

PROVERBS

Advice to the reader

1¹The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel,
²by which men will come to wisdom and instruction
and will understand words that bring understanding,
³and by which they will gain a well-instructed intelligence,
righteousness, justice, and probity.
⁴The simple will be endowed with shrewdness
and the young with knowledge and prudence.
⁵If the wise man listens, he will increase his learning,
and the man of understanding will acquire skill
⁶to understand proverbs and parables,
the sayings of wise men and their riddles.

⁷The fear of the LORD is the beginning [*Or* chief part] of knowledge,
but fools scorn wisdom and discipline.

⁸Attend, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not reject the teaching of your mother;
⁹for they are a garland of grace on your head
and a chain of honour round your neck.

¹⁰My son, bad men may tempt you [*prob. rdg, Heb adds do not come, or, with some manuscripts, do not consent*] ¹¹and 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.

¹²Like Sheol we will swallow them alive;
though blameless, they shall be like men who go down to the abyss.

¹³We shall take rich treasure of every sort
and fill our homes with booty;

¹⁴throw in your lot with us,
and we will have a common purse.'

¹⁵My son, do not go along with them,
keep clear of their ways;

¹⁶they hasten hot-foot into crime,
impatient to shed blood.

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

¹⁸These 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?<sup>[The rest of
v22 transposed to follow v27]</sup>
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,
2giving 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

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

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

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

3¹My son, do not forget my teaching,
but guard my commands in your heart;
2for long life and years in plenty
will they bring you, and prosperity as well.
3Let your good faith and loyalty never fail,
but bind them about your neck.
4Thus will you win favour and success
in the sight of God and man.

⁵Put all your trust in the LORD
and do not rely on your own understanding.

⁶Think of him in all your ways,
and he will smooth your path.

⁷Do not think how wise you are,
but fear the LORD and turn from evil.

⁸Let that be the medicine to keep you in health,
the liniment for your limbs.

⁹Honour the LORD with your wealth
as the first charge on all your earnings;

¹⁰then your granaries will be filled with corn [with corn: *or to overflowing*]
and your vats bursting with new wine.

¹¹My son, do not spurn the LORD's correction
or take offence at his reproof;

¹²for those whom he loves the LORD reproves,
and he punishes a favourite son.

¹³Happy he who has found wisdom,
and the man who has acquired understanding;

¹⁴for wisdom is more profitable than silver,
and the gain she brings is better than gold.

¹⁵She is more precious than red coral,
and all your jewels are no match for her.

¹⁶Long life is in her right hand,
in her left hand are riches and honour.

¹⁷Her ways are pleasant ways
and all her paths lead to prosperity.

¹⁸She is a staff of life to all who grasp her,
and those who hold her fast are safe.

¹⁹In wisdom the LORD founded the earth
and by understanding he set the heavens in their place;

²⁰by his knowledge the depths burst forth
and the clouds dropped dew.

²¹My son, keep watch over your ability and prudence,
do not let them slip from sight;

²²they shall be a charm hung about your neck
and an ornament on your breast.

²³Then you will go your way without a care,
and your feet will not stumble.

²⁴When you sit, you need have no fear;
when you lie down, your sleep will be pleasant.

²⁵Do not be afraid when fools are frightened
or when ruin comes upon the wicked;

²⁶for the LORD will be at your side,

and he will keep your feet clear of the trap.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁵Wise 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.

4¹Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction,
consider attentively how to gain understanding;

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

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

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

⁵Do 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.

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

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

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

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

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

¹²As 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.]

⁷Now, my son, listen to me
and do not ignore What I say:
⁸keep well away from her
and do not go near the door of her house;
⁹or you will lose your dignity in the eyes of others
and your honour before strangers;
¹⁰strangers will batten on your wealth,
and your hard-won gains pass to another man's family.
¹¹The end will be that you will starve,
you will shrink to mere skin and bones.
¹²Then you will say, 'Why did I hate correction
and set my heart against reproof?
¹³I did not listen to the voice of my teachers
or pay attention to my masters.
¹⁴I soon earned [*Or I almost earned*] a bad name
and was despised in the public assembly.'

¹⁵Drink water from your own cistern
and running water from your own spring;
¹⁶do 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;
¹⁷let them be yours alone,
not shared with strangers.
¹⁸Let your fountain, the wife of your youth,
be blessed, rejoice in her,
¹⁹a 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.
²²[*Wherever ... with you: transposed from 6.22*]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.
²⁰Why, my son, are you wrapped up in the love of an adulteress?
Why do you embrace a loose woman?
²¹For a man's ways are always in the LORD's sight
who watches for every path that he must take.
²²The wicked man is caught in his own iniquities
and held fast in the toils of his own sin;
²³he will perish for want of discipline,
wrapped in the shroud of his boundless folly.

6¹My son, if you pledge yourself to another man
and stand surety for a stranger,
²if you are caught by your promise,
trapped by some promise you have made,
³do what I now tell you

and save yourself, my son:
when you fall into another man's power,
bestir yourself, go and pester the man,
⁴give yourself no rest,
allow yourself no sleep.
⁵Save yourself like a gazelle from the toils,
like a bird from the grasp of the fowler.

⁶Go to the ant, you sluggard,
watch her ways and get wisdom.
⁷She has no overseer,
no governor or ruler;
⁸but in summer she prepares her store of food
and lays in her supplies at harvest.
⁹How long, you sluggard, will you lie abed?
When will you rouse yourself from sleep?
¹⁰A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands in rest,
¹¹and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
want like a ruffian.

¹²A scoundrel, a mischievous man, is he
who prowls about with crooked talk –
¹³a wink of the eye,
a touch with the foot,
a sign with the fingers.
¹⁴Subversion is the evil that he is plotting,
he stirs up quarrels all the time.
¹⁵Down comes disaster suddenly upon him;
suddenly he is broken beyond all remedy.

