

Proverbs 26:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage.

Analysis

Sending a message by a fool's hand cuts off feet and drinks damage. The Hebrew 'qarats raglayim' (cut off feet) and 'shathah chamas' (drink violence) create bizarre imagery emphasizing self-harm. Using fools as messengers is self-defeating - like amputating your own feet or drinking poison. Foolish messengers garble messages, represent poorly, create problems rather than solving them. Wisdom requires entrusting important tasks to competent people, not fools.

Historical Context

Ancient communication depended on messengers' reliability (see 25:13). Proverbs 10:26 says: 'As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.' Employing foolish or lazy messengers guaranteed failure. Modern organizations still suffer when incompetent people fill crucial positions. Wisdom demands matching people to roles appropriately - don't assign important tasks to those unable to handle them.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What important tasks have you assigned to incompetent people, ensuring failure?
2. How can you better evaluate others' competence before entrusting them with responsibility?
3. What tasks might you be 'the fool' for - assignments beyond your competence that harm those who trusted you?

Interlinear Text

דָּבָר יָמָם תְּקַנֵּת הַגְּלִים תְּקַנֵּת הַמִּסְתָּרֶת

cutteth off the feet damage and drinketh He that sendeth a message

H7096

H7272

H2555

H8354

H7971

H1697

בְּידֵי פָּזָל:

by the hand of a fool

H3027

H3684

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 25:13 (Parallel theme): As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

Proverbs 10:26 (Parallel theme): As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

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