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## Ten Sayings about Wealth

### 22:22 to 23:11

**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.**



In his book *Jesus and Proverbs, Reconciling the teachings of Jesus and Proverbs regarding money and business*, Gary Miller states: If we are honest, we must admit there are major differences between **Proverbs** and the teachings of **Yeshua**. The overriding message in **Proverbs** is that a **wise** man works hard, plans ahead, saves for the future, is honest in his business dealings, and, over time discovers that the ways of **ADONAI** work. A man who continues down this path will eventually enjoy material prosperity, which is evidence that he is following **God's** common-sense instructions.

In contrast, **Yeshua** repeatedly teaches the blessing of being **poor** and **the foolishness** of focusing on material things. **He** reminds us that material **wealth** is a great snare, and emphasizes the superiority of eternal and unseen treasures compared to temporal material **wealth**. If we do accumulate earthly **wealth**, we are to sell it and give it to the poor. In other words, we need to exchange earthly treasure for eternal **wealth**. Biblical financial counselors and business planners use both the teachings of **Yeshua** and the book of **Proverbs**. There is nothing wrong with this. But they (and we) need to be careful in reconciling their differences.

Although **Yeshua's** perspective on **wealth** is different from **Proverbs**, notice that **He** never suggested that the truths in **Proverbs** are no longer valid. **He** didn't say, "You have heard it said that he that plows the ground will have plenty of bread, but I say to you: Don't get up early to work in the field. Relax, God knows you need food and will bring it to you." **The Master** didn't say it was impossible to accumulate earthly **wealth** by heeding **Proverbs**. **He** just taught that earthly **wealth** wasn't worth accumulating.

A central theme runs throughout **Messiah's** teaching regarding money and possessions: everything around us will soon be gone. And since that day is quickly approaching, a wise man will view life, money, and possessions from an eternal perspective. **Yeshua** wasn't saying that having a good work ethic, saving for known expenses, or being diligent in our financial decisions isn't beneficial. But **He** is saying that a man can do all of this and still be bankrupt at the end of his life. Actually, **Solomon** also hinted at the foolishness of focusing only on material **wealth: A pretentious, showy life is an empty life; a plain and simple life is a full life (13:7 MSG)**. Even in the TaNaKh there was a basic understanding that earthly **wealth** alone was insufficient, and **Yeshua** continually emphasized the folly of having an earth-bound vision.

Many of us have grown up reading and listening to the Sermon on the Mount. We hear what **Yeshua** said, we discuss and try to understand what **He** really meant, and we memorize many of the passages. But remember, **the Master** was talking to people who had been raised on the book of **Proverbs** and **the Torah**. I don't think we can comprehend the powerful impact that His teachings had when they were first spoken. Imagine growing up in a time when you were taught that **ADONAI** materially blesses those who are faithful to **Him**. And then **Yeshua** comes along saying: **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God**. No wonder the masses were astonished.<sup>446</sup> So what are we to do with the differences in focus and message? Although **Proverbs** and the teachings of **Yeshua** have a different purpose and focus, they do not contradict each other. In fact, both are necessary. Let's look at how both messages have powerful roles to play in our lives today (**to see link click [Do - Torah and Wealth](#)**).

**The first saying (22:22-23): Do not rob the poor just because you can, or exploit the needy at the gate. For ADONAI will plead their case and take the life of those who rob them (22:22-23 Hebrew)**. To **rob** anyone is a crime, but to **rob the poor**, who are already in a difficult situation, is especially evil

**(Exodus 22:21-23 and 23:6; Deuteronomy 24:14-15)**. The same is true about the oppression of those who are already suffering. To do so publicly is especially humiliating. The reference to **the gate** points to a legal setting in court.

