

Proverbs 17:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Analysis

A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment. Shochad mecheq rasha yiqqach (שֹׁחַד מֵעֵקֶב רָשָׁע יִקַּח, a bribe from the bosom the wicked takes). Bribes given secretly (from the bosom/inner garment) pervert justice. Lehatot orchot mishpat (לְהַטּוֹת אֲרוֹחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט, to pervert paths of justice). Natah (נָטָה, turn aside, pervert, bend) describes corrupting what should be straight. God abhors bribery (Exodus 23:8, Deuteronomy 16:19). Jesus perfectly exemplified incorruptible justice. Christians must resist bribes and pursue righteousness in all dealings.

Historical Context

Ancient judicial systems lacked institutional safeguards against corruption. Judges who accepted bribes enriched themselves while destroying justice. Prophets condemned this practice repeatedly (Isaiah 1:23, 5:23, Micah 3:11, 7:3). Samuel's sons took bribes, provoking Israel to demand a king (1 Samuel 8:3). Perversion of justice was among Israel's worst sins bringing exile. Modern parallel: corruption undermining rule of law destroys societies.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. In what contexts might you be tempted to take or give 'gifts' that pervert justice or fairness?
2. How can you maintain incorruptible integrity in business, employment, and all dealings?
3. What does pursuing justice and loving mercy (Micah 6:8) look like in your sphere of influence?

Interlinear Text

שֶׁתָּתֵּן	מִן הַבֶּטֶן	אִישׁ רָשָׁע	יִקַּח	לְהַטֵּא וְתֵּן	אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ
a gift	out of the bosom	A wicked	man taketh	to pervert	the ways
H7810	H2436	H7563	H3947	H5186	H734

מִשְׁפָּט:

of judgment

H4941

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:8 (Parallel theme): A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

Exodus 23:8 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Micah 7:3 (Judgment): That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Judgment): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

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