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About Friends and Friendship

27: 1-22

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.

First Instructions on Friends and Friendship (27:1-10): Hezekiah's men copied and compiled 22 proverbs into one literary unit. The word **praise forms two bookends, **it** being the first word in **verse 1** and the last word in **verse 21**. **Verse 22** is a janus, a transition saying, looking backward and forward. The unit falls into two balanced halves of ten verses each (**verses 1-10** and **11-21**). Both halves begin and end with either explicit warnings directed to **the son, "you"** (**verses 1-2** and **10, 11** and **22**), and both conclude with an extended **proverb**. The first half consists of **five couplets**.⁵⁰⁷**

The first couplet (27:1-2): Don't boast (Hebrew: *halal*, meaning *to praise*) **about tomorrow, for you don't know what the day may bring (27:1 CJB)**. Warning against **bragging** unites these two **proverbs**. The first **proverb** warns against overconfidence concerning the future. One may think of **the bragging** done by **Ben-hadad, king of Aram**, that **he** would defeat **Samaria**. At this point the unnamed **king of Isra'el** (probably **Ahab**) responds with what looks like a **proverb: One who puts on his armor should not boast like one who takes it off (First Kings 20:11)**. Indeed, thanks to divine intervention, **the Israelite** army repulsed the army of **Aram**. Of course, our present **proverb** extends beyond a military context. **Boasting** in the future would assume one's control over the future, and as we have already learned in **Proverbs**, though one can plan the future, the future is ultimately in the hands of **God (to see link click [Cn - We Plan, but God Determines Our Steps](#))**.

The second **proverb** also warns against improper **boasting**, but here it does not concern certainty about the future, but rather one's character or

accomplishments. **Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth, a stranger and not your own lips (27:2 CJB).** The sages tell their students not to **boast** about themselves, but rather to let someone else do it. Such teaching shows that **the praise** of others is something to be desired. In the B'rit Chadashsh, **Paul** has extensive teaching about **boasting**, and the most important point that **he** makes is that **God's people** should **boast in the Lord. He** deflects any **praise** that might come **his** way back toward **ADONAI (First Corinthians 1:31, Second Corinthians 10:17)**, just as **Jeremiah** does (**Jeremiah 9:23-24**).⁵⁰⁸

The second couplet (27:3-4): These **proverbs** are united by **their** common comments on **anger/resentment**, though the vocabulary differs between **them. Stone is heavy and sand a dead weight, but the resentment caused by a fool is even heavier (27:3 NLT).** This implicitly "**better-than**" proverb shows the **heaviness** of **the resentment** of **a fool** is more than that of **stone and sand**. Even today we talk about a "heavy mood" when feeling oppressed. We even talk about how a mood "weighs heavily" on people and those around them. The lesson of **Solomon** to **his son** is this: Stay far away from **fools** because **they** aim to seduce **you** to join **them** (see [Al - Bad Company Corrupts Good Character](#)).⁵⁰⁹

Anger is cruel and wrath is like a flood, but jealousy is even more dangerous (27:4 NLT). **Anger** can be violent, but **jealousy** is worse. Here's why. **Anger** at its best is reacting against something that is right and good. If you wrong someone they might forgive you. But if you're better than someone they might never forgive you. **Jealousy** is that bad. **Cain** did not **murder Abel** because **his brother** had wronged **him: Why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brothers righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you (First John 3:12-13).** The Bible says it was out of envy that the enemies of **Messiah** passed him over to the Romans to be crucified (**Matthew 27:18**). And the early Church was persecuted because of **jealousy** (see the commentary on [Acts Au - The Apostles are Persecuted](#)). Who can stand before **jealousy**? **It** will keep coming after you relentlessly, until you come down to **its** level. If you refuse to knuckle under, **it** will punish you – and blame you for all of it. This is one of the reasons we admire **Paul** so much. When **he** was put in prison and had to cancel **his** preaching plans, other preachers in the early Church were glad. With **Paul** out of the way, they finally got the limelight. Was **Paul jealous** or

resentful? No. **He** was happy, because **Messiah** was being preached, even out of bad motives (see the commentary on **Philippians An - Proclaiming Messiah Out of Jealousy**). When **Yeshua**, not self, is who matters most to us, that frees us to be happy even when we are shoved aside, overlooked, or passed over.⁵¹⁰

