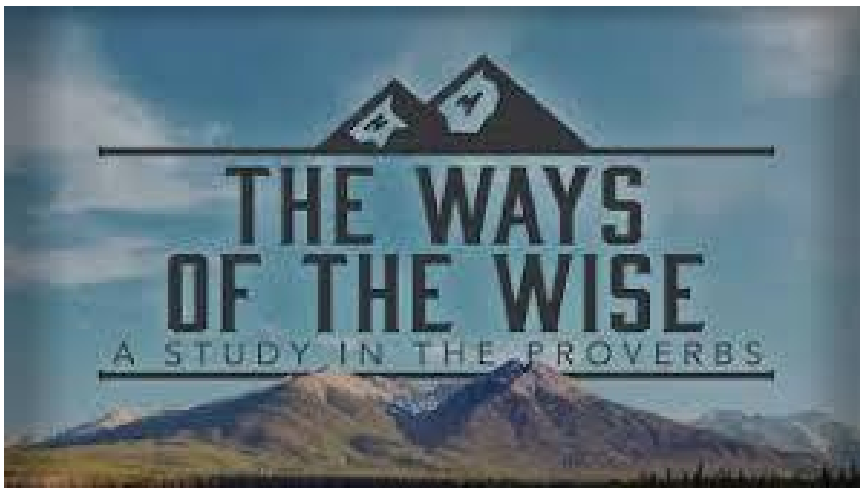


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The Ways of the Wise

12: 1-14

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.



There are three kinds of people; those who have made mistakes, those who are making mistakes, and those who will make mistakes. Actually, we all fit into all three categories. People who never need correction, **discipline**, or rebuke, are generally people who don't take risks. Either that or they made their mistakes in the past, learned from them, and make a lot fewer now.

Whoever loves knowledge loves discipline; but he who hates correction is stupid (12:1 Hebrew). Every time we are disciplined or corrected, we have an opportunity. So often, people who are successful first went through a period of failure. Thomas Edison failed a thousand times before inventing the light bulb, although he contended that the light bulb was an invention with a thousand steps. This failure is part of the learning process.

Farmers who raise grapes prune them back every year. The grapevines are pruned

back to mere stumps. To the casual observer, the stump looks dead. However, the farmers know that the most fruit comes from the new wood. Old wood, left unpruned, does not produce. Like a grapevine, we need pruning at times. **Solomon** says: **When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; but when the wise are instructed, they receive knowledge (21:11 Hebrew).** The converse of this is that **a mocker** who goes unpunished remains **a fool**. **Lady Wisdom (to see link click [Am - Lady Wisdom's Rebuke of the Foolish](#))** is the vinedresser who prunes us back so that we will bear much fruit.

Not all **correction** is painful. There is a progression from severe **correction** for **the mocker** to the instruction of **the wise**. The word used for **correction** is from the root *'anas*, meaning *to charge a fine*. **The correction of the mocker** is costly. However, for **the wise** there is no fine, but rather *haskiyl*, meaning *being made to understand*. This word choice is interesting because *sekhel*, a noun from the same root, means *insight* or *wisdom*. Whereas **the mocker** needs correction that is costly, **the wise** simply needs to be made to have *insight* and *wisdom*. This could be done merely with **words**.

Here, then, is the advantage of learning from **correction**. The more we learn from our mistakes, the less often we will make them. Furthermore, when we do make them, those who know us will understand that we simply need to be told. **They** know that we will recognize **wisdom** when we hear it. A child who usually improves behavior after **corrective wisdom** will find spanking a rarity.

Thus, in contrast to our usual attitude, **Solomon** notes that **whoever loves knowledge loves discipline (12:1a)**. But usually we hate being corrected. Pride wells up in us and says, "Who do you think you are correcting me?" But employers and authority figures who don't correct us do us a disservice. They enable us to remain in our ignorance. In the same way friends who don't gently correct us are not doing us any favors. Even **ADONAI disciplines** us because **He loves** us (see **Hebrews [Cz](#) - God Disciplines His Children**).

In this fallen world, we are going to find that **correction** is despised more often than not. If someone is not a friend or one under authority, then "advice most needed will be least headed." But we do not have to participate in this prideful attitude. In fact, as our friends, family, colleagues, and authorities discover that we are teachable, they will correct us more often and more gently. We will become like **the wise**, who learn *sekhel* easily: **When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; but when the wise are instructed, they receive knowledge**

(21:11). Sooner or later, we will even **be at home among the wise (15:31).**²⁵⁴

ADONAI favors those who do good, but He condemns those who plan wickedness (12:2 Hebrew). This contrasting parable reveals two kinds of people. On the one hand are **those who do good**, whom **YHVH** favors; and on the other are **those who plan wickedness**, whom **God** will condemn. The result is that **wickedness never brings stability, but the godly have deep roots (12:3 NLT).** We may presume that the lives of **the righteous of the TaNaKh** are not upended by **troubles** and setbacks as envisioned for **the wicked**. There seems to be a paradox here. People perform **wicked** acts to get ahead in life (steal money, cheat others, lie to cover their tracks), but according to **Solomon**, these acts do not lead to **stability**, but **trouble**. **Wickedness** complicates life by making it tumultuous. **The proverb** is an observation that serves to motivate its hearers toward **righteousness**.

A wife of noble character is a crown for her husband (see [Dz - Wisdom for Women](#)), **but a disgraceful woman is like cancer in his bones (12:4 NLT).** The contrast between the right and the wrong woman is a major theme in the book of **Proverbs**, because the subject is of such monumental importance to **the young men** to whom the book is primarily addressed in its ancient setting. The purpose was to motivate **them** to avoid a bad marital choice. **A wife of noble character** enhances **the godly man's** life and is a reward for **his wise** choice, whereas a disgraceful **wife** brings suffering to **his** life. The fact that such a **wife** is likened to **cancer in his bones** shows just how deeply a bad marital choice affects **the husband's** life.

