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Without Vision the People Perish

29: 16-27

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.

With single framing **proverbs, 29:16** and **27**, this **proverb** is comprised of two equal halves: **verses 17-21** and **22:26**. The first half is stitched together through a leapfrog pattern of catchwords and subjects, alternating between the topics of household and public in its aim to instruct **the son** on the necessity of discipline both in **his life** and in the nation.⁵³⁸

Introductory framing proverb (29:16): This single framing **proverb** separates the many transgressions of **the wicked** with **the righteous** observing the sudden overturn of **the evil ones. When the wicked increase, so does their sin (26:16a NIV). The proverb** begins with the observation that as **the wicked increase, so does their sin (28:12** and **28, 29:2)**. The verb **increase** seems to naturally point to numerical increase, but it may also imply growth in strength. Actually, as the wicked increase in number, it is natural to think that they also increase in their influence. The offences may be seen as sin against the law and crime against society, which are often intertwined. **But the righteous will see their downfall (29:16b NIV).** The second colon points out that the predominance of **the wicked** is always temporary. In the end, **the righteous** will be victorious. Ironically, the very increase of **the wicked** will also bring about **their** downfall, for offences against society bring social unrest as well as divine retribution. This **proverb** could be read as a word of warning to the wicked: You may be strong now, but it won't last. This **proverb** is also a comfort to **the righteous** during a period where it appears that the lawless dominate.⁵³⁹

The necessity of discipline (29:17-21): A rare admonition directly addressed to **the son** introduces the theme of this unit. In addition to the leapfrog pattern of topics, the unit is stitched together by an alternating tandem series of catchwords

in every other verse: **discipline (verses 17 and 19), servant (verses 19 and 21).**⁵⁴⁰

Discipline your children (29:17a NIV). This word of advice is directed toward **parents** and is another encouragement to engage in the tough work of **disciplining their children**. Whereas **parental** neglect of instruction will lead to tremendous problems in the future (**29:15**), this **proverb** gives positive reinforcement to **the parents**. Instruct **the child** now, and in the future **the parents** will not have to deal with the problems that arise from **a wicked child**.⁵⁴¹ The second colon teaches us that **if the parents discipline their children, they will give them peace of mind and delight** (Hebrew: *ma'adannah*) **in their hearts (29:17b NIV)**. *Ma'adannah* occurs only three times, and in its other two occurrences it refers to **delightful food (Genesis 49:20 and Lamentations 4:5)**. In this **proverb** it is probably also an analogy for emotional luxuries such as **peace (29:17), joy (29:2 and 12), and honor (29:15)**, in addition to the rest that accompanies **a son's** providing the physical necessities of need, aging **parents**. Paradoxically, **the rod of discipline** brings **the parents joy** and **shalom**, and its absence, **disgrace** and turmoil (**29:15**).⁵⁴²



A wise son follows instruction, but those with worthless friends bring shame to his father (28:7 Hebrew). Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he who keeps the Torah is happy (29:18 KJV). As Derek Leman recounts in his book *Proverbial Wisdom and Common Sense*, there are two places outside of ourselves where **ADONAI's** teaching must dwell: in our family and in society around us. **Moses** clearly instructed the teaching of **YHVH's** ways in the home. **He** wrote these instructions that **YHVH** gave about when to practice **His Word: Speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when**

you rise up (6:7).

Through **Moshe**, **ADONAI** also instituted a society based on **His** teaching and made a covenant with **Isra'el** involving blessings on the land for obedience and curses for disobedience (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, **to see link click Fd - Blessings and the Curses**). Although today no nation exists under the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da - The Dispensation of Torah**), there is yet a general sense in which **blessings** depend on following **God's** teachings. Like **Nineveh** (see the commentary on **Jonah Aw - Jonah Goes to Nineveh**), our modern cities and nations are called to a standard of corporate righteousness or they will face the judgment of **Ha'Shem**.

In **28:7** we see a contrast between **a son** who pleases **his father** by keeping the teachings of **ADONAI**, and **a son** who **shames his father** by hanging out with the wrong crowd. This struggle is familiar to **parents** and teenagers. Often, **children** are raised in godliness and yet end up hanging out with other rebellious **children** who drag them down. This issue is of such importance in training our **children** in righteousness that **Solomon** devoted much of the opening chapter of **Proverbs** to this subject (see **Aj - Proverbs to the Youth**).

