Advice to the reader

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel,
by which men will come to wisdom and instruction
and will understand words that bring understanding,
and by which they will gain a well-instructed intelligence,
righteousness, justice, and probity.
2 The simple will be endowed with shrewdness
and the young with knowledge and prudence.
3 If the wise man listens, he will increase his learning,
and the man of understanding will acquire skill
to understand proverbs and parables,
the sayings of wise men and their riddles.

4 The fear of the LORD is the beginning [Or chief part] of knowledge,
but fools scorn wisdom and discipline.

5 Attend, my son, to your father’s instruction
and do not reject the teaching of your mother;
6 for they are a garland of grace on your head
and a chain of honour round your neck.

10 My son, bad men may tempt you [prob. rdg, Heb adds do not come, or, with some manuscripts, do not consent] 11 and say,
‘Come with us; let us lie in wait for someone’s blood;
let us waylay [prob. rdg, Heb store up] an innocent man who has done us no harm.
12 Like Sheol we will swallow them alive;
though blameless, they shall be like men who go down to the abyss.
13 We shall take rich treasure of every sort
and fill our homes with booty;
14 throw in your lot with us,
and we will have a common purse.’
15 My son, do not go along with them,
keep clear of their ways;
16 they hasten hot-foot into crime,
impatient to shed blood.

17 In vain is a net spread wide
if any bird that flies can see it.

18 These men lie in wait for their own blood
and waylay [prob. rdg, Heb store up] no one but themselves.
19This is the fate [This ... fate: prob. rdg, Heb Such are the courses] of men eager for ill-gotten gain: it robs those who get it of their lives.

20Wisdom cries aloud in the open air, 
she raises her voice in public places; 
21she calls at the top of the busy street 
and proclaims at the open gates of the city: 
22Simple fools, how long will you be content with your simplicity? [The rest of v22 transposed to follow v27]

23If only you would respond to my reproof, I would give you my counsel and teach you my precepts. 
24But because you refused to listen when I called, because no one attended when I stretched out my hand, 
25because you spurned all my advice and would have nothing to do with my reproof, 
26I in my turn will laugh at your doom and deride you when terror comes upon you, 
27when terror comes upon you like a hurricane and your doom descends like a whirlwind [prob. rdg, Heb adds when anguish and distress come upon you]. 
Insolent men delight in their insolence; 
stupid men hate knowledge. [Insolent ... knowledge: transposed from end of v22]

28When they call upon me, I will not answer them; when they search for me, they shall not find me. 
29Because they hate knowledge and have not chosen to fear the LORD, 
30because they have not accepted my counsel and have spurned all my reproof, 
31they shall eat the fruits of their behaviour and have a surfeit of their own devices; 
32for the simpleton turns a deaf ear and comes to grief, and the stupid are ruined by their own complacency. 
33But whoever listens to me shall live without a care, undisturbed by fear of misfortune.’

21My son, if you take my words to heart and lay up my commands in your mind, 
giving your attention to wisdom and your mind to understanding, 
3if you summon discernment to your aid and invoke understanding, 
4if you seek her out like silver and dig for her like buried treasure, 
5then you will understand the fear of the LORD

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and attain to the knowledge of God, 

6 for the LORD bestows wisdom and teaches knowledge and understanding. 
7 Out of his store he endows the upright with ability as a shield for those who live blameless lives; 
8 for he guards the course of justice and keeps watch over the way of his loyal servants.

9 Then you will understand what is right and just and keep [keep: prob. rdg, Heb uprightness] only to the good man’s path; 
10 for wisdom will sink into your mind, and knowledge will be your heart’s delight. 
11 Prudence will keep watch over you, understanding will guard you, 
12 it will save you from evil ways and from men whose talk is subversive, 
13 who forsake the honest course to walk in ways of darkness, 
14 who rejoice in doing evil and exult in evil and subversive acts, 
15 whose own ways are crooked, whose tracks are devious.
16 It will save you from the adulteress, from the loose woman with her seductive words, 
17 who forsakes the teaching of her childhood and has forgotten the covenant of her God; 
18 for her path [prob. rdg, Heb house] runs downhill towards death, and her course is set for the land of the dead. 
19 No one who resorts to her [resorts to her: or takes to them] finds his way back or regains the path to life.

20 See then that you follow the footsteps of good men and keep to the course of the righteous; 
21 for the upright shall dwell on earth and blameless men remain there; 
22 but the wicked shall be uprooted from it and traitors weeded out.

3 My son, do not forget my teaching, but guard my commands in your heart; 
2 for long life and years in plenty will they bring you, and prosperity as well. 
3 Let your good faith and loyalty never fail, but bind them about your neck. 
4 Thus will you win favour and success in the sight of God and man.
5 Put all your trust in the LORD
and do not rely on your own understanding.
6 Think of him in all your ways,
and he will smooth your path.
7 Do not think how wise you are,
but fear the LORD and turn from evil.
8 Let that be the medicine to keep you in health,
the liniment for your limbs.
9 Honour the LORD with your wealth
as the first charge on all your earnings;
10 then your granaries will be filled with corn [with corn: or to overflowing] and your vats bursting with new wine.
11 My son, do not spurn the LORD’s correction
or take offence at his reproof;
12 for those whom he loves the LORD reproves,
and he punishes a favourite son.

13 Happy he who has found wisdom,
and the man who has acquired understanding;
14 for wisdom is more profitable than silver,
and the gain she brings is better than gold.
15 She is more precious than red coral,
and all your jewels are no match for her.
16 Long life is in her right hand,
in her left hand are riches and honour.
17 Her ways are pleasant ways
and all her paths lead to prosperity.
18 She is a staff of life to all who grasp her,
and those who hold her fast are safe.

19 In wisdom the LORD founded the earth
and by understanding he set the heavens in their place;
20 by his knowledge the depths burst forth
and the clouds dropped dew.

21 My son, keep watch over your ability and prudence,
do not let them slip from sight;
22 they shall be a charm hung about your neck
and an ornament on your breast.
23 Then you will go your way without a care,
and your feet will not stumble.
24 When you sit, you need have no fear;
when you lie down, your sleep will be pleasant.
25 Do not be afraid when fools are frightened
or when ruin comes upon the wicked;
26 for the LORD will be at your side,
and he will keep your feet clear of the trap.

27 Refuse no man any favour that you owe him when it lies in your power to pay it.

28 Do not say to your friend, ‘Come back again; you shall have it tomorrow’ – when you have it already.

29 Plot no evil against your friend, your unsuspecting neighbour.

30 Do not pick a quarrel with a man for no reason, if he has not done you a bad turn.

31 Do not emulate a lawless man, do not choose to follow his footsteps;

32 for one who is not straight is detestable to the LORD, but upright men are in God’s confidence.

33 The LORD’s curse rests on the house of the evildoer, while he blesses the home of the righteous.

34 Though God himself meets the arrogant with arrogance, yet he bestows his favour on the meek [Or wretched].

35 Wise men are adorned with [are adorned with: prob. rdg, Heb shall inherit] honour, but the coat [the coat: prob. rdg, Heb obscure] on a fool’s back is contempt.

4 Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction, consider attentively how to gain understanding;

2 for it is sound learning I give you; so do not forsake my teaching.

3 I too have been a father’s son, tender in years, my mother’s only child.

4 He taught me and said to me: Hold fast to my words with all your heart, keep my commands and you will have life.

5 Do not forget or turn a deaf ear to what I say.

7 [v6 and v7 transposition not noted] The first thing [prob. rdg, Heb adds wisdom] is to acquire wisdom; gain understanding though it cost you all you have.

6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you safe; love her, and she will guard you;

8 cherish her, and she will lift you high; if only you embrace her, she will bring you to honour.

9 She will set a garland of grace on your head and bestow on you a crown of glory.

10 Listen, my son, take my words to heart, and the years of your life shall be multiplied.

11 I will guide you in the paths of wisdom and lead you in honest ways.

12 As you walk you will not slip,
and, if you run, nothing will bring you down.

13Cling to instruction and never let it go; observe it well, for it is your life.

14Do not take to the course of the wicked or follow the way of evil men;

15do not set foot on it, but avoid it; turn aside and go on your way.

16For they cannot sleep unless they have done some wrong; unless they have been someone’s downfall they lose their sleep.

17The bread they eat is the fruit of crime and they drink wine got by violence.

18The course of the righteous is like morning light, growing brighter till it is broad day;

19but the ways of the wicked are like darkness at night, and they do not know what has been their downfall.

20My son, attend to my speech, pay heed to my words;

21do not let them slip out of your mind, keep them close in your heart;

22for they are life to him who finds them, and health to his whole body.

23Guard your heart more than any treasure, for it is the source of all life.

24Keep your mouth from crooked speech and your lips from deceitful talk.

25Let your eyes look straight before you, fix your gaze upon what lies ahead.

