

Proverbs 31:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle
goeth not out by night.

Analysis

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good (ta'amah ki-tov sachra)—The verb 'perceiveth' (ta'am) means to taste, discern, or have good judgment. This is the 9 (pe) line of the acrostic. The eshet chayil is not merely industrious but discerning—she evaluates quality, understands market value, and takes satisfaction in excellent work. Sachar (merchandise/profit) appears throughout Proverbs to describe wisdom's value (3:14, 31:18).

Her candle goeth not out by night (lo-yichbeh balailah nerah)—The lamp burning through darkness symbolizes vigilance, provision, and prosperity (Job 18:6, 21:17). This is not workaholism but faithful stewardship—her household never lacks because she maintains productive rhythms. The lamp also suggests hospitality and security, marking a home of blessing.

Historical Context

In ancient times, olive oil lamps required regular attention and adequate oil supply. A continuously burning lamp indicated both prosperity (sufficient oil) and vigilant household management. Night work, particularly textile production, extended productive hours and demonstrated commitment to family welfare.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you cultivate discernment to distinguish between good and mediocre work in your own labor?
2. What does it mean for your 'lamp' to burn continually—not through anxious striving but through faithful stewardship?
3. In what ways might you take legitimate satisfaction in work well done without falling into pride or self-sufficiency?

Interlinear Text

שֶׁ תֵּדַע	כִּי	טוֹב	סִחֲךָ	לֹא	יֵצֵא	בַּלַּיְלָה
She perceiveth	H3588	is good	that her merchandise	H3808	goeth not out	by night
H2938		H2896	H5504		H3518	H3915
נֶרָהּ:						
her candle						
H5216						

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 2:9 (Parallel theme): For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.