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Torah and Wealth

28: 1-11

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.



We have seen that there are major differences between **Proverbs** and the teaching of **Yeshua** ([to see link click Da - Ten Sayings about Wealth](#)). In his book *Jesus and Proverbs, Reconciling the teachings of Jesus and Proverbs regarding money and business*, Gary Miller examines **four ways** that *both messages* have powerful roles to play in our lives.

1. Proverbs provides the how, and Yeshua provides the why. **Proverbs** tell us *how* to produce income, and the teachings of **Yeshua** tell us *why*. **Proverbs** provides the tools to make the material world work for us. We learn that it is important to get out of bed in the morning, that we need to be out in the field/workplace to survive, and that we must plan ahead. In the B'rit Chadashah we discover why **ADONAI** wants us to be involved in these activities. We are to use **money** to provide for our families (**First Timothy 5:8**), to assist **the fatherless and widows** (**James 1:27**), and to send aid to needy believers around the world (**Second Corinthians 8:14**). None of this is possible without industry, and nothing surpasses **Proverbs** in teaching how to make business profitable.

2. Money can be useful in furthering the Kingdom. In some ways it would be easier if **Yeshua** had just told us to stay away from **money**. Sometimes I see young

people taking this position out of reaction. But **Yeshua** didn't say this. In fact, **He** taught that, as dangerous as **money** is, it can be useful in the Kingdom. One of the most lengthy and difficult parables the Master told was the story of **the shrewd manager** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Hw - The Parable of the Shrewd Manager](#)). Through the years men have wrestled to understand why **Yeshua** used an unrighteous man to illustrate a godly concept. But the concluding message is clear. While we are not to serve money, it can be useful if furthering the Kingdom of **God**. **Paul** picked up this theme in **his** letter to **the church at Ephesus** when **he** encouraged **them** to earn **money** so **they** would **be able to share with those in need (Ephesians 4:28b)**.

3. Surrendering what is right and fair. **Proverbs** describes what is **right** and **fair** and has many teachings regarding cause and effect. If you do certain things, you can expect certain results. It describes what is just and fair, every business owner should be familiar with it. But the teachings of **Yeshua** take us far beyond the pursuit of what is right and fair. They call us to lay down our personal rights - to not insist on receiving what may be fair and equitable, and to consider each business transaction from the other person's perspective. **Yeshua** doesn't disagree with the teaching of **Proverbs** describing fair treatment. **He** just taught us not to insist on it.

4. Wealth is to be accumulated. Both **Proverbs** and the teachings of **Yeshua** encourage accumulation of **wealth**. But while **Proverbs** primarily focuses on the blessings that come from accumulating temporal wealth (**Proverbs 14:24**), **Yeshua's** teachings emphasize another kind of treasure and a different place to save. In contrast to temporal wealth, which is subject to **moth, rust, and thieves**, **Messiah** reveals a savings account surpassing any security measures man can provide: **Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal (Matthew 6:19)**. **He** says we can direct-deposit into this heavenly account now. Imagine that! You can almost sense the excitement in our **Lord's** voice as **He** urges **His** listeners: **Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out. Purses** is a metaphor for the contents in them. In other words, one should not even attempt to use one's earthly money to lay up treasure in heaven. But by being generous with your money, you will store up **a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys (Luke 12:33)**. Business owners are interested in a return on investments. There is no greater risk-free investment being offered today, and wise business owners will shift

their assets to this heavenly account as quickly as possible.

The book of **Proverbs** contains the universal building blocks to help us provide for our families. I can think of no better resource for a young man or woman who wants to understand how to make the material work for them. It will teach them to work hard and plan ahead, it will provide the principles for successful business operation. Everyone should become familiar with this teaching. But in the middle of our hustle and bustle, it is essential to stop and ask why diligence and good work ethic are so important. **Proverbs** and the teachings of **Yeshua** are meant to complement each other.

An entrepreneur loves logic, challenge, production, common sense, and the business would naturally reward those who pursue these attributes. Consequently, believers who enjoy business can become enamored with the biblical truths in **Proverbs** and give less attention to the call of **Messiah**. Beware! One who lives only by the teachings of **Proverbs** is a **fool!**⁵¹⁹

The wicked flee when no one pursues them; but the godly are as bold as a lion (28:1 NIV). One of the reasons we don't fear **ADONAI** enough is that we fear people too much. We fear their disapproval. We think that our self-esteem comes from the approval of other people. But wisdom redirects our hunger for approval. Whose smile really satisfies us? If **ADONAI** approves of us, that should be enough. If you are "**in Messiah**" today (**Ephesians 1:1, 1:3, 1:5, 1:9, 1:12-13, 2:1, 2:6-7, 2:10, 2:13, 3:11, 3:21, 4:32**), **God** wants you to know that your relationship with **Him** is pre-approved. **He** will correct you as needed, but **He** will not reject you (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). That assurance continually draws our hearts toward **Him**. The Bible says that when we are filled with spiritual **wisdom**, our goal changes; we want to be **entirely pleasing to Him (Colossians 1:10 CJB)**. We'd *like* to please everybody; but we *must* please **Him**. This is **the fear of ADONAI** (see **Ai - The Fear of ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom**). Wouldn't it be great to stop fearing people so much?