26Look out for the path that your feet must take, and your ways will be secure.

27Swerve neither to right nor left, and keep clear of every evil thing.

51My son, attend to my wisdom and listen to my good counsel,

2so that you may observe proper prudence and your speech be informed with knowledge.

3For though the lips of an adulteress drip honey and her tongue is smoother than oil,

4yet in the end she is more bitter than wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword.

5Her feet go downwards on the path to death, her course is set for Sheol.

6She does not watch for the road that leads to life; her course turns this way and that, and what does she care? [what ... care?: or she is restless.]
Now, my son, listen to me and do not ignore What I say: keep well away from her and do not go near the door of her house; or you will lose your dignity in the eyes of others and your honour before strangers; strangers will batten on your wealth, and your hard-won gains pass to another man’s family. The end will be that you will starve, you will shrink to mere skin and bones. Then you will say, ‘Why did I hate correction and set my heart against reproof? I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or pay attention to my masters. I soon earned [Or I almost earned] a bad name and was despised in the public assembly.’

Drink water from your own cistern and running water from your own spring; do not let your [do not let your: prob. rdg, Heb shall your] well overflow into the road, your runnels of water pour into the street; let them be yours alone, not shared with strangers. Let your fountain, the wife of your youth, be blessed, rejoice in her, a lovely doe, a graceful hind, let her be your companion; you will at all times be bathed in her love, and her love will continually wrap you round. Wherever you turn, she will guide you; when you lie in bed, she will watch over you, and when you wake she will talk with you.

Why, my son, are you wrapped up in the love of an adulteress? Why do you embrace a loose woman? For a man’s ways are always in the LORD’s sight who watches for every path that he must take. The wicked man is caught in his own iniquities and held fast in the toils of his own sin; he will perish for want of discipline, wrapped in the shroud of his boundless folly.

My son, if you pledge yourself to another man and stand surety for a stranger,
and save yourself, my son:
when you fall into another man’s power,
bestir yourself, go and pester the man,
give yourself no rest,
allow yourself no sleep.
Save yourself like a gazelle from the toils,
like a bird from the grasp of the fowler.

Go to the ant, you sluggard,
watch her ways and get wisdom.
She has no overseer,
no governor or ruler;
but in summer she prepares her store of food
and lays in her supplies at harvest.
How long, you sluggard, will you lie abed?
When will you rouse yourself from sleep?
A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands in rest,
and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
want like a ruffian.

A scoundrel, a mischievous man, is he
who prowls about with crooked talk –
a wink of the eye,
a touch with the foot,
a sign with the fingers.
Subversion is the evil that he is plotting,
he stirs up quarrels all the time.
Down comes disaster suddenly upon him;
suddenly he is broken beyond all remedy.

Six things the LORD hates,
seven things are detestable to him:
a proud eye, a false tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that forges thoughts of mischief,
and feet that run swiftly to do evil,
a false witness telling a pack of lies,
and one who stirs up quarrels between brothers.

My son, observe your father’s commands
and do not reject the teaching of your mother;
wear them always next your heart
and bind them close about your neck;
for a command is a lamp, and
teaching a light,
reproof and correction point the way of life,
to keep you from the wife of another man,
from the seductive tongue of the loose woman.

25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart
or let her glance provoke you;
26 for a prostitute can be had for the price of a loaf,
but a married woman is out for bigger game.

27 Can a man kindle fire in his bosom
without burning his clothes?
28 If a man walks on hot coals,
will his feet not be scorched?
29 So is he who sleeps with his neighbour’s wife;
no one can touch such a woman and go free.
30 Is not a thief contemptible when he steals
to satisfy his appetite, even if he is hungry?
31 And, if he is caught, must he not pay seven times over
and surrender all that his house contains?
32 So one who commits adultery is a senseless fool:
he dishonours the woman and ruins himself;
33 he will get nothing but blows and contumely
and will never live down the disgrace;
34 for a husband’s anger is a jealous anger
and in the day of vengeance he will show no mercy;
35 compensation will not buy his forgiveness [compensation ... forgiveness: prob. rdg, Heb obscure];
no bribe, however large, will purchase his connivance.

7 My son, keep my words,
store up my commands in your mind.
2 Keep my commands if you would live,
and treasure my teaching as the apple of your eye.
3 Wear them like a ring on your finger;
write them on the tablet of your memory.
4 Call Wisdom your sister,.
greet Understanding as a familiar friend;
5 then they will save you from the adulteress,
from the loose woman with her seductive words.

6 I glanced [I glanced: prob. rdg, Heb omitted] out of the window of my
house,
I looked down through the lattice,
7 and I saw among simple youths,
there amongst the boys I noticed
a lad, a foolish lad,
8 passing along the street, at the corner,
stepping out in the direction of her house
9 at twilight, as the day faded,
at dusk as the night grew dark;
suddenly a woman came to meet him, dressed like a prostitute, full of wiles, flighty and inconstant, a woman never content to stay at home, lying in wait at every corner, now in the street, now in the public squares. She caught hold of him and kissed him; brazenly she accosted him and said, I have had a sacrifice, an offering, to make and I have paid my vows today; that is why I have come out to meet you, to watch for you and find you. I have spread coverings on my bed of coloured linen from Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, my clothes with aloes and cassia. Come! Let us drown ourselves in pleasure, let us spend a whole night of love; for the man of the house is away, he has gone on a long journey, he has taken a bag of silver with him; until the moon is full he will not be home.' Persuasively she led him on, she pressed him with seductive words. Like a simple fool he followed her, like an ox on its way to the slaughter-house, like an antelope bounding into the noose, like a bird hurrying into the trap; he did not know that he was risking his life until the arrow pierced his vitals.

But now, my son, listen to me, attend to what I say. Do not let your heart entice you into her ways, do not stray down her paths; many has she pierced and laid low, and her victims are without number. Her house is the entrance to Sheol, which leads down to the halls of death.

Wisdom and folly contrasted

Hear how Wisdom lifts her voice and Understanding cries out. She stands at the cross-roads, by the wayside, at the top of the hill;
beside the gate, at the entrance to the city, at the entry by the open gate she calls aloud:

Men, it is to you I call, I appeal to every man: understand, you simple fools, what it is to be shrewd; you stupid people, understand what sense means. Listen! For I will speak clearly, you will have plain speech from me; for I speak nothing but truth and my lips detest wicked talk.

All that I say is right, not a word is twisted or crooked. All is straightforward to him who can understand, all is plain to the man who has knowledge. Accept instruction and not silver, knowledge rather than pure gold; for wisdom is better than red coral, no jewels can match her. I am Wisdom, I bestow shrewdness and show the way to knowledge and prudence.

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil, Pride, presumption, evil courses, subversive talk, all these I hate. I have force, I also have ability; understanding and power are mine. Through me kings are sovereign and governors make just laws. Through me princes act like princes, from me all rulers on earth derive their nobility. Those who love me I love, those who search for me find me. In my hands are riches and honour, boundless wealth and the rewards of virtue. My harvest is better than gold, fine gold, and my revenue better than pure silver. I follow the course of virtue, my path is the path of justice; I endow with riches those who love me and I will fill their treasuries.

The LORD created me the beginning of his works, before all else that he made, long ago. Alone, I was fashioned in times long past, at the beginning, long before earth itself. When there was yet no ocean I was born, no springs brimming with water. Before the mountains were settled in their place,
long before the hills I was born,
when as yet he had made neither land nor lake
nor the first clod [the first clod: or the sum of the clods] of earth.
27When he set the heavens in their place I was there,
when he girdled the ocean with the horizon,
28when he fixed the canopy of clouds overhead
and set the springs of ocean firm in their place,
29when he prescribed its limits for the sea [prob. rdg, Heb adds and the
water shall not disobey his command]
and knit together earth’s foundations.
30Then I was at his side each day,
his darling and delight,
playing in his presence continually,
31playing on the earth, when he had finished it,
while my delight was in mankind.

32-33Now, my sons, listen to me,
listen to instruction and grow wise, do not reject it.
Happy is the man who keeps to my ways,
34happy the man who listens to me,
watching daily at my threshold
with his eyes on the doorway;
35for he who finds me finds life
and wins favour with the LORD,
36while he who finds me not, hurts himself,
and all who hate me are in love with death.’

9Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars;
2she has killed a beast and spiced her wine,
and she has spread her table.
3She has sent out her maidens to proclaim
from the highest part of the town,
4‘Come in, you simpletons.’
She says also to the fool,
5‘Come, dine with me
and taste the wine that I have spiced.
6Cease to be silly, and you will live,
you will grow in understanding.’

7Correct an insolent man, and be sneered at for your pains;
correct a bad man, and you will put yourself in the wrong.
8Do not correct the insolent or they will hate you;
correct a wise man, and he will be your friend.
9Lecture a wise man, and he will grow wiser;
teach a righteous man, and his learning. will increase.

