

CHAPTER 26

Ver. 1. *As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest*, etc.] Which were very undesirable and unseasonable, yea, very hurtful to the fruits of the earth; and a great obstruction to the labourers in the harvest, and a hinderance to the gathering of it in; and were very rare and uncommon in Judea; it was even a miracle for thunder and rain to be in wheat harvest, (^{<09217>}1 Samuel 12:17);

so honour is not seemly for a fool: for a wicked man; such should not be favoured by kings, and set in high places of honour and trust; “folly set in great dignity”, or foolish and bad men set in honourable places, are as unsuitable and inconvenient as snow and rain in summer and harvest, and should be as rare as they; and they are as hurtful and pernicious, since they discourage virtue and encourage vice, and hinder the prosperity of the commonwealth; such vile persons are contemned in the eyes of good men, and are disregarded of God; he will not give, theft, glory here nor hereafter; the wise shall inherit it, but shame shall be the promotion of fools, (^{<2185>}Proverbs 3:35); (see ^{<2106>}Ecclesiastes 10:6).

Ver. 2. *As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying*, etc.] As a bird, particularly the sparrow, as the word^{f706} is sometimes rendered, leaves its nest and wanders from it; and flies here and there, and settles nowhere; and as the swallow flies to the place from whence it came; or the wild pigeon, as some^{f707} think is meant, which flies away very swiftly: the swallow has its name in Hebrew from liberty, because it flies about boldly and freely, and makes its nest in houses, to which it goes and comes without fear;

so the curse causeless shall not come; the mouths of fools or wicked men are full of cursing and bitterness, and especially such who are advanced above others, and are set in high places; who think they have a right to swear at and curse those below them, and by this means to support their authority and power; but what signify their curses which are without a cause? they are vain and fruitless, like Shimei’s cursing David; they fly away, as the above birds are said to do, and fly over the heads of those on whom they are designed to light; yea, return and fall upon the heads of those that curse, as the swallow goes to the place from whence it came; it being a bird of passage, (^{<2487>}Jeremiah 8:7); in the winter it flies away and betakes itself to some islands on rocks called from thence “chelidonian”^{f708}.

According to the “Keri”, or marginal reading, for here is a double reading, it may be rendered, “so the curse causeless shall come to him”^{f709}; that gives it without any reason. The Septuagint takes in both,

“so a vain curse shall not come upon any;”

what are all the anathemas of the church of Rome? who can curse whom God has not cursed? yea, such shall be cursed themselves; see (~~KA917~~ Psalm 109:17).

Ver. 3. *A whip for the horse*, etc.] One that is dull of going, or refractory and wants breaking;

a bridle for the ass; not to curb and restrain it from going too fast, asses being generally dull; but to direct its way and turn it when necessary, it being stiffnecked and obstinate; though the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it a “spear” or “goad”, something to prick with, and excite it to motion; and so the Targum; or otherwise one would have thought the whip was fitter for the ass and the bridle for the horse;

and a rod for the fool’s back; suggesting that the fool, or wicked man, is like the horse or the mule; though not without understanding of things natural, yet of things divine and moral; and as stupid as the ass, however wise he may conceit himself to be, being born like a wild ass’s colt; and instead of honour being given him, stripes should be laid upon him; he should be reproved sharply, and corrected for his wickedness, especially the causeless curser, (~~AK99~~ Proverbs 19:29).

Ver. 4. *Answer not a fool according to his folly*, etc.] Sometimes a fool, or wicked man, is not to be answered at all; as the ministers of Hezekiah answered not a word to Rabshakeh; nor Jeremiah the prophet to Hananiah; nor Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees; and when an answer is returned, it should not be in his foolish way and manner, rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing, in the same virulent, lying, calumniating, and reproachful language;

lest thou also be like unto him; lest thou also, who art a man of understanding and sense, and hast passed for one among men, come under the same imputation, and be reckoned a fool like him.

