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Security in Wisdom

11: 10-15

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 whole city celebrates when the godly succeed; they shout for joy when the wicked die (11:10 NLT). While it is people who are righteous or **wicked**, the influence of **their** character goes far beyond **themselves**. This **proverb** makes this observation by saying that the presence and prosperity of **the righteous** and **destruction of the wicked** are good for **the whole city**. What would that look like? The flourishing of the righteous means that they would hold positions of influence and authority. Occupying governmental positions where righteous behavior would lead to security in the community and the alleviation of oppression. On the other hand, **the wicked** encourage injustice and oppression. Therefore, **their** absence benefits the community as a whole.

By the blessing of the upright, a city is raised up; but the words of the wicked tear it down (11:11 CJB). We can see the obvious relationship between **verses 10** and **11**. The first colon is especially close to the first colon of **verse 10**. However, here the positive elements of society are referred to as **the upright**; that is, those with integrity reflecting in godly actions. We could also call **them the righteous of the TaNaKh**. As **they** are **blessed**, **the whole city** benefits. That

blessing may come through an increase in material prosperity, through better health, through a good reputation, or through advancement through positions of influence. **The blessing** is unspecified, allowing us to fill in all of these other possible tangible expressions.

Whoever despises his neighbor lacks heart, but the one who has understanding (2:2) keeps silent (11:12 Hebrew). The contrast in this **proverb** is between one who **despises his neighbor** and one who **remains silent**. Reading the second colon in light of the first leads us to believe that **the silence** points to **the despising neighbor**. In other words, **the fool** (here described as **the one who lacks heart**) verbally abuses the neighbor while **the wise** (here described as **the one with understanding**) does not respond. The characterization of **the fool** as **the one who lacks heart** is interesting. **The heart** is the core of our personality. Earlier **the godly father** had encouraged his son to: **store my commands in your heart (3:1)**. **Fools** have nothing inside to share with others or even sustain **themselves**. In this context, the expression may more specifically point to a lack of discernment or judgment. We have already seen this phrase in **6:32**, and **10:13** and **21**. On the other hand, **the wise** are characterized by using few **words (13:3, 15:4, and 17:28)**.

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret (11:13 NIV). Again, we can see a connection with the previous **proverb**. One way of **despising a neighbor** is by **gossip** and revealing a **secret (Proverbs 16:28, 18:8, 20:19, 26:20, 26:22; Romans 1:29 and Second Corinthians 12:20)**. **The wise person**, though, knows better and **keeps silent**. **Slander**, closely associated with **gossip**, is also connected with **the foolish**, “**He who covers up hate has lips that lie, and anyone who slanders is a fool.**” **Slander** involves speaking to third parties about a person with the intention of harm, not help. **The wise**, here called a **trustworthy person** (which implies **someone** who is true to **their** word), does not engage in such sinful behavior. **The wise person** might rebuke someone, but it would be done with the intention of helping that person, not hurting them (**24:25; 25:12, and 27:5**).

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisors (11:14 NIV). The point of this observation is clear. Planning is pivotal for the survival of a **city**. In this, we seem to be getting back to the topic of **verses 10** and **11**, where it is **the wise** who are good for society. Without guidance a city falls, but with **counsel the city** will have victory. The language suggests a military situation and reminds us of **Solomon’s** anecdote: **Here is something else I have**

seen as wisdom under the sun, and it seemed important to me: there was a small town with few people in it; and a great king came to attack it; he surrounded it and built massive siege-works against it. Now there was found in it a man who was poor but wise, and by his wisdom he saved the city (Ecclesiastes 9:13-15a).

Guidance and **counsel** come only from **those** with **wisdom** after all. So it is the wise who are needed at times of crisis. Guidance may have the specific sense of military strategy here in **20:18** as well as **24:6** (the latter is very close to **11:14** in thought as well as wording). **Solomon's** anecdote goes on to show the limitations of **wisdom**, at least for the one who possesses it: **Yet afterwards, nobody remembered that poor man. So, although I say that wisdom is better than strength, nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised; nobody pays attention to what he says (Ecclesiastes 9:15b-16).** **Proverbs**, though, are not concerned about the ultimate value of **wisdom** in and of **itself**. It simply makes the point that military planning by those who possess **wisdom** is a valuable, indeed lifesaving service.

Whoever puts up security for another will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to shake hands in a pledge is safe (11:15 NIV). The book of **Proverbs** calls on people of means to be generous toward those in need (**29:7** and **14**). However, it frequently warns against helping others make **loans**. In the first place, **the Torah** is against **loans** with **interest** to fellow **Israelites** (see the commentary on **Leviticus**, [to see link click Et - The Poor and Interest](#)). **My people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender and charge him interest. If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to Me, I will hear, for I am compassionate (Exodus 22:25-27).**²⁴⁵

Today, this would be analogous to cosigning for **a loan**. **Isra'el's** sages urge that the theme of **6:1-19** is not to discourage people from lending money or performing acts of loving-kindness. Lending was intended as a means of helping a fellow **Israelite**, not as **a money-making** transaction as it is today. **Interest** could be applied to **a loan** to Gentiles, but even then, an unreasonably high interest rate was illegal. Exorbitant interest often resulted in injustice (**Second Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:1-11**) which **the Torah** sought to prevent. The warning of **6:1** is not so much against borrowing or lending but against being held accountable for another person's high-interest **loan**. The tenor of the proverb seems to be that a

person could lose money from securing a **loan** for a Gentile. Putting up **security** is referred to frequently in **Proverbs 11:15, 17:18, 20:16, 22:26-27, 27:13.**²⁴⁶

The consequence of this teaching is especially painful for my family. In 1928 my grandfather **foolishly** cosigned a **loan** to enable a relative to buy a farm. But in 1929 the stock market crashed and America entered the Great Depression. My grandfather couldn't pay the bank for the **loan** that he cosigned and lost the thousand-acre farm that had been in our family for 110 years, the land deed being signed by President James Monroe. My grandparents and my mother, a child at the time, were economically ruined as a result (see **Bd - Avoid Foolish Financial Entanglements**).

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for graciously giving **wisdom** to all who seek it from **You**. **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him (Ja 1:5)**. **Your wisdom** is amazing! **You** created the entire universe by **Your Word!** **You** hold together the atoms of the universe together! **For by Him all things were created - in heaven and on earth . . . All was created through Him and for Him. He exists before everything, and in Him all holds together (Col 1:16a and 17)**. Thank **You** for being gracious in giving **wisdom** to those who **ask for it**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*