

Proverbs 24:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

Analysis

This proverb contrasts the resilience of the righteous with the fragility of the wicked: 'For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.' The 'just man' (tsaddiq) experiences repeated setbacks ('seven times'—representing completeness, many times), yet 'riseth up again' (qum)—he perseveres, recovering from failures and difficulties. This doesn't describe moral falls into sin but life's trials and troubles. The righteous person's character, faith, and God's help enable recovery. Conversely, 'the wicked shall fall into mischief (ra'ah—calamity, evil)' permanently—lacking moral foundation, they cannot recover. Proverbs 24:16 anticipated by centuries Paul's affirmation: 'we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair' (2 Corinthians 4:8).

Historical Context

Life in the ancient world was precarious—famine, war, disease, and economic reversals threatened survival. This proverb offered hope: the righteous may fall repeatedly but will rise again through God's sustaining grace. The wicked, despite temporary prosperity, ultimately fall permanently. This principle encouraged faithfulness despite adversity, trusting God's ultimate justice and care.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How have you experienced God's sustaining grace enabling you to 'rise up again' after failures or setbacks?
2. What distinguishes falling and rising (resilience) from falling into permanent ruin, and how does righteousness make the difference?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	שֵׁן בָּעוֹן	אִם וְלֹא	צַדִּיק יִקַּן	וְלֹא קִם	וְרָשָׁע יִפֹּל
H3588	seven times	man falleth	For a just	and riseth up again	but the wicked
	H7651	H5307	H6662	H6965	H7563
יִפֹּל	בְּרָעָה:				
shall fall	into mischief				
H3782	H7451				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:24 (Parallel theme): Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

Psalms 34:19 (Righteousness): Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

Job 5:19 (Evil): He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (Parallel theme): For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Proverbs 14:32 (Righteousness): The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Proverbs 13:17 (Evil): A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health.

Psalms 52:5 (Parallel theme): God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

Amos 5:2 (Resurrection): The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

1 Samuel 26:10 (Parallel theme): David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.