10The first step to wisdom is the fear of the LORD,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding;
11 for through me your days will be multiplied
and years will be added to your life.
12 If you are wise, it will be to your own advantage;
if you are haughty, you alone are to blame.
13 The Lady Stupidity is a flighty creature;
the simpleton, she cares for nothing.
14 She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat in the highest part of the town,
15 to invite the passers-by indoors
as they hurry on their way:
16 ‘Come in, you simpletons’, she says.
She says also to the fool,
17 ‘Stolen water is sweet
and bread got by stealth tastes good.’
18 Little does he know that death lurks there,
that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

A collection of wise sayings

10 The proverbs of Solomon:
A wise son brings joy to his father;
a foolish son is his mother’s bane.
11 Ill-gotten wealth brings no profit;
uprightness is a safeguard against death.
12 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry [Or be afraid],
but he disappoints the cravings [Or the clamour] of the wicked.
13 Idle hands make a man poor;
busy hands grow rich.
14 A thoughtful son puts by in summer;
a son who sleeps at harvest is a disgrace.
15 Blessings are showered on the righteous;
the wicked are choked by their own violence.
16 The righteous are remembered in blessings;
the name of the wicked turns rotten.
17 A wise man takes a command to heart;
a foolish talker comes to grief.
18 A blameless life makes for security;
crooked ways bring a man down.
19 To wink at a fault causes trouble;
a frank rebuke leads to peace.
20 The words of good men are a fountain of life;
the wicked are choked by their own violence.
21 Hate is always picking a quarrel,
but love turns a blind eye to every fault.
22 The man of understanding has wisdom on his lips;
a rod is in store for the back of the fool.

14 Wise men lay up knowledge; when a fool speaks, ruin is near.
15 A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, but poverty is the undoing of the helpless.
16 The good man’s labour is his livelihood; the wicked man’s earnings bring him to a bad end.
17 Correction is the high road to life; neglect reproof and you miss the way.
18 There is no spite in a just man’s talk; it is the stupid who are fluent with calumny.
19 When men talk too much, sin is never far away; common sense holds its tongue.
20 A good man’s tongue is pure silver; the heart of the wicked is trash.
21 The lips of a good man teach many, but fools perish for want of sense.
22 The blessing of the LORD brings riches and he sends no sorrow with them.
23 Lewdness is sport for the stupid; wisdom a delight to men of understanding.
24 The fears of the wicked will overtake them; the desire of the righteous will be granted.
25 When the whirlwind has passed by, the wicked are gone; the foundations of the righteous are eternal.
26 Like vinegar on the teeth or smoke in the eyes, so is the lazy servant to his master.
27 The fear of the LORD brings length of days; the years of the wicked are few.
28 The hope of the righteous blossoms; the expectation of the wicked withers away.
29 The way of the LORD gives refuge to the honest man, but dismays those who do evil.
30 The righteous man will never be shaken; the wicked shall not remain on earth.
31 Wisdom flows from the mouth of the righteous; the subversive tongue will be rooted out.
32 The righteous man can suit his words to the occasion; the wicked know only subversive talk.

11 False scales are the LORD’s abomination; correct weights are dear to his heart.
2 When presumption comes in, in comes contempt, but wisdom goes with sagacity.
3 Honesty is a guide to the upright, but rogues are balked by their own perversity.
4 Wealth is worth nothing in the day of wrath,
but uprightness is a safeguard against death.
5 By uprightness the blameless keep their course,
but the wicked are brought down by their wickedness.
6 Uprightness saves the righteous,
but rogues are trapped in their own greed.
7 When a man dies, his thread of life ends,
and with it ends the hope of affluence.
8 A righteous man is rescued from disaster,
and the wicked man plunges into it.
9 By his words a godless man tries to ruin others,
but they are saved when the righteous plead for them.
10 A city rejoices in the prosperity of the righteous;
there is jubilation when the wicked perish.
11 By the blessing of the upright a city is built up;
the words of the wicked tear it down.
12 A man without sense despises others,
but a man of understanding holds his peace.
13 A gossip gives away secrets,
but a trusty man keeps his own counsel.
14 For want of skilful strategy an army is lost;
victory is the fruit of long planning.
15 Give a pledge for a stranger and know no peace;
refuse to stand surety and be safe.
16 Grace in a woman wins honour,
but she who hates virtue makes a home for dishonour.
Be timid in business and come to beggary;
be bold and make a fortune.
17 Loyalty brings its own reward;
a cruel man makes trouble for his kin.
18 A wicked man earns a fallacious [Or fraudulent] profit;
he who sows goodness reaps a sure reward [a sure reward: or the reward of honesty].
19 A man set on righteousness finds life,
but the pursuit of evil leads to death.
20 The LORD detests the crooked heart,
but honesty is dear to him.
21 Depend upon it: an evil man shall not escape punishment; the righteous and all their offspring shall go free.
22 Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout
is a beautiful woman without good sense.
23 The righteous desire only what is good;
the hope of the wicked comes to nothing.
24 A man may spend freely and yet grow richer;
another is sparing beyond measure, yet ends in poverty.
25 A generous man grows fat and prosperous,
and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.
26 He who withholds his grain is cursed by the people,
but he who sells his corn is blessed.

27 He who eagerly seeks what is good finds much favour,
but if a man pursues evil it turns upon him.

28 Whoever relies on his wealth is riding for a fall,
but the righteous flourish like the green leaf.

29 He who brings trouble on his family inherits the wind,
and a fool becomes slave to a wise man.

30 The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life,
but violence means the taking away of life.

31 If the righteous in the land get their deserts,
how much more the wicked man and the sinner!

12 1 He who loves correction loves knowledge;
he who hates reproof is a mere brute.

2 A good man earns favour from the LORD;
the schemer is condemned.

3 No man can establish himself by wickedness,
but good men have roots that cannot be dislodged.

4 A capable wife is her husband’s crown;
one who disgraces him is like rot in his bones.

5 The purposes of the righteous are lawful;
the designs of the wicked are full of deceit.

6 The wicked are destroyed [prob. rdg, Heb are an ambush for blood] by
their own words;
the words of the good man are his salvation.

7 Once the wicked are down, that is the end of them,
but the good man’s line continues.

8 A man is commended for his intelligence,
but a warped mind is despised.

9 It is better to be modest [Or scorned] and earn one’s living
than to be conceited [Or honoured] and go hungry.

10 A righteous man cares for his beast,
but a wicked man is cruel at heart.

11 He who tills his land has enough to eat,
but to follow idle pursuits is foolishness.

12 The stronghold of the wicked crumbles like clay [prob. rdg, Heb A wicked
man covets a stronghold of crumbling earth],
but the righteous take lasting root.

13 The wicked man is trapped by his own falsehoods,
but the righteous comes safe through trouble.

14 One man wins success by his words;
another gets his due reward by the work of his hands.

15 A fool thinks that he is always right;
wise is the man who listens to advice.

16 A fool shows his ill humour at once;
a clever man slighted conceals his feelings.

17 An honest speaker comes out with the truth,
but the false witness is full of deceit.

18 Gossip can be sharp as a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals.

19 Truth spoken stands firm for ever, but lies live only for a moment.

20 Those who plot evil delude themselves, but there is joy for those who seek the common good.

21 No mischief will befall the righteous, but wicked men get their fill of adversity.

22 The LORD detests a liar but delights in the honest man.

23 A clever man conceals his knowledge, but a stupid man broadcasts his folly.

24 Diligence brings a man to power, but laziness to forced labour.

25 An anxious heart dispirits a man, and a kind word fills him with joy.

26 A righteous man recoils from evil [recoils from evil: prob. rdg, Heb let him spy out his friend], but the wicked take a path that leads them astray.

27 The lazy hunter puts up no game, but the industrious man reaps a rich harvest [but ... harvest: prob. rdg, Heb obscure].

28 The way of honesty leads to life, but there is a well-worn path to death.

13 1 A wise man sees the reason for his father’s correction; an arrogant man will not listen to rebuke.

2 A good man enjoys the fruit of righteousness, but violence is meat and drink for the treacherous.

3 He who minds his words preserves his life; he who talks too much comes to grief.

4 A lazy man is torn by appetite unsatisfied, but the diligent grow fat and prosperous.

5 The righteous hate falsehood; the doings of the wicked are foul and deceitful.

6 To do right is the protection of an honest man, but wickedness brings sinners to grief [brings ... grief: or plays havoc with a man].

7 One man pretends to be rich, although he has nothing; another has great wealth but goes in rags [One man ... rags: or One man may grow rich though he has nothing; another may grow poor though he has great wealth].

8 A rich man must buy himself off, but a poor man is immune from threats.

9 The light of the righteous burns brightly; the embers of the wicked will be put out.
A brainless fool causes strife by his presumption; wisdom is found among friends in council.

