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Wisdom is a Fountain of Life

13: 12-19

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.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life (13:12 CJB). This illustrates how the sages were indeed interested in what today we would call psychology. It is an observation with no explicit caution or prohibition, but as an observation it provides insight into how the human spirit typically functions. This knowledge will help the **wise** read others as well as **themselves**. The idea is that anticipation or delay in the fulfillment of a desire leads to frustration, disappointment, or depression. **The heart** stands for the core personality of a person and here seems to connect specifically with one's emotions (**3:1**). The fulfillment of a desire is compared to **the tree of life**, a very positive metaphor that points not just to physical life, but also to the enjoyment of it. The metaphor of **the tree of life** is on **the Garden of Eden** account (**Genesis Chapters 2 and 3, Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 15:4, as well as Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14, and 19**).

People who despise the Word are asking for trouble, but those who revere the Torah (Hebrew: *mitzvah* meaning *a commandment or directive given by ADONAI*) **will be rewarded (13:13 Hebrew).** This **proverb** fits into the general theme of openness to instruction. **Fools** do not listen to advice, while **the wise** pay close attention to those who guide and offer correction (**3:11-12, 9:7-9, 12:1 and 15, 27:5, etc**). **The Word** of the first colon is unspecified, but it should be read in light of **the Torah** in the second colon. Any advice or correction of **the father** would be in line with **God's Word, the Torah**. The son will be blessed or cursed depending on **his** obedience to **Torah** (see **Deuteronomy, to see link click [Fd](#) - Blessings and the Curses**).²⁶⁷



The teaching of a wise man is a fountain of life, enabling one to avoid deadly traps (13:14 CJB). **Wisdom** has a two-edged benefit for those who will follow its teaching. **Wisdom** prevents disaster and it creates prosperity. **Solomon** says that **the teaching of a wise man is a fountain of life, enabling one to avoid deadly traps (13:14 CJB).** The word for **fountain** actually doesn't refer to a fountain in a city square, but to a spring of water. Springs were of immeasurable value in the Ancient Near East, where water supply was always an issue. Springs not only provided water, but the best water.

Thus, to follow **wisdom** is to **love oneself (19:8)**. The unstated opposite is that following the way of **folly** leads to **death** (see [Bo](#) - **Madam Folly's Invitation to Death**). There is a destructive bent to folly. Young people are especially prone to foolish actions that risk life. And grown men and women are not having their "mid-life crises" in which they begin acting in foolish and self-destructive ways. Substance abuse and sexual promiscuity stand out as common, yet tragic, examples of **foolish** and self-destructive behavior. To avoid these obvious destructive lifestyles is to **love oneself**. But also, to practice other aspects of **wisdom** - in relationships, in finances, in our occupation, and in our attitudes - will extend and prosper our lives as well.

Foresight is one aspect of **wisdom** that tends to extend and improve life. **Solomon** says that **the wise** see trouble coming. **The prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions; the thoughtless goes blindly on and suffers the consequences (27:12a).** This is because **the wise** understand human nature and understand the biblical principles of life. Therefore, at times they see danger coming and take the necessary precautions. **The wise** see an employer who is struggling and takes steps either to secure another job or to be a part of the solution and avoid a layoff. **The wise** sense political trouble brewing and avoid becoming victims. **The wise** see financial downfalls coming and prepare for **them**. **The wise** see fractures developing in a relationship and repair those fractures

before the relationship is broken.

Many die young due to foolishness. Death may come in the form of a drunken car crash, a fatal disease brought on by immorality, or stress-induced heart disease. Others pay for their folly with poverty in the golden years of retirement, or with loneliness, having alienated all loved ones. Others are alone despite the illusion of success. And some live lives with no hope. Even believers, though their eternity is secure (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer](#)), may face the prospect of a bleak existence if the teachings of **wisdom**, which are part of **God's** instruction, are not followed.

