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Trusting in ADONAI to Avenge Wrongs 20: 20-28

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.



Introduction: Honoring parents (20:20-21): Whoever curses their father or mother - their lamp will be snuffed out in total darkness (20:20 NIV). This introductory **proverb** describes respecting **parents** in negative terms (not to **curse them**) in order to forge a link with the theme of **bad words** in the proceeding subunit (**to see link click [Cu](#) - Words of Wisdom are More Valuable than Gold**). The second colon declares that the dire consequences of **cursing** one's **parents** is an untimely **death**. By publicly defaming **his parents, the fool**, trying to harm **him**, perhaps to win **his** inheritance prematurely (**19:26** and **20:21**), only harms **himself**.⁴⁰⁹ **As he cursed his parents, Ha'Shem curses him. Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their own head,** literally by stoning (**Leviticus 20:9**). **The proverb** expresses the reverse of **the fifth commandment**, where **children** had duty to **honor [their] father and mother just as ADONAI your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and it may go well with you in the land of ADONAI your God is**

giving you (see the commentary on [Deuteronomy Bp - Honor Your Parents](#)).

Trusting in ADONAI to avenge wrongs (20:22-25): An inheritance obtained too soon in life will not be a blessing in the end (20:21 NLT). This **proverb** connects **the hasty son** in this **verse** with **the cursing son** in the previous one. This **proverb** may well fit in with the extensive teaching on the dangers of **quick wealth (11:18 and 13:11)**. It may envision a young, immature **person** coming into an inheritance because of the untimely early **death** of **his parents**. Without **the wisdom** needed to manage **his** new found **prosperity**, it will **not** be a **blessing** but a **curse** that will vanish rather quickly like sand through **his** fingers.

Don't say, "I'll pay you back evil for evil." Wait for Ha'Shem to avenge you (20:22 Hebrew). **The wise** do not look for revenge. Rather, **they** can expect **Ha'Shem** to act on **their** behalf. Believers will recognize the same idea behind **Paul's** teaching in **Romans: Do not take revenge, my dear friends . . . but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says Ha'Shem (Romans 12:17, 19-20 Hebrew).** **The wisdom** in this advice is that it is often frustrating to try to get back at **the person** who has harmed you. In the end, revenge provides the opportunity for **the wrongdoer** to harm the victim even further. Solace is taken in the idea that **Ha'Shem** will carry out **the revenge** and take care of the victim.

It is important to note, however, that **proverbs** are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal. This **proverb** should not be understood as applying to sins punishable by the standards of **the Torah**. Rather, these are offenses for which there are no prescribed punishments or where the wrongdoer is somehow beyond the power of the law.⁴¹⁰ It is comforting to know that, ultimately, no one is getting away with anything (see the commentary on [Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment](#)).

Unequal weights are an abomination to ADONAI, and false scales are not good (20:23 ESV). This is yet another in the list of **proverbs** that condemn deceptive business practices (**11:1, 16:11, and 20:10**). This is about dishonesty. **Unequal weights** are any kind of dishonesty, any kind of cheating, cutting corners, or false advertising. That is **an abomination to ADONAI**. Strong language. **An abomination** in the TaNaKh included sexual sin (see [Leviticus De - Homosexuality](#)). But here the Bible says that dishonest business practices are **an abomination**. They are moral corruption. You might be sexually pure, but if you cheat people for money, your life is still **an abomination** in the sight of **Ha'Shem**.

Do you owe any money you are not paying? Do you have the relationship with **God** that you think you have? The Bible says: **If you are a thief, quit stealing. Indeed, use your hands for hard work, then give generously to others in need (Ephesians 4:28).**⁴¹¹

A person's steps are directed by ADONAI. How can anyone understand their own way (20:24). The teaching of this **proverb** is similar to that found earlier in the book (see **Cn - We Plan, but God Determines Our Steps: Dependence on ADONAI**). The path of a **person**, representing one's life journey, is enigmatic. Indeed, to claim to know where one is heading is presumptuous and dangerous. **Proverbs** certainly do not denigrate planning; just the opposite is true. Yet, planning must be done with the awareness that **ADONAI** can intervene and change one's future. This **proverb** is a call to recognize **God's** sovereignty over one's life.