¹⁶Six things the LORD hates,
seven things are detestable to him:
¹⁷a proud eye, a false tongue,
hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸a heart that forges thoughts of mischief,
and feet that run swiftly to do evil,
¹⁹a false witness telling a pack of lies,
and one who stirs up quarrels between brothers.

²⁰My son, observe your father's commands
and do not reject the teaching of your mother;
²¹wear them always next your heart
and bind them close about your neck;
²³[v22 transposed to follow wrap you round in 5.19] for a command is a lamp, and
teaching a light,
reproof and correction point the way of life,
²⁴to keep you from the wife of another man,

from the seductive tongue of the loose woman.

²⁵Do not desire her beauty in your heart
or let her glance provoke you;

²⁶for a prostitute can be had for the price of a loaf,
but a married woman is out for bigger game.

²⁷Can a man kindle fire in his bosom
without burning his clothes?

²⁸If a man walks on hot coals,
will his feet not be scorched?

²⁹So is he who sleeps with his neighbour's wife;
no one can touch such a woman and go free.

³⁰Is not a thief contemptible when he steals
to satisfy his appetite, even if he is hungry?

³¹And, if he is caught, must he not pay seven times over
and surrender all that his house contains?

³²So one who commits adultery is a senseless fool:
he dishonours the woman and ruins himself;

³³he will get nothing but blows and contumely
and will never live down the disgrace;

³⁴for a husband's anger is a jealous anger
and in the day of vengeance he will show no mercy;

³⁵compensation will not buy his forgiveness [*compensation ... forgiveness:*
prob. rdg, Heb obscure];
no bribe, however large, will purchase his connivance.

7¹My son, keep my words,
store up my commands in your mind.

²Keep my commands if you would live,
and treasure my teaching as the apple of your eye.

³Wear them like a ring on your finger;
write them on the tablet of your memory.

⁴Call Wisdom your sister,
greet Understanding as a familiar friend;

⁵then they will save you from the adulteress,
from the loose woman with her seductive words.

⁶I glanced [*I glanced: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*] out of the window of my
house,

I looked down through the lattice,

⁷and I saw among simple youths,
there amongst the boys I noticed
a lad, a foolish lad,

⁸passing along the street, at the corner,
stepping out in the direction of her house

⁹at twilight, as the day faded,
at dusk as the night grew dark;

¹⁰suddenly a woman came to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute, full of wiles,
¹¹flighty and inconstant,
a woman never content to stay at home,
¹²lying in wait at every corner,
now in the street, now in the public squares.
¹³She caught hold of him and kissed him;
brazenly she accosted him and said,
¹⁴I have had a sacrifice, an offering, to make
and I have paid my vows today;
¹⁵that is why I have come out to meet you,
to watch for you and find you.
¹⁶I have spread coverings on my bed
of coloured linen from Egypt.
¹⁷I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh,
my clothes [*my clothes: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*] with aloes and cassia.
¹⁸Come! Let us drown ourselves in pleasure,
let us spend a whole night of love;
¹⁹for the man of the house is away,
he has gone on a long journey,
²⁰he has taken a bag of silver with him;
until the moon is full he will not be home.'
²¹Persuasively she led him on,
she pressed him with seductive words.
²²Like a simple fool he followed her,
like an ox on its way to the slaughter-house,
like an antelope bounding into the noose,
²³like a bird hurrying into the trap;
he did not know that he was risking his life
until the arrow pierced his vitals.

²⁴But now, my son, listen to me,
attend to what I say.
²⁵Do not let your heart entice you into her ways,
do not stray down her paths;
²⁶many has she pierced and laid low,
and her victims are without number.
²⁷Her house is the entrance to Sheol,
which leads down to the halls of death.

Wisdom and folly contrasted

8¹Hear how Wisdom lifts her voice
and Understanding cries out.
²She stands at the cross-roads,
by the wayside, at the top of the hill;

³beside the gate, at the entrance to the city,
at the entry by the open gate she calls aloud:
⁴Men, it is to you I call,
I appeal to every man:
⁵understand, you simple fools, what it is to be shrewd;
you stupid people, understand what sense means.
⁶Listen! For I will speak clearly,
you will have plain speech from me;
⁷for I speak nothing but truth
and my lips detest wicked talk.
⁸All that I say is right,
not a word is twisted or crooked.
⁹All is straightforward to him who can understand,
all is plain to the man who has knowledge.
¹⁰Accept instruction and not silver,
knowledge rather than pure gold;
¹¹for wisdom is better than red coral,
no jewels can match her.
¹²I am Wisdom, I bestow shrewdness
and show the way to knowledge and prudence.
¹³[*prob. rdg, Heb prefixes* The fear of the LORD is to hate evil] Pride,
presumption, evil courses,
subversive talk, all these I hate.
¹⁴I have force, I also have ability;
understanding and power are mine.
¹⁵Through me kings are sovereign
and governors make just laws.
¹⁶Through me princes act like princes,
from me all rulers on earth derive their nobility.
¹⁷Those who love me I love,
those who search for me find me.
¹⁸In my hands are riches and honour,
boundless wealth and the rewards of virtue.
¹⁹My harvest is better than gold, fine gold,
and my revenue better than pure silver.
²⁰I follow the course of virtue,
my path is the path of justice;
²¹I endow with riches those who love me
and I will fill their treasuries.

²²The LORD created me the beginning of his works,
before all else that he made, long ago.
²³Alone, I was fashioned in times long past,
at the beginning, long before earth itself.
²⁴When there was yet no ocean I was born,
no springs brimming with water.
²⁵Before the mountains were settled in their place,

long before the hills I was born,
26when 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.'