Wealth quickly come by dwindles away, but if it comes little by little, it multiplies.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick; a wish come true is a staff of life.

To despise a word of advice is to ask for trouble; mind what you are told, and you will be rewarded.

A wise man’s teaching is a fountain of life for one who would escape the snares of death.

Good intelligence wins favour, but treachery leads to disaster.

A clever man is wise and conceals everything, but the stupid parade their folly.

An evil messenger causes trouble [causes trouble: or is unsuccessful], but a trusty envoy makes all go well again.

To refuse correction brings poverty and contempt; one who takes a reproof to heart comes to honour.

Lust indulged sickens a man [Lust ... a man: or Desire fulfilled is pleasant to the appetite]; stupid people loathe to mend their ways.

Walk with the wise and be wise; mix with the stupid and be misled.

Ill fortune follows the sinner close behind, but good rewards the righteous.

A good man leaves an inheritance to his descendants, but the sinner’s hoard passes to the righteous.

Untilled land might yield food enough for the poor, but even that may be lost through injustice.

A father who spares the rod hates his son, but one who loves him keeps him in order.

A righteous man eats his fill, but the wicked go hungry.

The wisest women build up their homes; the foolish pull them down with their own hands.

A straightforward man fears the LORD; the double-dealer scorns him.

The speech of a fool is a rod for his back [his back: prob. rdg, Heb pride]; a wise man’s words are his safeguard.

Where there are no oxen the barn is empty, but the strength of a great ox ensures rich crops.

A truthful witness is no liar; a false witness tells a pack of lies.

A conceited man seeks wisdom, yet finds none; to one of understanding, knowledge comes easily.

Avoid a stupid man,
you will hear not a word of sense from him.

8 A clever man has the wit to find the right way; the folly of stupid men misleads them.

9 A fool is too arrogant to make amends; upright men know what reconciliation means.

10 The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger has no part in its joy.

11 The house of the wicked will be torn down, but the home of the upright flourishes.

12 A road may seem straightforward to a man, yet may end as the way to death.

13 Even in laughter the heart may grieve, and mirth may end in sorrow.

14 The renegade reaps the fruit of his conduct, a good man the fruit of his own achievements.

15 A simple man believes every word he hears; a clever man understands the need for proof.

16 A wise man is cautious and turns his back on evil; the stupid is heedless and falls headlong.

17 Impatience runs into folly; distinction comes by careful thought [distinction ... thought: prob. rdg, Heb a man of careful thought is hated].

18 The simple wear the trappings of folly; the clever are crowned with knowledge.

19 Evil men cringe before the good, wicked men at the righteous man’s door.

20 A poor man is odious even to his friend; the rich have friends in plenty.

21 He who despises a hungry man does wrong, but he who is generous to the poor is happy.

22 Do not those who intend evil go astray, while those with good intentions are loyal and faithful?

23 The pains of toil bring gain, but mere talk brings nothing but poverty.

24 Insight is the crown of the wise; folly the chief ornament of the stupid.

25 A truthful witness saves life; the false accuser utters nothing but lies.

26 A strong man who trusts in the fear of the LORD will be a refuge for his sons.

27 The fear of the LORD is the fountain of life for the man who would escape the snares of death.

28 Many subjects make a famous king; with none to rule, a prince is ruined.

29 To be patient shows great understanding; quick temper is the height of folly.

30 A tranquil mind puts flesh on a man,
but passion rots his bones.

31 He who oppresses [Or slanders] the poor insults his Maker; he who is generous to the needy honours him.

32 An evil man is brought down by his wickedness; the upright man is secure in his own honesty.

33 Wisdom is at home in a discerning mind, but is ill at ease in the heart of a fool.

34 Righteousness raises a people to honour; to do wrong is a disgrace to any nation.

35 A king shows favour to an intelligent servant, but his displeasure strikes down those who fail him.

15 A soft answer turns away anger, but a sharp word makes tempers hot.

2 A wise man’s tongue spreads knowledge; stupid men talk nonsense.

3 The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, surveying evil and good men alike.

4 A soothing word is a staff of life, but a mischievous tongue breaks the spirit.

5 A fool spurns his father’s correction, but to take a reproof to heart shows good sense.

6 In the righteous man’s house there is ample wealth; the gains of the wicked bring trouble.

7 The lips of a wise man promote knowledge; the hearts of the stupid are dishonest.

8 The wicked man’s sacrifice is abominable to the LORD; the good man’s prayer is his delight.

9 The conduct of the wicked is abominable to the LORD, but he loves the seeker after righteousness.

10 A man who leaves the main road resents correction, and he who hates reproof will die.

11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, how much more the hearts of men!

12 The conceited man does not take kindly to reproof and he will not consult the wise.

13 A merry heart makes a cheerful face; heartache crushes the spirit.

14 A discerning mind seeks knowledge, but the stupid man feeds on folly.

15 In the life of the downtrodden every day is wretched, but to have a glad heart is a perpetual feast.

16 Better a pittance with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble in its train.

17 Better a dish of vegetables if love go with it than a fat ox eaten in hatred.

18 Bad temper provokes a quarrel,
but patience heals discords.
19 The path of the sluggard is a tangle of weeds,
but the road of the diligent is a highway.
20 A wise son brings joy to his father;
a young fool despises his mother.
21 Folly may amuse the empty-headed;
a man of understanding makes straight for his goal.
22 Schemes lightly made come to nothing,
but with long planning they succeed.
23 A man may be pleased with his own retort;
how much better is a word in season!
24 For men of intelligence the path of life leads upwards
and keeps them clear of Sheol below.
25 The LORD pulls down the proud man’s home
but fixes the widow’s boundary-stones.
26 A bad man’s thoughts are the LORD’s abomination,
but the words of the pure are a delight [the words ... delight: or gracious
words are pure].
27 A grasping man brings trouble on his family,
but he who spurns a bribe will enjoy long life.
28 The righteous think before they answer;
a bad man’s ready tongue is full of mischief.
29 The LORD stands aloof from the wicked,
he listens to the righteous man’s prayer.
30 A bright look brings joy to the heart,
and good news warms a man’s marrow.
31 Whoever listens to wholesome reproof
shall enjoy the society of the wise.
32 He who refuses correction is his own worst enemy,
but he who listens to reproof learns sense.
33 The fear of the LORD is a training in wisdom,
and the way to honour is humility.

16 1 A man may order his thoughts,
but the LORD inspires the words he utters.
2 A man’s whole conduct may be pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD fixes a standard for the spirit of man.
3 Commit to the LORD all that you do,
and your plans will be fulfilled.
4 The LORD has made each thing for its own end;
he made even the wicked for a day of disaster.
5 Proud men, one and all, are abominable to the LORD;
depend upon it: they will not escape punishment.
6 Guilt is wiped out by faith and loyalty,
and the fear of the LORD makes men turn from evil.
7 When the LORD is pleased with a man and his ways,
he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.
Better a pittance honestly earned than great gains ill gotten.

Man plans his journey by his own wit, but it is the LORD who guides his steps.

The king's mouth is an oracle, he cannot err when he passes sentence.

Scales [Or Pointer] and balances [prob. rdg, Heb balances of justice] are the LORD's concern; all the weights in the bag are his business.

Wickedness is abhorrent to kings, for a throne rests firm on righteousness.

 Honest speech is the desire of kings, they love a man who speaks the truth.

A king's anger is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it.

In the light of the king's countenance is life, his favour is like a rain-cloud in the spring.

How much better than gold it is to gain wisdom, and to gain discernment is better than pure silver.

To turn from evil is the highway of the upright; watch your step and save your life.

Pride comes before disaster, and arrogance before a fall.

Better sit humbly with those in need than divide the spoil with the proud.

The shrewd man of business will succeed well, but the happy man is he who trusts in the LORD.

The sensible man seeks advice from the wise, he drinks it in and increases his knowledge [he drinks ... knowledge: or and he whose speech is persuasive increases learning].

Intelligence is a fountain of life to its possessors, but a fool is punished by his own folly.

The wise man's mind guides his speech, and what his lips impart increases learning [and what ... learning: or and increases the learning of his utterance].

Kind words are like dripping honey, sweetness on the tongue and health for the body.

A road may seem straightforward to a man, yet may end as the way to death.

The labourer's appetite is always plaguing him, his hunger spurs him on.

A scoundrel repeats evil gossip; it is like a scorching fire on his lips.

Disaffection stirs up quarrels, and tale-bearing breaks up friendship.

A man of violence draws others on and leads them into lawless ways.
The man who narrows his eyes is disaffected at heart, and a close-lipped man is bent on mischief.
Grey hair is a crown of glory, and it is won by a virtuous life.
Better be slow to anger than a fighter, better govern one’s temper than capture a city.
The lots may be cast into the lap, but the issue depends wholly on the LORD.