These teachings are for teenagers who face the decision of two paths for the first time in their lives. Faithfulness, **wisdom**, and love, line the pathway of the first (**28:7a**), while selfishness, rebelliousness, and violence litter the second (**28:7b**). The first is the road to **life** and **blessing** (see **Bn - Lady Wisdom's Invitation to Life**); the second leads to the grave - often an early grave (see **Bo - Madam Folly's Invitation to Death**). Why is this so important to fathers and mothers? Because **parents** have such hope for the good of **their children**. To see errant **children** squandering the blessings of a good upbringing is a terrible disappointment, a crushing blow to years of love and hope.

Similarly, **29:18** considers the impact of **Torah** on society. Like the family on a larger scale, society must run on **God's Word** and **wisdom**. The society that lacks a moral compass, sinks ever deeper into the quicksand of debauchery and collapse. In Israel, the prophets called the people back to the standard set by **YHVH** at Mount Sinai (see **Deuteronomy Fm - Renewal of the Covenant**). They applied those moral standards to everyday living for the

people (see **Deuteronomy Cr - The Second Address: The Specific Stipulations of the Covenant**). Every society needs a moral compass, even though we may not have the kind of prophets in our day that graced **Isra'el** in the past (see the commentary on **First Corinthians Cp - The Gift of Prophecy**). Every society needs voices calling people to faith and to obedience to **ADONAI**. As **Yeshua** said: **You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5: 14 and 16)**.

Families and societies cannot live by **God's** teachings in some abstract, corporate mass. **His** teaching must be lived out by the people who make up these families and societies. Everyone ought to ask, "Have I shamed my father and mother by **a life** of rebelliousness?" It would befit every parent to ask, "Am I raising my **children** to improve society, to maintain the status quo of righteousness, or am I actually contributing to the problem by refusing to **discipline** my **children** or allowing them to learn evil? **Yeshua's children** must be a preserving element in society, like salt preserves (see **The Life of Christ Df - You are the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World**). The figures of **salt** and **light** emphasize different characteristics of influence, but their basic purpose is the same.⁵⁴³ The world needs **salt** because it is corrupt and it needs **light** because it is dark. **Evil people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves (Second Timothy 3:13)**. The world cannot do anything but get worse, because it has no inherent goodness to build on, no inherent moral or spiritual **life** in which it can grow. Year after year, decade after decade, century after century, the system of evil accumulates a deeper and more perverse darkness.

Words alone will not discipline a servant; the words may be understood (29:19a NLT). The sages operated on the principle that wisdom is not an inherent human quality. Their teaching implies that people in their natural state are naïve, or foolish. It takes work to become wise. They also thought that it is harder to educate some people than others to do the wise thing. Here, we see that **servants** were thought by **the wise** to be especially difficult to train. **Words** alone won't do it. It's not that **the servants** aren't intelligent enough to **understand** intellectually what **they** are being told. The second colon affirms that **they** do **understand, but they will not respond (29:19b NLT)**. This likely indicates a lack of desire to carry out the commands

of the master. It appears that they need something more to motivate them. Perhaps the rod. “If the rod is far from his master, the servant will not obey him” (Insinger Papyrus 14:11).

Do you see a person who is hasty with his words? There is more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking (29:20 NLT). The fool’s speech is **hasty**, rash, and reckless (**12:23, 14:16, 15:2**), like the one **hasty** to get **rich (28:20)**, **he** misses the way (**19:2**). However, **he** doesn’t blurt out **his foolishness**, but rationally calculates how to get what **he** wants when **he** wants it. But **the blabbermouth’s hope** for salvation is even less than **a fool**.

A servant pampered from childhood will eventually be trouble (29:21 Hebrew). The buzzword **trouble** (Hebrew: *manon*) is uncertain. In Aramaic it means *to pamper* and in Arabic *to let someone lead a pleasant, easy and prosperous life*. **Trouble** is the consequence, the end, of treating **the young servant** with excessive care and attention so that **he** can lead a free and easy **life** instead of training **him** for work that **he** will be required to do when **he** grows up. Thus, instead of stimulating gratitude to **his master**, diligence to **his** work, and respect for others, it makes **him** unruly and brings **his** owner **trouble**.

