

Proverbs 28:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Analysis

The rich man is wise in his own conceit—Wealth creates dangerous self-deception; chakham be'einav (wise in his own eyes) indicates presumptuous confidence in one's judgment. The ashir (rich man) assumes his success validates his wisdom.

The reversal is striking: **the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out**. The discerning poor man (mevin dal) with genuine binah (understanding, discernment) penetrates the rich man's pretensions. True wisdom isn't purchased; it comes from fearing the Lord (Proverbs 9:10). James 2:5 affirms this: 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?' Wealth often blinds; poverty can clarify spiritual vision.

Historical Context

Solomon himself warned about wealth's corrupting influence despite his own riches. Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature often celebrated wealthy patrons, but biblical wisdom subverts this by elevating character and understanding over economic status. Jesus's parables consistently exposed the self-sufficiency of the wealthy (Luke 12:16-21, 16:19-31).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does material prosperity tempt you toward self-reliance rather than God-dependence?
2. What can you learn from believers who lack wealth but possess deep spiritual understanding?
3. In what areas might you be 'wise in your own eyes' rather than truly discerning?

Interlinear Text

מֵבֶן	אֲשֶׁר	עַל	אֶל	בָּעֵנִים	בָּעֵנִים	מֵבֶן
is wise	in his own conceit	man	The rich	but the poor	that hath understanding	
H2450	H5869	H376	H6223	H1800	H995	

יְחַזְקֵהוּ
searcheth him out
H2713

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 18:17 (Parallel theme): He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

Proverbs 26:16 (Parallel theme): The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Romans 12:16 (Parallel theme): Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.