Here is how. Since **the fear of ADONAI is the beginning of wisdom**, the fear of people is the beginning of **foolishness**. Let's all admit, that is a real problem among us. We are always performing, hoping for applause. Then we can consider ourselves successful; then we can feel good about ourselves. We even perform in front of ourselves, in the theater of our minds. We are constantly going onstage to build emotional capital from human applause and attention. But it's all false. What if

people found out the truth about us? Our idol is human approval. Our heaven is the spotlight. Our hell is bad reviews. Our ritual worship is to keep up appearances. We have the wrong fear. And that wrong fear is the beginning, the entry point, the thin edge of wedge for **folly**. Living a lie hollows us out. We end up so insecure, we **flee** even when no one is pursuing us – always fugitives, never settled in one place.

To **fear ADONAI** means **His** opinion is the only thing that matters. We have an audience of **One**. And **He** promises **His** approval through **Yeshua Messiah**. The Gospel puts **the Master** on stage for us and says, “You can stop posing, you can stop fearing exposure. You can stop looking over your shoulder and worrying about the sins of yesterday. You can know for sure today that **goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life (Psalm 23:6)** because of **the Messiah**. If you **fear ADONAI** enough to let **His** Gospel satisfy you, then you will be bold and confident and valiant as **a lion**, like **Messiah Himself** (see the commentary on **Revelation Ce - The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David has Triumphed**).⁵²⁰

When there is moral rot within a nation, its government topples easily. The translation of the first colon is relatively clear, and its point is almost as transparent. Basically, the point is that the offense of **a nation** will lead to the increase of many leaders, which is not a good thing. Long-lived benevolent rulers are the best circumstance for a nation, providing it with stability and security. The offense in this parable may well have been rebellion, which itself could introduce instability into **a nation**. Many **leaders** may point to the fragmentation of a previously united land (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon Dn - The Kings of Isra’el**). **But wise and knowledgeable leaders bring stability (28:2 NLT)**. The second colon simply asserts that people of **wisdom** and understanding know that rebellion will lead to trouble, so they remain loyal to **ADONAI** and **the Torah**, therefore avoid the destructive consequences.

A poor person who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain that leaves no food (28:3 Hebrew). Those who try to get something out of **the poor** are trying to get “blood out of a rock,” as the modern saying goes. This **proverb** envisions an especially pitiful scene as **poor people** oppress other **poor people**, leading to devastating results. **People** who have nothing, try to get something from **people** who have nothing, which leads to nothing. **The driving rain** that washes away **food** may refer to crop-destroying **rains** that ruin **a harvest (26:1a)**.⁵²¹

Those who abandon the Torah praise the wicked, but those who obey the

Torah oppose them (28:4 CJB). This **proverb** speaks of those who abandon the Torah. The verb denotes a divorce, as in **a wife** who is **abandoned (Isaiah 60:15)**. Thus, when **Solomon** speaks of one who **abandons the Torah**, **he** means someone who was familiar with **it** first. This is more than rejection by an unbeliever, but refers to one who follows **the Word** for a while and then abandons **it**. Such people often end up **praising the wicked**. The apostate often leaves **God's** teaching in pursuit of the fruits of a sign, saying in his heart, "**God** will not punish **the wicked**, so why be religious?" By the same principle, those who do follow the teachings of **ADONAI** generally end up **opposing** those who **abandon** the faith. Their apostasy makes us angry.

The righteous and the wicked are contrasted many times in **Proverbs** (see [Cl - Consequences of Righteousness and Wickedness](#)). **Ha'Shem** punishes **the wicked** and rewards **the righteous**. But here we see a contrast based completely within the realm of human relationships. **The Torah** separates **the righteous** from **the wicked**. Even more so, **abandoning the Torah** separates **the righteous** from **the wicked**. There is more hope for a sinner who has not yet discovered **God's perfect teaching**, than for one who knows **it** and has left **it** for the world. **They went out from us, but they weren't part of us; for if they had been part of us, they would have remained with us [in the church] (First John 2:19 CJB).**

Ironically, **Solomon** didn't ultimately follow **his** own advice. **He** became one who **abandoned the Torah**. **He** committed spiritual adultery with the **wicked** rulers of foreign nations. And the righteous of the TaNaKh battled with **him**, as we can see in the story of **Ahijah**, who came at the bidding of **God** to give **ten of the tribes** of **Solomon's** kingdom to another ruler (see [the Life of Solomon Bz - The First Prophecy of Ahijah](#)). **Isra'el's** unity came to an end, just as **the proverb** ironically warned - through **Solomon abandoning the Torah**.

