

Proverbs 17:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Analysis

He that hath a froward heart findeth no good: and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief. Iqqesh-lev lo yimtsa-tov (עֵקֶשׁ-לֵב לֹא יִמְצָא-טוֹב, crooked of heart finds no good). Twisted hearts prevent finding blessing. Venehpakh bilshono yippol bera'ah (וְנִהְפָּךְ בִּלְשׁוֹנוֹ יִפּוֹל בְּרָעָה, and perverted in tongue falls into evil). Perverse speech brings calamity. The proverb teaches that internal crookedness (heart) and external crookedness (tongue) both produce bad outcomes. Jeremiah 17:9 declares the heart is deceitfully wicked. Only God can create clean hearts (Psalm 51:10), transforming speech (Ephesians 4:29).

Historical Context

Ancient wisdom recognized heart-speech connection. Crooked hearts produced crooked words, bringing trouble. Biblical examples: Gehazi's deceitful heart and lying tongue brought leprosy (2 Kings 5:20-27), Ananias and Sapphira's fraud brought death (Acts 5:1-11). Conversely, upright hearts and honest tongues found good—Daniel's integrity brought deliverance and promotion (Daniel 6). Gospel transforms both heart and speech (2 Corinthians 5:17, Luke 6:45).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Does your heart's crookedness prevent you from finding good?
2. How has perverse speech fallen you into evil or trouble?
3. What does it mean to have God create a clean heart (Psalm 51:10) that produces wholesome speech?

Interlinear Text

עֵקֶשׁ	לֵב	לֹא	יִמְצָא	טוֹב	וְהַיָּדָה
He that hath a froward	heart	H3808	findeth	no good	and he that hath a perverse
H6141	H3820		H4672	H2896	H2015
בְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ	יִפֹּל	בְּרָעָה:			
tongue	falleth	into mischief			
H3956	H5307	H7451			

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 10:31 (Parallel theme): The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom: but the froward tongue shall be cut out.