Ver. 5. *Answer a fool according to his folly*, etc.] The Targum is,

“but speak with a fool in thy wisdom;”

and the Syriac version,

“yea, speak with a fool according to thy wisdom;”

which would at once remove the seeming contradiction in these words to the former, but then they are not a true version; indeed it is right, and must be the sense, that when a fool is answered, as it is sometimes necessary he should, that it be done in wisdom, and so as to expose his folly; he is to be answered and not answered according to different times, places, and circumstances, and manner of answering; he is to be answered when there is any hope of doing him good, or of doing good to others; or of preventing ill impressions being made upon others by what he has said; when the glory of God, the good of the church, and the cause of truth, require it; and when he would otherwise glory and triumph, as if his words or works were unanswerable, as follow;

lest he be wise in his own conceit; which fools are apt to be, and the rather when no answer is given them; imagining it arises from the strength of their arguments, and their nervous way of reasoning, when it is rather from a neglect and contempt of them.

Ver. 6. *He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool*, etc.] Who knows not how to deliver it in a proper manner, and is incapable of taking the answer, and reporting it as he should; or unfaithful in it, and brings a bad or false report, as the spies did upon the good land;

cutteth off the feet; he may as well cut off his feet before he sends him, or send a man without feet, as such an one; for prudence, diligence, and faithfulness in doing a message, and bringing back the answer, are as necessary to a messenger as his feet are;

[and] drinketh damage; to himself; his message not being rightly performed, and business not done well; which is a loss to the sender, as well as to his credit and reputation with the person to whom he sends him; he hereby concluding that he must be a man of no great judgment and sense to send such a fool on his errand. Such are the unskilful ambassadors of princes; and such are unfaithful ministers, the messengers of the churches; (see ³⁰⁰⁵Proverbs 10:26). The words in the original are three sentences, without a copulative, and stand in this order, “[he] that cutteth off feet; [he] that drinketh damage; [he] that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool”; that is, they are alike.

Ver. 7. *The legs of the lame are not equal*, etc.] Or as “the lifting up the legs by one that is lame”^{f710}, to dance to a pipe or violin, is very unseemly, and does but the more expose his infirmity, and can give no pleasure to others, but causes derision and contempt;

so [is] a parable in the mouth of fools; an apophthegm, or sententious expression of his own, which he delivers out as a wise saying, but is lame and halts; it is not consistent with itself, but like the legs of a lame man, one higher than the other: or one of the proverbs of this book, or rather any passage of Scripture, in the mouth of a wicked man; or any religious discourse of his is very unsuitable, since his life and conversation do not agree with it; it is as disagreeable to hear such a man talk of religious affairs as it is to see a lame man dance; or whose legs imitate buckets at a well, where one goes up and another down, as Gussetius^{f711} interprets the word.

Ver. 8. *As he that bindeth a stone in a sling*, etc.] That so fastens it to it that it cannot be slung out of it, it becomes useless and does not answer the end for which it is put there; or that places it there that it may be cast out, and is cast out, and so is thrown away, and of no more use; or that puts a precious stone, so some interpret it, in a heap of common stones, even in such a heap as is used at the stoning of malefactors; or increases the heap of stones on such, which the more exposes them, and the greater reproach they are loaded with; so the more a fool is praised, it does but bring to mind his folly, and issues in his greater disgrace, so Gussetius^{f712}: or rather it has respect to a precious stone put in such a heap of stones, as Luther; or else, according to Schultens, to such an one put into a heap of sepulchral stones; or, as Aben Ezra, that binds up a stone, a common stone, in purple, which to do is ridiculous, so R. Joseph Kimchi; the Vulgate Latin version renders it,

“as he that casts a stone to Mercury’s heap;”

a Heathen deity, called by the eastern people Mertholin and Margenah^{f713}, which last is near the same with the Hebrew word here used; whose statue was set up where two or more ways met, to direct travellers; and who therefore out of respect to the deity, and to show gratitude to him, used to cast a stone to the heap for the support of it; and which stones, set up in such doubtful places, were dedicated to him, and were called after his name^{f714}; and not only travellers did this in honour of the deity, and to make his statue more manifest^{f715}, but also for profit, to clear the way from

stones; and this custom obtained with the Indians, Arabs, Saracens, and now does with the Mahometans^{f716}: and such heaps of stones were also placed in cities, and at the doors of houses, in honour of Mercury, and were called from him Hermae^{f717}; these stones were also erected for borders of countries^{f718}. But it is not probable that this custom obtained in Solomon's time; and yet some Jewish writers interpret it to this sense, as if he that gives honour to a fool is like him that casts a stone to Mercury; and Jarchi in the text observes it as the sense of some of their Rabbins,

“that he that teacheth the law to a disciple that is not fit, is as he that casts a stone to Mercury;”

and to cast a stone to Mercury is with them the same as to commit idolatry^{f719}; but either of the former senses is best;

so [is] he that giveth honour to a fool; it is all thrown away and lost, as a stone out of a sling; or as unseemly as to put a precious stone among a heap of stones, or a common stone in purple; (see Gill on “~~200~~ Proverbs 26:1”).

