

African Proverb of the Month
August, 2004

Amaisho gomukuru gakila orumuli kumulika. (Haya)
Fumbo mfubie mjinga mwerevu huling'amua. (Swahili)
The eyes of the wise person see through you. (English)

Haya ([Tanzania](#)) Proverb

Background, Explanation, Meaning and Everyday Use

A wise person, according to the Haya people in Tanzania's interpretation, is one who has long experiences in life based on natural knowledge and good insight. This is someone who can give relevant points in solving problems, and the more so if she/he lives longer and lives a good life. An old man or woman who is unwise is regarded as "a white haired only" (a white haired head).

The Haya Christians refer to this wisdom to God who is Wisdom himself. There are certain men and women in our society who are wise and the community depends on them for the growth and development of the faithful. Wisdom is the noble virtue of kings and those in authority. Also the family that is lead by wisdom is blessed, so is a country with a wise president. Wisdom is the gift from the Spirit of God. Some people acquire wisdom through articulating every day events.

Listen to this Haya story:

Once upon a time there was an old man who thought that God acts unwisely. He was wondering why God created small trees, bearing big fruits, whereas huge trees like oak trees bear small fruits. "This is not fair", he said, "it is ridiculous". One day he was traveling through a forest. After walking for a long way, he was tired and sat under an oak tree to refresh himself with a drink and some food which he carried in his skin purse. After that he took a nap. Not long, he was startled by a dry acorn on his forehead, "Paaa"! Oh goodness me, am I hurt? No, not at all. Thank God. Now I know and understand why God created big, tall trees with small fruits. God is always WISE. If this acorn was like a big pumpkin, it could have been the end of my life. Now I understand God's plans in creation, and all that happens is planned wisely for the

good of human beings. God, you are wonderfully great and wise.

This story of the Haya people teaches our society to appreciate the Wisdom of God. God is the best teacher if we listen to Him and be ready to learn his wisdom through everyday events. We should not take events for granted. Every event has a purpose in life. Everything happens for a reason.

Biblical Parallels

The outstanding biblical passage of how God grants wisdom is the story of King Solomon in 1 *Kings* 16, 20, 24, 26–28:

One day two prostitutes came and presented themselves before King Solomon. One of them said, "Your Majesty, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a baby boy at home while she also gave birth to a baby boy too. One night, she accidentally rolled over on her baby and smothered it. She got up during the night, took my son from my side while I was asleep, then she put the dead child in my bed. The next morning when I woke up, I saw that it was dead. I looked at it more closely and saw that it was not my child. But the other woman said, "No! The living child is mine and the dead one is yours" The first woman answered back, "No! The dead child is yours, and the living is mine".

King Solomon sent for a sword and when it was brought to him, he said, "Cut the living child in two and give each woman half of it". The mother, her heart full of love for her son, said to the King, please your Majesty, "Don't kill the child! Give it to her". But the other woman said, "Don't give it to either of us, go on and cut it into two".

Then King Solomon said, "Don't kill the child! Give it to the first woman (who said don't kill it). She is the real mother.

The people of Israel felt deep respect for King Solomon because they knew that God had given him the wisdom to settle disputes fairly. We find the word wisdom more than 70 times in the Bible. To quote just a few:

1. 1 *Kings* 9:10 –13: "To be wise you must first have reverence for the Lord. If you know the Holy One, you have understanding. Wisdom will add years to your life. You are the one who will profit if you have wisdom, and if you reject it you are the one who will suffer!"

2. *Psalms* 119:98–100 speaks of wisdom: "Your commandment is with me all the time and makes me wiser than my enemies. I understand more than all my teachers, because I meditate on your instructions. I have greater wisdom than those who are old because I obey your commands."

The Haya proverb *The eyes of a wise man see through you* teaches us how to walk in God's ways because the Lord sees what happens everywhere. He is watching us.

Contemporary Use and Religious Application

Africans honor and respect elderly women and men because of their long lived life. We say about such a person that *One had eaten much salt*. Old people are expected to act wisely. It is sad to see how some old people are behaving nowadays. Our society depends on wise people especially old men and women for the development of countries. Alas! Some old people now are the first to destroy the cultural heritage of our ancestors by ruining the growth of youth. It seems there are more unwise old people that it used to be in olden times (child abuse, broken marriages, single parent families).

The Holy Father John Paul II invites all people young as well as old to read the signs of time, to be ready to change for the better and to walk in the commandments of God. The story of the traveling old man teaches how one can understand the mysteries of God's wisdom by meditating on everyday events in life.

With Solomon let us ask for wisdom: "So give me the wisdom I need to rule your people with justice and to know the difference between good and evil" (1 *Kings* 3:9).

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