

# Proverbs 13:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly.

## Analysis

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This proverb contrasts prudent wisdom with foolish naivety. "Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge" describes the wise person's modus operandi. Kol-arum ya'aresh veda'at (כל-ערום יעשה בדעת, every shrewd one acts with knowledge). Arum (ערום) means prudent, shrewd, sensible—someone who thinks before acting. They ya'aresh (יעשה, act, do, make) according to da'at (דעת, knowledge, discernment). Their actions are informed, calculated, wise.

"But a fool layeth open his folly" reveals the fool's self-exposure. Ukh'sil yifrosh ivvelet (וכסיל יפרש אולת), but a fool spreads foolishness. Kesil (כסיל, fool) yifrosh (יפרש), spreads out, displays, unfolds) his ivvelet (אולת, folly, foolishness). While the wise carefully apply knowledge, the fool broadcasts ignorance.

The proverb teaches discretion versus display. Prudent people think before speaking and acting, ensuring their behavior reflects knowledge. Fools act impulsively, revealing their folly to all. Proverbs 12:23 says: "A prudent man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness." Jesus exemplified prudence, knowing when to speak and when to remain silent (Matthew 26:63). James commands being "swift to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19). The Spirit produces self-control (Galatians 5:22-23), enabling believers to act with knowledge rather than laying open folly.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern wisdom valued discretion, especially in royal courts and diplomatic contexts. Prudent advisors carefully considered counsel before speaking. Fools spoke rashly, exposing ignorance and causing problems. Proverbs were compiled partly to train young men in courtly wisdom—how to navigate complex social situations with prudence rather than foolishly revealing inadequacy.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. Do you tend to act with knowledge (thinking before speaking/acting) or lay open your folly through impulsive behavior?
2. In what situations are you most tempted to speak or act without adequate knowledge or consideration?
3. How can cultivating the Spirit's fruit of self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) help you become more prudent in your dealings?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּל	עַ	רֹם	וְיַעֲשֶׂה	בְּ	עַת	בְּ	כָּסֵל	וְיַפְרֵשׂ		
H3605	Every prudent	H6175	H6213		with knowledge	H1847	but a fool	H3684	layeth open	H6566

אַלְתָּה:  
his folly  
H200

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 15:2** (Parallel theme): The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

**Ephesians 5:17** (Parallel theme): Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

**Isaiah 52:13** (Parallel theme): Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

**Ecclesiastes 10:3** (Parallel theme): Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

**Romans 16:19** (Parallel theme): For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

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