Do you know someone who has rejected **ADONAI's** teaching? Perhaps that person used to attend the congregation, but now won't come near it. He might be like Dave, who became bitter with **YHVH** after finding out that his wife had committed adultery. Dave has **abandoned God**. Or he might be like Mike, who read certain books that convinced him that the Bible is not **the Word of God**. How can we convince them that they have **abandoned** their only source of help? It is not right to despise them, but we can fight for their souls, as **Jude** says: **Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by**

corrupted flesh (see [Jude Az - Be Merciful to Those Who Doubt, Snatch Others from the Fire, to Others Show Mercy, Mixed with Fear](#)).⁵²²

Evil people don't understand justice. This first colon is obviously true. **Understanding** involves more than mere awareness of the concept of **justice**. It implies that **they** appreciate **it**. **Evil people** don't want to **understand justice** because **they** live lives that are at odds with **justice**. Not only that, **they** do not see the divine justice that will catch up with them. On the other hand, **those who seek ADONAI understand fully (28:5 CJB)**. One question that we may ask is, "What does **the proverb** mean fully?" It would be really egotistical to be calm to **fully** know anything in this world. It probably is best to restrict the word **fully** to matters of **justice**. After all, **those** who seek **YHVH** are **wise**, and **they** want to know **His** will. **ADONAI** defines the nature of **justice**, so by knowing **Him**, **they** come to know **His justice**.

Better to be poor and honest than one who walks crooked paths and is wealthy (28:6 Hebrew). This "**better-than**" **proverb** provides a relative **judgment** between integrity and wealth. Nothing is wrong with **wealth** in and of **itself**, but if a decision must be made, it is clear that integrity is more important, and wealth should be sacrificed. **Proverbs 19:1** provides a similar idea: **Better to be poor and honest than one whose lips are crooked and is a fool**. The metaphor of walking on a **path**, so familiar in **Chapters 1-9**, underlines this **proverb**. There are two paths. There is a **path of the righteous** (see [Cc - The Path of the Righteous](#)), and a **path of the wicked** (see [Az - Don't Follow the Path of the Wicked](#)).

A wise son follows instruction, but those with worthless friends bring shame to his father (28:7 Hebrew). This **proverb**, presuming a **wise father**, gauges **the child's wisdom** by whether **the parent** is **shamed** by **his** or **her** actions. As in **28:4**, the term "**instruction**" (Hebrew: *torah*) could hypothetically refer to either the mitzvot of **ADONAI** in **the Torah**, or to **the father's** advice. Elsewhere in **Proverbs**, **the father** encourages moderation, and lack of control in one's diet is criticized (**23:1-3**). It is possible the **instruction** here refers to the advice that we find represented in **Proverbs itself**, but we should also refer to **Deuteronomy**, where a **son** is described as a **stubborn and rebellious son who does not listen to the voice of his father or mother** (see [Deuteronomy Ds - The Tale of Two Sons: The rebellious son](#)).

Income from charging high interest rates will end up in the pocket of

someone who is kind to the poor (28:8 NLT). Wealth is good and often considered a sign of **wisdom** and **the blessing of God (3:9-10, 10:15 and 22)**. But not always. **Proverbs** recognizes that some people gain **wealth** illegitimately (**11:8, 21:6 and 22:16**), and one such illegitimate way is through **charging high interest rates**. Charging *any interest* to fellow **Israelites** violated a mitzvah of **the Torah** (see **Deuteronomy Ef - Don't Gouge Your Brother: No interest for the Jew**). Here, the consequence is that **wealth** would be taken away and given **to someone who** would be **kind to the poor**. **Proverbs** often encourages generosity **to the poor (11:24, 28:27, 29:7 and 14)**.⁵²³

If a person will not listen to the Torah, even his prayers are an abomination (28:9 CJB). This proverb paints a picture of **ADONAI**, betrayed and disgusted with those who **refuse to listen to the Torah** (Hebrew: *teaching*). This **proverb** could possibly refer to general instruction and not specifically to the **Torah**. Even so, this verse rings true. People who are unteachable often hold an inflated opinion of their own knowledge, an attitude that reflects on their relationship with **God**. For anyone who cannot bring himself to learn from other humans is not likely not to be open to learn the hard lessons that **YHVH** desires of him.

