
PROVERBS 6: 1 My son, if you have become collateral for your neighbour, if you have struck your hands in pledge for a stranger;

Exhortations against becoming surety for others, Pro 6:1-5; against idleness, from the example of the ant, Pro 6:6-11; description of a worthless person, Pro 6:12-15; seven things hateful to God, Pro 6:16-19; the benefits of instruction, Pro 6:20-23; farther exhortations against bad women, and especially against adultery, Pro 6:24-33; what may be expected from jealousy, Pro 6:34, Pro 6:35.

Verse 1

If thou be surety for thy friend - לרעך lerecha, for thy neighbor; i.e., any person. If thou pledge thyself in behalf of another, thou takest the burden off him, and placest it on thine own shoulders; and when he knows he has got one to stand between him and the demands of law and justice, he will feel little responsibility; his spirit of exertion will become crippled, and listlessness as to the event will be the consequence. His own character will suffer little; his property nothing, for his friend bears all the burden: and perhaps the very person for whom he bore this burden treats him with neglect; and, lest the restoration of the pledge should be required, will avoid both the sight and presence of his friend. Give what thou canst; but, except in extreme cases, be surety for no man. Striking or shaking hands when the mouth had once made the promise, was considered as the ratification of the engagement; and thus the man became ensnared with the words of his mouth.

PROVERBS 6: 2 You are trapped by the words of your mouth. You are ensnared with the words of your mouth.

PROVERBS 6: 3 Do this now, my son, and deliver yourself, since you have come into the hand of your neighbour. Go, humble yourself. Press your plea with your neighbour.

Verse 3

Do this - deliver thyself - Continue to press him for whom thou art become surety, to pay his creditor; give him no rest till he do it, else thou mayest fully expect to be left to pay the debt.

PROVERBS 6: 4 Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids.

PROVERBS 6: 5 Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler.

Verse 5

Deliver thyself as a roe - צבי tsebi, the antelope. If thou art got into the snare, get out if thou possibly canst; make every struggle and exertion, as the antelope taken in the net, and the bird taken in the snare would, in order to get free from thy captivity.

PROVERBS 6: 6 Go to the ant, you sluggard. Consider her ways, and be wise;

Verse 6

Go to the ant, thou sluggard - נמלה nemalah, the ant, is a remarkable creature for foresight, industry, and economy. At the proper seasons they collect their food - not in the summer to lay up for the winter; for they sleep during the winter, and eat not; and therefore such hoards would be to them useless; but when the food necessary for them is most plentiful, then they collect it for their consumption in the proper seasons. No insect is more laborious, not even the bee itself; and none is more fondly attached to or more careful of its young, than the ant. When the young are in their aurelia state, in which they appear like a small grain of rice, they will bring them out of their nests, and lay them near their holes, for the benefit of the sun; and on the approach of rain, carefully remove them, and deposit them in the nest, the hole or entrance to which they will cover with a piece of thin stone or tile, to prevent the wet from getting in. It is a fact that they do not lay up any meat for winter; nor does Solomon, either here or in Pro 30:25, assert it. He simply says that they provide their food in summer, and gather it in harvest; these are the most proper times for a stock to be laid in for their consumption; not in winter; for no such thing appears in any of their nests, nor do they need it, as they sleep during that season; but for autumn, during which they wake and work. Spring, summer, and autumn, they are incessant in their labor; and their conduct affords a bright example to men.

PROVERBS 6: 7 which having no chief, overseer, or ruler,

PROVERBS 6: 8 provides her bread in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.

PROVERBS 6: 9 How long will you sleep, sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep?

PROVERBS 6: 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

Verse 10

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber - This, if not the language, is the feeling of the sluggard. The ant gathers its food in summer and in harvest, and sleeps in winter when it has no work to do. If the sluggard would work in the day, and sleep at night, it would be all proper. The ant yields him a lesson of reproach.

PROVERBS 6: 11 so your poverty will come as a robber, and your scarcity as an armed man.

Verse 11

So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth - That is, with slow, but surely approaching steps.

Thy want as an armed man - That is, with irresistible fury; and thou art not prepared to oppose it. The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Arabic add the following clause to this verse: - "But if thou wilt be diligent, thy harvest shall be as a fountain; and poverty shall flee far away from thee."

It is also thus in the Old MS. Bible: If forsothe unslow thou shul ben; shul comen as a welle thi rip; and nede fer shal fleen fro thee.

