

Proverbs 27:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

Analysis

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks (בְּדַע תְּדַע פְּנֵי צָאן, yado'a teda penei tzonekha)—the emphatic doubling of יְדֻעַ (yada, 'to know') creates an intensive imperative: 'knowing, know!' This is intimate, experiential knowledge, not mere information. The פְנֵים (panim, 'face') of the flock suggests personal attention to each animal's condition.

And look well to thy herds (שִׁתְתַּחַת לְבֵב לְעִדרִים) —literally 'set your heart to the herds.' The לְבֵב (lev, 'heart') again emphasizes not casual observation but devoted attention. This begins a five-verse unit (23-27) on stewardship and providence, teaching that faithful management of God's gifts secures lasting provision. Jesus's parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) extends this principle to all divine entrustments.

Historical Context

In ancient Israel's pastoral economy, wealth consisted primarily in livestock. Unlike modern absentee ownership, biblical shepherding required personal, daily involvement. David's faithfulness as a shepherd prepared him for kingship (1 Samuel 17:34-37). The imagery would resonate deeply in an agrarian society where negligent stewardship meant ruin.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'flocks' has God entrusted to your stewardship—family, ministry, work, resources?
2. Are you giving personal, attentive care to what God has given you, or merely managing from a distance?
3. How does faithful stewardship of earthly resources prepare you for eternal responsibilities?

Interlinear Text

לְבָבֶךָ	שִׁתְּךָ	צָאֵת בָּנֶיךָ	תִּלְאֵעַ	פָּנֶיךָ	צָאֵת בָּנֶיךָ	בְּעֵדֶיךָ	לְבָבֶךָ
Be thou diligent	Be thou diligent	the state	of thy flocks	and look			well
H3045	H3045	H6440	H6629	H7896			H3820
לְבָבֶךָ	שִׁתְּךָ	צָאֵת בָּנֶיךָ	תִּלְאֵעַ	פָּנֶיךָ	צָאֵת בָּנֶיךָ	בְּעֵדֶיךָ	לְבָבֶךָ
to thy herds							

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 5:2 (Parallel theme): Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

2 Chronicles 26:10 (Parallel theme): Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.

Genesis 33:13 (Parallel theme): And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.

Proverbs 24:32 (Parallel theme): Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

John 10:3 (Parallel theme): To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

Ezekiel 34:31 (Parallel theme): And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.

Deuteronomy 32:46 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.