9¹Wisdom 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;
¹¹for through me your days will be multiplied
and years will be added to your life.
¹²If you are wise, it will be to your own advantage;
if you are haughty, you alone are to blame.
¹³The Lady Stupidity is a flighty creature;
the simpleton, she cares for nothing.
¹⁴She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat in the highest part of the town,
¹⁵to 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.'
¹⁸Little does he know that death lurks there,
that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

A collection of wise sayings

10¹The proverbs of Solomon:

A wise son brings joy to his father;
a foolish son is his mother's bane.
²Ill-gotten wealth brings no profit;
uprightness is a safeguard against death.
³The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry [*Or be afraid*],
but he disappoints the cravings [*Or the clamour*] of the wicked.
⁴Idle hands make a man poor;
busy hands grow rich.
⁵A thoughtful son puts by in summer;
a son who sleeps at harvest is a disgrace.
⁶Blessings are showered on the righteous;
the wicked are choked by their own violence.
⁷The righteous are remembered in blessings;
the name of the wicked turns rotten.
⁸A wise man takes a command to heart;
a foolish talker comes to grief.
⁹A blameless life makes for security;
crooked ways bring a man down.
¹⁰To wink at a fault causes trouble;
a frank rebuke leads to peace.
¹¹The words of good men are a fountain of life;
the wicked are choked by their own violence.
¹²Hate is always picking a quarrel,
but love turns a blind eye to every fault.
¹³The man of understanding has wisdom on his lips;

a rod is in store for the back of the fool.

¹⁴Wise men lay up knowledge;
when a fool speaks, ruin is near.

¹⁵A rich man's wealth is his strong city,
but poverty is the undoing of the helpless.

¹⁶The good man's labour is his livelihood;
the wicked man's earnings bring him to a bad end.

¹⁷Correction is the high road to life;
neglect reproof and you miss the way.

¹⁸There is no spite in a just man's talk;
it is the stupid who are fluent with calumny.

¹⁹When men talk too much, sin is never far away;
common sense holds its tongue.

²⁰A good man's tongue is pure silver;
the heart of the wicked is trash.

²¹The lips of a good man teach many,
but fools perish for want of sense.

²²The blessing of the LORD brings riches
and he sends no sorrow with them.

²³Lewdness is sport for the stupid;
wisdom a delight to men of understanding.

²⁴The fears of the wicked will overtake them;
the desire of the righteous will be granted.

²⁵When the whirlwind has passed by, the wicked are gone;
the foundations of the righteous are eternal.

²⁶Like vinegar on the teeth or smoke in the eyes,
so is the lazy servant to his master.

²⁷The fear of the LORD brings length of days;
the years of the wicked are few.

²⁸The hope of the righteous blossoms;
the expectation of the wicked withers away.

²⁹The way of the LORD gives refuge to the honest man,
but dismays those who do evil.

³⁰The righteous man will never be shaken;
the wicked shall not remain on earth.

³¹Wisdom flows from the mouth of the righteous;
the subversive tongue will be rooted out.

³²The righteous man can suit his words to the occasion;
the wicked know only subversive talk.

11¹False scales are the LORD's abomination;
correct weights are dear to his heart.

²When presumption comes in, in comes contempt,
but wisdom goes with sagacity.

³Honesty is a guide to the upright,
but rogues are balked by their own perversity.

⁴Wealth is worth nothing in the day of wrath,

but uprightness is a safeguard against death.

⁵By uprightness the blameless keep their course,
but the wicked are brought down by their wickedness.

⁶Uprightness saves the righteous,
but rogues are trapped in their own greed.

⁷When a man dies, his thread of life ends,
and with it ends the hope of affluence.

⁸A righteous man is rescued from disaster,
and the wicked man plunges into it.

⁹By his words a godless man tries to ruin others,
but they are saved when the righteous plead for them.

¹⁰A city rejoices in the prosperity of the righteous;
there is jubilation when the wicked perish.

¹¹By the blessing of the upright a city is built up;
the words of the wicked tear it down.

¹²A man without sense despises others,
but a man of understanding holds his peace.

¹³A gossip gives away secrets,
but a trusty man keeps his own counsel.

¹⁴For want of skilful strategy an army is lost;
victory is the fruit of long planning.

¹⁵Give a pledge for a stranger and know no peace;
refuse to stand surety and be safe.

¹⁶Grace 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.

¹⁷Loyalty brings its own reward;
a cruel man makes trouble for his kin.

¹⁸A wicked man earns a fallacious [*Or fraudulent*] profit;
he who sows goodness reaps a sure reward [*a sure reward: or the reward of honesty*].

¹⁹A man set on righteousness finds life,
but the pursuit of evil leads to death.

²⁰The LORD detests the crooked heart,
but honesty is dear to him.

²¹Depend upon it: an evil man shall not escape punishment;
the righteous and all their offspring shall go free.

²²Like a gold ring in a pig's snout
is a beautiful woman without good sense.

²³The righteous desire only what is good;
the hope of the wicked comes to nothing.

²⁴A man may spend freely and yet grow richer;
another is sparing beyond measure, yet ends in poverty.

²⁵A generous man grows fat and prosperous,
and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

²⁶He who withholds his grain is cursed by the people,

but he who sells his corn is blessed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹²The 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.

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

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

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

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

¹⁷An honest speaker comes out with the truth,

but the false witness is full of deceit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶A 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷One 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*].

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

⁹The light of the righteous burns brightly;
the embers of the wicked will be put out.

