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Gray Hair is a Crown of Honor 16:31 to 17:6

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.



Gray hair is a crown of honor, obtained by righteous living (16:31 CJB). Righteousness is rewarded with longevity. **The proverb** presents an essential truth, but not the whole truth, for **it** does not include evil old men or the good who die young. The consistent teaching of **Proverbs** is that **wisdom** leads to **life**, while **folly** leads to **death**. Again, this is not an absolute principle in **Proverbs**, but a generally true one. It is more likely, for example, that a man will grow old if he does not sleep with his neighbor's wife (**6:20-35**). **Proverbs 6:31** attributes this **crown of honor** to **righteous living**, and **17:6** intensifies that splendor to future generations. If **gray hair crowns a person** by displaying that **they** have lived a **righteous life (Psalm 92:14 and Proverbs 20:29)**, how much more **their grandchildren** to whom **they** have successfully passed down the family's testimony into the foreseeable future.³³⁶

The commandment to **stand up in the presence of a person with gray hair**, and to **show respect for the old** is tied to **the fear of ADONAI**, which is **the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10a)**. When we respect **the elderly**, it is credited to us as reverence for **YHVH**. If we are unable to honor our seniors, neither will we find reverence for **God** within us. Imagine a culture where the young people stood up from their chairs when **the elderly** entered the room. Imagine a culture where, rather than brazen disrespect for seniors, honor and admiration were accorded them on account of their years of **wisdom**. Such is **Torah** culture. We are to be a holy people. We are to be different. Again, the motivation for obeying this mitzvah is stated: **I am ADONAI (Leviticus 19:32)**.

He who controls his temper is better than a war hero, he who rules his spirit is better than he who captures a city (16:32 CJB). As is typical, this **“better-than” proverb** expresses relative rather than absolute value. The one who is slow to anger is esteemed greater than a war hero. A war hero must overcome an army, but the person who holds his temper must overcome powerful emotions and urges from within. The war hero has an easier job than the one who can remain peaceful amid conflict. The key is self-control. The word translated **controls** means *to rule and exercise control over*, just as **Solomon** ruled over **his** kingdom. **According to Rashi, “the one who rules his spirit” is the one who conquers evil inclination (Judaism teaches that every person is born with two competing drives: a good inclination (Yetzer hatov) and an evil inclination (yetzer hara). Non-messianic Jews do not believe in the doctrine of original sin).**³³⁷

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from ADONAI (16:33 NIV). **God’s** sovereignty is so great that even **the casting of a lot** (see the commentary on **Exodus**, **to see link click Gb - The Urim and Thummim: The Means of Making Decisions**) was under **His** control. This method was neither mechanical or magical, but a way of allowing **ADONAI** to lead by a specific “yes” or “no” answer to determine **His** will. **The Urim and Thummim of Isra’el’s high priests (Exodus 28:30 and Leviticus 8:8) were so used (Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8 and 10; and First Samuel 23:9-12)**. This practice of discovering **God’s** will continued into the B’rit Chadashah, where **a lot** was used to choose **Matthias** (not **Justus**) as successor to **Judas** (see the commentary on **Acts Ak - Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas**). Today, thanks to the completion of **Scripture**, the example of **Messiah**, the witness of **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**, and **the wisdom** of fellow believers, we have better ways of determining **God’s** will.³³⁸

Again, these “**better-than**” **proverbs** present a relative assessment: **Better a dry crust eaten in peace than a house full of feasting and conflict (17:1 NLT); Better to live in the desert than with a nagging, angry woman (21:19 Hebrew)**. Surely, husbands can also be **nagging** and irritable. But regardless of **the nag’s** gender, a day spent in the hot, sunbaked hills and dunes in the wilderness of Judea or Sinai is better than the constant irritation of an incessant **nag**. In fact, **nagging** could be compared to the infamous Chinese water torture (if there is such a thing), for **Solomon** compares **it** to a **constant dripping: A nagging wife is as annoying as constant dripping on a rainy day (27:15)**.

It is obvious that such quarrels and contentiousness are harmful to any relationship. Men and women today eventually seek greener pastures, reneging on their lifelong commitment to marriage. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Rather, learning **wisdom** principles concerning anger and the tongue, it is possible to learn to communicate without **nagging**. These basic principles of communication will apply even in relationships other than marriage.

For those who are married, however, there is also a deeper level of unity that can be achieved when we learn from **Paul** principles of godly marriage. **He** says: **As for husbands, love your wives, just as the Messiah loved the Messianic Community** (see the commentary on **Ephesians Bx - The Role and Priorities of the Husband**). **Yeshua loved** us enough to sacrifice **His** life for us. Can there be any petty, **nagging** issue that is more important than this? And **wives** are to **submit to their husbands in everything** (see **Ephesians Bw - The Role and Priorities of the Wife**). The beauty of this model is that if a husband and wife are both following what the Bible clearly teaches, there is a **glorious** harmony. Instead of moving out to the desert or putting up with **nagging**, dripping irritation, we can find peace and unity of purpose in the family.³³⁹

A wise servant will rule over the master’s disgraceful son and will share the inheritance as one of the family (17:2 Hebrew). The form of this **proverb** provides relative values in a way similar to **the “better-than” proverbs**. The assumption of the **proverb** provided by culture is that **a son** is prized far above **a servant** in **the father’s** eyes. However, here the insight of **the servant** is enough to tip the balance in **his** favor, especially in the light of the **disgraceful** reputation of **the son**. In other words, ability outweighs birthright, at least in extreme cases. The consequence of **wisdom** over **disgrace** (which implies a lack of **wisdom**) is that **the servant** will be treated like **a son** when it comes to inheritance. The purpose of this **proverb** may be to warn **sons** to pay close attention to **their**

familial duties and to act in such a way that **their** reputations bring honor and not shame to the **family**.

