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Honesty and Justice

11: 16-22

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.

HONESTY & JUSTICE

A gracious woman takes hold of honor (11:16a Hebrew). This is a contrasting proverb. The first contrast between the two cola is found in the subject of the verb: **gracious**, which is clearly contrasted with **violent**. Someone who is characterized by **grace**; thus, someone who acts for the benefit of others, not expecting anything in return. **She** is respected and loved by others for **her** actions. **Her** reward will be **honor**. **But violent men will only take hold of wealth (11:16b Hebrew).** On the other hand, **violence** implies a willingness to take what is wanted, by force if necessary. The reward for such **violence** is **wealth (Ps 73)**, which sounds good on the surface, but at the end of his life, **his wealth** will only slip through **his** fingers like dry sand (see **The Life of Solomon, to see link click Co - The Bitterness of Disappointment**). That is, **wealth** without **honor**. To be sure, **Proverbs** does not regard **wealth** as bad in and of **itself**, and in the right context it indeed signifies a **blessing** from **ADONAI (3:9-10, 8:17-21)**. But **Proverbs** also recognizes that **evil people** can obtain **wealth (13:11)** and that such **wealth** will often harm those who have **it (21:6)**.

A faithful (Hebrew: *chesed*) man will be rewarded, but a cruel man only does harm to himself (11:17 Hebrew). Two classes of people are contrasted in this **proverb**. It offers **itself** as an observation, but as such, **it** also clearly intends to

give implicit advice. After all, one course of action leads to **reward**, while the other to **harm**. In the first cola, **a faithful man** is characterized by *chesed*. This is the kind of love that **ADONAI** shows to those who are bound in a covenant relationship with **Him** (see **Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed**). **It** is a love where the interests of the other person are supreme. One who loves another in such a way protects and does not **harm** the other person. This would be contrasted to **cruel** people, who harm others for their own gain. The paradox of **the proverb** is that those who look out for others because of covenant love find that their lives are better. On the other hand, those who are **cruel** to others only end up hurting **themselves**.

The profits of the wicked are illusory; but those who sow righteousness gain true reward (11:18 Hebrew). Here we have another observation of how different actions lead to different consequences. By making this observation, **Solomon** is interested in influencing people's behavior. After all, it is clear which is preferable: **illusory prophets** or **righteous true reward**. The point of **the parable** is to encourage **righteous** deeds leading to **true reward**. Just what constitutes **wicked** and **righteous** deeds are not detailed, but are made obvious throughout **Proverbs** as it describes the actions of **the wise/righteous** over those of **the foolish/wicked**. **The prophets of the wicked are illusory** because **they** don't last that long. **Proverbs** is aware that **the wicked** may have **wealth**, but either **it** will not last (**13:11**), or else it will actually **harm** the one who has **it** (**21:6**).

Genuine righteousness leads to life, but the pursuit of evil brings death (11:19 BSB). This observation, like the previous two, clearly describes opposite actions that lead to opposite conclusions. Once again, the consequences are such that they are intended to influence behavior. The nature of **genuine righteousness** and **the pursuit of evil** are not specified, but the rest of **the book** fills out the picture.²⁴⁷

For two and a half years, the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel disputed. The House of Shammai argued that it would have been better [alternatively, easier] for man had he not been created, and the House of Hillel argued that it was better for mankind to have been created. In the end, a vote was taken, and it was decided, "It would have been better for man not to have been created, but now that he has been created, let him examine his deeds." Others say, "Let him consider his future actions" (Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b, cited in Telushkin, page 216). The sages Shammai and Hillel, who lived just before the time of Yeshua, knew the

biblical view of the human heart. For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteousness is like a filthy garment, and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind (Isa 64:6). As a result, there is none that does good, no not one (Ps 14:3). Yet, by using wisdom, people could choose what path to take. In other words, people could override their crooked hearts.

There are two paths presented to us in this **proverb**. **The crooked heart is an abomination to ADONAI, but He delights in those who are blameless (11:20 Hebrew)**. The first was an **abomination to ADONAI**. This is a frequent term in **Proverbs** and describes the ones whose ways are repulsive to **God**. The second way is **a delight to Him**. This word is used in **ADONAI's** favor. For believers, who are empowered by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, this is a choice. It is not merely a warning to unbelievers. **Paul** speaks of this when **he** says: **Those who identify with the old sin nature set their minds on the things of the old sin nature (Romans 8:5)**. So, **Paul's** teaching and **Solomon's** are similar. Those who follow the worldly desires that are universal in human hearts will commit abominable acts before **God**.