17 Better a dry crust and concord with it than a house full of feasting and strife.
A wise slave may give orders to a disappointing son and share the inheritance with the brothers.
The melting-pot is for silver and the crucible for gold, but it is the LORD who assays the hearts of men.
A rogue gives a ready ear to mischievous talk, and a liar listens to slander.
A man who sneers at the poor insults his Maker, and he who gloats over another’s ruin will answer for it.
Grandchildren are the crown of old age, and sons are proud of their fathers.
Fine talk is out of place in a boor, how much more is falsehood in the noble!
He who offers a bribe finds it work like a charm, he prospers in all he undertakes.
He who conceals another’s offence seeks his goodwill, but he who harps on something breaks up friendship.
A reproof is felt by a man of discernment more than a hundred blows by a stupid man.
An evil man is set only on disobedience, but a messenger without mercy will be sent against him.
Better face a she-bear robbed of her cubs than a stupid man in his folly.
If a man repays evil for good, evil will never quit his house.
Stealing water starts a quarrel; drop a dispute before you bare your teeth.
To acquit the wicked and condemn the righteous, both are abominable in the LORD’s sight.
What use is money in the hands of a stupid man? Can he buy wisdom if he has no sense?
A friend is a loving companion at all times, and a brother is born to share troubles.
A man is without sense who gives a guarantee and surrenders himself to another as surety.
He who loves strife loves sin.
He who builds a lofty entrance invites thieves.
A crooked heart will come to no good, and a mischievous tongue will end in disaster.

A stupid man is the bane of his parent, and his father has no joy in a boorish son.

A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but low spirits sap a man’s strength.

A wicked man accepts a bribe under his cloak to pervert the course of justice.

Wisdom is never out of sight of a discerning man, but a stupid man’s eyes are roving everywhere.

A stupid son exasperates his father and is a bitter sorrow to the mother who bore him.

Again, to punish the righteous is not good and it is wrong to inflict blows on men of noble mind.

Experience uses few words; discernment keeps a cool head.

Even a fool, if he holds his peace, is thought wise; keep your mouth shut and show your good sense.

18 The man who holds aloof seeks every pretext to bare his teeth in scorn at competent people.

2 The foolish have no interest in seeking to understand, but prefer to display their wit.

3 When wickedness comes in, in comes contempt; with loss of honour comes reproach.

4 The words of a man’s mouth are a gushing torrent, but deep is the water in the well of wisdom [The words ... wisdom: prob. rdg, inverting phrases].

5 It is not good to show favour to the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice.

6 When the stupid man talks, contention follows; his words provoke blows.

7 The stupid man’s tongue is his undoing; his lips put his life in jeopardy.

8 A gossip’s whispers are savoury morsels, gulped down into the inner man.

9 Again, the lazy worker is own brother to the man who enjoys destruction.

10 The name of the LORD is a tower of strength, where the righteous may run for refuge.

11 A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, a towering wall, so he supposes.

12 Before disaster comes, a man is proud, but the way to honour is humility.

13 To answer a question before you have heard it out is both stupid and insulting.

14 A man’s spirit may sustain him in sickness,
but if the spirit is wounded, who can mend it?

15. Knowledge comes to the discerning mind; the wise ear listens to get knowledge.

16. A gift opens the door to the giver and gains access to the great.

17. In a lawsuit the first speaker seems right until another steps forward and cross-questions him.

18. Cast lots, and settle a quarrel, and so keep litigants apart.

19. A reluctant brother is more unyielding than a fortress, and quarrels are stubborn as the bars of a castle.

20. A man may live by the fruit of his tongue, his lips may earn him a livelihood.

21. The tongue has power of life and death; make friends with it and enjoy its fruits.

22. Find a wife, and you find a good thing; so you will earn the favour of the LORD.

23. The poor man speaks in a tone of entreaty, and the rich man gives a harsh answer.

24. Some companions are good only for idle talk, but a friend may stick closer than a brother.

19

Better be poor and above reproach than rich and crooked in speech.

2. Again, desire without knowledge is not good; the man in a hurry misses the way.

3. A man's own folly wrecks his life, and then he bears a grudge against the LORD.

4. Wealth makes many friends, but a man without means loses the friend he has.

5. A false witness will not escape punishment, and one who utters nothing but lies will not go free.

6. Many curry favour with the great; a lavish giver has the world for his friend.

7. A poor man's brothers all dislike him, how much more is he shunned by his friends! Practice in evil makes the perfect scoundrel; the man who talks too much meets his deserts.

8. To learn sense is true self-love; cherish discernment and make sure of success.

9. A false witness will not escape punishment, and one who utters nothing but lies will perish.

10. A fool at the helm is out of place, how much worse a slave in command of men of rank!

11. To be patient shows intelligence; to overlook faults is a man's glory.

12. A king's rage is like a lion's roar,
his favour like dew on the grass.
A stupid son is a calamity to his father;
a nagging wife is like water dripping endlessly.
Home and wealth may come down from ancestors,
but an intelligent wife is a gift from the LORD.
Laziness is the undoing of the worthless;
idlers must starve.
To keep the commandments keeps a man safe,
but scorning the way of the LORD brings death.
He who is generous to the poor lends to the LORD;
he will repay him in full measure.
Chastise your son while there is hope for him,
but be careful not to flog him to death.
A man’s ill temper brings its own punishment;
try to save him, and you make matters worse.
Listen to advice and accept instruction,
and you will die a wise man.
A man’s heart may be full of schemes,
but the LORD’s purpose will prevail.
Greed is a disgrace to a man;
better be a poor man than a liar.
The fear of the LORD is life;
he who is full of it will rest untouched by evil.
The sluggard plunges his hand in the dish
but will not so much as lift it to his mouth.
Strike an arrogant man, and he resents it like a fool;
reprove an understanding man, and he understands what you mean.
He who talks his father down vexes his mother;
he is a son to bring shame and disgrace on them.
A son who ceases to accept correction
is sure to turn his back on the teachings of knowledge.
A rascally witness perverts justice,
and the talk of the wicked fosters mischief.
There is a rod in pickle for the arrogant,
and blows ready for the stupid man’s back.

Wine is an insolent fellow, and strong drink makes an uproar;
no one addicted to their company grows wise.
A king’s threat is like a lion’s roar;
one who ignores it is his own worst enemy.
To draw back from a dispute is honourable;
it is the fool who bares his teeth.
The sluggard who does not plough in autumn
goes begging at harvest and gets nothing.
Counsel in another’s heart is like deep water,
but a discerning man will draw it up.
Many a man protests his loyalty,
but where will you find one to keep faith?
7 If a man leads a good and upright life, happy are the sons who come after him!
8 A king seated on the judgement-throne has an eye to sift all that is evil.
9 Who can say, 'I have a clear conscience; I am purged from my sin'?
10 A double standard in weights and measures is an abomination to the LORD.
11 Again, a young man is known by his actions, whether his conduct is innocent or guilty [prob. rdg, Heb upright].
12 The ear that hears, the eye that sees, the LORD made them both.
13 Love sleep, and you will end in poverty; keep your eyes open, and you will eat your fill..
14 'A bad bargain!' says the buyer to the seller, but off he goes to brag about it.
15 There is gold in plenty and coral too, but a wise word is a rare jewel.
16 Take a man’s garment when he pledges his word for a stranger and hold that as a pledge for the unknown person.
17 Bread got by fraud tastes good, but afterwards it fills the mouth with grit.
18 Care is the secret of good planning; Wars are won by skilful strategy.
19 A gossip will betray secrets [Or He who betrays secrets is a gossip]; have nothing to do with a tattler.
20 If a man reviles father and mother, his lamp will go out when darkness comes.
21 If you begin by piling up property in haste, it will bring you no blessing in the end.
22 Do not think to repay evil for evil, Wait for the LORD to deliver you.
23 A double standard in weights is an abomination to the LORD, and false scales are not good in his sight.
24 It is the LORD who directs a man’s steps; how can mortal man understand the road he travels?
25 It is dangerous to dedicate a gift rashly or to make a vow and have second thoughts.
26 A wise king sifts out the wicked and turns back for them the wheel of fortune.
27 The LORD shines into a man’s very soul, searching out his inmost being.
28 A king’s guards are loyalty and good faith, his throne is upheld by righteousness.
29 The glory of young men is their strength, the dignity of old men their grey hairs.
30A good beating purges the mind,  
and blows chasten the inmost being.

21\(^1\)The king’s heart is under the LORD’s hand;  
like runnels of water, he turns it wherever he will.

2A man may think that he is always right,  
but the LORD fixes a standard for the heart.

3Do what is right and just;  
that is more pleasing to the LORD than sacrifice.