Ver. 9. [*As] a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard*, etc.] And he perceives it not; or being in his hand he makes an ill use of it, and hurts himself and others with it;

so [is] a parable in the mouth of fools, a proverbial sentence respecting religious matters; or a passage of holy Scripture which either he understands not, and has no spiritual perception of, any more than the drunkard has of the thorn in his hand; or which being used as a pun, or by way of jest, as it is the manner of some to pun upon or jest with the Scripture, hurts himself and others, wounds his own conscience, and ruins the souls of others; for it is dangerous meddling with edge tools, and hard to kick against the pricks; so to do is like a drunken man's handling thorns, which he does without judgment, and to his own prejudice and others. Gussetius^{f720} understands this of a fish hook coming up into the hand of a drunkard empty, without taking any thing by it, and so alike useless is what is said by a fool.

Ver. 10. *The great [God], that formed all [things]*, etc.] That made the heavens, earth, and sea, and all that are in them; who is great in the perfections of his nature, and in the works of his hands, and greatly to be praised;

both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors; according to their works; every transgression of the law receiving its just recompence of reward, whether a man transgresses it ignorantly or wilfully; as his transgressions are, whether through error or presumption, so shall his punishment be; though some understand this, as Kimchi, of the Lord's doing good in a providential way, to the wise and unwise, the righteous and the wicked: the words are by some rendered to another sense, "a great one grieveth all, and he hireth the fool, and he hireth the transgressors"^{f721}; that is, a great man, a tyrannical prince, grieves all his good subjects; or, as Hottinger^{f722}, from the use of the word in the Arabic tongue, changes all things, inverts their order, or administers all at his will, that is, wrongly; when he hires fools and wicked men to do those bad things for him which others would not, to the great detriment of the commonwealth; and rewards them for it, putting them into posts of honour and trust, to the great grief and trouble of all his best subjects.

Ver. 11. *As a dog returneth to his vomit*, etc.] Who being sick with what he has eaten, casts it up again, and afterwards returns unto it and licks it up;

[so] a fool returneth to his folly, or "repeats"^{f723} it, time after time, many times, as Ben Melech; or a wicked man turns to his wickedness, who, having had some qualms upon his conscience for sin, for a while forsakes it; but that fit being over, and he forgetting all his former horror and uneasiness, returns to his old course of life: a wicked man is here compared to a dog, as he is elsewhere for his impudence and voraciousness in sinning; and the filthiness of sin is expressed by the vomit of a dog, than which nothing is more nauseous and loathsome; and the apostasy of the sinner, from an external course of righteousness into open profaneness is signified by the return of this creature to it. This is said to be a "true proverb", (^{f722}2 Peter 2:22), where it is quoted and applied.

Ver. 12. *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit*, etc.] Or "in his own eyes"^{f724}; as multitudes may be seen, by looking round; man is a creature but of small knowledge in things natural, civil, mechanical, philosophical, moral, or divine; yet greatly conceited for the most part of his knowledge and wisdom. As by a "fool" in this book is generally understood a wicked profane man, so by a wise man is meant a good and righteous man, and may be so understood here; and many there are who are good and righteous only their own conceit and esteem, not truly so; they place their

righteousness in outward things, in the observance of external duties; and though there may be some little imperfection in them, yet they think, as they mean well, God will accept the will for the deed: and some have imagined they have arrived to perfection; and such are generally conceited, proud, and haughty, and despise others; all which flows from ignorance; for, though they fancy themselves to be wise, they are very ignorant of themselves; of the plague of their own hearts; of the law of God, and the spirituality of it, and the extensiveness of its demands; of the strict justice and righteousness of God, which will not admit of an imperfect righteousness in the room of a perfect one; and also of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the nature and necessity of that to justify: and this being their case, they are in very dangerous circumstances; they are building on a sand; they are liable to fall into a ditch; they cannot be justified nor saved by their own works; they oppose themselves to God's way of justifying and saving sinners; and he sets himself against them, he resisteth the proud. Wherefore