¹⁰A brainless fool causes strife by his presumption;
wisdom is found among friends in council.
¹¹Wealth quickly come by dwindles away,
but if it comes little by little, it multiplies.
¹²Hope deferred makes the heart sick;
a wish come true is a staff of life.
¹³To despise a word of advice is to ask for trouble;
mind what you are told, and you will be rewarded.
¹⁴A wise man's teaching is a fountain of life
for one who would escape the snares of death.
¹⁵Good intelligence wins favour,
but treachery leads to disaster.
¹⁶A clever man is wise and conceals everything,
but the stupid parade their folly.
¹⁷An evil messenger causes trouble [*causes trouble: or is unsuccessful*],
but a trusty envoy makes all go well again.
¹⁸To refuse correction brings poverty and contempt;
one who takes a reproof to heart comes to honour.
¹⁹Lust indulged sickens a man [*Lust ... a man: or Desire fulfilled is pleasant
to the appetite*];
stupid people loathe to mend their ways.
²⁰Walk with the wise and be wise;
mix with the stupid and be misled.
²¹Ill fortune follows the sinner close behind,
but good rewards the righteous.
²²A good man leaves an inheritance to his descendants,
but the sinner's hoard passes to the righteous.
²³Untilled land might yield food enough for the poor,
but even that may be lost through injustice.
²⁴A father who spares the rod hates his son,
but one who loves him keeps him in order.
²⁵A righteous man eats his fill,
but the wicked go hungry.

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

²A straightforward man fears the LORD;
the double-dealer scorns him.

³The speech of a fool is a rod for his back [*his back: prob. rdg, Heb pride*];
a wise man's words are his safeguard.

⁴Where there are no oxen the barn is empty,
but the strength of a great ox ensures rich crops.

⁵A truthful witness is no liar;
a false witness tells a pack of lies.

⁶A conceited man seeks wisdom, yet finds none;
to one of understanding, knowledge comes easily.

⁷Avoid a stupid man,

you will hear not a word of sense from him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁰A tranquil mind puts flesh on a man,

but passion rots his bones.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁸Bad temper provokes a quarrel,

but patience heals discords.

¹⁹The path of the sluggard is a tangle of weeds,
but the road of the diligent is a highway.

²⁰A wise son brings joy to his father;
a young fool despises his mother.

²¹Folly may amuse the empty-headed;
a man of understanding makes straight for his goal.

²²Schemes lightly made come to nothing,
but with long planning they succeed.

²³A man may be pleased with his own retort;
how much better is a word in season!

²⁴For men of intelligence the path of life leads upwards
and keeps them clear of Sheol below.

²⁵The LORD pulls down the proud man's home
but fixes the widow's boundary-stones.

²⁶A 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].

²⁷A grasping man brings trouble on his family,
but he who spurns a bribe will enjoy long life.

²⁸The righteous think before they answer;
a bad man's ready tongue is full of mischief.

²⁹The LORD stands aloof from the wicked,
he listens to the righteous man's prayer.

³⁰A bright look brings joy to the heart,
and good news warms a man's marrow.

³¹Whoever listens to wholesome reproof
shall enjoy the society of the wise.

³²He who refuses correction is his own worst enemy,
but he who listens to reproof learns sense.

³³The fear of the LORD is a training in wisdom,
and the way to honour is humility.

16¹A man may order his thoughts,
but the LORD inspires the words he utters.

²A man's whole conduct may be pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD fixes a standard for the spirit of man.

³Commit to the LORD all that you do,
and your plans will be fulfilled.

⁴The LORD has made each thing for its own end;
he made even the wicked for a day of disaster.

⁵Proud men, one and all, are abominable to the LORD;
depend upon it: they will not escape punishment.

⁶Guilt is wiped out by faith and loyalty,
and the fear of the LORD makes men turn from evil.

⁷When the LORD is pleased with a man and his ways,
he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.

⁸Better a pittance honestly earned
than great gains ill gotten.

⁹Man plans his journey by his own wit,
but it is the LORD who guides his steps.

¹⁰The king's mouth is an oracle,
he cannot err when he passes sentence.

¹¹Scales [*Or Pointer*] and balances [*prob. rdg, Heb balances of justice*] are
the LORD's concern;
all the weights in the bag are his business.

¹²Wickedness is abhorrent to kings,
for a throne rests firm on righteousness.

¹³Honest speech is the desire of kings,
they love a man who speaks the truth.

¹⁴A king's anger is a messenger of death,
and a wise man will appease it.

¹⁵In the light of the king's countenance is life,
his favour is like a rain-cloud in the spring.

¹⁶How much better than gold it is to gain wisdom,
and to gain discernment is better than pure silver.

¹⁷To turn from evil is the highway of the upright;
watch your step and save your life.

¹⁸Pride comes before disaster,
and arrogance before a fall.

¹⁹Better sit humbly with those in need
than divide the spoil with the proud.

²⁰The shrewd man of business will succeed well,
but the happy man is he who trusts in the LORD.

²¹The 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*].

²²Intelligence is a fountain of life to its possessors,
but a fool is punished by his own folly.

²³The 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*].

²⁴Kind words are like dripping honey,
sweetness on the tongue and health for the body.

²⁵A road may seem straightforward to a man,
yet may end as the way to death.

²⁶The labourer's appetite is always plaguing him,
his hunger spurs him on.

²⁷A scoundrel repeats evil gossip;
it is like a scorching fire on his lips.

²⁸Disaffection stirs up quarrels,
and tale-bearing breaks up friendship.

²⁹A man of violence draws others on
and leads them into lawless ways.

³⁰The man who narrows his eyes is disaffected at heart,
and a close-lipped man is bent on mischief.

³¹Grey hair is a crown of glory,
and it is won by a virtuous life.

³²Better be slow to anger than a fighter,
better govern one's temper than capture a city.

³³The lots may be cast into the lap,
but the issue depends wholly on the LORD.

17¹Better a dry crust and concord with it
than a house full of feasting and strife.

²A wise slave may give orders to a disappointing son
and share the inheritance with the brothers.

³The melting-pot is for silver and the crucible for gold,
but it is the LORD who assays the hearts of men.