The word translated **abomination** (Hebrew: *to'evah*) is the same word used to describe sexual sins, including **homosexuality, bestiality, and incest** (see **Leviticus De - Homosexuality**). This is a strong word. **The prayers** of **those** who reject **God's** teaching are offensive to **Him**. Far from winning points with **God**, **those** who reject **His Word (John 1:1 and 14)** and then offer **Him a prayer**, are offending **Him** by **their** pretense.

Yeshua and **the prophets** spoke of such pretense. **Samuel** rebuked **Sha'ul's** ritualism: **To obey is better than sacrifice (First Samuel 15:22)**. **Isaiah** spoke for **God** who cried out: **Why are all those sacrifices offensive to me (Isaiah 1:11)**. **Hosea** also spoke for **ADONAI** who teaches: **What I desire is chesed** (see the commentary on **Ruth Af - The Concept of Chesed**), **not sacrifices, knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6)**. **Yeshua** blasted hypocrites who fasted with grimaced faces or who drew attention to themselves by praying loudly on street corners (**Matthew 6:5 and 16**). They all practiced ritualism.

Marriage is a useful analogy for understanding **God's** point of view on this matter. Imagine a husband who speaks romantically to his wife and yet is known to be

cheating on her. Imagine the disgust with which those romantic words are met, words that would otherwise bring joy and warmth. So are the words offered to **God** by those who are not faithful to **His Word**.

There is a common idea that it is possible to “put in one’s time” with **ADONAI**. This fallacy occurs on many levels, and includes those who practice empty ritual (a prayer book, a service at the congregation, or even “quiet time”) instead of knowing and obeying the living **God**. This may be an unbeliever who hides behind the practice of religion, a secular person who scoffs at **God’s Word**, yet speaks of a “personal spirituality,” or even a believer who has “personal devotions” out in nature and believes that he doesn’t need **the Body of Messiah**. But those who reject **God’s Word** are not in communion with **Him**. This is not to be confused with sins of weakness or failure, but refers to willful rejection of **God’s** teaching in any area. Turning away is an active rebellion. It would be better not to pray, unless it’s a prayer of repentance.⁵²⁴

Whoever causes the honest to pursue evil ways will himself fall into his own pit, but the blameless will receive a good inheritance (28:10 Hebrew). It is bad enough being **wicked**, but it is even worse for **one** who is **walking on the straight path** to go astray. Those who might be tempted to influence **the righteous of the TaNaKh** to act **wickedly** are warned that **they** are **the ones** who will suffer. **Jesus said to His apostles, “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come.”** Using the graphic image of the millstone, **Christ** told **the Twelve** that **it would be better for them to die** than to be the source of another person’s **sin**. **It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone** (a heavy stone for grinding grain) **tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones**, the weak and vulnerable for whom **Messiah** had so much concern, **to stumble (Luke 17:1-2)**. Here and elsewhere in **Proverbs**, **the wicked** are told **they** will experience the pain that **they** want to inflict on others. On the other hand, **the blameless**, those who do act with **honesty** and **wisdom**, **will receive a good inheritance**.

The wealthy are wise in their own eyes, but a poor person with discernment can see right through them (28:11 Hebrew). The contrast between **the wealthy** and **the poor** is just to make the contrast between those who pretend and **those who can see right through them** all the more dramatic. In **Proverbs**, **wealth** is better than **poverty**, but as **the wealthy** use **their wealth** to cheat others, then **their wealth** is worse than **poverty**. The expression

in their own eyes is used a number of times in **Proverbs (3:7, 12:15, 26:5)** to refer to egotism. **Wealth** can sometimes cloud the mind so that **the rich** think that **the wealthy** are so smart that they became wealthy on their own, leaving **God** out of the picture. This breeds an attitude of conceit and self-reliance. On the other hand, **a wise person, a person with discernment**, even if **poor, can see right through them.**⁵²⁵

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being so absolutely wonderful, loving and just, all at the same time! How important it is to never leave you out of the picture of our lives. **Money** may make the picture of our lives a bit more comfortable, but money disappears and is gone. A loving relationship with **You** lasts for all eternity and is worth far more than all the **money** in the world! **You** are always there to help and to guide me! **For God Himself has said: I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5c)**. What a joy it is to know that when I am perplexed about what to do in life, I can always run to **Your Word** seeking **Your wisdom**. If **Your Word** doesn't talk specifically about the situation, then I can run to **You** in prayer and **You** promise to answer! **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him (James 1:5)**. **Your Word** enlightens me on how to be wise with my time and money. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*