[there is] more hope of a fool than of him; of a profane sinner than of a self-righteous person; for Christ came to save sinners, to call them to repentance, and he receives them as such; but not self-righteous persons; and, humanly speaking, there is a greater likelihood and greater hopes of convincing sinners, and bringing them to repentance and to forsake their sins, than there is of convincing a self-righteous man of the insufficiency of his righteousness, and the folly of trusting to it, and of bringing him to repent of such a confidence, and to forsake it; for it is most natural to him; it is his own, and the effect of great labour and pains; and encourages vanity and boasting, which would be excluded should he part with it; (see ~~4123~~ Matthew 21:31,32).

Ver. 13. *The slothful [man] saith,* etc.] Within himself; or to such that excite him to diligence and industry, to go about the business of his calling, to till his field, and dress his vineyard. The Septuagint and Arabic versions add, "being sent into the way"; ordered by his master to go out to work, when he makes the following excuse:

[there is] a lion in the way; a lion [is] in the streets; in the way to his field or vineyard, and in the streets, where his business lies or leads unto it: a very idle excuse this; since lions are usually in woods, forests, and desert places, and not in public roads, and much less in streets of cities; (see ~~4123~~ Proverbs 22:13). This may be applied to a man slothful in the duties of religion; the "way" and "streets" may denote public ordinances, which are

the ways of God's appointing, prescribing, and directing to; and in which good men walk, and find pleasure and profit; and are the streets where Wisdom cries, or Christ is preached, and where he is sought for and found: but many are the excuses some men make not to attend them; (see ~~2417~~ Luke 14:17-20); though they are vain, frivolous, and foolish, as this here; for in these ways and streets may true seen the feet of the messengers of peace; here the turtle's voice, the joyful sound of salvation by Christ, may be heard; here the Lamb of God is directed to, to be looked at, as taking away the sins of men, having been slain, and having shed his blood for the redemption of them: and though the terrible voice of the law may be sometimes heard, which is necessary to arouse and awaken sleepy sinners, and unhinge self-righteous persons from a dependence on the works of the law; yet, afterwards comes the still small voice of the Gospel, proclaiming freedom from the curse and condemnation of the law by Christ. Indeed, in some ages, there have been violent persecutors, comparable to lions; and informers have been in the way and in the streets, to terrify saints from their duty; but none of these could move them from it, nor separate fully gracious souls from their love to Christ: though carnal slothful professors are offended, when tribulation or persecution arise because of the word, these are lions to them; and, in times of peace and liberty, they can paint lions, very terrible to themselves, and raise such difficulties as are insuperable to them; a slight disorder of body, a small inclemency of the weather, little danger of catching cold, and the like, shall be a lion to them: not considering they have a devouring lion nearer them in their houses, chambers, and on their beds with them; even Satan, in whose clutches they are, who keeps their goods in peace, by whom they are led captive, and to whom they fall a prey: nor fearing the wrath of the King of kings, which is as the roaring of a lion: the wrath of God and of the Lamb, who is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and whose day of wrath will be such as none will be able to bear.

Ver. 14. [*As*] *the door turneth upon his hinges*, etc.] And moves this way and that way, and opens and shuts, and yet hangs where it did, is not moved from its place:

so [doth] the slothful upon his bed; he turns himself from side to side, but is still on his bed, and does not move out of it, and go about his business. Aben Ezra makes mention of another reading and sense, "the door turneth upon his hinges", and is opened to let men out, one and another, to his work; "but [yet] the slothful man [is] upon his bed"; though one and

another rise and go about business, and he hears the door open again and again, he stirs not, but keeps his, bed. So profane sinners lie on the bed of sinful lusts and sensual pleasures, indulge themselves in chambering and wantonness, and do not care to rise from hence, and walk honestly as in the daytime; and though their consciences are sometimes jogged by inward pricks, and they are moved a little by the reproofs of their friends, or awakened by the judgments of God; yet these are quickly over, and they give themselves a turn and go to sleep again: sometimes there are some motions in them, some thoughts and resolutions of amendment, some purposes to do good works; but, alas! their slothfulness is so great, and the habits and customs of sin so strong, that they cannot break through them, shake off their sloth, and come out, but remain as they were: and so it is with carnal professors, resting in their own works, and in a round of duties; and after ten, twenty, thirty years' profession, or more, they are just where they were; have no spiritual knowledge, judgment, and experience.

