

Proverbs 15:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Analysis

A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother. This proverb echoes 10:1, emphasizing parental heartbreak or joy through children's character. Ben chakham yesammach-av (בֵּן חֲכָם יְשַׁמְּמָךְ אָב) a wise son gladdens father). Wisdom brings parental joy. Ukhesil adam bozeh immo (וכסיל אָדָם בָּזֵה אִמּוֹ) but a foolish man despises his mother). Bazah (בָּזָה, despise, hold in contempt) shows active disrespect. Foolish children bring grief through scorning those who gave them life. The fifth commandment requires honoring parents (Exodus 20:12). Christ modeled this even from the cross (John 19:26-27).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures emphasized filial piety. Children who honored parents brought family honor; those who despised parents brought shame. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 prescribed death for persistently rebellious sons. Proverbs frequently addresses parent-child relationships, urging children toward wisdom that honors parents and glorifies God. Paul commands children to obey and honor parents (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does your life bring joy or grief to your parents (or parental figures)?
2. In what ways might you be despising rather than honoring those God has placed in authority over you?
3. How does wisdom in all areas of life constitute honoring parents by validating their instruction?

Interlinear Text

בָּן	בָּן	מָקֵם	שָׁמֵחַ	אָבִ	אָבִ	וְכֹסֶל	וְכֹסֶל	אָדָם	אָדָם	בָּזֵבֶן
son	A wise	maketh	a glad	father	but a foolish	man		despiseth		
H1121	H2450		H8055		H1		H3684		H120	

אָמֵן
his mother
H517

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 29:3 (Parallel theme): Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance.

Proverbs 10:1 (Parallel theme): The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Proverbs 23:22 (Parallel theme): Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.

1 Kings 1:48 (Parallel theme): And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it.

1 Kings 5:7 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people.

Leviticus 19:3 (Parallel theme): Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

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