

Proverbs 11:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Analysis

This proverb contrasts pride and humility: 'When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.' The sequence is causal—pride leads inevitably to shame. The Hebrew word for pride (*zadon*) denotes arrogance, presumption, and insolence. Shame (*qalon*) refers to disgrace, dishonor, and humiliation. Pride sets one up for a fall because it distorts reality, refuses correction, and overestimates one's abilities. The contrasting phrase presents humility (*tsanu'im*—the lowly, humble ones) as possessing wisdom. Humility enables learning, accepts correction, and maintains accurate self-assessment. This principle appears throughout Scripture: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures made this proverb particularly relevant. Public shame was a devastating social consequence, while honor was zealously guarded. Yet Proverbs insists that pursuing honor through pride backfires—only humility preserves true honor. This countercultural wisdom challenged ancient Mediterranean values just as it challenges modern self-promotion and image management.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life does pride set you up for potential shame by refusing to acknowledge limitations or accept help?
2. How can you cultivate genuine humility that leads to wisdom rather than false humility that is actually pride in disguise?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּבֶ א	י דוֹן	וַיֵּבֶ א	קָל וֹן	וְאֵת	צָנוּעַ יִם	חֲכָמָה:
cometh	When pride	cometh	shame	H854	but with the lowly	is wisdom
H935	H2087	H935	H7036		H6800	H2451

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 29:23 (Parallel theme): A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Proverbs 15:33 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.

Luke 18:14 (Parallel theme): I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Proverbs 18:12 (Parallel theme): Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.