**The second saying (22:24-25): Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul (22:24-25 NLT)**. The book of Proverbs teaches that we should associate with people of **wisdom** and avoid those who practice **foolish** behavior. Otherwise, as this passage states, **their bad** behavior will rub off on us and so will the negative consequences due **them** (see [AI - Bad Company Corrupts Good Character](#)). In this case, angry behavior is specifically named as something to be avoided. This passage is not talking about just an occasional outburst of **anger**, but rather about people characterized by **their anger**. This shows a lack of self-discipline and an absence of emotional intelligence.

**The third saying (22:26-27): Don't agree to guarantee another person's debt or put up security for someone else. If you can't pay it, even your bed will be snatched from under you (22:26-27 NLT)**. **Proverbs** makes it clear that **the wise** are generous. However, to be generous means giving money to **the poor** without the expectation of return. Here and elsewhere, however, we have a different situation. There is an expectation of return. Whatever the circumstance, giving a loan is a mistake, but it is even more of a mistake to cosign another person's loan. Such people may lose everything (see below). This **proverb** not only gives good **advice**, but other **proverbs** provide an "out" if someone should pressure us to do so. We have **Scripture** to back us up (**6:1-5, 11:15, 17:18, 29:16** and **27:13**).<sup>447</sup>

This consequence of this teaching is especially painful for my family. In 1927 my grandfather **foolishly** cosigned a loan to enable a relative to buy a farm. But in 1929 the stock market crashed and America entered the Great Depression. My grandfather couldn't pay the bank for the loan that he cosigned and lost the thousand-acre farm that had been in our family for 110 years, the land deed being signed by President James Monroe. My grandparents and my mother, a child at the time, were economically ruined as a result.

**The fourth saying (22:28): Don't move an ancient boundary stone set up by your ancestors (22:28 CJB)**. **Land** was absolutely for ancient **Israelites**. After all, **their** society was predominately agricultural for much of **their** history. Not only that, but **their land** was distributed by divine choice to the tribes and then to

individual families after settlement. **The land** was **God's** gift in fulfillment of **His** promise to **Abraham** (see the commentary on **Genesis Dt - I Will Bless Those Who Bless You and Whoever Curses You I Will Curse**). Indeed, if for any reason a family was separated from its ancestral **lands** (perhaps for reasons of debt), their property would be returned to them during **the Year of Jubilee**, which occurred every **fifty years** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Em - The Year of Jubilee**).

The removal of a **boundary stone** would be an attempt to encroach upon, or even totally possess, **the land** of another person (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Dn - Moving a Boundary Stone**). Not even a **king** could take **the land** of another person (see the commentary on **Elijah and Elisha Az - King Ahab and Naboth's Vineyard**). Other passages that have to do with the ban of the removal of a **boundary stone** include **Job 24:2; Proverbs 23:10; Hosea 5:10**.

**The fifth saying (22:29): Do you see anyone truly skilled at their work? They will serve kings rather than working for ordinary people (22:29 Hebrew).** This **proverb** states that those who work hard and are skilled will succeed in their careers. They will work for the most powerful people in the society, while those who are not diligent will spend their careers working for people on the lower end of the social order. As always, it is important to note that **proverbs** are not promises; they are generally true principles, all other things being equal.

**The sixth saying (23:1-3): When you sit down to dine with a ruler, think carefully about who is before you (23:1 CJB). Put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive (23:2-3 NIV).** This **proverbial** saying is composed of three related warnings and seems to be the most relevant for those who are in service, or at least have access, to a powerful ruler. Nonetheless, broader application may be derived from this teaching. This particular **proverb** helps to counsel an adviser for table manners. It may seem a trite thing, but dining is actually an opportunity for people to demonstrate the type of self-control they need to have. Just as **the wise** are able to control **their** emotions and **their** speech, **they** also need to control **their** appetites. And there would be no greater temptation than at the splendid table of a **ruler**. If **he** saw a potential adviser's appetite get the better of him, then how could **the ruler** trust him to control himself in other matters. In this way, the food could be **deceptive**: it was a potential trap that could cause a prospective adviser to lose an opportunity. The image of a **knife** at **the throat** suggests that it would be

better to slice one's own **throat** than to overeat in the presence of **the ruler**.