Ver. 15. *The slothful hideth his hand in [his] bosom*, etc.] To keep it warm; Jarchi's note is,

“he puts his hand in a hot basin, because of the cold.”

The word^{f725} for “bosom” does sometimes signify a “pot” or basin. Or he hides it under his “arm holes”, as some render it, not caring to make use of it for labour; or covers it out of sight in his bosom, pretending some weakness or ailment in it, which hinders him from working; (see ~~20924~~ Proverbs 19:24);

it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth; from under his arm holes, or out of his bosom, or even out of the platter, where his food is; an hyperbolical expression, setting forth his excessive sloth; and such an one ought not to eat, but starve indeed. It may be rendered, “he is weary”; it is a “weariness”^{f726} to him; it is even a labour too much for him to feed himself, so great is his sloth: and such is the sloth of carnal men; it is a weariness to them to hear the word, and attend on ordinances, and to lift up their hands in prayer to God; or to make use of any means, that they may have food for their souls; praying, hearing, and reading, are a burden to them; and therefore it is but just with God to send them a famine of the word, and take away the whole stay and staff of bread and water.

Ver. 16. *The sluggard [is] wiser in his own conceit*, etc.] It is a sort of a solecism, a kind of a contradiction in terms for a sluggard to be wise, who

is so slothful as to make no use of the means of getting wisdom and knowledge. And it must be a mere conceit in him that he is wise, and especially that he is wiser

than seven men that can render a reason; not alluding to the number of a king's counsellors, who return him an answer to what he inquires of them, as Aben Ezra thinks; such as were the "seven" princes of the king of Persia, (^{CH4}Esther 1:14). Since to have such an exact number might not obtain in Solomon's time, either in Persia, or in his own court, or elsewhere: but it signifies a large number, many wise men, as Gersom observes, that render a reason to everyone that asks it of them; who, having been diligent and industrious, have got such a competency of knowledge, that they are able to give a proper reason of what they say, believe, or do: and such are they, who, by the blessing of grace in the use of means, are wise in a spiritual sense; know themselves, and Christ Jesus, and the way of salvation by him; have an understanding of the Scriptures, and of the doctrines of the Gospel; have their spiritual senses exercised, to discern between truth and error; are of established judgments, and capable of teaching others good judgment and knowledge; and of giving a reason of their faith, hope, and practice; (see ^{CH5}1 Peter 3:15). Now such is the conceit of an ignorant sluggard, that he is wiser than ten thousand or ever so many of these; he thinks himself the wisest man, inasmuch as he enjoys ease and quiet in his stupid sottish way, while they are toiling and labouring, and taking a great deal of pains to get knowledge; and that he sleeps in a whole skin, and escapes the censure and reproaches of men, which they endure for being precise in religious duties, and constant in the performance of them; and fancies he can get to heaven in an easier way, without all this care and toil and trouble, only by saying, Lord, have mercy on me, at last.

Ver. 17. *He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife [belonging] not to him*, etc.] One that going along the streets, and passing by the door, where two or more persons are quarrelling, and he thrusts himself in and intermeddles in the affair he has no concern in; and interests himself in the cause of the quarrel he has nothing to do with, on account of acquaintance, relation, or office; and especially when, instead of being a mediator and peacemaker, he takes on one side, and acts the angry part, as Aben Ezra interprets the word rendered "meddleth"; blows things up into a greater flame, and enrages the one against the other. Such a man

[is like] one that taketh a dog by the ears; which are short, and difficult to be held, and tender; and therefore cannot bear to be held by them, especially to be pulled and lugged by them, and which is very provoking; and as such a man has work enough to do to hold him, so he is in danger of being bitten by him, at least when he is forced to let go his hold: and so it is with a man that interferes in a quarrel in a furious manner; it is much if one or other of the contending parties do not fall upon him and abuse him. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, “as he that holdeth the tail of a dog.”

