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Words of Wisdom are More Valuable than Gold 20: 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.

Ears to hear and eyes to see are both gifts from ADONAI (20:12 Hebrew).

So much of the wisdom of proverbs is based on experience that arises out of observation. This is what makes **wisdom** seem so practical as a result of **the fear of ADONAI** (**to see link click [Ai](#) - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom**), describing the relationship with **Lady Wisdom** (see **[Am](#) - Lady Wisdom's Rebuke of the Foolish**). But this simple **proverb** brings additional insight: there is no **seeing** or **hearing** apart from **ADONAI**.⁴⁰¹ Though human perception is no match for divine **wisdom**, it can be relied on in many situations, not because of human ingenuity, but because **ADONAI** has made **both gifts**.⁴⁰²

If you love to sleep, you will become poor; keep your eyes open, and you'll have plenty to eat (20:13 CJB). This **proverb** is yet another that warns about the negative consequences of **laziness** (see **[Be](#) - Don't be Lazy**). The implication seems to be that whoever prefers **sleep** to work may anger the father enough to be cut out of the family will. The opposite expressed in the second colon is that an alert **person** will not lack for food.

The buyer haggles over the price, saying, "This is worthless," then brags about getting a bargain (20:14)! What we have here is the case of "seller beware!" Ancient Near Eastern commercial transactions, as in some places even today, were done by barter and negotiation. Here, the shrewd buyer makes it seem as if there is something wrong with the merchandise; when the seller agrees with a lower price, the buyer goes to his friends and brags about his negotiating skills. The purpose of **the proverb** seems to be a warning against the deception of appearances. **Proverbs** is often concerned that commercial transactions are fair. Typically, the warning is directed at the shrewd seller (**11:1, 16:11, 20:10**), but

here it is the shrewd buyer.⁴⁰³



Words of wisdom are more valuable than much gold and many jewels (20:15 NLT). The deceptive **words** of **verse 14** give way to a **proverb** commending **wise words** in general, and in part to protect **verse 14** from the common misinterpretation that because **lies** and **bragging** are so common in the oriental bazaar **they** are acceptable. It's as if **Solomon** is saying, "That which is most valuable cannot be obtained 'over the counter' or through sleazy deals." Unlike **the "better-than" proverbs** that compare something bad with something worse (**16:8**), this one compares that which is good with something **better**. It doesn't aim to criticize possessing **wealth**, but to simply state that if a choice must be made, **wisdom** is "**better-than**" **gold and many jewels**. It puts **wealth** in its proper perspective. After all, **wealth** often comes through **wisdom**, so **better** to get that. One can be **wise** and **rich**! Though wisdom comes through due diligence, and requires the long, hard work of education, it is finally superior to any treasure because, as **3:15** makes clear, it brings **riches**, honor, long life, and peace (see **Av - Happy is the One who Find Wisdom**).⁴⁰⁴

Get security from someone who guarantees a stranger's debt. Get a deposit if he does it for foreigners (20:16 NLT). This **proverb** is another warning against providing loans or supporting loans for another **person**, especially for **a stranger** (also see **6:1-5** and **11-15, 17:18, 22:26, and 27:13**). This proverb is addressed to those who are thinking about making a loan, and it says that no mercy should be shown to foolish people who stick their necks out in such a way. **Better** to be generous to someone in need (**11:24, 28:27, 29:7 and 14**) than to expect to get paid back for such a loan.⁴⁰⁵

In granting a loan to strangers, **Solomon's** principle is to not take unwanted risks, and he suggests that a **person's** credibility should be examined. Interestingly, the rabbis suggest that compared to **6:1** and **16** draws a distinction between misfortune and when a **person** willfully neglects sound advice. **As Rabbi Eliezer Ginsburg wrote concerning Rabbi Yonah's understanding of this passage, "How foolish a person is when he forgets the natural consequences of indulging his passions. Were he to keep the painful results in mind, he would subdue his divine of material gratification."**⁴⁰⁶

Bread obtained by fraud may taste sweet; but afterward the mouth will be filled with gravel (20:17 Hebrew). Bread, considered the staple of food, may stand for any kind of material possession, and like any kind of material possession, be obtained by **fraud**. At first it may seem enjoyable and beneficial, **but afterward** it leaves a bad taste in **the mouth**. In other words, what appears to be **bread in the mouth** is actually **gravel** to be spit out. This can be seen in **the stolen water** that **Madam Folly** offers to **the young men**, saying that it is **sweet** (see **Bo - Madam Folly's Invitation to Death**). In reality, however, drinking that **water** leads to **death**. Thus, **the proverb** is a warning against pursuing gain through false means.

Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without wise advice (20:18 NLT). The wise person does not act **on impulse**, but only after careful reflection (**15:28, 19:2, 20:18** and **25, 21:5**). This **proverb** encourages thoughtful preparation for action, and then applies this principle particularly to **war**. Bad things will happen if one enters into a **war** without thinking. The thought is similar to **24:6**, where it says: **Surely you need guidance to wage war, and victory is won through many advisers.** The general principle, though, allows the reader to apply the idea to other aspects of life. On the other hand, it seems odd to conclude that the second colon is only figurative language and does not have reference to actual warfare. Since **the proverb** applies the principle to **warfare**, this may well be a proverb that finds its primary setting in the royal court.⁴⁰⁷

A gossip goes around revealing secrets, so don't get involved with a talkative person (20:19 CJB). **Gossip** takes private information and makes it public so as to embarrass people. As believers in **the congregations of God**, we need to refuse to listen to **gossip**, passing on information when we are neither part of the problem nor part of the solution. You may know that **spreading gossip** is wrong, but you shouldn't *listen* to **it** either, if you want to protect **the Body of Messiah**. Listening to **gossip** is like accepting stolen property, and it makes you

just as guilty as **the person** who stole it.

When someone begins to **gossip** to you, have the courage to say, "Please stop. I don't need to know this. Have you talked to that person directly?" 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**. **Troublemakers listen to troublemakers (17:4 CEV)**. **These are the people who cause divisions. They are controlled by their impulses, because they don't have the Spirit (Jude 19)**.

It is sad that in **God's** flock, the greatest wounds usually come from other sheep, not wolves. **Paul** warned about "cannibals in the pews" who **devour one another** and destroy **fellowship (Galatians 5:15 AMP)**. **A gossip reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a babblers (20:19 NRSV)**. The fastest way to end conflict in **the congregation** is to lovingly confront those who are **gossiping** and insist they stop it.⁴⁰⁸ As **Solomon** points out: **There are six things that ADONAI hates, yes, seven that are detestable to Him, and the seventh is the person who stirs up dissension in the congregation (6:16 and 19b Hebrew)**.

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that **Your** words of **wisdom** are so much **more valuable than gold**. **Wisdom**. What you **God** can see and hear everything. That is amazing! **You** see into the secrets of the heart and **You** can discern the motive behind why something was done. What a great joy and comfort it is to know that **You** have a deep and steadfast **love** for me. **Your love, ADONAI, is in the heavens, Your faithfulness up to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God. Your judgments are like the great deep (Psalms 36:6-7b)**. Thank **You** also that in **Your wisdom**, **You** have already prepared beforehand, **deeds** for me to do for **Your** honor. **For we are His workmanship - created in Messiah Yeshua for good deeds, which God prepared beforehand so we might walk in them (Ephesians 2:10)**. **You** are such a **wise Father!** What a joy to listen to **Your wisdom**, and to live to please **You!** In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*