The faithless verses the faithful (29:22-26): The second subunit warns **the son/disciple** against spiritual troublemakers (**verses 22-24**) and instructs **him** to **trust in ADONAI (verses 25-26)**. The subunit begins in **verse 22** with a double *aleph*, and ends in the framing **proverb** of **verse 27** with a fourfold *taw*. Moreover, there is an alphabetic progression of initial *aleph*, *bet* and *gimel* in the first three verses.⁵⁴⁴

An angry (Hebrew: *aleph*) **person stirs up strife; a hot-tempered person** (Hebrew: *ba'al*) **commits all kinds of sin (29:22 Hebrew). Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a quick temper shows himself to be a fool (14:29 Hebrew).** As Ray Ortland relates in his commentary on *Proverbs, Wisdom that Works*, we all feel **anger**. And not that all **anger** is wrong. In fact, the closer we get to **Messiah, the angrier** we will get to real evil. By nature we are cowards and compromisers. We need holy **anger** if we are going to represent the real **Yeshua** to our world today. But it’s so hard to sort out which anger is good and which **anger** is bad, isn’t it? The book of **Proverbs** helps us to get to the point. What do we *do* with

our **anger**?

The **anger** that is hated **stirs up strife**. The word translated **strife** in **10:12** has to do with judgments and opinions. It's when someone walks up and demands of you, "So what do you think about _____? As if you are *expected* to have a strong opinion. But **wisdom** is not intimidated by that approach. **Wisdom** asks, "Why should I feel intensely about that issue?" Moreover, why does anyone *need* my opinion? Why are we even talking about this? Does this involve the Gospel? Podcasts, X, and emails would be spared much conflict if we humbled our opinions before **the Lord**. What are we really here for? What does **ADONAI** want to **stir up** in our hearts? **He** says, **stir one another up to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)**.

Even if you are **angry** for good reason . . . sometimes there is real provocation . . . still, **it is a glory to overlook (show restraint) a personal offense (19:11)**. We have a higher standard than getting even. Our standard is **glory**, because **ADONAI** is **glorious**. **He** overlooks our offenses because of the cross. **He** does not embarrass us. **He's** above that. There is more than one world in the TaNaKh for **glory**, and this word in **19:11** means **beauty**. This same word is used to describe **beautiful clothing (Isaiah 52:1)**, **beautiful jewels (Ezeki'el 16:17)**, **a beautiful city (Isaiah 28:1)**, and **the beauty of God Himself (First Chronicles 19:11)**. **He** makes beautiful people who know how to ignore the slight.

Anger is a judging emotion. **Anger** is our hearts feeling that something is wrong. And a lot *is* wrong. But **wisdom** brings this judging emotion itself under judgment. **Fools** unleash **it** with no filter. In so doing, **they** lift up for everyone to see **their own foolishness (14:29)**. But **the wise** rule **their** emotions with a nobility that outclasses world conquerors: **He who rules his spirit is better than he who captures a city (16:32b CJB)**. Conquering a city is child's play compared with ruling the turbulent, demanding, upset world inside of us. The one is only the battle of a day; the other is the conflict of a lifetime.

Here is how the Gospel helps us rule our **anger** moment by moment . . . the doctrine of the **wrath** of **Ha'Shem**. Messiah is coming again in **wrath** to punish all the evil with terrible finality. This is the clear teaching of the Bible (see the commentary on **Revelation Ex - The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). And it is a great resource for tolerance and patience right now. The certainty of **God's** judgment at the end of the Dispensation of Grace (see

the commentary on **Hebrews Bp - The Dispensation of Grace**) is the premise for the rejection of being **angry** with others in the middle of it. We can be **wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16)**, but if you really believe that **Messiah** will come in final and inescapable judgment, you don't need to be anyone's judge right now. **The Lord Yeshua Messiah** has all the **wrath** this world needs.⁵⁴⁵

One's pride will bring a person low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor (29:23 ESV). In a number of places, the sages warn concerning **pride** and encourage **humility**. This **proverb** contributes to this important theme. **Humility** is valuable in acquiring **wisdom** because it depends on a teachable **spirit**. **Wisdom** is not a natural trait. **Folly** is natural; **wisdom** must be taught. To do so, people need to be open to criticism of their words and behavior. They hear, and they change. However, because of **the pride of fools, they will** resist criticism, even mocking those who try to help **them**. The results are clear. **The proud** are doomed to repeat **their** mistakes over and over again, where **the humble spirit** will gain **glory**.