PROVERBS 6: 12 A worthless person, a man of iniquity, is he who walks with a perverse mouth;

Verse 12

A naughty person - אדם בליעל adam beliyal, "Adam good for nothing." When he lost his innocence. A man apostata; Old MS. Bible.

A wicked man - איש און ish aven. He soon became a general transgressor after having departed from his God. All his posterity, unless restored by Divine grace, are men of Belial, and sinners by trade; and most of them, in one form or other, answer the character here given. They yield their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.

PROVERBS 6: 13 who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who motions with his fingers;

Verse 13

He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers - These things seem to be spoken of debauchees, and the following quotation from Ovid, Amor. lib. i., El. iv., ver. 15, shoots the whole process of the villany spoken of by Solomon:

Cum premit ille torum, vultu comes ipsa modestolbis, ut accumbas: clam mihi tange pedem.

Me specta, nutusque meos, vultum que loquacem Excipe furtivas, et refer ipsa, notas.

Verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam Verba leges digitis, verba notata mero.

Cum tibi succurrit Veneris lascivia nostrae, Purpureas tenero pollice tange genas, etc., etc.

The whole elegy is in the same strain: it is translated in Garth's Ovid, but cannot be introduced here.

PROVERBS 6: 14 in whose heart is perverseness, who devises evil continually, who always sows discord.

Verse 14

He deviseth mischief - He plots schemes and plans to bring it to pass.

He soweth discord - Between men and their wives, by seducing the latter from their fidelity. See the preceding quotation.

PROVERBS 6: 15 Therefore his calamity will come suddenly. He will be broken suddenly, and that without remedy.

Verse 15

Suddenly shall he be broken - Probably alluding to some punishment of the adulterer, such as being stoned to death. A multitude shall join together, and so overwhelm him with stones, that he shall have his flesh and bones broken to pieces, and there shall be no remedy - none to deliver or pity him.

PROVERBS 6: 16 There are six things which the LORD hates; yes, seven which are an abomination to him:

Verse 16

These six - doth the Lord hate -

1. A proud look - exalted eyes; those who will not condescend to look on the rest of mankind.
2. A lying tongue - he who neither loves nor tells truth.
3. Hands that shed innocent blood, whether by murder or by battery.
4. A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations - the heart that fabricates such, lays the foundation, builds upon it, and completes the superstructure of iniquity.
5. Feet that be swift in running to mischief - he who works iniquity with greediness.
6. A false witness that speaketh lies - one who, even on his oath before a court of justice, tells any thing but the truth.

Seven are an abomination unto him - נפשו naphsho, "to his soul." The seventh is, he that soweth discord among brethren - he who troubles the peace of a family, of a village, of the state; all who, by lies and misrepresentations, strive to make men's minds evil-affected towards their brethren.

PROVERBS 6: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood;

PROVERBS 6: 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief,

PROVERBS 6: 19 a false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers.

PROVERBS 6: 20 My son, keep your father's commandment, and don't forsake your mother's teaching.

Verse 20

Keep thy father's commandment - See on Pro 1:8 (note).

PROVERBS 6: 21 Bind them continually on your heart. Tie them around your neck.

Verse 21

Bind them continually upon thine heart - See on Pro 3:3 (note). And see a similar command, to which this is an allusion, Deu 6:6-8 (note).

PROVERBS 6: 22 When you walk, it will lead you. When you sleep, it will watch over you. When you awake, it will talk with you.

Verse 22

When thou goest, it shall lead thee - Here the law is personified; and is represented as a nurse, teacher, and guardian, by night and day. An upright man never goes but as directed by God's word and led by God's Spirit.

When thou sleepest - He commends his body and soul to the protection of his Maker when he lies down and sleeps in peace. And when he awakes in the morning, the promises and mercies of God are the first things that present themselves to his recollection.

PROVERBS 6: 23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light. Reproofs of instruction are the way of life,

Verse 23

For the commandment is a lamp - It illuminates our path. It shows us how we should walk and praise God.

And the law is light - A general light, showing the nature and will of God, and the interest and duty of Man.

And reproofs of instruction - Or, that instruction which reproveth us for our sins and errors leads us into the way of life.

PROVERBS 6: 24 to keep you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the wayward wife's tongue.

Verse 24

To keep thee from the evil woman - Solomon had suffered sorely from this quarter; and hence his repeated cautions and warnings to others. The strange woman always means one that is not a man's

own; and sometimes it may also imply a foreign harlot, one who is also a stranger to the God of Israel.