⁴A rogue gives a ready ear to mischievous talk,
and a liar listens to slander.

⁵A man who sneers at the poor insults his Maker,
and he who gloats over another's ruin will answer for it.

⁶Grandchildren are the crown of old age,
and sons are proud of their fathers.

⁷Fine talk is out of place in a boor,
how much more is falsehood in the noble!

⁸He who offers a bribe finds it work like a charm,
he prospers in all he undertakes.

⁹He who conceals another's offence seeks his goodwill,
but he who harps on something breaks up friendship.

¹⁰A reproof is felt by a man of discernment
more than a hundred blows by a stupid man.

¹¹An evil man is set only on disobedience,
but a messenger without mercy will be sent against him.

¹²Better face a she-bear robbed of her cubs
than a stupid man in his folly.

¹³If a man repays evil for good,
evil will never quit his house.

¹⁴Stealing water starts a quarrel;
drop a dispute before you bare your teeth.

¹⁵To acquit the wicked and condemn the righteous,
both are abominable in the LORD's sight.

¹⁶What use is money in the hands of a stupid man?
Can he buy wisdom if he has no sense?

¹⁷A friend is a loving companion at all times,
and a brother is born to share troubles.

¹⁸A man is without sense who gives a guarantee
and surrenders himself to another as surety.

¹⁹He who loves strife loves sin.
He who builds a lofty entrance invites thieves.

²⁰A crooked heart will come to no good,
and a mischievous tongue will end in disaster.

²¹A stupid man is the bane of his parent,
and his father has no joy in a boorish son.

²²A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance,
but low spirits sap a man's strength.

²³A wicked man accepts a bribe under his cloak
to pervert the course of justice.

²⁴Wisdom is never out of sight of a discerning man,
but a stupid man's eyes are roving everywhere.

²⁵A stupid son exasperates his father
and is a bitter sorrow to the mother who bore him.

²⁶Again, to punish the righteous is not good
and it is wrong to inflict blows on men of noble mind.

²⁷Experience uses few words;
discernment keeps a cool head.

²⁸Even a fool, if he holds his peace, is thought wise;
keep your mouth shut and show your good sense.

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

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

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

⁴The 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*].

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴A man's spirit may sustain him in sickness,

but if the spirit is wounded, who can mend it?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷A 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.

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

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

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

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

¹²A king's rage is like a lion's roar,

his favour like dew on the grass.

¹³A stupid son is a calamity to his father;
a nagging wife is like water dripping endlessly.

¹⁴Home and wealth may come down from ancestors,
but an intelligent wife is a gift from the LORD.

¹⁵Laziness is the undoing of the worthless;
idlers must starve.

¹⁶To keep the commandments keeps a man safe,
but scorning the way of the LORD brings death.

¹⁷He who is generous to the poor lends to the LORD;
he will repay him in full measure.

¹⁸Chastise your son while there is hope for him,
but be careful not to flog him to death.

¹⁹A man's ill temper brings its own punishment;
try to save him, and you make matters worse.

²⁰Listen to advice and accept instruction,
and you will die a wise man.

²¹A man's heart may be full of schemes,
but the LORD's purpose will prevail.

²²Greed is a disgrace to a man;
better be a poor man than a liar.

²³The fear of the LORD is life;
he who is full of it will rest untouched by evil.

²⁴The sluggard plunges his hand in the dish
but will not so much as lift it to his mouth.

²⁵Strike an arrogant man, and he resents it like a fool;
reprove an understanding man, and he understands what you mean.

²⁶He who talks his father down vexes his mother;
he is a son to bring shame and disgrace on them.

²⁷A son who ceases to accept correction
is sure to turn his back on the teachings of knowledge.

²⁸A rascally witness perverts justice,
and the talk of the wicked fosters mischief.

²⁹There is a rod in pickle for the arrogant,
and blows ready for the stupid man's back.

20¹Wine is an insolent fellow, and strong drink makes an uproar;
no one addicted to their company grows wise.

²A king's threat is like a lion's roar;
one who ignores it is his own worst enemy.

³To draw back from a dispute is honourable;
it is the fool who bares his teeth.

⁴The sluggard who does not plough in autumn
goes begging at harvest and gets nothing.

⁵Counsel in another's heart is like deep water,
but a discerning man will draw it up.

⁶Many a man protests his loyalty,

but where will you find one to keep faith?

⁷If a man leads a good and upright life,
happy are the sons who come after him!

⁸A king seated on the judgement-throne
has an eye to sift all that is evil.

⁹Who can say, 'I have a clear conscience;
I am purged from my sin'?

¹⁰A double standard in weights and measures
is an abomination to the LORD.

¹¹Again, a young man is known by his actions,
whether his conduct is innocent or guilty [*prob. rdg, Heb upright*].

¹²The ear that hears, the eye that sees,
the LORD made them both.

¹³Love 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.

¹⁵There is gold in plenty and coral too,
but a wise word is a rare jewel.

¹⁶Take a man's garment when he pledges his word for a stranger
and hold that as a pledge for the unknown person.

¹⁷Bread got by fraud tastes good,
but afterwards it fills the mouth with grit.

¹⁸Care is the secret of good planning;
Wars are won by skilful strategy.

¹⁹A gossip will betray secrets [*Or He who betrays secrets is a gossip*];
have nothing to do with a tattler.

²⁰If a man reviles father and mother,
his lamp will go out when darkness comes.

²¹If you begin by piling up property in haste,
it will bring you no blessing in the end.

²²Do not think to repay evil for evil,
Wait for the LORD to deliver you.

²³A double standard in weights is an abomination to the LORD,
and false scales are not good in his sight.

²⁴It is the LORD who directs a man's steps;
how can mortal man understand the road he travels?