The crucible tests silver, and the furnace tests gold, but ADONAI tests the heart (17:3 NLT). The **proverb** sets up a comparison between **God**, who refines hearts, and the refining of two precious materials (**Psalm 12:6; Isaiah 1:24-26; Jeremiah 9:7; Zechariah 13:8-9**). Metalworkers separate **silver** and **gold** from impurities by a process of heating the metal until the dross can be poured off. In the same way, **ADONAI** puts **His** people into difficult situations that will reveal their sin (impurity of the hearts). Since the crucible does not only expose but also get rid of dross, the implication may be that he not only evaluates hearts in this way but also helps people get rid of their sin.³⁴⁰ **God** allows us to resist this process. Instead of letting go of the dross, we sometimes respond to trials with anger and bitterness. But if we recognize **the Lord's** hand in our trials, we can be purified. If we recognize **the Smelter**, then we can **regard it as joy (James 1:2).**³⁴¹

A wicked person listens to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander (17:4 NLT). We should refuse to listen to **gossip**. **Gossip** is passing on information when you are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution. You know spreading gossip is wrong, but you should not listen to it, either, if you want to protect your place of worship. Listening to **gossip** is like accepting stolen property, and it makes you just as guilty of the crime. When **someone** begins to **gossip** to you, have the courage to say, "Please stop. I don't need to know this. Have you talked directly to that person?" People who **gossip** to you will also **gossip about** you. **They** cannot be trusted. If you listen to **gossip**, **God** says you are a troublemaker (**16:28, 26:20, 25:9, and 20:19**). And troublemakers listen to troublemakers. **These are the people who cause divisions. They are controlled by their impulses, because they don't have the Spirit (Jude 19).**³⁴²

Those who mock the poor insult their Maker, those who rejoice at the misfortune of others will be punished (17:5 NLT). This **proverb** is an interesting one, especially in the light of **the proverbs** that ridicule **the poor (6:6-11 and 10:4-5)**. However, close examination shows that it is not **their poverty** that is being ridiculed, but the foolish, lazy behavior that got **them** there. **Solomon** recognized other causes of **poverty** beyond the control of **the poor**, such as **injustice (13:23)**. This is why it is so dangerous to ridicule **the poor; they** may be **poor** through no fault of **their** own. **The poor**, after all, were also created

in the image of God, and thus to insult **them** is to insult **God Himself (22:2)**. No wonder such people will not go unpunished. The second colon may enlarge the idea to include any type of **disaster**, not just what results from **poverty**.³⁴³

Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; children are the pride of their parents (17:6 Hebrew). This verse, by using the metaphor of **the crowning glory of the aged**, completes the frame of **6:31** to **7:6**, those verses acting like book ends. **The proverb** pictures **children** gathered around **their aged grandparent**. In **their** old age **they** are given a **crown of honor, and they and their grandchildren** will shine with **them**. Once again, it is important to note that **proverbs** are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal. Godless families collapse (**17:1**), and godless children bring **shame** upon their parents (**10:5, 17:2, and 19:26**). This proves that the family unit is ancient, enduring, and true. **Isra'el** boasted about their famous **father, Abraham (Matthew 3:9; John 8:33)**. Ancient **Isra'el** regarded **children** as a mark of divine blessing and counted **them** among the things that gave **them** weight and influence in **their** community (**Psalms 127:3-5, 128:3-4, 144:12-15**), while childlessness was a curse (**Jeremiah 22:30**). By contrast, in the Dispensation of Grace (see the commentary on **Hebrews Bp - The Dispensation of Grace**), **Yeshua Messiah**, who had no biological children, blessed the Church to reproduce spiritually, not physically (**Matthew 28:18-19; Luke 24:50-51; John 20:22, 15:5-8; and First Corinthians 7:8-9 and 25-25**).³⁴⁴

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **You** are **Sovereign** over All. **“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”** says **ADONAI Elohim**, **“Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty”** (**Revelation 1:8**)! **Your sovereignty** is so great and it pertains to all events, **the casting of a lot** or the movement of the planets . . . all is under **Your** control (**Job 38-41**). You lovingly mold me to become purer in my thoughts and attitudes. **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)**. Thank you for so carefully watching over me while I am in fiery trials. **And He will sit as a smelter or a purifier of silver, and He will cleanse the sons of Levi, and purify them like gold or silver. Then they will become for ADONAI those who present an offering in righteousness (Malachi 3:3)**. As the silversmith watches over so very carefully the vessel in the fire, so you are right there with your child in the fiery trial, to help and to guide him. **For God Himself has said, “I will never leave you or***



forsake you,” (Hebrews 13:5b). When **You** see the reflection of **Your** face as I am being purified, then **You** know the time is right to remove me from the trial, for fire/trial has done its work of purification. Thank **You** for helping me be conformed into **the image of Messiah (Romans 8:29, First Corinthians 15:49, Second Corinthians 3:18).** In **Messiah’s** holy **Name** and power of **His** Resurrection. Amen