The third couplet (27:5-6): Dealing with the mystery of **friendship** and **correction**, this **proverb** is very helpful. It compares **open rebuke** on the one hand, and **hidden love** on the other. **Better is open rebuke than hidden love (27:5 CJB)**. What is going on here is that **Solomon** has done some thinking behind the scenes that is not apparent on the surface. The terms are alike yet opposite. **Open** is the opposite of **hidden**. **Rebuke** is similar to **love**, if you understand that people who **love** each other **correct** each other. To those who have not thought this through, an open **rebuke** seems like a bad thing. On the other hand, **hidden love** sounds like a good thing though not as good as **open love**. In reality, however, an **open rebuke** is giving something beneficial and **hidden love** is withholding something beneficial.

Thus, properly understood, the two terms are really opposite. It is better to give something beneficial, even if it hurts, than to withhold something beneficial, even if it's sweet. Thus, **Solomon** can also say: **Trustworthy are the bruises caused by the wounding of one who loves you; deceitful is the flattery of one who hates you (27:6 Hebrew)**. There is a relationship between **love** and **rebuke (correction)**. But it's important to realize that not only does **friendship** involve **rebuke**, but also that **flattery** can be the action of an enemy. An enemy's kisses are insincere. We judge a compliment of a criticism by the relationship we have to the speaker. An enemy's compliments are usually insincere, but a friend's **rebuke** is motivated by **love**. Here is the key to successfully being able to correct those whom we **love**: getting them to trust that we **love** them and desire their best interest.

Being willing to correct others, especially with **love**, is not easy. People tend to resent **correction**. But if we **befriend** someone and demonstrate our commitment to them, they are more likely to hear us. In other words, we have earned the right to be heard. Also, if we learn to speak with gentleness and grace, we are more likely to be heard. **In the end, people appreciate frankness far more than flattery (28:23)**. If we keep on **loving** someone, that person will eventually see that we are more valuable to them than others

who just want to tell them what they want to hear.

In fact, **just as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another (27:17)**. The type of relationship with others in which there is mutual accountability, in which there is freedom for **loving correction**, is greatly desired. A file made from lead would never be used to **sharpen** an **iron** blade. So, too, it is difficult for a person to accept correction from people who are not well known or trusted. Truthfully, we ought to receive and think about correction. But there is a special relationship, **iron sharpening iron** - that gives us a regular source of correction.⁵¹¹

The fourth couplet (27:7-8): A person who is full refuses honey (27:7a NLT). In the book of **Proverbs**, the right course of action or saying the right thing depends on circumstances, or timing. **Honey** is a delicacy, **sweet to the taste** and providing all kinds of energy. However, for those who are full, it may cause vomiting (**25:16**). **But even bitter food tastes sweet to the hungry (27:7b NLT)**. On the other hand, anything tastes good to someone who is **hungry**. Something naturally **sweet** like **honey** is spurned by someone with a full stomach; yet even something sour tastes **sweet** (like **honey**) to someone whose stomach is empty. The message articulated by this **proverb** is that it is important to know the situation.