²⁵It is dangerous to dedicate a gift rashly
or to make a vow and have second thoughts.

²⁶A wise king sifts out the wicked
and turns back for them the wheel of fortune.

²⁷The LORD shines into a man's very soul,
searching out his inmost being.

²⁸A king's guards are loyalty and good faith,
his throne is upheld by righteousness.

²⁹The 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.

21¹The 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.

¹²The 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22¹A good name is more to be desired than great riches;
esteem is better than silver or gold.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴The words of an adulteress are like a deep pit;

those whom the LORD has cursed will fall into it.

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

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

Thirty wise sayings

¹⁷The sayings of the wise:

Pay heed and listen to my words,
open your mind to the knowledge I impart;

¹⁸to keep them in your heart will be a pleasure,
and then you will always have them ready on your lips.

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

²⁰Here I have written out for you thirty sayings,
full of knowledge and wise advice,

²¹to 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.

²²Never rob a helpless man because he is helpless,
nor ill-treat a poor wretch in court;

²³for the LORD will take up their cause
and rob him who robs them of their livelihood.

²⁴Never make friends with an angry man
nor keep company with a bad-tempered one;

²⁵be careful not to learn his ways,
or you will find yourself caught in a trap.

²⁶Never be one to give guarantees,
or to pledge yourself as surety for another;

²⁷for if you cannot pay, beware:
your bed will be taken from under you.

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

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

23¹When you sit down to eat with a ruling prince,
be sure to keep your mind on what is before you,

²and if you are a greedy man,
cut your throat first.

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

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

⁵Before you can look round, it will be gone;
it will surely grow wings
like an eagle, like a bird in the sky.

⁶Do not go to dinner with a miser [*Or a man with an evil eye*],
do not be greedy for his dainties;
⁷for 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;
⁸you will bring up the mouthful you have eaten,
and your winning words will have been wasted.
⁹Hold your tongue in the hearing of a stupid man;
for he will despise your words of wisdom.
¹⁰Do not move the ancient boundary-stone
or encroach on the land of orphans:
¹¹they have a powerful guardian
who will take up their cause against you.
¹²Apply your mind to instruction
and open your ears to knowledge when it speaks.
¹³Do not withhold discipline from a boy;
take the stick to him, and save him from death.
¹⁴If you take the stick to him yourself,
you will preserve him from the jaws of death.
¹⁵My son, if you are wise at heart,
my heart in its turn will be glad;
¹⁶I shall rejoice with all my soul
when you speak plain truth.

¹⁷Do not try to emulate sinners;
envy only those who fear the LORD day by day;
¹⁸do this, and you may look forward to the future,
and your thread of life will not be cut short.

¹⁹Listen, my son, listen, and become wise;
set your mind on the right course.
²⁰Do not keep company with drunkards
or those who are greedy for the fleshpots;
²¹for drink and greed will end in poverty,
and drunken stupor goes in rags.

²²Listen to your father, who gave you life,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.
²³Buy truth, never sell it;
buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.
²⁴A good man's father will rejoice
and he who has a wise son will delight in him.
²⁵Give your father and your mother cause for delight,
let her who bore you rejoice.

²⁶My son, mark my words,
and accept my guidance with a will.

²⁷A prostitute is a deep pit,
a loose woman a narrow well;
²⁸she lies in wait like a robber
and betrays her husband with man after man.

²⁹Whose is the misery? whose the remorse?
Whose are the quarrels and the anxiety?
Who gets the bruises without knowing why?
Whose eyes are bloodshot?

³⁰Those who linger late over their wine,
those who are always trying some new spiced liquor.

³¹Do 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*];

³²in the end it will bite like a snake
and sting like a cobra.

³³Then your eyes see strange sights,
your wits and your speech are confused;

³⁴you 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;

³⁵you 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.'

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

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

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

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

⁸A man who is bent on mischief
gets a name for intrigue;
⁹the intrigues of foolish men misfire,
and the insolent man is odious to his fellows.

¹⁰If your strength fails on a lucky [*lucky: prob. rdg, Heb omitted*] day, how helpless will you be on a day of disaster!

¹¹When you see a man being dragged to be killed, go to his rescue, and save those being hurried away to their death.

¹²If 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.

¹³Eat honey, my son, for it is good, and the honeycomb so sweet upon the tongue.

¹⁴Make 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.

¹⁵Do not lie in wait like a felon at the good man's house, or raid his farm.

¹⁶Though the good man may fall seven times, he is soon up again, but the rascal is brought down by misfortune.

¹⁷Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, do not gloat when he is brought down;

¹⁸or the LORD will see and be displeased with you, and he will cease to be angry with him.

¹⁹Do not vie with evildoers or emulate the wicked;

²⁰for wicked men have no future to look forward to; their embers will be put out.

²¹My son, fear the LORD and grow rich, but have nothing to do with men of rank,

²²they 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*]?

²³More sayings of wise men:

Partiality in dispensing justice is not good.

²⁴A judge who pronounces a guilty man innocent is cursed by all nations, all peoples execrate him;

²⁵but for those who convict the guilty all will go well, they will be blessed with prosperity.

²⁶A straightforward answer is as good as a kiss of friendship.

²⁷First put all in order out of doors and make everything ready on the land;

then establish your house and home.

²⁸Do not be a witness against your neighbour without good reason nor misrepresent him in your evidence.

²⁹Do not say,
'I will do to him what he has done to me;
I will requite him for what he has done.'

³⁰I passed by the field of an idle man,
by the vineyard of a man with no sense.

³¹I 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.

³²I saw and I took good note,
I considered and learnt the lesson:

³³a little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands in rest,

³⁴and poverty will come upon you like a robber,
want like a ruffian.

Other collections of wise sayings

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

²The glory of God is to keep things hidden
but the glory of kings is to fathom them.

