

Proverbs 29:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Scornful men bring a city into a snare: but wise men turn away wrath.

Analysis

Scornful men bring a city into a snare—(אֲקָשִׁי לְצִוָּן יָפִיכָו קְרִיחָה) —the Hebrew latzôn (scorn/mockery) describes those who reject wisdom with cynical contempt. The verb yapichu means 'to blow into flame' or 'kindle'—scoffers inflame social discord, turning cities into traps (môqêš) of violence and chaos. These are demagogues who weaponize cynicism.

Conversely, **wise men turn away wrath**—(חֲכָמִים יְשִׁיבּו אֶפֶּן) —chakamim (the wise) literally 'turn back' (yashibu) anger. Wisdom de-escalates; scorn inflames. Proverbs repeatedly warns against 'scorners' (Proverbs 1:22, 9:7-8, 13:1) as those impervious to correction and destructive to community.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cities required social cohesion for survival against external threats and internal disorder. Scoffers who undermined authority and sowed discord were genuine threats to civic stability. Solomon's concern for wise governance made identifying and restraining scornful influences a matter of political wisdom.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. Where do you see 'scornful men' inflaming division in contemporary society, and how can wisdom respond?
2. How does your speech and attitude either kindle conflict or 'turn away wrath' in tense situations?
3. What is the difference between legitimate prophetic critique and the destructive scorn Solomon condemns?

Interlinear Text

אָף: נִשְׁאָר יְבוּא אֲגַשׁ יְמִינָה לְצֹוֹן קְרַבְתִּי הַיְמִינָה נִפְגַּשׁ יְחִינָה

H376 Scornful H3944 bring H6315 a city H7151 but wise H2450 men turn away H7725 wrath H639

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 11:11 (Parallel theme): By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

Jeremiah 15:1 (Parallel theme): Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.

Proverbs 16:14 (Judgment): The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will pacify it.