

Proverbs 29:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.

Analysis

If a ruler hearken to lies (מֹשֶׁל מִקְשִׁיב עַל־דְּבַר־שָׁקֶר)—when a ruler (moshel) gives attention to (maqshib, listens/hearkens) deceitful words (debar shaqer, false testimony), **all his servants are wicked** (כָּל־מְשָׁרְתָיו רָשָׁעִים). Leadership sets moral tone from the top down. A ruler who rewards falsehood cultivates a court of flatterers, schemers, and corrupt officials.

This principle operates institutionally: when leadership tolerates or rewards dishonesty, the entire organization becomes corrupted. Truthful people either leave or are driven out; only the wicked thrive. We see this in Ahab's court where 400 false prophets surrounded him while Micaiah alone spoke truth (1 Kings 22). Rehoboam's folly in following bad counsel cost him most of his kingdom (1 Kings 12).

Historical Context

Solomon witnessed court intrigue firsthand—Adonijah's conspiracy, Joab and Shimei's treachery. The king's wisdom or folly in choosing advisors determined the kingdom's fate. The proverb warns future rulers that their willingness to hear truth versus flattery shapes the character of their entire administration.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do leaders today—in church, business, politics—create cultures that either reward truth-telling or punish it?
2. What accountability structures prevent rulers from surrounding themselves with deceitful counselors?
3. In what ways might you function as a 'wicked servant' by telling leaders what they want to hear rather than what is true?

Interlinear Text

מִן	יִבְ	עַל	דָּבַר	שֶׁ	קָרָה	כָּל	מִשְׁרָתָהּ	יֹאמְרוּ:
If a ruler	hearken	H5921	to lies	H8267	H3605	all his servants	are wicked	
H4910	H7181		H1697			H8334	H7563	

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:8 (Evil): A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.