Don't trap yourself by making a rash vow to God, and only later count the cost (20:25 NLT). This **proverb** warns us about the danger of speaking before thinking. Here the stakes are especially high since **rash promises** are made in terms of one's relationship to **God**. **A vow (Leviticus 7:16-17 and 22:18-23)** is a commitment made to **God** if **He** sees fit to answer one's request. This commitment could take the form of money or some other possession that would be turned over to the Sanctuary upon the answer to the prayer. **Jephthah**, for instance, made a rash vow without thinking of the consequences, which almost killed **his daughter** (see **Judges Bw - Jephthah Makes a Rash Vow**). **Ecclesiastes** issues a similar warning in what might be a more estranged relationship with **ADONAI**, whom **Qoheleth** considered **Him** distant (see **the Life of Solomon Co - The Bitterness of Disappointment: Pious talk**). **Proverbs** doesn't reflect on **the Teacher's** sense of alienation from **God** but knows that **Ha'Shem** is powerful and therefore dangerous.

Conclusion: the king judges the wicked and protects the needy (20:26-28): A wise king scatters the wicked like wheat, then runs his threshing wheel over them (20:26 NLT). **A wise king** is set against **evildoers**, and **he** will use **his** considerable power to destroy **them**. **Wickedness** in the kingdom will destroy it, so before that happens, **the king** should destroy **it!** **When a king sits in judgment, he weighs all the evidence, and disperses all evil with his eyes (20:8 Hebrew).** The image of **scattering** or **winnowing** evokes the idea of separating **the wheat** from **the chaff**. The metaphor of the second colon is perhaps that of the chariot or even of an instrument of torture, but it simply may be

that of a **wheel** that **he** used to **winnow** the grain and thus be consistent with the first colon.

The human spirit is the lamp of ADONAI; exposing every hidden motive (20:27 NLT). Spirit (Hebrew: *neshamah*) is a reference to the breath of life which ADONAI breathed into man's nostrils (see Genesis [Au](#) - God Formed the Man from the Dust of the Ground). It is the **Divine** spark that connects us to **the Creator**, allowing for spiritual awareness, intuition, and worship, and is distinct from the soul (the seat of our personality and emotions, who you are) and body. It receives revelation from **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, enabling relationship and guidance from **God**. **It is the vital element in human beings that is different from animals. For man, life is more than existence, because he is endowed with the ability to aspire to higher levels of thinking. This interpretation is preferable to understanding the verse as alluding to human conscience.** **The lamp** image makes more sense in connection with the second colon. In essence, nothing is hidden from **the lamp like the illumination** of **YHVH**, who knows us inside and out (**Proverbs 15:11** and **Psalm 139**).

A covenant of lovingkindness (see the commentary on [Ruth Af](#) - **The Concept of Chesed**) and **faithfulness preserve the king, and righteousness upholds his throne (20:28 Hebrew). Lovingkindness and faithfulness** form a frequent word pair (see **3:3, 14:22, 16:6**, etc) and refer to **ADONAI's** attitude toward those **He loves**. It is not clear that the love and faithfulness mentioned here in the first colon specifically refer to that divine attitude toward **the king**, but it might. More likely, it refers to **the king's** own attitude toward **his** subjects or the covenant love **the king** directs toward his subjects, or to both. The second colon makes more sense if "**the covenant love**" is what **he** expresses, but the whole saying may refer to "**covenant love**" all around. It is through that kind of constant **faithfulness** between all the parties involved that productive government can take place and **the king himself** can avoid a coup or even assassination.⁴¹²

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being both so very wise! I can always count on **You** to be there with him to help and guide me. It is such a comfort to know that when someone hurts me, you feel it too and you will avenge the wrong. With confidence I can rest the entire situation in **Your** powerful hands, asking **You** to judge the entire situation righteously, avenging the wrong. **Do not take revenge, my dear friends . . . but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says Ha'Shem (Romans 12:17-20).** In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*