

## Proverbs Lesson #110 (11:21)

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*"Assuredly, the evil man will not go unpunished, But the descendants of the righteous will be delivered."*  
(Proverbs 11:21 NAS95)

*"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered."* (Proverbs 11:21 KJV)

*"One who unjustly joins hands will not go unpunished, but he who sows righteousness will receive an assured reward."* (Proverbs 11:21 NETS)

I have provided three separate versions of today's verse. Even if you are not skilled in Biblical languages, when you notice significant differences in translations you can assume there is some difficulty in the text which challenges scholars. In this case the opening Hebrew phrase is *yad l'yad* (יָד לְיָד) which literally means hand to hand. But what exactly does this phrase mean? More importantly, if we are warned there is something here that will be punished, what exactly is it?

This phrase is only used one other time in the Tenach (also in Proverbs) so it is difficult to be certain exactly what is intended to be communicated. Some have suggested *yad l'yad* means certainly or assuredly and this would affirm that God will not let the guilty go unpunished (Num 14:18). Others have suggested this verse refers to the practice of being deceitful in business transactions. If you try to trick or cheat someone this verse reminds us that God sees what we do and He is not fooled by our "secrets." A third possible interpretation suggests that this phrase means "'my hand on it", meaning depend upon it."<sup>1</sup> If we compare the picture of a vapor (as we learn from the book of Ecclesiastes) being something that is hard to get ahold of this would be an example of something we all **can** grasp. We may be able to fool each other or even ourselves but God is not fooled. He knows what is best for His name's sake and also what we need to bring about His righteousness to future generations.

*"Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.""* (Psalms 96:7–10 NAS95)

**To Learn Wisdom and Instruction:** We need to be able to unpack the two terms compared in our main verse. The words righteous and evil may mean different things to different people. As families we are called to look to the LORD for our source of truth and instruction. The words from Psalm 96 remind me that we are to define these terms based not upon ourselves but upon who God is. When is the last time you ascribed something to the Lord? In modern English to ascribe can mean to attribute something to someone (a cause) or regard (a quality) as belonging to someone. The Hebrew word for ascribe, *havu* (הָבִי), is an imperative which commands us to bring, present, or bear. As we seek to determine the difference between those things which are righteous and those things that are evil, I want us to focus not on our own thoughts but on learning to know more about the God we serve.

**To Discern Wise Counsel:** I've suggested before that we need to become fruit inspectors. I am not thinking about bananas and apples. I am thinking about the fruit of God's Spirit in our lives. I also don't think that we should become experts in other peoples fruit. Do you know the difference? It is usually easy to see the wrong in others and not always easy to admit the wrong we have in ourselves.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. Nothing in the Torah stands against such things."* (Galatians 5:22–23 CJB)

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<sup>1</sup> Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Accordance electronic edition, version 3.1. Leiden: Brill, 2000.