On the other side of the coin are those who accept no compromise. Their way is **blameless**. This description does not necessarily refer to perfection, for it is used of mortal humans such as **Job**, who was said to be **blameless and upright (Job 1:1)**. In the book of **Job** we see **him** as sinning by doubting **ADONAI**, so we know that **blameless** isn't the same as "perfect." Rather, it means *not subject to judgment*. We should follow the path that is **blameless** or *innocent*. Whenever we speak, our words should be truthful and from pure motives.

Proverbs 12:22 gives a contrast identical to that of **11:20**. **ADONAI detests lying words, but He delights in those who tell the truth (12:22)**. Lying lips or dealing faithfully - that is the choice between being repugnant to **Ha'Shem** and being acceptable to **Him**. When **Isaiah** stood before **God he** realized that **his lips** were **unclean (Isaiah 6:5)**. **He** may have meant that he had some sin issue, such a lying, to deal with. Or it may have been that dishonest lips represented the general sinful condition of mankind. Whatever the case may have been, we ought to take seriously the need to be **honest** in everything we say. **The Lord** will reward those who deal faithfully, and with **honesty** and **justice**.

The converse is that **Ha'Shem** will judge those who **lie** and deceive. One way **He** does this is through natural consequences, as **Solomon** recognized. **Godliness**

guards the path of the righteous, but wickedness undermines the sinner (13:6). The person who is **honest** is protected when something goes wrong. But the one who is dishonest will often be found out. **His** own dishonesty will ruin **him**. As stated above, it is important to note that **proverbs** are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

Believers in **Messiah** are called to a high standard of **honesty**. Not only did **Solomon** recognize that **honesty** is essential in our relationship with **YHVH**, but **Yeshua** also thought so. **He** called on believers to be so known for their **honesty**, that their taking oaths would be unnecessary. Rather, our **Lord** said: **Just let your “Yes” be a simple “Yes,” and your “No” be a simple “No;” anything more that comes from the evil one (Matthew 5:37).** The next time you consider using a little lie to get something you want, remember how **ADONAI** views it.²⁴⁸

You can be assured that the wicked will not go unpunished, but the descendants of the righteous will be delivered (11:21 Hebrew). In the first colon, punishment of **the wicked** is stated, though not specified. Based on the fact that this phrase occurs in the revelation of the name of **YHVH (Exodus 34:6-7)**, this verse implies that **Ha’Shem** stands behind the proper punishment of **the wicked**. The second colon shows the benefits of righteousness. After all, the benefits not only go to **the righteous** but are also extended to **their children**.

Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout, is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion (11:22 Hebrew). The picture this **proverb** conjures up in our minds is striking, powerful, and memorable. **The gold ring** is small, but expensive and attractive to look at. **The pig** is ugly and dirty, but there is more here for the Jewish audience. **The pig** is considered **unclean**, according to **Leviticus 11:7** and **Deuteronomy 14:8**. In fact, **the pig** is considered the apex of all animals and foods that are **unclean**. But, the emphasis here is on **the pig** as the personification of indiscretion. After all, **the pig** rolls in the mud and feces, eats scraps, and is generally a mess. **Solomon**, though, is writing from the perspective of the man. As one looks at **the pig** and only sees **the gold ring**, so is a man who is so enamored by a **woman’s** physical **beauty** that he doesn’t recognize **her** lack of discretion. **The sage** is warning those who will listen that **her beauty** is not worth all the problems that **her** indiscretion will inflict on him. Later, in the acrostic poem concerning **the virtuous wife** (see [Dz - Wisdom for Women](#)), **Solomon** will affirm that what is really important is not **charm** or **beauty**, but rather **her fear of ADONAI**.²⁴⁹

Dear Heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **You** are totally **righteous** and **just**. **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne. Lovingkindness and truth go before You (Psalm 89:14)**. Someday everyone will stand before **You** and want to enter **Your** holy heaven. With **righteousness and justice You** will allow only those who are clothed in **Messiah's righteousness. He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21)**.

How comforting it is that it is not the wealthy who will get into heaven, nor those who are the best dressed, not the wealthiest, but only those who believe in **You** as their **Lord and Savior. For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame" (Romans 10:9-11)**.

Thank you for opening heaven's doors to all who love you. **For you are all sons of God through trusting in Messiah Yeshua. For all of you who were immersed in Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female - for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua (Galatians 3:26-28)**.

You will look into the hearts and you will see who really loves you. Only those whose hearts have been made holy by washing in the blood of the Lamb- Messiah Yeshua's **blood** will be able to enter heaven. **They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives even in the face of death. (Revelation 12:11)**. **You** will welcome into heaven all whom **You** have made **Your children** because they **trust in You (John 1:12)**. In **Yeshua Messiah's** holy **Name** and power of His resurrection. Amen