

Proverbs 16:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A foward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

Analysis

A foward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends. Ish tahpukhot yeshal lech madon (ישלח מdon, אִישׁ תַּהְפֹּכּוֹת, a perverse man sends forth strife). Tahpukhot (תַּהְפֹּכּוֹת, perverseness, fowardness) describes twisted character sowing (shalach, שָׁלַח, send, dispatch) conflict. Venirgan mafrid aluf (נִרְגַּן מִפְרִיד, and a whisperer separates close friends). Nirgan (נִרְגַּן, whisperer, slanderer, talebearer) destroys (parad, תַּנְשֵׁךְ, separate, divide) intimate friendships. The proverb condemns those who cause division through gossip and slander. Romans 16:17 warns to mark those causing divisions.

Historical Context

Ancient honor-shame cultures made reputation crucial. Whisperers could destroy friendships, marriages, alliances through gossip. Biblical examples include Absalom turning Israel against David through manipulation (2 Samuel 15), Jezebel's scheme against Naboth (1 Kings 21), enemies trying to separate Nehemiah from his supporters (Nehemiah 6:5-9). Paul warned against talebearing that divides communities (2 Corinthians 12:20, 1 Timothy 5:13).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. Have you been a whisperer who separates friends through gossip, or have you been a peacemaker who reconciles?
2. How can you recognize and refuse to participate in divisive gossip and slander?
3. In what ways does the gospel call us to unity and peacemaking rather than frowardness and division?

Interlinear Text

אֲלֹזֶן מִפְרָץ יְהִי שָׁלֹשׁ כְּתָבָת הַפְּכָוֹת אֵין
man A froward soweth strife and a whisperer separateth chief friends
H376 H8419 H7971 H4066 H5372 H6504 H441

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:9 (Parallel theme): He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends.

Proverbs 15:18 (Parallel theme): A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Proverbs 18:8 (Parallel theme): The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Romans 1:29 (Parallel theme): Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Proverbs 6:14 (Parallel theme): Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord.

Proverbs 6:19 (Parallel theme): A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.