

# Proverbs 26:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

## Analysis

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This verse completes the metaphor begun in verse 18, revealing the deceiver's defense: "Am I not in sport?" The Hebrew 'sahaq' (sport/jest) means to laugh, play, or mock—the ancient equivalent of "just kidding!" This person wounds their neighbor through deception, then deflects accountability by claiming it was merely entertainment. The comparison to a madman hurling firebrands shows God's view: such behavior isn't innocent fun but dangerous insanity. The excuse doesn't negate the harm—it compounds the sin by adding dishonesty to injury. Someone who deceives then claims "I was only joking" is as culpable as the madman who shoots arrows randomly, because both cause real damage while denying responsibility.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern cultures highly valued truthful speech and considered deceptive jesting a serious moral failure. Egyptian wisdom literature warned against mockery that wounds, and Mesopotamian texts emphasized the sacredness of honest communication between neighbors. In Israel's covenant community, bearing false witness was forbidden (Exodus 20:16), and this extended to all deceptive speech—even when disguised as humor. The excuse "Am I not in sport?" would not have absolved the speaker; it would have revealed a callous heart that treats relationships carelessly and refuses to own the consequences of harmful words.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. When have you used "I was just joking" to avoid taking responsibility for words that wounded someone?
2. How does God view the difference between genuine humor that builds relationships and deceptive jesting that harms them?
3. What practical steps can you take to ensure your speech reflects genuine love for your neighbor rather than careless entertainment at their expense?

## Interlinear Text

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בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר רָמַת אֶת רָמַת הַזָּר בְּלֹא אֶת מֶרֶךְ  
H3651 So is the man that deceiveth H853 his neighbour and saith H3808  
H376 H7411 H7453 H559

אַנְתִּי קָשֵׁת בְּלֹא אֶת מֶרֶךְ  
Am not I in sport H589  
H7832

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 10:23** (Parallel theme): It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

**Ephesians 5:4** (Parallel theme): Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.