Like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home (27:8 ESV). This comparative **proverb** likens **a man** who willingly **flees his home** to a fluttering **bird** that flies away from the security of **its** nest. This is compared to **a man** leaving **his home**. Cut off from the security of his family he opened himself up to danger. The **proverb** is thus a warning to those who might think that “the grass is greener on the other side of the fence,” and be grateful for what they have.⁵¹²



The fifth couplet (27:9-10): Both of these **proverbs** praise friendship and encourage the cultivation of deep and loyal **friendships**. **Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend (27:9a Hebrew)**. The first **proverb** begins by talking about two expensive luxuries that make people very happy. But the second colon celebrates **the sweetness of friendship** over one's own advice. The second of the pair turns from **the friend's** counsel to his support. **The proverb** envisions a situation where **the son** suffers sudden **destruction** and **he** asks for the help of a trusted **friend** of the family rather than a blood relative (**27:10b**). Such a **friend** is indispensable at those times. **Never abandon a friend - either yours or your father's. When disaster strikes, you won't have to ask your brother for assistance.** Such a **friend** is better in a crisis than a relative who is far off (**18:24**). **It's better to go to a neighbor than to a brother who lives far away (27:10 NLT).**

Second Instructions of Friends and Friendship (27:11-21): The unit falls into two balanced halves of ten verses each (**verses 1-10** and **11-21**). The second half begins with a **proverb** pair that pertains to education. **Be wise, my son (verse 11)** is followed by an implied warning to be **prudent**, not **gullible (verse 12)**. Both halves begin and end with either explicit or explicit warnings directed to **the son**, "**you**" (**verses 1-2** and **10, 11** and **22**), and both conclude with an extended **proverb**.

Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad. Then I will be able to answer my critics (27:11 NLT). The teaching of **the father to his son** reminds us of the dynamic of **Chapters 1-9** (see **Aj - Proverbs to the Youth**). The same is true for the nature of the advice, which is a general call to

seek **wisdom**. The motivation given for **the son** to seek **wisdom** is the benefit that comes to **his parents**. **They** are **happy** because **they** have an **answer to any criticism** of their **son's** reputation. If **the son** pursues **wisdom** and not **foolishness**, then **the father's critics** won't have any basis for **their** verbal attacks on the family (**10:1**). **The second proverb** of the pair implicitly defines "**being wise**" in **verse 11** as **being prudent** and not **gullible**. **The prudent person (1:4a) foresees danger and takes precautions; the gullible blindly goes on and suffers the consequences (27:12 Hebrew)**. The difference between **the prudent** and **the gullible** is based on **their** ability to navigate life, which really gets at the heart of **wisdom**. It's easy to **take precautions** if you **see danger** coming. **The prudent** have that sense, and this allows **them** to work around the problems. On the other hand, **the gullible** just plunge ahead and suffer the consequences of **their foolish** actions. This **proverb** repeats **22:3** with only minor variations.

Get security from someone who guarantees a stranger's debt. Get a deposit if he does it for foreigners (27:13 NLT). This verse essentially repeats **20:16**.

Whoever greets his neighbor in a loud voice at dawn might just as well have cursed him (27:14 Hebrew). This **proverb** picks up the file's key word **neighbor**, but now within the context of a "bad **neighbor**." The flamboyant manner in which **he** rises at **the crack of dawn** to pronounce a "blessing" on **his neighbor** is deceitful. **His** unnatural voice and timing betray **him** as a hypocrite. **The neighbor** will not be fooled and will regard the act as **a curse**, not a "blessing." Instead of receiving the phony "blessing," **he** will **curse the hypocrite**. The innocent **neighbor**, however, has nothing to fear, for an undeserved **curse** will not land (**26:2**). Real **friendship** is expressed in **actions** and **truth**, not in flashy words. **Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions (First John 3:18 NLT)**.⁵¹³

A nagging wife is as annoying as constant dripping on a rainy day. The language of **verse 15** is similar to **19:13b**, which proclaims that **a nagging wife is like dripping water that just won't quit (19:13)**. Here the language of **19:13b** is divided into two parts and distributed in the two colas of **the verse**, and **the dripping** is placed into the context of **a rainy day**. The metaphor highlights just how annoying and depressing **a nagging wife** can be. **Stopping her complaints is like trying to stop a storm or trying to**

hold something with greased hands (27:15-16 NLT). The home should have provided **her** and **her husband** shelter from **the storm**, but, ironically, **she** brings **the storm**, and chaos, into it.

