

Proverbs 13:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Analysis

This proverb celebrates wisdom's life-giving power. "The law of the wise is a fountain of life" presents teaching as living water. Torat chakham meqor chayyim (תּוֹרַת חָכָם מְקוֹר חַיִּים, instruction of the wise—fountain of life). Torah (תּוֹרָה) means instruction, teaching, law. From the wise flows meqor (מְקוֹר, fountain, spring, source) of chayyim (חַיִּים, life). Wisdom's teaching isn't stagnant doctrine but flowing, refreshing, life-sustaining truth.

"To depart from the snares of death" explains the purpose. Lasur mimmoqeshey mavet (לָסוּר מִמּוֹקְשֵׁי מָוֶת, to turn from snares of death). Wisdom's fountain provides power lasur (לָסוּר, to turn aside, depart from) moqeshim (מּוֹקְשִׁים, snares, traps) of mavet (מָוֶת, death). Death sets traps throughout life—temptations, false philosophies, destructive relationships. Wisdom provides escape.

The fountain metaphor recalls Jeremiah 2:13's indictment: Israel forsook God, "the fountain of living waters," for broken cisterns. Jesus promised living water: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Christ is wisdom incarnate (1 Corinthians 1:30), the source of eternal life (John 14:6). His teaching is the fountain that delivers from death's snares and grants everlasting life (John 5:24).

Historical Context

In arid Palestine, springs and fountains meant survival. Desert travelers could die without water sources. Cities were built near springs (Jerusalem's Gihon Spring). The fountain of life metaphor would resonate powerfully—wisdom provides what's essential for survival. Death's snares included not only physical dangers but spiritual ones: idolatry, covenant-breaking, false wisdom from neighboring cultures. True wisdom—rooted in fearing the LORD—was Israel's fountain of life.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. From what sources are you drawing 'water'—wisdom from God's Word or broken cisterns of worldly philosophy?
2. What specific 'snares of death' are you facing, and how can God's wisdom help you avoid them?
3. How does Jesus as the fountain of living water (John 4:14) satisfy your deepest needs and lead to eternal life?

Interlinear Text

תּוֹרַת	חֹכְמָה	מְקוֹר	חַיִּים	לֵךְ	מִמֶּנִּי	מִתְּ:
The law	of the wise	is a fountain	of life	to depart	from the snares	of death
H8451	H2450	H4726	H2416	H5493	H4170	H4194

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 18:5 (Parallel theme): The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

Proverbs 10:11 (Parallel theme): The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Proverbs 14:27 (Parallel theme): The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Psalms 116:3 (Parallel theme): The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

Proverbs 16:17 (Parallel theme): The highway of the upright is to depart from evil: he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

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