

Proverbs 29:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Analysis

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words?—The interrogative 'seest thou' (chazita) demands observation. The ish ats be'devarav (man hasty in his words) speaks impulsively without reflection. The verdict is devastating: **there is more hope of a fool than of him.**

This surpasses even the kesil (fool) in hopelessness. James 1:19 echoes: 'Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.' Proverbs repeatedly condemns rash speech: 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin' (10:19), 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him' (18:13). Verbal restraint demonstrates wisdom; impulsive speech reveals lack of self-control and invites calamity.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom valued measured speech. Court advisors who spoke hastily before kings risked execution. Israel's sages taught that words have power to build or destroy (Proverbs 18:21). The New Testament expands this: Jesus warns we'll give account for 'every idle word' (Matthew 12:36), and the tongue is 'a fire, a world of iniquity' (James 3:6).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What situations trigger hasty, unconsidered speech in your life?
2. How can you cultivate the discipline of reflective listening before responding?
3. When has impulsive speech caused damage you later regretted? What did you learn?

Interlinear Text

סֵ֑עֵ֔ת	אַ֑ יִשׁ	אֶ֑ץ	בְּדִבְרֵ֑י	תִּקְוָ֑ה	לְכֹסֵ֑ יל
Seest	thou a man	that is hasty	in his words	there is more hope	of a fool
H2372	H376	H213	H1697	H8615	H3684

מִמְנוֹ֙
H4480

Additional Cross-References

James 1:19 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Proverbs 26:12 (Hope): Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Proverbs 14:29 (Parallel theme): He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 (Word): Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Proverbs 21:5 (Parallel theme): The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.

Proverbs 29:11 (Parallel theme): A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

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