

Proverbs 31:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

Analysis

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land—The װ (shin) line continues, showing the eshet chayil's impact on her husband's public standing. The 'gates' (she'arim) were the civic center where elders adjudicated disputes, conducted business, and governed (Ruth 4:1-11, Proverbs 22:22). To 'sit among the elders' (yoshev im-ziqnei-aretz) indicates respected leadership.

This verse reveals that a wife's character directly affects her husband's reputation and capacity for public service. By managing the household with excellence (vv.10-27), she liberates him for civic leadership. This isn't female subordination but partnership—her competence enables his contribution. Proverbs affirms complementary vocations: she excels in household economy; he serves in public governance. Both roles carry dignity and demand wisdom.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite society functioned through male elders who governed at the city gates, but this leadership depended on well-managed households. A man whose household was chaotic or impoverished could not command respect or devote time to civic duties. The partnership between husband and wife sustained both private and public order.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does your character and competence affect the reputation and capacity of those closest to you?
2. In what ways might Proverbs' vision of complementary vocations challenge modern individualism?
3. What would it mean to excel in your particular calling to enable others to excel in theirs?

Interlinear Text

נֹדָע	בַּשְּׁעַר יָם	בַּעֲלָהּ	בְּשִׁבְתָּהּ	עַם	זִקְנֵי
is known	in the gates	Her husband	when he sitteth	H5973	among the elders
H3045	H8179	H1167	H3427		H2205
אֶרֶץ					
of the land					
H776					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 12:4 (Parallel theme): A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

Ruth 4:1 (Parallel theme): Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

Deuteronomy 16:18 (Parallel theme): Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

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