**The seventh saying (23:4-5): Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich. Be wise enough to know when to quit. Because in the blink of an eye, wealth disappears, for it will sprout wings and fly away like an eagle (23:4-5 NLT).** This **proverb** within the context of **Proverbs** is quite striking. After all, there are a considerable number of **proverbs** that support hard work and imply that **wealth** will come to those who are **wise (3:9-10, 10:22, 14:24)**. But these **proverbs** do not tell the whole truth. There are times and circumstances where people can work hard and are still poor. There comes a time when enough **wealth** is enough, according to this **proverb**. And in any case, when **wealth** does come, it often doesn't stay for long. Thus, this **proverb** helps us put **riches** in **their** proper perspective. As with poverty, being **rich** also poses dangers (**Proverbs 30:7-9** and **Ecclesiastes 5:13-17**). Believers will recognize a similar statement toward fleeting **riches** in **Matthew 6:19: Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal.**<sup>448</sup> **The Art Scroll translates this as, "Do not weary yourself to become rich; withhold from your own understanding. You cast your eyes upon [wealth] and it is gone, for it makes wings for itself." Pirque Avot 28 therefore notes, "The more flesh, the more worms. The more possessions, the more worries."**<sup>449</sup>

**The eighth saying (23:6-8): Don't eat with people who are stingy; don't desire their delicacies. For they are always thinking about how much it costs. "Eat and drink," they say, but they don't mean it. You will throw up what little you've eaten, and your compliments will be wasted (23:6-8 NLT).** Whereas **23:1-3** gave **advice** about table manners with **a king**, here we have **advice** about dining with a stingy person. A specific connection can be seen in the warning in both passages not to **desire their delicacies**. In both cases, though **the food** is tempting on the surface, it should be resisted. **Stingy** (literally *evil eye*) **people** are those who may seem to encourage you to eat, but are really not interested in your well-being or enjoyment. **The delicacies** are really a sham. **The hosts** are, after all, **stingy**, so **the food** that **they** serve will really be low quality. **The food** really tastes horrible, and like a hair in the throat, it will be **vomited up**. So any **compliments will be wasted** on **them**.

**The ninth saying (23:9): Don't waste your breath on fools, for they will despise the wisest advice (23:9 NLT).** **The wisest advice** will bounce off the ears of **fools**. Even worse, it will bring on **their** hostility. **Fools** are set against

**wisdom**, especially if that **wisdom** involves any kind of criticism of **their** favorite sin. **Yeshua** made a similar comment to **His** disciples: **Do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces (Mattityahu 7:6).**

**The tenth saying (23:10-11): Don't cheat your neighbor by moving the ancient boundary stone or take the land of defenseless orphans, for their Redeemer (see the commentary on [Ruth Ax](#) - Ruth and Bo'az on the Threshing Floor) is strong and He Himself will bring their charges against you (23:10-11 Hebrew).** This **proverb** has to do with social justice. The first colon is identical to that of **22:28**, and the discussion of **land** and **boundaries** there should be checked. The second colon applies the ban against raiding the property of others to **orphans**. Along with widows, **orphans** are a group that is socially powerless, not having parents to take care of **them**. This **proverb** lends the authority of **wisdom teaching** behind the charge not to take advantage of the weakness of **orphans**.<sup>450</sup>

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being so **wise!** **You** so perfectly put together all the books in **Your Word** to complement each other. Both **Proverbs** and **Messiah** speak wise instructions about **wealth**. **Messiah Yeshua** spoke with a perspective for how **wealth** was to be used in **His** coming eternal Kingdom (**Dani'el 7:13-14**). **Messiah** told of how important it was to use **money/talents** for **God (Matthew 25:14-30)**. How time and money is used, is a reflection of who the heart loves. Thank **You** for giving **Your** children **Your Word** with books such as **Proverbs** and **the Gospels**. To **the One** who sits at **God's** right hand. Amen*