4Haughty looks and a proud heart –  
these sins mark a wicked man.

5Forethought and diligence are sure of profit;  
the man in a hurry is as sure of poverty.

6He who makes a fortune by telling lies  
runs needlessly into the toils of death.

7The wicked are caught up in their own violence,  
because they refuse to do what is just.

8The criminal’s conduct is tortuous;  
straight dealing is a sign of integrity.

9Better to live in a corner of the house-top  
than have a nagging wife and a brawling household.

10The wicked man is set on evil;  
he has no pity to spare for his friend.

11The simple man is made wise when he sees the insolent punished,  
and learns his lesson when the wise man prospers.

12\[^2\]The just God [Or The just man] makes the wicked man’s home childless  
[makes ... childless: prob. rdg, Heb considers the wicked man’s home];  
he overturns the wicked and ruins them.

13If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the helpless,  
he will cry for help himself and not be heard.

14A gift in secret placates an angry man;  
a bribe slipped under the cloak pacifies great wrath.

15When justice is done, all good men rejoice,  
but it brings ruin to evildoers.

16A man who takes leave of common sense  
comes to rest in the company of the dead.

17Love pleasure and you will beg your bread;  
a man who loves wine and oil will never grow rich.

18The wicked man serves as a ransom for the righteous,  
so does a traitor for the upright.

19Better to live alone in the desert  
than with a nagging and ill-tempered wife.

20The wise man has his home full of fine and costly treasures;  
the stupid man is a mere spendthrift.

21Persevere in right conduct and loyalty  
and you shall find life and honour.

22A wise man climbs into a city full of armed men
and undermines its strength and its confidence.

23 Keep a guard over your lips and tongue
and keep yourself out of trouble.

24 The conceited man is haughty, his name is insolence;
conceit and impatience are in all he does.

25 The sluggard’s cravings will be the death of him,
because his hands refuse to work;

26 all day long his cravings go unsatisfied,
while the righteous man gives without stint.

27 The wicked man’s sacrifice is an abomination to the LORD;
how much more when he offers it with viliness at heart!

28 A lying witness will perish,
but he whose words ring true will leave children behind him.

29 A wicked man puts a bold face on it,
whereas the upright man secures his line of retreat.

30 Face to face with the LORD,
wisdom, understanding, counsel go for nothing.

31 A horse may be made ready for the day of battle,
but victory comes from the LORD.

22 1 A good name is more to be desired than great riches;
estee is better than silver or gold.

2 Rich and poor have this in common:
the LORD made them both.

3 A shrewd man sees trouble coming and lies low;
the simple walk into it and pay the penalty.

4 The fruit of humility is the fear of God
with riches and honour and life.

5 The crooked man’s path is set with snares and pitfalls;
the cautious man will steer clear of them.

6 Start a boy on the right road,
and even in old age he will not leave it.

7 The rich lord it over the poor;
the borrower becomes the lender’s slave.

8 The man who sows injustice reaps trouble,
and the end of his work will be the rod [the rod: or the threshing].

9 The kindly man will be blessed,
for he shares his food with the poor.

10 Drive out the insolent man, and strife goes with him;
if he sits on the bench, he makes a mockery of justice.

11 The LORD loves a sincere man;
but you will make a king your friend with your fine phrases.

12 The LORD keeps watch over every claim at law,
and overturns the scoundrel’s case.

13 The sluggard protests, ‘There’s a lion outside;
I shall get myself killed in the street.’

14 The words of an adulteress are like a deep pit;
those whom the LORD has cursed will fall into it.

15 Folly is deep-rooted in the heart of a boy; a good beating will drive it right out of him.

16 Oppression of the poor may bring gain to a man, but giving to the rich leads only to penury.

Thirty wise sayings

17 The sayings of the wise:

Pay heed and listen to my words, open your mind to the knowledge I impart; to keep them in your heart will be a pleasure, and then you will always have them ready on your lips.

19 I would have you trust in the LORD and so I tell you these things this day for your own good.

20 Here I have written out for you thirty sayings, full of knowledge and wise advice, to impart to you a knowledge of the truth, that you may take back a true report [prob. rdg, Heb adds words of truth] to him who sent you.

22 Never rob a helpless man because he is helpless, nor ill-treat a poor wretch in court; for the LORD will take up their cause and rob him who robs them of their livelihood.

24 Never make friends with an angry man nor keep company with a bad-tempered one; be careful not to learn his ways, or you will find yourself caught in a trap.

26 Never be one to give guarantees, or to pledge yourself as surety for another; for if you cannot pay, beware: your bed will be taken from under you.

28 Do not move the ancient boundary-stone which your forefathers set up.

29 You see a man skilful at his craft: he will serve kings, he will not serve common men.

23 When you sit down to eat with a ruling prince, be sure to keep your mind on what is before you, and if you are a greedy man, cut your throat first.

3 Do not be greedy for his dainties, for they are not what they seem.

4 Do not slave to get wealth [to get wealth: or for an invitation to a feast]; be a sensible man, and give up.

5 Before you can look round, it will be gone; it will surely grow wings like an eagle, like a bird in the sky.
Do not go to dinner with a miser [Or a man with an evil eye], do not be greedy for his dainties; for they will stick in your [prob. rdg, Heb his] throat like a hair. He will bid you eat and drink, but his heart is not with you; you will bring up the mouthful you have eaten, and your winning words will have been wasted. 

Hold your tongue in the hearing of a stupid man; for he will despise your words of wisdom. 

Do not move the ancient boundary-stone or encroach on the land of orphans: they have a powerful guardian who will take up their cause against you. 

Apply your mind to instruction and open your ears to knowledge when it speaks. 

Do not withhold discipline from a boy; take the stick to him, and save him from death. If you take the stick to him yourself, you will preserve him from the jaws of death. 

My son, if you are wise at heart, my heart in its turn will be glad; I shall rejoice with all my soul when you speak plain truth. 

Do not try to emulate sinners; envy only those who fear the LORD day by day; do this, and you may look forward to the future, and your thread of life will not be cut short. 

Listen, my son, listen, and become wise; set your mind on the right course. 

Do not keep company with drunkards or those who are greedy for the fleshpots; for drink and greed will end in poverty, and drunken stupor goes in rags. 

Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, never sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. 

A good man’s father will rejoice and he who has a wise son will delight in him. Give your father and your mother cause for delight, let her who bore you rejoice. 

My son, mark my words, and accept my guidance with a will.
27 A prostitute is a deep pit,  
a loose woman a narrow well;  
28 she lies in wait like a robber  
and betrays her husband with man after man.

29 Whose is the misery? whose the remorse?  
Whose are the quarrels and the anxiety?  
Who gets the bruises without knowing why?  
Whose eyes are bloodshot?
30 Those who linger late over their wine,  
those who are always trying some new spiced liquor.  
31 Do not gulp down the wine, the strong red wine,  
when the droplets form on the side of the cup [prob. rdg, Heb adds it runs  
smoothly to and fro];
32 in the end it will bite like a snake  
and sting like a cobra.
33 Then your eyes see strange sights,  
your wits and your speech are confused;
34 you become like a man tossing out at sea,  
like one who clings to [clings to: prob. rdg, Heb lies on] the top of the  
rigging;
35 you say, ‘If it lays me flat, what do I care?  
If it brings me to the ground, what of it?  
As soon as I wake up,  
I shall turn to it again.’

24 1 Do not emulate wicked men  
or long to make friends with them;  
2 for violence is all they think of,  
and all they say means mischief.

3 Wisdom builds the house,  
good judgement makes it secure,
4 knowledge furnishes the rooms  
with all the precious and pleasant things that wealth can buy.

5 Wisdom prevails over strength,  
knowledge over brute force;
6 for wars are won by skilful strategy,  
and victory is the fruit of long planning.

7 Wisdom is too high for a fool;  
he dare not open his mouth in court.

8 A man who is bent on mischief  
gets a name for intrigue;  
9 the intrigues of foolish men misfire,  
and the insolent man is odious to his fellows.
10 If your strength fails on a lucky [lucky: prob. rdg, Heb omitted] day, how helpless will you be on a day of disaster!

11 When you see a man being dragged to be killed, go to his rescue, and save those being hurried away to their death.
12 If you say, ‘But I do not know this man’, God, who fixes a standard for the heart, will take note. God who watches you – be sure he will know; he will requite every man for what he does.

13 Eat honey, my son, for it is good, and the honeycomb so sweet upon the tongue.
14 Make wisdom too your own; if you find it, you may look forward to the future, and your thread of life will not be cut short.

15 Do not lie in wait like a felon at the good man’s house, or raid his farm.
16 Though the good man may fall seven times, he is soon up again, but the rascal is brought down by misfortune.
17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, do not gloat when he is brought down;
18 or the LORD will see and be displeased with you, and he will cease to be angry with him.

