

Proverbs 14:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Analysis

This proverb uses feminine imagery to contrast wisdom and folly: 'Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.' Though gendered, the principle applies universally—wisdom builds while folly destroys. The 'wise woman' actively constructs (banah) her household through diligent effort, wise management, and godly character. The 'foolish' woman actively demolishes (haras—tears down, destroys) her own house through her actions. The phrase 'with her hands' emphasizes deliberate action—the destruction isn't accidental but the result of foolish choices. Whether through poor management, contentious behavior, or ungodly living, folly undermines the home from within.

Historical Context

In ancient Israelite patriarchal culture, women bore primary responsibility for household management. The Proverbs 31 woman exemplifies the wise woman who builds her house through industry, integrity, and godliness. Yet the principle transcends gender roles—whoever manages a household builds it through wisdom or destroys it through folly. The metaphor also applies to broader 'houses' (families, communities, churches, nations).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. In what specific ways are you building up your household (or community, or church) through wise choices and godly character?
2. What foolish patterns or behaviors might you be inadvertently using to tear down what should be built up?

Interlinear Text

כָּבִידָהּ	וְאִלָּה	בֵּיתָהּ	בְּנִתָּהּ	נָשִׁים	חֲכָמִים	וְ
with her hands	but the foolish	her house	buildeth	woman	Every wise	
H3027	H200	H1004	H1129	H802	H2454	

תִּהְרֹסֶנָּהּ:
plucketh it down
H2040

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 21:9 (Parallel theme): It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

Proverbs 21:19 (Parallel theme): It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Ruth 4:11 (Parallel theme): And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem:

Proverbs 19:13 (Parallel theme): A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

1 Kings 16:31 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife

Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

2 Kings 11:1 (Parallel theme): And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

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