

Proverbs 20:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

Analysis

This proverb humorously depicts common marketplace deception. The buyer disparages the goods ('It is naught, it is naught') to drive down the price, then boasts after getting a bargain. This exposes duplicity in commercial dealings—saying one thing while intending another. While shrewd negotiation has its place, this verse critiques dishonest manipulation where internal valuation contradicts external claim. Such behavior violates the commandment against false witness and the requirement to love neighbor as self. Commercial transactions should reflect covenant faithfulness and truthfulness. The broader principle applies to all areas: consistency between words and thoughts honors God; hypocrisy dishonors Him.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern marketplaces involved extensive negotiation and haggling. While this was customary, the proverb warns against crossing from legitimate bargaining into outright deception.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Do you practice honesty in your business dealings, or do you manipulate for advantage?
2. How can you maintain integrity in negotiations while still seeking fair value?

Interlinear Text

אָזֶל	וְאֵל	בְּקָוֹן	הַיְאָמָר	בְּעָנָבָן	It is naught	It is naught	saith	the buyer	but when he is gone	H0	H227
H7451	H7451	H559	H7069	H235							

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 4:6 (Parallel theme): That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

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