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## Joy and Stability Through Righteousness

### 29: 1-7

**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.**

**Whoever stubbornly refuses to accept criticism will suddenly be destroyed beyond recovery (29:1 NLT).** This proverb addresses the danger of not listening to those who use constructive criticism. Those who are repeatedly warned about behavior that has potentially dangerous consequences but do not listen, and thus are **stubborn**, will find that sudden consequences catch up with them, and will have moved beyond the point of an easy fix. The purpose of the proverb is not just to explain why some people end up in the ditch of life, but also to encourage the wise not to reject criticism.



**When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked are in power, they groan (29:2 CJB).** This **proverb** is similar in thought to **28:28** as well as **28:12**. The contrast is between a situation where **the righteous** are dominant and in control, and one in which **the wicked** are the majority influence in society. In these circumstances, the well-being of **the people** is at stake. **They** rejoice when **the righteous** are in control because **they** will lead the community with **wisdom** and justice. As a result, the community will prosper; however, **they** moan if **the wicked** are in control because, at best, **they** will make

foolish decisions, and at worst, **they** will exploit the people.

**The man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but if he hangs around with prostitutes, his wealth will be squandered (29:3 Hebrew).** The first colon is a general statement. **A wise child** makes **his father rejoice**. Here we may clearly see that **the father himself** is understood in **the proverb** to be a **wise man**. After all, what other kind of **father** would rejoice at **the wisdom** of **his child**? The contrast between colon 1 and 2 has to do with **wisdom** and **folly**. Though the latter is not used in the second colon, we know full well that chasing after **prostitutes** is an act of **fools** ([to see link click Bi - Avoid the Seductress](#)). Here the trouble caused by having sex with **prostitutes** is financial. That does not mean that this is the only problem; after all, **proverbs** are not nuanced or exhaustive statements. And it is true that **prostitutes** are expensive. It is unclear whether **the wealth** is that of **the father** or **the son**, but especially if the former (unless the latter is gained by inheritance), we can see why such **foolish** behavior would lead to the sadness of **the father**.

**The king gives stability to the land by justice, but tax man destroys it (29:4 Hebrew).** This **proverb** likely cannot be used to argue against all **taxes** as detrimental to a nation. **The tax man** (literally *man of tribute*) is a person whose influence and motivation are defined by **taxes**. Likely, this person's **taxes** are to be understood as unjust since the contrast is with **the just king** of the first colon. Unjust taxation takes all the energy out of the land. **Samuel** warned **Isra'el** that **the king they** wanted could well turn out to be an exploiter and detrimental to **the people** (see [the Life of King Sha'ul Br - Samuel's Warnings](#)). On the other hand, the first colon describes the king who rules justly. Such a strategy leads to the long-term health of the land.

**A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his own steps (29:5 BSB).** **Proverbs** speak consistently against **flattery** (**5:3, 6:24, 7:5 and 21, 26:28, 28:23**). **Flattery** is different from encouragement because the latter is based on truth. As **the proverb** indicates, **flattery** energizes people but does not help them; rather, it harms them. The harm is communicated here by the image of **the net** that is **spread out**. Just as a net is set out in secret to hide it from its prey, so flattery sets people up for a fall. **Flattery** might, for instance, convince someone that their abilities are superior to what they really are. Thus, when they try to act on their own supposed abilities, they fall flat. Closer to the intention of **the proverb**, however, is the idea that **the flatterer** is buttering up the recipients in order to gain an advantage over them or a favor from them. In any case, the sages warn

their listeners to beware of such a tempting thing as **flattery**, since it will lead to trouble. In **Proverbs Chapters 5** through **7**, we see that **the adulterous woman** uses **flattery** to lure **the young man** into **her bed** (see [Bh](#) - **Warning Against Adultery**), causing him much harm.

**An evil person's crime is a trap, but the righteous sing and rejoice (29:6 CJB).** To the wicked and sometimes even to the righteous (see **Psalm 73**), it seems as if sin is the way to get ahead in life. **The wicked** often seem to **prosper**, while **the righteous suffer**. But as this **proverb** points out, that is only true from a superficial vantagepoint. Sin complicates life, setting traps for the sinner. On the other hand, **righteous** behavior leads to **rejoicing**. The believer takes the long view on retribution. Although in the short run **the righteous** may suffer for **their righteousness**, the future will bring **rejoicing**.

**The righteous understand the cause of the poor, but the wicked do not understand knowledge (29:7 CJB).** **The rich** are often stereotyped as being so callous that they believe that **ADONAI** blesses **them** with **their riches** and that **poverty** or disease is a sign of **God's** punishment for **their sin** (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Gt](#) - **Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind**). It is true that some **proverbs** hold out the reward of **riches** for the acquisition of **wisdom (3:9-10 and 15-16)**, and the fear of **poverty** for the lack of it. However, this **proverb** is a generally true proposition, not a promise. It is true if all things are equal, but often all things aren't equal. Sometimes **the wise** are **poor** because of an injustice or a natural disaster. Therefore, **the wisdom** of **Proverbs** also calls for compassion and action in favor of **the poor**. The second colon seems to imply that by **their** lack of compassion for **the poor**, **the wicked** show **they** are not on the side of **the wise**, who would **understand knowledge**. This **knowledge**, like all **wisdom** in general, refers to an active, caring concern.<sup>532</sup>