

Proverbs 29:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

Analysis

A king establishes land by judgment, but one who receives 'gifts' (Hebrew 'terumah'—contributions/bribes) overthrows it. The Hebrew 'amad' (establish) versus 'haras' (overthrow/tear down) create stark alternatives. Just rule stabilizes; corrupt rule destroys. The word 'terumah' can mean offering or bribe; context suggests corruption. Reformed theology insists on impartial justice as foundation for stable society. When rulers accept bribes, justice perverts and society collapses. This applies to all leadership—justice establishes, corruption destroys.

Historical Context

Mosaic law forbade bribes (Exodus 23:8), recognizing their corrupting power. Israel's prophets condemned corrupt judges (Isaiah 1:23, Micah 3:11). When justice failed, national collapse followed.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you see corruption undermining justice and stability in contemporary society?
2. If you hold positions of authority, are you scrupulously free from corrupting influences?
3. What can you do to promote just governance in your spheres of influence?

Interlinear Text

מֶלֶךְ	בְּמִשְׁפָּט	יָסֵד	אֶרֶץ	וְאִישׁ	תְּרוֹמַת
The king	by judgment	establisheth	the land	but he	that receiveth gifts
H4428	H4941	H5975	H776	H376	H8641
וְהִרְסָנָה:					
overthroweth					
H2040					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 29:14 (Judgment): The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.

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

Daniel 11:20 (Kingdom): Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

Micah 7:3 (Judgment): That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.