PROVERBS 6: 25 Don't lust after her beauty in your heart, neither let her captivate you with her eyelids.

Verse 25

Neither let her take thee with her eye-lids - It is a very general custom in the East to paint the eye-lids. I have many Asiatic drawings in which this is expressed. They have a method of polishing the eyes with a preparation of antimony, so that they appear with an indescribable lustre; or, as one who mentions the fact from observation, "Their eyes appear to be swimming in bliss."

PROVERBS 6: 26 For a prostitute reduces you to a piece of bread. The adulteress hunts for your precious life.

Verse 26

By means of a whorish woman - In following lewd women, a man is soon reduced to poverty and disease. The Septuagint gives this a strange turn: timh gar pornhv, osh kai enov artou. "For the price or hire of a whore is about one loaf." So many were they in the land, that they hired themselves out for a bare subsistence. The Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, give the same sense. The old MS. Bible has it thus: The price forsothe of a strumpet is unneth oon lof: the woman forsothe taketh the precious liif of a mam. The sense of which is, and probably the sense of the Hebrew too, While the man hires the whore for a single loaf of bread; the woman thus hired taketh his precious life. She extracts his energy, and poisons his constitution. In the first clause אשה זונה ishshah zonah is plainly a prostitute; but should we render אשת esheth, in the second clause, an adulteress? I think not. The versions in general join אשת איש esheth ish, together, which, thus connected, signify no more than the wife of a man; and out of this we have made adulteress, and Coverdale a married woman. I do not think that the Old MS. Bible gives a good sense; and it requires a good deal of paraphrase to extract the common meaning from the text. Though the following verses seem to countenance the common interpretation, yet they may contain a complete sense of themselves; but, taken in either way, the sense is good, though the construction is a little violent.

PROVERBS 6: 27 Can a man scoop fire into his lap, and his clothes not be burned?

Verse 27

Can a man take fire - These were proverbial expressions, the meaning of which was plain to every capacity.

PROVERBS 6: 28 Or can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched?

PROVERBS 6: 29 So is he who goes in to his neighbour's wife. Whoever touches her will not be unpunished.

Verse 29

So he that goeth In to his neighbor's wife - As sure as he who takes fire into his bosom, or who walks upon live coals, is burnt thereby; so sure he that seduces his neighbour's wife shall be guilty. That is, he shall be punished.

PROVERBS 6: 30 Men don't despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry:

Verse 30

Men do not despise a thief if he steal - Every man pities the poor culprit who was perishing for lack of food, and stole to satisfy his hunger; yet no law clears him: he is bound to make restitution; in some cases double, in others quadruple and quintuple; and if he have not property enough to make restitution, to be sold for a bondsman; Exo 22:1-4; Lev 25:39.

PROVERBS 6: 31 but if he is found, he shall restore seven times. He shall give all the wealth of his house.

PROVERBS 6: 32 He who commits adultery with a woman is void of understanding. He who does it destroys his own soul.

Verse 32

But whoso committeth adultery - The case understood is that of a married man: he has a wife; and therefore is not in the circumstances of the poor thief, who stole to appease his hunger, having nothing to eat. In this alone the opposition between the two cases is found: the thief had no food, and he stole some; the married man had a wife, and yet went in to the wife of his neighbor.

Destroyeth his own soul - Sins against his life, for, under the law of Moses, adultery was punished with death; Lev 20:10; Deu 22:22.

PROVERBS 6: 33 He will get wounds and dishonour. His reproach will not be wiped away.

Verse 33

A wound and dishonor shall he get - Among the Romans, when a man was caught in the fact, the injured husband took the law into his own hand; and a large radish was thrust up into the anus of

the transgressor, which not only overwhelmed him with infamy and disgrace, but generally caused his death.

PROVERBS 6: 34 For jealousy arouses the fury of the husband. He won't spare in the day of vengeance.

Verse 34

Jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare - He will not, when he has detected the adulterer in the fact, wait for the slow progress of the law: it is then to him the day of vengeance; and in general, he avenges himself on the spot, as we see above.

PROVERBS 6: 35 He won't regard any ransom, neither will he rest content, though you give many gifts.

Verse 35

He will not regard any ransom - This is an injury that admits of no compensation. No gifts can satisfy a man for the injury his honor has sustained; and to take a bribe or a ransom, would be setting up chastity at a price.