

Proverbs 17:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

Analysis

This proverb commends wise speech: 'He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.' Those with genuine knowledge (da'at) are sparing with words—they don't feel compelled to speak constantly or prove themselves through much speaking. 'A man of understanding' (ish tevunah) possesses an 'excellent spirit' (qar-ruach—literally 'cool of spirit,' meaning calm, composed, level-headed). The principle: wisdom shows itself in measured, restrained speech, not constant talking. This anticipates James' teaching: 'let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak' (James 1:19). Fools multiply words; the wise speak judiciously.

Historical Context

Ancient rhetorical cultures valued eloquence and persuasive speech. Yet Proverbs repeatedly warns against hasty or excessive words (10:19, 13:3, 17:28, 21:23, 29:20), prizing careful, measured speech. This wisdom countered both ancient sophistry and modern cultures of constant communication and opinion-sharing. Silence and restraint often demonstrate wisdom more than voluble speech.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Do you speak too much, feeling compelled to fill silence or prove your knowledge through constant talking?
2. How can you develop the 'cool spirit' that speaks judiciously rather than hastily or excessively?

Interlinear Text

אֲישׁ רְאִמְרָה יְדֵעָה יְדֵיִת יְדֵיִת
spareth his words He that hath knowledge H7119 H7303 and a man
H2820 H561 H3045 H1847 H376

תְּבוּנָה:
of understanding
H8394

Additional Cross-References

James 3:18 (Parallel theme): And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

James 1:19 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Proverbs 10:19 (Word): In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Proverbs 14:29 (Spirit): He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

James 3:2 (Word): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Proverbs 15:28 (Parallel theme): The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Ecclesiastes 9:17 (Word): The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.

Proverbs 16:32 (Spirit): He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.