

Proverbs 16:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Analysis

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. Tov shefal-ruach et-anavim (טוֹב שְׁפָלָרָעַת אֶת־עֲנוּמִים), better lowly of spirit with the humble). Mechalleq shalal et-ge'im (מְחַלֵּק שְׁלָל אֶת־גְּאִים), than dividing plunder with the proud). Humble poverty beats proud prosperity. The proverb values character over material gain. Jesus blessed the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3) and warned against prideful wealth. James 4:6 declares God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. True riches come through humility, not pride.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare brought spoils to victors. Dividing plunder represented wealth and success. Yet this proverb says humble poverty is better. Israel's history vindicated this—proud kings who gained much (like Saul keeping Amalekite spoil, 1 Samuel 15) fell, while humble servants (like David) prospered. Jesus modeled humble poverty over proud wealth (2 Corinthians 8:9, Philippians 2:5-8).

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Would you rather be humble and lowly or prideful and successful in worldly terms?
2. What 'spoils' might you be pursuing that come with the dangerous companionship of the proud?
3. How does Jesus' example of humble poverty challenge contemporary prosperity Christianity?

Interlinear Text

שְׁפֵל	רַ וְנָ	עַנְיִים	מִתְּבִּיל
it is to be of an humble	spirit	with the lowly	than to divide
H2896	H8217	H854	H2505
טָבֵל	אֶת	גָּאִים:	לְקַח
the spoil	with the proud		
H7998	H1343		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 57:15 (Spirit): For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Matthew 5:3 (Spirit): Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

Psalms 138:6 (Parallel theme): Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

Exodus 15:9 (Parallel theme): The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

