

Proverbs 31:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

Analysis

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff—The ו (tsade) line uses the imagery of textile production, fundamental to ancient economies. The kishor (spindle) was held in one hand to twist fibers, while the pelek (distaff) held the unspun material. This verse emphasizes practical skill—competent hands (yadeha, repeated twice) that master complex crafts.

Spinning was painstaking work requiring dexterity and patience. By highlighting this specific craft, Proverbs dignifies women's traditional work as requiring genuine expertise. The eshet chayil is not abstractly 'capable' but concretely skilled in particular trades. Excellence manifests in mastery of real tasks, not vague moral qualities divorced from material competence.

Historical Context

Textile production was central to ancient household economies and typically women's domain. The process of transforming raw wool or flax into thread, then thread into cloth, required learned skills passed from mother to daughter. Quality textiles were valuable trade goods, making textile expertise economically significant.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What practical skills have you developed to the point of genuine mastery rather than mere adequacy?
2. How does Proverbs' celebration of specific crafts challenge modern tendencies to devalue manual or domestic labor?
3. In what ways might you recover the biblical dignity of ordinary work performed with excellence?

Interlinear Text

פָּלָג: תֵּחֶזֶק אֵלֶּךָ יְמִינְךָ שְׁלַח הַבְּכִישׁ וְרַבְבֵּשׁ
her hands She layeth to the spindle and her hands hold the distaff

H3027 H7971 H3601 H3709 H8551 H6418

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