³The heavens for height, the earth [*Or* the underworld] for depth:
unfathomable is the heart of a king.

⁴Rid silver of its impurities,
then it may go to [*then it may go to: or* and it will come out bright for] the
silversmith;

⁵rid the king's presence of wicked men,
and his throne will rest firmly on righteousness.

⁶Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence
or take your place among the great;

⁷for it is better that he should say to you, 'Come up here',
than move you down to make room for a nobleman.

⁸Be in no hurry to tell everyone what you have seen,
or it will end in bitter reproaches from your friend.

⁹Argue your own case with your neighbour,
but do not reveal another man's secrets,

¹⁰or he will reproach you when he hears of it
and your indiscretion will then be beyond recall.

¹¹Like apples of gold set in silver filigree
is a word spoken in season.

¹²Like a golden earring or a necklace of Nubian gold
is a wise man whose reproof finds attentive ears.

¹³Like the coolness of snow in harvest
is a trusty messenger to those who send him [*prob. rdg, Heb adds*
refreshing his master].

¹⁴Like clouds and wind that bring no rain
is the man who boasts of gifts he never gives.

¹⁵A prince may be persuaded by patience,
and a soft tongue may break down solid bone [*solid bone: or authority*].

¹⁶If you find honey, eat only what you need,
too much of it will make you sick;

¹⁷be sparing in visits to your neighbour's house,
if he sees too much of you, he will dislike you.

¹⁸Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow
is a false witness who denounces his friend.

¹⁹Like a tooth decayed or a foot limping
is a traitor relied on in the day of trouble.

²⁰Like 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.

²¹If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;

²²so you will heap glowing coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.

²³As the north wind holds back the rain,
so an angry glance holds back slander.

²⁴Better to live in a corner of the house-top
than have a nagging wife and a brawling household.

²⁵Like cold water to the throat when it is dry
is good news from a distant land.

²⁶Like a muddied spring or a tainted well
is a righteous man who gives way to a wicked one.

²⁷A surfeit of honey is bad for a man,
and the quest for honour is burdensome.

²⁸Like a city that has burst out of its confining walls [*Or that is breached and*
left unwallled]
is a man who cannot control his temper.

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

²Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow,
groundless abuse gets nowhere.

³The whip for a horse, the bridle for an ass,
the rod for the back of a fool!

⁴Do not answer a stupid man in the language of his folly,
or you will grow like him;

⁵answer a stupid man as his folly deserves,
or he will think himself a wise man.

⁶He who sends a fool on an errand

cuts his own leg off and displays the stump.

⁷A proverb in the mouth of stupid men
dangles helpless as a lame man's legs.

⁸Like one who gets the stone caught in his sling
is he who bestows honour on a fool.

⁹Like a thorn that pierces a drunkard's hand
is a proverb in a stupid man's mouth.

¹⁰Like 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.

¹¹Like a dog returning to its vomit
is a stupid man who repeats his folly.

¹²Do you see that man who thinks himself so wise?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

¹³The sluggard protests, 'There is a lion [*Or snake*] in the highway,
a lion at large in the streets.'

¹⁴A door turns on its hinges,
a sluggard on his bed.

¹⁵A sluggard plunges his hand in the dish
but is too lazy to lift it to his mouth.

¹⁶A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
than seven men who answer sensibly.

¹⁷Like 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',

¹⁸is like a madman shooting at random
his deadly darts and arrows.

²⁰For lack of fuel a fire dies down
and for want of a tale-bearer a quarrel subsides.

²¹Like bellows for the coal and fuel for the fire
is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

²²A gossip's whispers are savoury morsels
gulped down into the inner man.

²³Glib speech that covers a spiteful heart
is like glaze spread on earthenware.

²⁴With his lips an enemy may speak you fair
but inwardly he harbours deceit;

²⁵when his words are gracious, do not trust him,
for seven abominations fill his heart;

²⁶he may cloak his enmity in dissimulation,
but his wickedness is shown up before the assembly.

²⁷If he digs a pit, he will fall into it;
if he rolls a stone, it will roll back upon him.

²⁸A lying tongue makes innocence seem guilty,
and smooth words conceal their sting.

- 27**¹Do 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 [*prob. rdg, Heb adds or how should you enter your brother's house in the day of your ruin?*];
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 [*prob. rdg, Heb adds with groats*],
his folly will never be knocked out of him.
- ²³Be careful to know your own sheep

and take good care of your flocks;
²⁴for possessions do not last for ever,
nor will a crown endure to endless generations.
²⁵The grass disappears, new shoots are seen
and the green growth on the hills is gathered in;
²⁶the lambs clothe you,
the he-goats are worth the price of a field,
²⁷while the goats' milk is enough for your food
and nourishment for your maidens.

28¹The 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.

¹⁸Whoever leads an honest life will be safe,
but a rogue will fail, one way or another.

¹⁹One who cultivates his land has plenty to eat;
idle pursuits lead to poverty.

²⁰A man of steady character will enjoy many blessings,
but one in a hurry to grow rich will not go unpunished.

²¹To show favour is not good;
but men will do wrong for a mere crust of bread.

²²The miser [*Or The man with the evil eye*] is in a hurry to grow rich,
never dreaming that want will overtake him.

²³Take a man to task and in the end win more thanks
than the man with a flattering tongue.

²⁴To rob your father or mother and say you do no wrong
is no better than wanton destruction.

²⁵A self-important [*Or grasping*] man provokes quarrels,
but he who trusts in the LORD grows fat and prosperous.

²⁶It is plain stupidity to trust in one's own wits,
but he who walks the path of wisdom will come safely through.

²⁷He who gives to the poor will never want,
but he who turns a blind eye gets nothing but curses.

²⁸When 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.

