

# Ecclesiastes 10:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

## Analysis

**He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it**—this proverbial wisdom warns that harmful schemes often backfire on their perpetrators. The Hebrew choreh gumatz (חָרָה גּוּמָץ, digs a pit) refers to trap-digging, while yipol-bo (יַפְלֵל־בּוֹ, falls into it) describes poetic justice. Proverbs 26:27 parallels this: "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein." The second line adds another danger: **whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him**—poretz gader (פּוֹרֶץ גָּדֵר, breaks through a wall) risks encountering serpents sheltering in stone walls.

This wisdom operates on two levels:

1. Practical—dangerous work carries inherent risks requiring caution,
2. Moral—those who harm others often suffer similar harm themselves.

The principle appears throughout Scripture: Haman hanged on his own gallows (Esther 7:10), Babylon's violence returned upon her (Habakkuk 2:8). Jesus warned that those who use the sword perish by it (Matthew 26:52).

## Historical Context

Ancient agriculture involved both pit-digging (for storage, water collection, or animal traps) and stone wall construction (boundary markers and livestock enclosures). Both tasks carried real dangers—unstable pits could collapse, and snakes nested in wall crevices. The wisdom here applies practical observation to moral teaching: actions have consequences, often ironic ones. Early church fathers

saw this verse as warning against heresy—those who undermine doctrinal boundaries risk spiritual destruction. The Reformers applied it to political intrigue and religious persecution, noting that persecutors often faced similar fates.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. What "pits" have you dug—harmful schemes or gossip—that might backfire, and how does this verse counsel different behavior?
2. How does this principle of consequences challenge both naive optimism ("I can harm others without suffering") and fatalistic pessimism ("random bad things just happen")?

## Interlinear Text

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חָפַר	ר	יְפַרֵּץ	בְּ	בְּ	וְ	יְפַרֵּץ	ר	בְּ	בְּ	וְ	יְפַרֵּץ
He that diggeth	a pit	H0	shall fall	into it and whoso breaketh	an hedge						
H2658	H1475		H5307	H6555	H1447						
נַחַשׁ	בַּיַּשְׁכֵן										
shall bite	a serpent										
H5391	H5175										

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 26:27** (Parallel theme): Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

**Amos 5:19** (Parallel theme): As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

**Amos 9:3** (Parallel theme): And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

**Esther 7:10** (Parallel theme): So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

**2 Samuel 17:23** (Parallel theme): And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

**Judges 9:5** (Parallel theme): And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.