

Shayla: I don't understand the use of the word "strong" in some translations and "wealth" in others. What is the meaning of 'aven in Proverbs 11:7?

Meforshim:

Remember that in Hebrew everything reads from right to left if you are actually looking at it in the original. Just so you will be on the same page with me - when I check to see what it is in Hebrew, I read either the *Interlinear Bible* by Green, or the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. In those two, leaving each individual word still reading from right to left but placing them in an English sentence structure, the actual word order in the original Hebrew reads:

רשע	מות	אדם	רשע	אבד	תקוה
7563	4194	120	7563	6	8615
Rasha	maveth	adam	rasha	'abad	tiqvah

תוחלת	אבד	און
8431	205	6
towcheleth	'aven	'abad.

rasha (#7563) principally indicates the wicked or the unrighteous. It can secondarily indicate "having an unrighteous cause" and a tertiary meaning of "guilty" as in liable to punishment.

maveth (#4194) principally indicates death and is sometimes used to personify death (Psalm 49:15). It can describe the place of the dead (i.e. Gehenna or Paradise) or something particularly associated with death like a fatal disease or pestilence. Sometimes (like in Proverbs 11:19; 12:28; Isaiah 25:8 or Exodus 10:17) with other small markers attached it is used as a synonym for the word "destruction".

adam (#120) means "man." It is not simply used to indicate the male gender but humanity as a whole. For instance, it can be used for "anyone" as in Leviticus 1:2 or, with a negative particle "no one" as in Genesis 2:5.

'abad (#6) It's principle meaning is "to be lost, to lose one's self, to wander" but an extremely close second and obviously conceptually related use is "to perish, to be destroyed." We use the same kind of language in English when a ship goes down and we say that "all hands were lost." It can also mean "to be ready to perish, to be wretched or unfortunate."

tiqvah (#8615) evokes the mental image of a rope (Joshua 2:18, 21) and is used to indicate "expectation or hope" (Ruth 1:12; Job 5:16; Zechariah 9:12). Thus, in English, to lose one's hope is to be "at the end of one's rope".

Towcheleth (#8431) comes from a slightly different root which also means "expectation or hope" (Psalm 39:7; Proverbs 10:28) but carries the connotation of cutting up, or dividing and hence being the very central part of one's being.

'aven (#205) means "emptiness, vanity or something that is vain" (Isaiah 41:29; Zechariah 10:2) and is especially used in conjunction with the vanity of idols and all things pertaining to idolatry.

So, an amplified literal translation would seem to read:

The wicked or unrighteous death of the wicked or unrighteous man is lost or wandering; the hope and central expectation of vain idolatry dies.

A quick overview of four major translations gives us:

- Proverbs 11:7 (HCSB) When the wicked dies, his expectation comes to nothing, and hope placed in wealth vanishes.
- Proverbs 11:7 (NASB) When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish, and the hope of strong men perishes.
- Proverbs 11:7 (Amplified) When the wicked man dies, his hope [for the future] perishes; and the expectation of the godless comes to nothing.
- Proverbs 11:7 (NIV) When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.

A more recent (slightly suspect in my mind) translation called the *Complete Jewish Bible* by David H. Stern reads:

- Proverbs 11:7 (CJB) When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; what he hopes for from evil comes to nothing.

The HCSB gives us the implication of “vain idolatry” as being wealth, perhaps taking a cue from Matthew 6:24 (HCSB) “No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.”

The NASB gives the implication of “vain idolatry” as being the desire for strength or power, perhaps from Proverbs 28:12, 28 and Ecclesiastes 4:1.

The Amplified comes closest to the literal interpretation in my opinion (whatever that is worth).

The NIV is off its rocker as far as I’m concerned. While what it says is true generally, that’s not what is said in the text.

In this particular case the CJB reads rather well actually.

I guess the Pauley translation (in the Pauley Study Bible) would read:

- Proverbs 11:7 (PSB) When the wicked die in their sins, their expectations die; their central hope dies, meaningless.

Though, if one decided to interpret “rasha” as “unrighteous cause” the translation would be:

- Proverbs 11:7 (PSB) The unrighteous cause dies when the wicked die in their sins; their central hope dies, meaningless.

Each is correct and both may be appropriate. That is the beauty of Hebrew – it is so multifaceted that there are multiple layers of meaning. So the answer to your question is basically that the two major translations we tend to focus on (HCSB and NASB) both struggle to translate “tiqvah towcheleth ‘aven abad” with one falling on the side of wealth and the other on the side of power. My personal judgment is that both are right. The concept here wraps up wealth, power and any other thing in which man places his hopes besides Hashem as being ‘aven – emptiness, vanity. Is that not the principle message that Quohelath (the Teacher, the author of Ecclesiastes [Ecclesiastes 1:1]) later gave us in the book of Ecclesiastes?