

# Proverbs 17:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

## Analysis

A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend. Adam chasar-lev toqe'a khaf (אַדְם חָסַר־לֵב תֹּקֵעַ קָף, a man lacking heart strikes palms). Striking hands symbolized legally binding agreements. Orev aravah lifney re'ehu, עֶרֶב עֲרָבָה לְפָנֵי רֵעָהוּ, becoming surety before his friend). Becoming guarantor for another's debt was financially dangerous. Proverbs repeatedly warns against this practice (6:1-5, 11:15, 17:18, 20:16, 22:26-27, 27:13). While generosity is good, financially entangling yourself with others' debts is unwise. Give generously but don't obligate yourself legally for others' responsibilities.

## Historical Context

Ancient financial systems included debt slavery—those unable to pay debts became slaves. Sureties who guaranteed others' debts faced this if the primary debtor defaulted. Many lost everything becoming surety for friends or relatives. Proverbs' repeated warnings suggest this was common and destructive. While Israelites were to lend freely to needy brothers (Deuteronomy 15:7-8), becoming legal guarantor was different—and dangerous.

## Related Passages

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

1. Have you struck hands to become surety for others' debts, ignoring biblical wisdom?
2. How can you practice generous lending without the legal entanglements of co-signing or guaranteeing?
3. What is the difference between biblically wise generosity and foolish financial entanglement?

## Interlinear Text

מְצֻרָּא	לְבָבִים	עֲזָקָה	עֲרָבָה	עַבְדָּה	מְבָרָקָה	מְבָרָקָה
<b>A man</b> H120	<b>void</b> H2638	<b>of understanding</b> H3820	<b>striketh</b> H8628	<b>hands</b> H3709	<b>and becometh</b> H6148	<b>surety</b> H6161

לְפָנָי רְשָׁהָן  
in the presence of his friend

## Additional Cross-References

**Proverbs 11:15** (Parallel theme): He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it; and he that hateth sureship is sure.

**Proverbs 20:16** (Parallel theme): Take his garment that is surety for a stranger: and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

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