The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful (12:5 NIV). Again, this **proverb** contains a general observation, in this case to serve as a warning when listening to the advice of others. **The righteous of the TaNaKh** help people navigate life not just for **their** own benefit, but also for the benefit of others. Instead, there are hidden motives behind the advice that **the wicked** give a person about the future.

The words of the wicked are a deadly ambush, but the speech of the upright rescues them (12:6 CJB). This **proverb** is an observation on the consequences that flow from **the speech of the wicked** and **the upright**. As we might expect, **the words** of **the wicked** lead to a negative end, even violent **death**. Also, **the words** of the upright **rescues them** or saves those who listen to **their** advice. **Solomon** would affirm both results. Like the previous verse, this

proverb serves to warn its hearers to be discerning as they listen to **the words** of others.

The wicked die and disappear, but the family of the godly stands firm (12:7 NLT). This **proverb** expresses a similar sentiment to that of **10:25** and **12:3**. **The wicked** lack stability, but **the righteous** have it. In typical **proverb** fashion, details are not given. How do **the wicked die and disappear**, and who assures **their** downfall?

Because of his insight, a person is praised, but a distressed mind leads to shame (12:8 Hebrew). Isra'el was an **honor-and-shame** culture. The word **insight** (Hebrew: *sekel*) is closely connected to **wisdom (1:3)** and refers to the ability to recognize the true nature of a situation. Such recognition allows one to act in a way that allows one to navigate the difficulties of life, which would bring **praise**. Instead, **the distressed mind** (*leb*), literally **heart**, is a term that points to one's core personality (**3:1**), but at times will emphasize one's cognitive abilities. **A distressed mind** would not think clearly and thus would not arrive at the same helpful insight expected to come from the person in the first colon. Thus, instead of praise, this person would receive **shame**.

Better to be despised and have a servant than to boast of one's status and have nothing to eat (12:9 CJB). According to **Solomon**, reality is more important than appearances. The form is a "**better-than**" **proverb**, giving relative values. In this case, actually having wealth is more important than the illusion of wealth. As in the case with "**better-than**" **proverbs**, it is not that the reputation is unimportant to **Solomon**, it just is not as important as reality.

The godly care for their animals, but the wicked are always cruel (12:10 NLT). **The righteous of the TaNaKh** are not only sensitive to other people, **they** are also sensitive to **animals**. Since that is the case, one can only imagine just how carefully **they** would treat **their** fellow human beings. On the other hand, even the so-called compassion of **the wicked** is **cruel**. That is, even **their** best efforts are dangerous (**11:17**).

A hard worker has plenty of food, but a person who chases fantasies has no sense (12:11 NLT). This **proverb** fits in with others that criticize **laziness** and promote **hard work**. **A wise son gathers in the summer, but he who sleeps during the harvest is a disgrace (10:5, 6:6-11).** A difference, however, may be noted in the fact that the emphasis here is not so much on the lack of effort, but

rather **his** energy is misdirected (**28:19**).

The wicked are jealous of each other's loot, but the godly are well rooted and bear their own fruit (12:12 NLT). The idea is that those who **love wickedness** are going to find **evil** or **trouble** and thus **their** lives will be unstable. This is contrasted with the lives of **the righteous of the TaNaKh**, whose lifestyle leads to stability.

The wicked are trapped by their own speech, but the godly escape such trouble (12:13 NLT). If one offends with **their own** speech, then it will be like a **trap**. The **trap** is not so much in **the words they speak**, but in **the speaker** of those **words**. Perhaps the offense is **gossip** or **slander (10;18, 11:13, 18:8, 20:19)** or simply saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. In any case, saying something offensive will bring harm to **the speaker**.

From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward (12:14 NIV). This verse deals with consequences or retribution (see **Bv - Security Through Righteousness**) in both speech and action. **The fruit of the mouth** is the consequence that flows from **the words** one utters. Since **the words** are **wise**, they bring good and satisfying results to the situation as well as to the one who utters them. The second colon says the same is true in the realm of actions. In other words, the second colon furthers the thought of the first by applying the principle to another realm of meaning. Whatever one does will have consequences for that person. Presumably, if the actions are good, then the consequences will be good. The same reciprocal action is true if **the words** are bad. If they are, then the consequences will be bad. Like many other **proverbs**, this serves to warn its hearers to be discerning as to what they say and how they act.²⁵⁵

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your** steadfast **love**. For **Your** lovingkindness is great up to the heavens, and **Your** truth to the skies (Psalm 57:10). Even in discipline you are full of love. My son, do not take lightly the discipline of **ADONAI** or lose heart when you are corrected by Him, because **ADONAI** disciplines the one He loves and punishes every son He accepts (Hebrews 12:5c-6). Discipline is one of **Your** tools, **O God**, that **You** use to purify **Your** children. **Your** heart is tender toward **Your** children and **You** desire **them** to be pure, more like **You** are- filled with **the fruit of righteousness** (Hebrews 12:10c-11).*

Sometimes **discipline** feels like being in the tongs of a silversmith in a hot fire. **God**, you are the perfect **Silversmith**. As the silversmith works his object which is being heated in the hot fire, the silversmith never takes his eye off the object. He knows when to pull it from the fire at just the perfect timing - when he can see his own reflection in the fire! When **You** can see **Your** reflection in **Your child's heart**, then **You** know it's time to remove **Your child** from that fire. The fire will have done its purifying work. **These trials are so that the true metal of your faith (far more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire) may come to light in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua (First Peter 1:7).** May I be **wise** and learn quickly from **Your discipline** and from **trials** that come my way. In **Messiah's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen