

Proverbs 14:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends.

Analysis

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour: but the rich hath many friends. This proverb observes harsh socioeconomic reality. Gam-lerc'ehu yissane rash (גַּם-לִרְעֵהוּ יִסָּנֶה רָשׁ, even by his neighbor the poor is hated). Even close neighbors distance from the poor. Ve'ohavey ashir rabbim (וְאוֹהֲבֵי עֲשִׂיר רַבִּים, but lovers of the rich are many). Wealth attracts numerous 'friends'—though their motives may be selfish. This isn't moral endorsement but sociological observation of fallen human nature that values people by wealth rather than character.

Historical Context

Ancient societies lacked social safety nets. The poor depended on family and neighbors for survival. Yet often even neighbors avoided the poor, seeing them as burdens. The rich, offering opportunities for profit or advancement, attracted multitudes. Mosaic Law countered this tendency, commanding kindness to the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 15:7-11) and prohibiting partiality toward the rich (Leviticus 19:15, James 2:1-9).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this proverb expose the sinful human tendency to value people by wealth or status rather than God's image in them?
2. In what ways might you be gravitating toward 'rich' people (in wealth, influence, or status) while avoiding the 'poor'?
3. How does Jesus' friendship with sinners and the poor (Luke 7:34) challenge this pattern and model true love?

Interlinear Text

גַּם	לְרֵעֵהוּ	יֶשׁ נֶאֱדָר	כִּשׁ	וְאֵלֶיָּהּ יֵ	עֲשֵׂה יָרִיךְ
H1571	even of his own neighbour	is hated	The poor	friends	but the rich
	H7453	H8130	H7326	H157	H6223
רַבִּים:					
hath many					
H7227					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 19:4 (Parallel theme): Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Proverbs 10:15 (Parallel theme): The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.