Ver. 18. *As a mad [man], who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death.*] Or the instruments of death, as Aben Ezra; or the sharp arrows of death, as the Targum and Syriac version; who casts firebrands into the houses and barns of his neighbours, to consume them; or arrows at their persons and cattle, to destroy them; or any other instruments of death, which none but a mad man, or one wickedly mad, would do. Or, “as one that makes himself mad”^{f727}; that feigns himself mad, and, under colour of this, does mischief to his neighbour’s person and property: or, “as one that hides himself”^{f728}; that casts firebrands, arrows, and other deadly things, in a private way, so as not to be seen, and that it may not be known from whence they come: or, “as one that wearies himself”^{f729}, so Jarchi; in doing mischief in such a way. The word in the Arabic language signifies to play and be in sport; and so it means one that does these things in sport, as it is a sport to a fool to do mischief; which sense agrees with what follows.

Ver. 19. *So [is] the man [that] deceiveth his neighbour*, etc.] By telling him a lie; or by reporting false things concerning him; or by cheating him in trade and commerce; or by taking his goods privately from him; and, when caught in either of these,

and saith, Amos not I in sport? do not be angry, I designed no hurt; it is all in jest, a mere joke: but, had he not been apprehended, it would have been in earnest, as he was. This is only an excuse, and as absurd an one as if a man should set fire to his neighbour’s house and barns, or throw arrows at him, or strike him with any instrument of death, as the sword, etc. and then say he was only in jest, or pretend madness.

Ver. 20. *Where no wood is, [there] the fire goeth out*, etc.] Or “woods”^{f730}; where there is a large quantity of wood or fuel, the fire is kept up; but where there is little, scarce any or none at all, it goes out of course;

So where [there is] no talebearer, the strife ceaseth; or is silent^{f731}: men cease to quarrel one with another; they hold their peace and are silent, when there are none to bring tales from one to another, or any whisperer or backbiter to suggest evil things of each other; or when such are discouraged on both sides, and their tales are not listened to; or when they are detected and thrust out of doors, as they deserve, then strife subsides, and peace ensues. Contention is like a fire, the flame of which is blown up by talebearers and whisperers, who are as incendiaries, and as such are to be treated.

Ver. 21. *As coals [are] to burning coals, and wood to fire,* etc.] As brands, wood half burnt, or dead coals put to live and burning ones, soon take fire and become like them, and fit and proper fuel for them, and add to their heat:

so [is] a contentious man to kindle strife; or “a man of contentions”^{f732}; who is given to it, is full of it; it is agreeable to his natural temper and disposition; he is in his element when at it; such a man is as fuel to the fire, as a dead coal to a living one, which increases the heat of it; so does he, he kindles and spreads the flame of contention and strife.

Ver. 22. *The words of a talebearer [are] as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*] These expressions are the same with those in (^{Q1808}Proverbs 18:8); and are here repeated, as being found along with others by the men of Hezekiah, (^{Q1808}Proverbs 25:1); as some others likewise are; and also because of the importance of them; and to impress the minds of men with a sense of the evil of such a practice, that they may shun it, and avoid those that are given to it. (See Gill on “^{Q1808}Proverbs 18:8”).

Ver. 23. *Burning lips, and a wicked heart,* etc.] Either burning with wrath and malice; breathing out threatenings and slaughter; pursuing men with reproaches and slanders, arising from a wicked heart: or rather, burning with profession of love to God, and affection to good men; with great pretensions of kindness, and promises of good things, when their hearts are wicked, and they design noticing less; say one thing with their lips, with the greatest show of affection and sincerity, and mean another in their hearts. These

[are like] a potsherd covered with silver dross: which at a distance, or to less discerning persons, looks like silver, and is taken for it; when the

covering is only dross, and what is within is only a potsherd, Or a piece of an earthen vessel, good for nothing: such are the specious professions and deceitful words, which flow from a wicked heart.

Ver. 24. *He that hateth dissembleth with his lips*, etc.] He that bears a grudge in his mind, and retains hatred in his heart against any person, hides it all he can, till he has an opportunity of showing it as he would; he pretends a great deal of friendship with his lips, that his hatred might not be known; he would be thought to be a friend, when he is really an enemy; he does not choose as yet to make himself known what he is. Some render it to a sense the reverse, “the enemy”, or “he that hateth, is known by his lips”^{f733}; so the Targum, Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions: if you carefully watch him, mark his words, and observe what he says, you will find out the hatred that lies in his heart; he cannot forbear saying something, at one time or another, which betrays the malignity of his mind;

and layeth up deceit within him; or, “though^{f734} he layeth up”, etc. hides it as much as he can, yet it will show itself in some way or another.