19 Do not vie with evildoers or emulate the wicked;
20 for wicked men have no future to look forward to; their embers will be put out.

21 My son, fear the LORD and grow rich, but have nothing to do with men of rank,
22 they will bring about disaster without warning; who knows what ruin such men may cause [they ... cause: or they will come to sudden disaster; who knows what the ruin of such men will be]?

23 More sayings of wise men:
Partiality in dispensing justice is not good.
24 A judge who pronounces a guilty man innocent is cursed by all nations, all peoples execrate him;
25 but for those who convict the guilty all will go well, they will be blessed with prosperity.
26 A straightforward answer is as good as a kiss of friendship.

27 First put all in order out of doors and make everything ready on the land;
then establish your house and home.

28 Do not be a witness against your neighbour without good reason nor misrepresent him in your evidence.
29 Do not say, ‘I will do to him what he has done to me; I will requite him for what he has done.’

30 I passed by the field of an idle man, by the vineyard of a man with no sense.
31 I looked, and it was all dried up, it was overgrown with thistles and covered with weeds, and the stones of its walls had been torn down.
32 I saw and I took good note, I considered and learnt the lesson:
33 a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands in rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, want like a ruffian.

Other collections of wise sayings

25 More proverbs of Solomon transcribed by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah:

2 The glory of God is to keep things hidden but the glory of kings is to fathom them.
3 The heavens for height, the earth [Or the underworld] for depth: unfathomable is the heart of a king.
4 Rid silver of its impurities, then it may go to [then it may go to: or and it will come out bright for] the silversmith;
5 rid the king’s presence of wicked men, and his throne will rest firmly on righteousness.
6 Do not put yourself forward in the king’s presence or take your place among the great;
7 for it is better that he should say to you, ‘Come up here’, than move you down to make room for a nobleman.
8 Be in no hurry to tell everyone what you have seen, or it will end in bitter reproaches from your friend.
9 Argue your own case with your neighbour, but do not reveal another man’s secrets,
10 or he will reproach you when he hears of it and your indiscretion will then be beyond recall.
11 Like apples of gold set in silver filigree is a word spoken in season.
12 Like a golden earring or a necklace of Nubian gold is a wise man whose reproof finds attentive ears.
Like the coolness of snow in harvest
is a trusty messenger to those who send him [prob. rdg, Heb adds refreshing his master].

Like clouds and wind that bring no rain
is the man who boasts of gifts he never gives.

A prince may be persuaded by patience,
and a soft tongue may break down solid bone [solid bone: or authority].

If you find honey, eat only what you need,
too much of it will make you sick;

be sparing in visits to your neighbour’s house,
if he sees too much of you, he will dislike you.

Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow
is a false witness who denounces his friend.

Like a tooth decayed or a foot limping
is a traitor relied on in the day of trouble.

Like one who dresses [prob. rdg, Heb adds a garment on a cold day] a
wound with vinegar,
so is the sweetest of singers to the heavy-hearted.

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;

so you will heap glowing coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.

As the north wind holds back the rain,
so an angry glance holds back slander.

Better to live in a corner of the house-top
than have a nagging wife and a brawling household.

Like cold water to the throat when it is dry
is good news from a distant land.

Like a muddied spring or a tainted well
is a righteous man who gives way to a wicked one.

A surfeit of honey is bad for a man,
and the quest for honour is burdensome.

Like a city that has burst out of its confining walls [Or that is breached and left unwalls]
is a man who cannot control his temper.

Like snow in summer or rain at harvest,
honour is unseasonable in a stupid man.

Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow,
groundless abuse gets nowhere.

The whip for a horse, the bridle for an ass,
the rod for the back of a fool!

Do not answer a stupid man in the language of his folly,
or you will grow like him;

answer a stupid man as his folly deserves,
or he will think himself a wise man.

He who sends a fool on an errand
cuts his own leg off and displays the stump.
7 A proverb in the mouth of stupid men
dangles helpless as a lame man’s legs.
8 Like one who gets the stone caught in his sling
is he who bestows honour on a fool.
9 Like a thorn that pierces a drunkard’s hand
is a proverb in a stupid man’s mouth.
10 Like an archer who shoots at any passer-by [passer-by: transposed from end of verse]
is one who hires a stupid man or a drunkard.
11 Like a dog returning to its vomit
is a stupid man who repeats his folly.
12 Do you see that man who thinks himself so wise?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.
13 The sluggard protests, ‘There is a lion [Or snake] in the highway,
a lion at large in the streets.’
14 A door turns on its hinges,
a sluggard on his bed.
15 A sluggard plunges his hand in the dish
but is too lazy to lift it to his mouth.
16 A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
than seven men who answer sensibly.
17 Like a man who seizes a passing cur by the ears
is he who meddles in another’s quarrel.
19[vv18 and 19 transposed] A man who deceives another
and then says, ‘It was only a joke’,
is like a madman shooting at random
his deadly darts and arrows.
20 For lack of fuel a fire dies down
and for want of a tale-bearer a quarrel subsides.
21 Like bellows for the coal and fuel for the fire
is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
22 A gossip’s whispers are savoury morsels
 gulped down into the inner man.
23 Glib speech that covers a spiteful heart
is like glaze spread on earthenware.
24 With his lips an enemy may speak you fair
but inwardly he harbours deceit;
25 when his words are gracious, do not trust him,
for seven abominations fill his heart;
26 he may cloak his enmity in dissimulation,
but his wickedness is shown up before the assembly.
27 If he digs a pit, he will fall into it;
if he rolls a stone, it will roll back upon him.
28 A lying tongue makes innocence seem guilty,
and smooth words conceal their sting.
27 Do not flatter yourself about tomorrow, for you never know what a day will bring forth.  
2Let flattery come from a stranger, not from yourself, from the lips of an outsider and not from your own.  
3Stone is a burden and sand a dead weight, but to be vexed by a fool is more burdensome than either.  
4Wrath is cruel and anger is a deluge; but who can stand up to jealousy?  
5Open reproof is better than love concealed.  
6The blows a friend gives are well meant, but the kisses of an enemy are perfidious.  
7A man full-fed refuses honey, but even bitter food tastes sweet to a hungry man.  
8Like a bird that strays far from its nest is a man far from his home.  
9Oil and perfume bring joy to the heart, but cares torment a man’s very soul.  
10Do not neglect your own friend or your father’s; a neighbour at hand is better than a brother far away.  
11Be wise, my son, then you will bring joy to my heart, and I shall be able to forestall my critics.  
12A shrewd man sees trouble coming and lies low; the simple walk into it and pay the penalty.  
13Take a man’s garment when he pledges his word for a stranger and hold that as a pledge for the unknown person.  
14If one man greets another too heartily, he may give great offence.  
15Endless dripping on a rainy day – that is what a nagging wife is like.  
16As well try to control the wind as to control her! As well try to pick up oil in one’s fingers!  
17As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens the wits of another.  
18He who guards the fig-tree will eat its fruit, and he who watches his master’s interests will come to honour.  
19As face answers face reflected in the water, so one man’s heart answers another’s.  
20Sheol and Abaddon are insatiable; a man’s eyes too are never satisfied.  
21The melting-pot is for silver and the crucible for gold, but praise is the test of character.  
22Pound a fool with pestle and mortar, his folly will never be knocked out of him.  
23Be careful to know your own sheep
and take good care of your flocks;
for possessions do not last for ever,
nor will a crown endure to endless generations.
The grass disappears, new shoots are seen
and the green growth on the hills is gathered in;
the lambs clothe you,
the he-goats are worth the price of a field,
while the goats’ milk is enough for your food
and nourishment for your maidens.

