

# Proverbs 28:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

## Analysis

**The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor** (נָגִיד חָסֵר) nagid—(נָגִיד, nagid chasar tevunot verav ma'ashaqqot)—'prince, ruler, leader') who is (תֵבּוּתָה tevunah, 'lacking, devoid of') 'understanding, insight, intelligence') becomes בָּבָב (bab, 'great, abundant in') (מִשְׁקָה ma'ashaqqah, 'oppression, extortion'). Ignorant leadership multiplies injustice—not from malice but from incompetence.

**But he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days** (שָׁנָא בְּצָעַד יָאִרְיךָ יָמִים) sane ya'arikh yamim—(שָׁנָא, 'to hate, detest') toward בְּצָעַד (betza, 'unjust gain, dishonest profit, greed') leads to אָרַךְ (arakh, 'to lengthen, prolong') of יָמִים (yamim, 'days, life'). Rejecting corrupt gain secures lasting life. Jethro counseled Moses to appoint leaders who 'hate covetousness' (Exodus 18:21); greed shortened Achan's days (Joshua 7) and Judas's (Matthew 27:3-5).

## Historical Context

Ancient kingship concentrated vast power; without wisdom, rulers became tyrants. Solomon's prayer for wisdom rather than wealth (1 Kings 3:9-12) stands as the ideal; Rehoboam's foolishness split the kingdom (1 Kings 12). The Dead Sea Scrolls emphasize that Israel's future messianic king must be wise, not merely powerful.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does this proverb challenge the idea that 'good intentions' excuse incompetent leadership?
2. What areas of influence in your life require greater understanding to avoid unwitting oppression?
3. Where might covetousness be subtly shortening your effectiveness and legacy?

## Interlinear Text

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מַשְׁלַךְ וְתַּּתְּבִּין בְּבָזְנוֹת רַעַשׁ רְאֵת יְהִי  
The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor  
H5057 H2638 H8394 H7227 H4642

שְׁנָאֵי יְמִינֵיכֶם: יְאֵר יְמִינֵךְ צָעֵד  
but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days  
H8130 H1215 H748 H3117

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