

Proverbs 27:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

Analysis

As in water face answereth to face (כַּמַּיִם הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים, kamayim hapanim lapanim)—the simile of water as mirror employs the ancient practice of seeing one's reflection in still water before polished metal mirrors became common. The Hebrew פָּנִים (panim, 'face') also carries connotations of presence, countenance, and inner disposition.

So the heart of man to man (כֵּן לֵב־הָאָדָם לָאָדָם, ken lev-ha'adam la'adam)—the לֵב (lev, 'heart') in Hebrew encompasses mind, will, emotions, and moral character. This proverb reveals the profound truth of human interconnectedness: we know ourselves through relationships. Iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17); water reflects water; hearts reveal hearts.

Historical Context

Before glass mirrors (invented around 1st century AD), people saw their reflections in polished bronze, copper, or still pools of water. The clarity of self-knowledge paralleled the quality of reflection. This proverb dates from Solomon's era (10th century BC) when such reflections were common experiences.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. Who in your life serves as a 'mirror' reflecting your true character back to you?
2. What does your response to others reveal about the condition of your own heart?
3. How does community and fellowship help you see yourself more clearly before God?

Interlinear Text

כַּמִּיּוֹן	לְפָנַי יִ	לְפָנַי יִ	וְ	לֵב	לְאִדָּמָה
As in water	answereth to face	answereth to face	H3651	so the heart	of man
H4325	H6440	H6440		H3820	H120
לְאִדָּמָה					
of man					
H120					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 33:15 (Parallel theme): He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

Mark 7:21 (Parallel theme): For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Genesis 6:5 (Parallel theme): And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.