28 The wicked man runs away with no one in pursuit,
but the righteous is like a young lion in repose.
2It is the fault of a violent man that quarrels start,
but they are settled by a man of discernment.
3A tyrant oppressing the poor
is like driving rain which ruins the crop.
4The lawless praise wicked men;
the law-abiding contend with them.
5Bad men do not know what justice is,
but those who seek the LORD know everything good.
6Better be poor and above reproach
than rich and crooked.
7A discerning son observes the law,
but one who keeps riotous company wounds his father.
8He who grows rich by lending at discount or at interest
is saving for another who will be generous to the poor.
9If a man turns a deaf ear to the law,
even his prayers are an abomination.
10He who tempts the upright into evil courses
will himself fall into the pit he has dug.
The honest shall inherit a fortune,
but the wicked shall inherit nothing.
11The rich man may think himself wise,
but a poor man of discernment sees through him.
12When the just are in power, there are great celebrations [Or there is great pageantry],
but when the wicked come to the top, others are downtrodden.
13Conceal your faults, and you will not prosper;
confess and give them up, and you will find mercy.
14Happy the man who is scrupulous in conduct,
but he who hardens his heart falls into misfortune.
15Like a starving lion or a thirsty bear
is a wicked man ruling a helpless people.
16The man who is stupid and grasping will perish,
but he who hates ill-gotten gain will live long.
17A man charged with bloodshed
will jump into a well to escape arrest.
18 Whoever leads an honest life will be safe, 
but a rogue will fail, one way or another.
19 One who cultivates his land has plenty to eat; 
idle pursuits lead to poverty.
20 A man of steady character will enjoy many blessings, 
but one in a hurry to grow rich will not go unpunished.
21 To show favour is not good; 
but men will do wrong for a mere crust of bread.
22 The miser [Or The man with the evil eye] is in a hurry to grow rich, 
never dreaming that want will overtake him.
23 Take a man to task and in the end win more thanks 
than the man with a flattering tongue.
24 To rob your father or mother and say you do no wrong 
is no better than wanton destruction.
25 A self-important [Or grasping] man provokes quarrels, 
but he who trusts in the LORD grows fat and prosperous.
26 It is plain stupidity to trust in one’s own wits, 
but he who walks the path of wisdom will come safely through.
27 He who gives to the poor will never want, 
but he who turns a blind eye gets nothing but curses.
28 When the wicked come to the top, others are pulled down [are pulled down: or hide themselves]; 
but, when they perish, the righteous come into power.

29 A man who is still stubborn after much reproof 
will suddenly be broken past mending.
2 When the righteous are in power the people rejoice, 
but they groan when the wicked hold office.
3 A lover of wisdom brings joy to his father, 
but one who keeps company with harlots squanders his wealth.
4 By just government a king gives his country stability, 
but by forced contributions he reduces it to ruin.
5 A man who flatters his neighbour 
is spreading a net for his feet.
6 An evil man is ensnared by his sin [An evil ... sin: or When an evil man steps out a trap awaits him], 
but a righteous man lives and flourishes.
7 The righteous man is concerned for the cause of the helpless, 
but the wicked understand no such concern.
8 Arrogance can inflame a city, 
but wisdom averts the people’s anger.
9 If a wise man goes to law with a fool, 
he will meet abuse or derision, but get no remedy.
10 Men who have tasted blood hate an honest man, 
but the upright set much store by his life.
11 A stupid man gives free rein to his anger; 
a wise man waits and lets it grow cool.
If a prince listens to falsehood, all his servants will be wicked.

Poor man and oppressor have this in common: what happiness each has comes from the LORD.

A king who steadfastly deals out justice to the weak will be secure for ever on his throne.

Rod and reprimand impart wisdom, but a boy who runs wild brings shame on his mother.

When the wicked are in power, sin is in power, but the righteous will gloat over their downfall.

Correct your son, and he will be a comfort to you and bring you delights of every kind.

Where there is no one in authority [Or no vision], the people break loose, but a guardian of the law keeps them on the straight path.

Mere words will not keep a slave in order; he may understand, but he will not respond.

When you see someone over-eager to speak [Or someone hasty in business], there will be more hope for a fool than for him.

Pamper a slave from boyhood, and in the end he will prove ungrateful.

A man prone to anger provokes a quarrel and a hot-head is always doing wrong.

Pride will bring a man low; a man lowly in spirit wins honour.

He who goes shares with a thief is his own enemy: he hears himself put on oath and dare not give evidence.

A man’s fears will prove a snare to him, but he who trusts in the LORD has a high tower of refuge.

Many seek audience of a prince, but in every case the LORD decides.

The righteous cannot abide an unjust man, nor the wicked a man whose conduct is upright.

**Sayings of Agur son of Jakeh from Massa** [from Massa: prob. rdg, cp 31.1; Heb the oracle]:

This is the great man’s very word: I am weary, O God, I am weary and worn out;

I am a dumb brute, scarcely a man, without a man’s powers of understanding;

I have not learnt wisdom nor have I received knowledge from the Holy One.

Who has ever gone up to heaven and come down again? Who has cupped the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has bound up the waters in the fold of his garment? Who has fixed the boundaries of the earth? What is his name or his son’s name, if you know it?
5 God’s every promise has stood the test:
    he is a shield to all who seek refuge with him.
6 Add nothing to his words,
    or he will expose you for a liar.
7 Two things I ask of thee;
    do not withhold them from me before I die.
8 Put fraud and lying far from me;
    give me neither poverty nor wealth,
    provide me only with the food I need.
9 If I have too much, I shall deny thee
    and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’
    If I am reduced to poverty, I shall steal
    and blacken the name of my God.

10 Never disparage a slave to his master,
    or he will speak ill of you, and you will pay for it.

11 There is a sort of people who defame their fathers
    and do not speak well of their own mothers;
12 a sort who are pure in their own eyes
    and yet are not cleansed of their filth;
13 a sort – how haughty are their looks,
    how disdainful their glances!
14 A sort whose teeth are swords,
    their jaws are set with knives,
    they eat the wretched out of the country
    and the needy out of house and home
    [house and home: prob. rdg, Heb man].

15 The leech has two daughters;
    ‘Give’, says one, and ‘Give’, says the other.

Three things there are which will never be satisfied,
    four which never say, ‘Enough!’
16 The grave and a barren womb [Or a woman’s desire],
    a land thirsty for water
    and fire that never says, ‘Enough!’

17 The eye that mocks a father or scorns a mother’s old age [old age: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible]
    will be plucked out by magpies
    or eaten by the vulture’s young.

18 Three things there are which are too wonderful for me,
    four which I do not understand:
19 the way of a vulture in the sky,
    the way of a serpent on the rock,
    the way of a ship out at sea,
and the way of a man with a girl.

20 The way of an unfaithful wife is this: she eats, then she wipes her mouth and says, 'I have done no harm.'

21 At three things the earth shakes, four things it cannot bear:
22 a slave turned king, a churl gorging himself,
23 a woman unloved when she is married, and a slave-girl displacing her mistress.

24 Four things there are which are smallest on earth yet wise beyond the wisest:
25 ants, a people with no strength, yet they prepare their store of food in the summer;
26 rock-badgers, a feeble folk, yet they make their home among the rocks;
27 locusts, which have no king, yet they all sally forth in detachments;
28 the lizard, which can be grasped in the hand, yet is found in the palaces of kings.

29 Three things there are which are stately in their stride, four which are stately as they move:
30 the lion, a hero among beasts, which will not turn tail for anyone;
31 the strutting cock and the he-goat; and a king going forth to lead his army [going forth to lead his army: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible].

32 If you are churlish and arrogant and fond of filthy talk, hold your tongue;
33 for wringing out the milk produces curd and wringing the nose produces blood, so provocation leads to strife.

31 Sayings of Lemuel king of Massa, which his mother taught him:
2 What, O my son, what shall I say to you, you, the child of my womb and answer to my prayers?
3 Do not give the vigour of your manhood to women nor consort with those who make eyes at [who make eyes at: prob. rdg, Heb unintelligible] kings.
4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine nor for princes to crave strong drink;
5 if they drink, they will forget rights and customs and twist the law against their wretched victims.
6 Give strong drink to the desperate
and wine to the embittered;
7 such men will drink and forget their poverty
and remember their trouble no longer.
8 Open your mouth and speak up for the dumb,
against the suit of any that oppose them;
9 open your mouth and pronounce just sentence
and give judgement for the wretched and the poor.

A capable wife

10 Who can find a capable wife?
Her worth is far beyond coral.
11 Her husband’s whole trust is in her,
and children are not lacking.
12 She repays him with good, not evil,
all her life long.
13 She chooses wool and flax
and toils at her work.
14 Like a ship laden with merchandise,
she brings home food from far off.
15 She rises while it is still night
and sets meat before her household [prob. rdg, Heb adds and a prescribed portion for her maidens].
16 After careful thought she buys a field
and plants a vineyard out of her earnings.
17 She sets about her duties with vigour
and braces herself for the work.
18 She sees that her business goes well,
and never puts out her lamp at night.
19 She holds the distaff in her hand,
and her fingers grasp the spindle.
20 She is open-handed to the wretched
and generous to the poor.
21 She has no fear for her household when it snows,
for they are wrapped in two cloaks.
22 She makes her own coverings,
and clothing of fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is well known in the city gate
when he takes his seat with the elders of the land.
24 She weaves linen and sells it,
and supplies merchants with their sashes.
25 She is clothed in dignity and power
and can afford to laugh at tomorrow.
26 When she opens her mouth, it is to speak wisely,
and loyalty is the theme of her teaching.
27 She keeps her eye on the doings of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her sons with one accord call her happy; her husband too, and he sings her praises:
29 Many a woman shows how capable she is [Or Many daughters show how capable they are];
but you excel them all.’
30 Charm is a delusion and beauty fleeting; it is the God-fearing woman who is honoured.
31 Extol her for the fruit of all her toil, and let her labours bring her honour in the city gate.