misguided love, offer to facilitate a constructive discussion between **the gossip** and the victim.

Above are two kinds of destructive **speech** that use ulterior motives. When we **flatter** someone, we deceive that person in order to gain an advantage for ourselves. When we **gossip**, we lower people in the eyes of others. Both involve deception. Now, let's consider destructive confrontation. While it is direct and open, unlike the cowardly ways of **flattery** and **gossip**, the effect is nonetheless harmful.

**3. Arguments, striving, and angry words:** Take the time now and read **Proverbs 14:16-17, 15:4, 17:14, 18:6, 25:15, and 29:11**. You will also profit from a careful examination of the following: **Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul (22:24-25)**. By arguments and striving I don't mean expressions of differing opinions or even constructive confrontation. Intelligent thinking and unguarded, open conversation must leave room for everyone to express themselves freely and without fear. Naturally this will lead to occasional differences of opinion. Arguments and striving, however, have to do with negative attitudes such as stubbornness and rigidity. This person responds to virtually every negative experience with venom because he or she remains angry with everyone about everything. Because **anger** begets **anger**, and strife follows this person like a dark cloud. **Solomon** warns us that this kind of **anger** can be a learned trait. Associate with a habitually **angry** person and you will soon become like him or her.

That said, we must recognize **anger** as a natural, healthy response when someone harms or offends us. Nowhere does **ADONAI** condemn **anger** as a **sin** in **itself**. He warns us that unresolved **anger** can lead to transgression: **An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin (29:22)**, and may give **the Adversary** an opportunity to destroy relationships. **Be angry, but don't sin; do not let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger (Ephesians 4:26-27)**. Therefore, **God** urges us to candidly confront our offenders in order to resolve the issue face-to-face. **If that person apologizes, you have won them over** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Gi - If a Brother or Sisters Sins, Go and Point Out Their Fault**).

**4. Boasting:** One who promises a gift but doesn't deliver is like clouds and wind that bring no rain (25:14). There is more hope for fools than for people who think they are wise (26:12). **Don't boast about tomorrow, for you don't know what the day may bring. Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth, a stranger and not your own lips (27:2)**.

**Boasting** most often occurs when we speak too highly of ourselves or our own achievements, but it's actually possible to **boast** without saying a single **word**. Some luxury cars are marketed as status symbols, as are some upscale neighborhoods and certain brands of clothing. **ADONAI** has nothing against people acquiring nice things if the purpose is to enjoy their use. But when someone buys them to advertise personal success, that person has become guilty of **boasting**.

**Boasting** is really a symptom of a much deeper problem known as **pride**, a condition of the heart that craves attention and loves to take center stage. Our **Lord hates** pride and considers our personal self-exaltation a personal affront. In fact, **He** places **haughty eyes**, that is, a superior attitude, at the head of a list of what **He hates**, a list that includes **lying, murder, rebellion, and slander** (see [Bf - What God Hates](#)). As **the proverb** warns us: **Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall (16:18 NIV)**. Beware of **boasting**, both our own **boasting** and **the boasting** of those around you. Even if you're not headed for a **fall** yourself, be careful that someone else's **pride** doesn't take you down with them.<sup>239</sup>

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise You for **Yeshua, Your Word, the Light and life of the world (John 1:1 and 4-5)**. **Words** are important. **Words** reveal what is in the heart. **God** promises to live in the hearts of those who love him. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23)**. **Holy Father God, You** are always pure and spotless and cannot tolerate any sin, so it is important to be careful about **the words** we use. I want the words that come out of the mouth to encourage others, reflecting the wisdom and love of **God**. In **Yeshua Messiah's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*