Just as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another (27:17 Hebrew). The topic shifts from false “friendship” back to true **friendship**. This **proverb** is one of the best-known and often-quoted verses in the book. It is often exclusively cited in connection with male **friendship**, but there is really no reason to think it does not also apply to women. The rubbing of **iron** against **iron** produces a sharp edge, so the only real question has to do with what **sharpening** a person implies. It means that **friends** help each other prepare for the ups and downs of life. In the context of the book of **Proverbs**, this means instruction in matters of **wisdom**, which would help a person navigate successfully. It would certainly include receiving and giving correction to **foolish** behavior and speech. In this way, **the friends** could avoid making the same mistake in the future.

As workers who tend a fig tree are allowed to eat the fruit, so workers who protect their employer’s interest will be rewarded (27:18 NLT). This **proverb** encourages **the wise** to take good care of those who employ them for their professional services. It pivots on the use of **fruit** for consequences or rewards. Just as those who **tend** (or possibly **protect**) **a fig tree** will have the benefit of **its fruit**, so will those who **take care of their employer’s interest** will also **be rewarded**.⁵¹⁴

As a face is reflected in water like a mirror, so that heart reflects the real person (27:19 NLT). On the one hand, your **heart** reveals the real you – what you really are, not what others think or what circumstances force you to be. Your **heart** determines why you say the things you say, feel the way you feel, and do the things you do. Another word for **heart** is passion. There are certain things you feel passionate about and others you couldn’t care less. Some experiences turn you on and capture your attention while others turn you off or bore you to tears. These reveal the nature of your **heart**. On the other hand, **the heart** reveals you to others. So, it is not so much self-revelation, but rather revelation to others.⁵¹⁵

Sh’ol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and neither are human eyes (27:20 Hebrew). **Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by [his reaction] to being praised (27:21 NLT).** **Praise** is

dangerous because it can produce **pride**. **Praise** is often flattery, and at other times it may simply be courtesy or for encouragement. Because of his insecurity, a person can also take **praise** to be an affirmation of his own importance. **The Torah** warns against **pride** since that often results in **forgetting about ADONAI (Deuteronomy 8:14)**.⁵¹⁶

Janus (27:22): This verse is a janus, named after the Roman god of endings and beginnings, symbolized by having two faces - one looking back toward the past and one looking forward toward the future. Looking back, you can't do much with **foolish** people. **You cannot separate fools from their foolishness, even though you grind them like grain with mortar** (a vessel in which substances are crushed or ground with a **pestle**) **(27:22 NLT)**. Looking forward, caring for **flocks** and **herds** (see [Dn - Caring for Flocks and Herds](#)) is the **wise** thing to do.

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being the very best **friend** and **Father** that ever could be! **Bragging** about something that we do is foolish, for our achievements are only temporary and very minimal compared to **Your** greatness. For **Hannah**, with a grateful heart, **boasted** in **You**, for **You** are all-knowing and **wise**. **You** see the intentions of **the heart (First Samuel 16:7)** and weigh the attitude behind why deeds are done. **Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in ADONAI, my horn is lifted high in ADONAI. I smile wide over my enemies, for I rejoice in Your salvation. Friends are also important. How wonderful to have such a wise and understanding friend as You dear God, for You are full of lovingkindness, and judge with righteousness. But let one who boasts boast in this: that he understands and knows Me. For I am ADONAI who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth. For in these things I delight." It is a declaration of ADONAI (Jeremiah 9:23-24). Your righteousness is like the mountains of God. Your judgments are like the great deep. You preserve man and beast, ADONAI. How precious is Your love, O God (Psalms 36:6-7a)! Thank You for always being such a loving and caring heavenly Father. It is a joy to boast about You and praise You. In Messiah Yeshua's holy Name and power of His resurrection. Amen***