

Proverbs 18:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Analysis

The Hebrew word for 'fool' (חִסְלָה/kesil) denotes not intellectual deficiency but moral obstinacy—one who rejects wisdom and divine instruction. The parallel structure intensifies the warning: 'mouth is his destruction' (הַתְּתַתָּה/mechittah, ruin) and 'lips are the snare' (שְׁלֵמָה/moqesh, trap). The fool's speech becomes a self-destructive mechanism. James 3:6 echoes this truth: 'the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.' Unlike the wise whose words bring life (Proverbs 10:11), the fool's speech ensnares his own soul (נֶפֶש/nephesh, the whole person). This reveals divine justice embedded in creation's moral order—sin carries inherent consequences. The fool doesn't merely suffer external punishment; his own words become the instrument of judgment. Jesus warned that 'by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). Words reveal heart condition (Luke 6:45) and determine destiny.

Historical Context

In ancient Israel's oral culture, speech held paramount importance. Without mass literacy, a person's reputation and influence depended on spoken word. The judicial system relied on witnesses' testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15). False speech could destroy lives (1 Kings 21:13), while wise counsel could save nations (2 Samuel 17:14). Solomon, who authored most of Proverbs, understood speech's power—he famously judged between two mothers through discerning their words (1 Kings 3:16-28). The warning against foolish speech reflects Israel's covenant

context: blessing and cursing, life and death, stood before God's people (Deuteronomy 30:19). Their words revealed covenant faithfulness or rebellion.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do your words reveal whether you are walking in wisdom or foolishness before God?
2. In what ways have you seen careless speech create destructive consequences in your life or others'?
3. How does understanding that words reveal heart condition motivate you toward genuine heart transformation rather than mere outward reform?

Interlinear Text

נֶפֶשׁ:	מוֹקֵשׁ	מוֹקֵשׁ	נֶפֶשׁ:		
mouth	A fool's	is his destruction	and his lips	are the snare	of his soul
H6310	H3684	H4288	H8193	H4170	H5315

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 13:3 (Parallel theme): He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Proverbs 10:14 (Parallel theme): Wise men lay up knowledge: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.

Proverbs 12:13 (Parallel theme): The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips: but the just shall come out of trouble.

Psalms 140:9 (Parallel theme): As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.

Psalms 64:8 (Parallel theme): So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

Proverbs 6:2 (Parallel theme): Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.