Those who divide plunder with a thief (Hebrew: *gimel*) hate their own lives, they are put under an oath but dare not testify (29:24 Hebrew). At first this **proverb** is enigmatic to the modern reader, but it is understandable against the teaching of the Torah: **If anyone** deliberately **sins because they do not speak up when they hear a public charge to testify regarding something they have seen or learned about, they will be held responsible (Leviticus 5:1).** The situation envisioned in this **proverb** is that of a person participating in the crime with the robber so that they will not testify against the criminal. But by doing so, he will suffer the same consequences as the criminal. Today, for example, someone who drives a criminal to the scene of a murder is just as guilty as if he pulled the trigger himself. This **proverb** is a specific instance of the broader **proverbial** warning against consorting with the ungodly (see **Ai - Bad Company Corrupts Good Character**).

Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but whoever trusts in ADONAI is kept safe (29:25 Hebrew). At heart, when read in the context of the whole book of **Proverbs**, this verse is saying something like: **perfect love drives out all fear (First John 4:18).** Those who trust **YHVH** have nothing to fear from anyone spiritually. Another way of thinking about this subject in the book of **Proverbs** is to think that one who **fears ADOANI** (see **Ai - The Fear of**

ADONAI is the Beginning of Wisdom) does not have to fear human beings spiritually. As **Psalm 56:11** says: **I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?. What can mere mortals do to me?**

Many seek the king's favor, but justice comes from ADONAI (29:26 NLT). Humanly, when people want something done, they go to the one with the power to do it. For justice, we go to the police, or governmental officials. But in ancient **Isra'el** that person was **the king**. People clamor to get before **the king** to get done what they think needs to be done. But sometimes that could be risky (see the commentary on **Esther Ba - I Will Go to the King: If I Perish, I Perish**). The first colon makes this observation, but then critiques it in the second colon. **The king** is *not the one* who can assure justice in this world, it is **ADONAI**. The implication of the second colon is that people should be clamoring to get into the safe presence of **ADONAI** to get justice. One might also remember that whatever power **the Israelite king** had was from **God**, who is the ultimate **King of Isra'el** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Ct - The LORD's Covenant with David**).⁵⁴⁶

The concluding framing proverb (29:27): This file comes to a conclusion by contrasting the disdain that the righteous and the wicked feel for one another's ways. It contrasts the ways of an unjust person who commits crimes and abuses the legal system, against **the righteous** who stay within the boundaries established by **ADONAI** to protect the social, legal, and/or economic rights of others. The difference that separates **the righteous** from **the wicked** is a matter of the heart (**3:32, 11:1 and 20, 12:22, 15:8-9 and 26, 16:5 and 12, 17:15, 20:10 and 23, 21:27, and 28:9**). It also teaches the right kind of intolerance.⁵⁴⁷

An unjust man is abominable to the righteous, and the straight path of the righteous is abominable to the wicked (29:27 Hebrew). In the early part of **Proverbs**, we grew familiar with the phrase: **abomination to ADONAI (11:1 and 20, 12:22, 15:9 and 26, 17:15, 20:10 and 23)** to indicate the **cherem** judgment of **YHVH** (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ff - Cherem**). Here, the term **abomination** is the same Hebrew word, but instead of something being **an abomination to ADONAI**, **Solomon** contrasted **the righteous** and **the wicked**. By structuring the verse in this way, we are able to see the relative values of these two groups, and we see precisely how much in contrast they are to each other. On the one hand, **the righteous** find **the unjust** repulsive; on the other, **the straight path of the righteous** is despised by **the wicked**. **The righteous** follow **Lady Wisdom to life** (see **Bn - Lady Wisdom's Invitation to Life**), and **the wicked**



follow **Madam Folly** to **death** (see [Bo](#) - **Madam Folly's Invitation to Death**).⁵⁴⁸