29¹A man who is still stubborn after much reproof
will suddenly be broken past mending.

²When the righteous are in power the people rejoice,
but they groan when the wicked hold office.

³A lover of wisdom brings joy to his father,
but one who keeps company with harlots squanders his wealth.

⁴By just government a king gives his country stability,
but by forced contributions he reduces it to ruin.

⁵A man who flatters his neighbour
is spreading a net for his feet.

⁶An 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.

⁷The righteous man is concerned for the cause of the helpless,
but the wicked understand no such concern.

⁸Arrogance can inflame a city,
but wisdom averts the people's anger.

⁹If a wise man goes to law with a fool,
he will meet abuse or derision, but get no remedy.

¹⁰Men who have tasted blood hate an honest man,
but the upright set much store by his life.

¹¹A stupid man gives free rein to his anger;
a wise man waits and lets it grow cool.

¹²If a prince listens to falsehood,
all his servants will be wicked.
¹³Poor man and oppressor have this in common:
what happiness each has comes from the LORD.
¹⁴A king who steadfastly deals out justice to the weak
will be secure for ever on his throne.
¹⁵Rod and reprimand impart wisdom,
but a boy who runs wild brings shame on his mother.
¹⁶When the wicked are in power, sin is in power,
but the righteous will gloat over their downfall.
¹⁷Correct your son, and he will be a comfort to you
and bring you delights of every kind.
¹⁸Where 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.
¹⁹Mere words will not keep a slave in order;
he may understand, but he will not respond.
²⁰When you see someone over-eager to speak [*Or someone hasty in
business*],
there will be more hope for a fool than for him.
²¹Pamper a slave from boyhood,
and in the end he will prove ungrateful.
²²A man prone to anger provokes a quarrel
and a hot-head is always doing wrong.
²³Pride will bring a man low;
a man lowly in spirit wins honour.
²⁴He who goes shares with a thief is his own enemy:
he hears himself put on oath and dare not give evidence.
²⁵A man's fears will prove a snare to him,
but he who trusts in the LORD has a high tower of refuge.
²⁶Many seek audience of a prince,
but in every case the LORD decides.
²⁷The righteous cannot abide an unjust man,
nor the wicked a man whose conduct is upright.

30¹Sayings 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;
²I am a dumb brute, scarcely a man,
without a man's powers of understanding;
³I have not learnt wisdom
nor have I received knowledge from the Holy One.
⁴Who 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?

⁵God's every promise has stood the test:
he is a shield to all who seek refuge with him.

⁶Add nothing to his words,
or he will expose you for a liar.

⁷Two things I ask of thee;
do not withhold them from me before I die.

⁸Put fraud and lying far from me;
give me neither poverty nor wealth,
provide me only with the food I need.

⁹If 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.

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

¹¹There is a sort of people who defame their fathers
and do not speak well of their own mothers;

¹²a sort who are pure in their own eyes
and yet are not cleansed of their filth;

¹³a sort – how haughty are their looks,
how disdainful their glances!

¹⁴A 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*].

¹⁵The 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!'

¹⁶The grave and a barren womb [*Or a woman's desire*],
a land thirsty for water
and fire that never says, 'Enough!'

¹⁷The 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.

¹⁸Three things there are which are too wonderful for me,
four which I do not understand:

¹⁹the 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.

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

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

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

²⁹Three things there are which are stately in their stride,
four which are stately as they move:
³⁰the lion, a hero among beasts,
which will not turn tail for anyone;
³¹the 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*].

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

31¹Sayings of Lemuel king of Massa, which his mother taught him:

²What, O my son, what shall I say to you,
you, the child of my womb and answer to my prayers?

³Do 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.

⁴It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine
nor for princes to crave strong drink;

⁵if they drink, they will forget rights and customs
and twist the law against their wretched victims.

⁶Give strong drink to the desperate
and wine to the embittered;
⁷such men will drink and forget their poverty
and remember their trouble no longer.
⁸Open your mouth and speak up for the dumb,
against the suit of any that oppose them;
⁹open your mouth and pronounce just sentence
and give judgement for the wretched and the poor.

A capable wife

¹⁰Who can find a capable wife?
Her worth is far beyond coral.
¹¹Her husband's whole trust is in her,
and children are not lacking.
¹²She repays him with good, not evil,
all her life long.
¹³She chooses wool and flax
and toils at her work.
¹⁴Like a ship laden with merchandise,
she brings home food from far off.
¹⁵She rises while it is still night
and sets meat before her household [*prob. rdg, Heb adds and a prescribed
portion for her maidens*].
¹⁶After careful thought she buys a field
and plants a vineyard out of her earnings.
¹⁷She sets about her duties with vigour
and braces herself for the work.
¹⁸She sees that her business goes well,
and never puts out her lamp at night.
¹⁹She holds the distaff in her hand,
and her fingers grasp the spindle.
²⁰She is open-handed to the wretched
and generous to the poor.
²¹She has no fear for her household when it snows,
for they are wrapped in two cloaks.
²²She makes her own coverings,
and clothing of fine linen and purple.
²³Her husband is well known in the city gate
when he takes his seat with the elders of the land.
²⁴She weaves linen and sells it,
and supplies merchants with their sashes.
²⁵She is clothed in dignity and power
and can afford to laugh at tomorrow.
²⁶When she opens her mouth, it is to speak wisely,
and loyalty is the theme of her teaching.

²⁷She keeps her eye on the doings of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

²⁸Her sons with one accord call her happy;
her husband too, and he sings her praises:

²⁹Many a woman shows how capable she is [*Or Many daughters show how
capable they are*];
but you excel them all.'

³⁰Charm is a delusion and beauty fleeting;
it is the God-fearing woman who is honoured.

³¹Extol her for the fruit of all her toil,
and let her labours bring her honour in the city gate.