But wisdom is a path of life, and **God's** full **wisdom** includes **the foolishness of Messiah** crucified. **God's** full **wisdom** is more than just principles of relationships and finances. It includes a message of **foolishness to the world** (see the commentary on [First Corinthians An - The Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom](#)). **ADONAI** declares that **He** will **destroy the wisdom of the [worldly] wise and frustrate the intelligence of the [worldly] intelligent (Isaiah 29:14)**. When the totality of **God's wisdom** is embraced, then **Proverbs 15:24** can be understood in a fuller sense than **Solomon** knew when **he** wrote: **The path of life leads upward for the wise; they leave the grave behind (15:24)**.²⁶⁸

Good common sense produces favor, but the way of the treacherous is hard (13:15 Hebrew). **The proverb** contrasts common sense with treachery. Those with the former are rewarded with favor in life. The Hebrew does not actually specify a negative contrast with **favor**, but just speaks of the permanence of wisdom. It may be that by this point, **the way of the treacherous** would be obvious: it ends in **death** rather than **life** (see [Ci - Life or Death](#)).

Prudent people think before they act (13:16a Hebrew). **The prudent** are those who act with a cool head. They take into consideration the situation in life (compare **1:4, 12:16** and **23**). It is a repetition to say that **the prudent** act with **wisdom**, since otherwise **they** would not be **prudent**; but the statement places emphasis on the connection. It is true that **the prudent conceal their wisdom (12:23)**; that is, they do not talk about it. But at the same time **their** actions show that **they** are **wise**. **But fools act stupidly**, a synonym of **foolishly (13:16 Hebrews)**. While **the prudent** and **wise** back up **their words** with **actions**, **fools** show **their stupidity** by **their own actions** and also by **their words**. This observation has the intention of encouraging **prudent actions** and discouraging **foolish** behavior.

A wicked messenger falls into evil, but a faithful envoy brings healing (13:17 CJB). Messengers played an important role in human relationships in an age long before email. They might be given a letter or perhaps an oral **message** to deliver. **A** reliable **messenger** would be one who delivered **the message** in a timely and accurate way. **A wicked messenger** could fail to deliver **the message**, delay it, or garble its content. Yet, according to **the proverb**, these **wicked messengers** could bring trouble on **themselves** by **their** actions, even conceivably as a direct result of **their** bad actions. On the other hand, **their** reliable envoy becomes a vehicle of healing, presumably for both the sender and the recipient of **the message**.

Those who neglect discipline will end up in poverty and disgrace, but whoever accepts correction will be honored (13:18 Hebrew). Discipline (1:2) and its close synonym **correction (3:11)** refer to the ability to control oneself and focus on the important tasks at hand, even if other behaviors would be more pleasurable. Those who stay focused get the reward of **honor**, while those who let things go will end up **poor** and **disgraced**. As **its** purpose, this observation encourages **discipline** by pointing out the consequences of pursuing or neglecting **it**.

Solomon observed that **hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life (13:12)**. And the first colon in **13:19a NIV** expresses a similar statement: **A longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul**. The second colon, however, is different from **13:12**, **but fools detest turning from evil (13:19b NIV)**. The most direct contrast in the verse is between the pleasure of **the fulfilled longing** and **the disdain** felt by **fools** at the ideas of forgoing **an evil** act or thought. Perhaps the implication is that **evil** is pleasant to **fools** or, rather, that **fools** cannot experience **desire fulfilled**, for **they** will not turn from **evil**.²⁶⁹

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your wisdom is the fountain of life - the water** that satisfies bringing peace and joy on earth and eternal peace and joy in heaven! **The fear of ADONAI is also the fountain of life enabling one to avoid deadly traps (14:27)**. It leads to **life (19:23)**, it gives **security (14:26)**, **hope (23:17-18)**, and the promise of **long life (10:27)**. When I **fear You, You** keep my priorities straight. **Better to have little, with the fear of ADONAI, than to have great wealth with inner turmoil (15:16)**. **You** also help me steer clear of **evil (8:13, 16:6, and 14:2)**. In **Messiah Yeshua's holy Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*