

Proverbs 24:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

Analysis

This proverb counsels proper priorities and timing. 'Prepare thy work without' (הַכֵּן חֶרֶץ חֲצוֹץ מְלֶאכֶתְךָ/hakhen bachutz melakhtekha, prepare in the outside your work) refers to fieldwork—plowing, planting, cultivating. 'And make it fit for thyself in the field' (וְעָתֵדָה בְּשָׂדֶךָ/ve'attedah bassadeh lakh, and make it ready in the field for yourself) continues describing agricultural preparation. 'And afterwards build thine house' (אַחַר וְבִנִיתָ בֵּיתְךָ/achar uvanita veytekha, afterward, then build your house) commands sequencing—establish income-producing work before constructing residential buildings. The principle is starting with necessities before luxuries, ensuring livelihood before comfort. This reflects biblical stewardship: provide for family needs responsibly before pursuing non-essentials. Paul taught: 'if any provide not for his own... he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' (1 Timothy 5:8).

Historical Context

Ancient Israel's agrarian economy required careful timing. Spring planting couldn't be delayed; missing the season meant no harvest and potential starvation. Building a house—cutting timber, hauling stone, plastering walls—required significant time. Wise farmers established productive fields first, ensuring food supply, then built comfortable housing. Archaeological evidence shows many Israelites initially lived in tents or simple shelters while working land, only later constructing permanent homes. This pattern continued in frontier contexts throughout history—American pioneers, for example, lived in temporary shelters

while clearing land and planting crops, only later building proper houses. The principle extends beyond agriculture: establish income before acquiring expensive possessions; complete education before starting expensive hobbies; ensure family provision before luxury pursuits. Modern consumer culture often reverses this—buying houses (through debt) before establishing stable income, prioritizing appearance over substance.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What 'houses' might you be building before properly preparing your 'fields'—making luxury purchases before securing stable provision?
2. How does this principle apply to life decisions like education, career, marriage, family planning?
3. In what areas do you need to reorder priorities, establishing foundations before pursuing comforts?

Interlinear Text

לְ	בַשָּׂדֶה	וְעָמַדְתָּ	מְלֹאכֶתְךָ	בְּחַ וְיָן	קֵן
	for thyself in the field	and make it fit	thy work	without	Prepare
H0	H7704	H6257	H4399	H2351	H3559
בֵּיתְךָ:	וּבְנֵי יָתְ	אַחֵר			
thine house	build	and afterwards			
H1004	H1129	H310			

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 6:7 (Parallel theme): And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org