Ver. 25. *When he speaketh fair, believe him not*, etc.] Gives good words, flatters with his lips, pretends great kindness and favour, expresses himself in a very gracious and amiable manner, in order to gain attention and respect; or when he delivers himself in a submissive and suppliant way, with great humility and deference; or in a mournful and pitiful strain, as if he had the most tender affection and concern; be not too credulous; do not suffer yourselves to be imposed upon by him; be upon your guard, distrust him, suspect a snake in the grass;

for [there are] seven abominations in his heart; a multitude of wicked purposes, schemes, and designs, which he has formed there against you, and which he only waits a proper time to put in execution; things abominable to God and men. Aben Ezra thinks reference is had to the seven abominations in (²¹¹⁶Proverbs 6:16).

Ver. 26. *[Whose] hatred is covered by deceit*, etc.] The hatred of whose heart is covered by deceitful words, and strong expressions of love and esteem; so that those to whom they are made are deceived by them. Or, whose “hatred is covered in a waste or desert place”^{f735}; it being not seen; as what is done in desert places is not obvious to view, being little frequented; which agrees with what follows, and keeps up the antithesis

between the two clauses: Schultens renders it, with a tumultuous noise, with loud and public acclamations; (see ^{<3847>}Zechariah 4:7);

his wickedness shall be showed before the [whole] congregation; in an open court of judicature, where he shall be brought, arraigned, and tried for his wickedness; which, though covertly done, shall be exposed and proved upon him: or before the church of God, where he shall be convicted by the word, and be obliged to acknowledge his sin; and, in a member, be reprov'd before all, and rejected: or however, at the great day of judgment, before angels and men, when all will be convened together; and where every secret work will be brought, and will be brought to light, and receive its just reward.

Ver. 27. *Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein*, etc.] That devises mischief against others, it shall come upon himself. The allusion is to the digging of pits for catching wild beasts, which are slightly covered with earth; and which sometimes the pursuers, through inadvertency, fall into themselves; the passage seems to be taken from (^{<3975>}Psalm 7:15,16);

and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him; that rolls a stone up hill, if he does not take care, it will return back, and fall with great force upon himself; so the mischief which a wicked man labours hard at, as men do in digging a pit, or rolling a stone, in time rolls back upon themselves; the measure they mete out to others is measured to them. Jarchi makes mention of an “hagadah”, or exposition, which illustrates this passage, by the case of Abimelech; who slew threescore and ten persons on one stone, and was himself killed with a piece of a millstone cast upon him, (^{<4098>}Judges 9:18,53); this may put in mind of the fable of Sisyphus^{f736}, feigned in hell to roll a great stone to the top of a mountain, which presently falling down on his head, made his labour fruitless.

Ver. 28. *A lying tongue hateth [those that are] afflicted by it*, etc.] That is, a man of a lying tongue, that is given to lying, hates those that are hurt and crushed by his lies; the reason why he hurts them with his lies is because he hates them; and, having hurt them, he hates them, being made his enemies, and from whom he may expect and be in fear of revenge: moreover, he hates those that are troubled at and disturbed with his lies; or the “contrite”^{f737} and humble men: or those who “smite” or “strike”^{f738} him, as some render the word, actively; that is, reprove him, and bring him to shame for lying. The words are by some translated, a “contrite” person, or everyone of “the contrite ones, hateth a lying tongue”^{f739}; such as are of a

broken and of a contrite spirit, and that tremble at the word of God, or are hurt by lies, these abhor a liar. The Targum is,

“a lying tongue bates the ways of truth;”

and the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, render it, “a lying tongue hate truth”; and so the Vulgate Latin version, “a lying tongue loves not truth”; for nothing is more contrary to a lie than truth;

and a flattering mouth worketh ruin; both to itself and to the persons flattered by it: or, “makes an impulse”¹⁷⁴⁰; a pushing, a driving away; it drives away such as cannot bear its flatteries: and pushes on such that are taken with it, both into sin and into ruin.