

# SIRACH

from *THE APOCRYPHA*, The New English Bible

## *The ways of wisdom*

1. ALL WISDOM is from the Lord; wisdom is with him for ever. 2 Who can count the sand of the sea, the drops of rain, or the days of unending time? 3 Who can measure the height of the sky, the breadth of the earth, or the depth of the abyss? 4 Wisdom was first of all created things; intelligent purpose has been there from the beginning. 6 Who has laid bare the root of wisdom? Who has understood her subtlety? 8 One alone is wise, the Lord most terrible, seated upon his throne. 9 It is he who created her, surveyed and measured her, and infused her into all his works. 10 To all mankind he has given her in some measure, but in plenty to those who love him. 11 THE FEAR OF THE LORD brings honour and pride, cheerfulness and a garland of joy. 12 The fear of the Lord gladdens the heart; it brings cheerfulness and joy and long life. 13 Whoever fears the Lord will be prosperous at the last; blessings will be his on the day of his death. 14 The essence of wisdom is the fear of the Lord; she is created with the faithful in their mother's womb, 15 she has built an everlasting home among men, and will keep faith with their descendants. 16 Those who fear the Lord have their fill of wisdom; she gives them deep draughts of her wine. 17 She stocks her home with all that the heart can desire and her storehouses with her produce. 18 Wisdom's garland is the fear of the Lord, flowering with peace and health. 19 She showers down knowledge and ability, and bestows high honour on those who hold fast to her. 20 Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, and long life grows on her branches. 22 Unjust rage can never be excused; when anger tips the scale it is a man's downfall. 23 Until the night time comes, a patient man restrains himself, and afterwards cheerfulness breaks through again; 24 until the right moment he keeps his thoughts to himself, and later his good sense is on everyone's lips. 25 In wisdom's store are wise proverbs, but godliness is detestable to a sinner. 26 If you long for wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will give it you in plenty. 27 For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline; fidelity and gentleness are his delight. 28 Do not disregard the fear of the Lord or approach him without sincerity. 29 Do not act a part before the eyes of the world; keep guard over your lips. 30 Never be arrogant, for fear you fall and bring disgrace on yourself; she Lord will reveal your secrets and humble you before the assembly, because it was not the fear of the Lord that prompted you, but your heart was full of hypocrisy.

2 MY SON, if you aspire to be a servant of the Lord, prepare yourself for testing. 2 Set a straight course, be resolute, and do not lose your head

in time of disaster. 3 Hold fast to him, never desert him, if you would end your days in prosperity. 4 Bear every hardship that is sent you; be patient under humiliation, whatever the cost. 5 For gold is assayed by fire, and the Lord proves men in the furnace of humiliation. 6 Trust him and he will help you; steer a straight course and set your hope on him. 7 You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy; do not stray or you will fall. 8 You who fear the Lord, trust in him, and you shall not miss your reward. 9 You who fear the Lord, expect prosperity, lasting happiness and favour. 10 Consider the past generations and see: was anyone who trusted the Lord ever disappointed? was anyone who stood firm in the fear of him ever deserted? did he ever neglect anyone who prayed to him? 11 For the Lord is compassionate and merciful; he forgives sins and comes to the rescue in time of trouble. 12 Woe to faint hearts and nerveless hands and to the sinner who leads a double life! 13 Woe to the feeble-hearted! they have no faith, and therefore shall go unprotected. 14 Woe to you who have given up the struggle! What will you do when the Lord's reckoning comes? 15 Those who fear the Lord never disobey his words; and all who love him keep to his ways. 16 Those who fear the Lord try to do his will; and all who love him steep themselves in the law. 17 Those who fear the Lord are always prepared; they humble themselves before him and say: 18 'We will fall into the hands of the Lord, not into the hands of men, for his majesty is equalled by his mercy.'

**3 CHILDREN, LISTEN TO ME,** for I am your father; do what I tell you, if you wish to be safe. 2 It is the Lord's will that a father should be honoured by his child and a mother's rights recognized by her sons. 3 Respect for a father atones for sins, 4 and to honour your mother is to lay up a fortune. 5 A son who respects his father will be made happy by his own children; when he prays, he will be heard. 6 He who honours his father will have a long life, and he who obeys the Lord comforts his mother; 7 he obeys his parents as though he were their slave. 8 My son, honour your father by word and deed, so that you may receive his blessing. 9 For a father's blessing strengthens his children's houses, but a mother's curse uproots their foundations. 10 Never seek honour at the cost of discredit to your father; how can his discredit bring honour to you? 11 A man is honoured if his father is honoured, and neglect of a mother is a disgrace to children. 12 My son, look after your father in his old age; do nothing to vex him as long as he lives. 13 Even if his mind fails, make allowances for him, and do not despise him because you are in your prime. 14 If you support your father it will never be forgotten, but be put to your credit against your sins; 15 when you are in trouble, it will be remembered in your favour, and your sins will melt away like frost in the sunshine. 16 To leave your father in the lurch is like blasphemy, and to provoke your mother's anger is to call down the Lord's curse. 17 My son, be unassuming in all you do, and those the Lord approves will love you. 18 The greater you are, the humbler you

must be, and the Lord will show you favour. 20 For his power is great, and he is honoured by the humble. 21 Do not pry into things too hard for you or examine what is beyond your reach. 22 Meditate on the commandments you have been given; what the Lord keeps secret is no concern of yours. 23 Do not busy yourself with matters that are beyond you; even what has been shown you is above man's grasp. 24 Many have been led astray by their speculations, and false conjectures have impaired their judgement. 26 Stubbornness will come to a bad end, and the man who flirts with danger will lose his life. 27 Stubbornness brings a load of troubles; the sinner piles sin on sin. 28 When calamity befalls the arrogant, there is no cure; wickedness is too deeply rooted in him. 29 A sensible man will take a proverb to heart; an attentive ear is the desire of the wise. 30 As water quenches a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin. 31 He who repays a good turn is mindful of the future; when he falls he will find support.

**4** My son, do not cheat a poor man of his livelihood or keep him waiting with hungry eyes. 2 Do not tantalize a starving man or drive him to desperation in his need. 3 If a man is desperate, do not add to his troubles or keep him waiting for the charity he asks. 4 Do not reject the appeal of a man in distress or turn your back on the poor; 5 when he begs for alms, do not look the other way and so give him reason to curse you, 6 for if he curses you in his bitterness, his Maker will listen to his prayer. 7 Make yourself popular in the assembly, and show deference to the great. 8 When a poor man speaks to you, give him your attention and answer his greeting politely. 9 Rescue the downtrodden from the oppressor, and be firm when giving a verdict. 10 Be a father to orphans and like a husband to their mother; then the Most High will call you his son, and his love for you will be greater than a mother's. 11 WISDOM RAISES her sons to greatness and cares for those who seek her. 12 To love her is to love life; to rise early for her sake is to be filled with joy. 13 The man who attains her will win recognition; the Lord's blessing rests upon every place she enters. 14 To serve her is to serve the Holy One, and the Lord loves those who love her. 15 Her dutiful servant will give laws to the heathen, and because he listens to her, his home will be secure. 16 If he trusts her, he will possess her and bequeath her to his descendants. 17 At first she will lead him by devious ways, filling him with craven fears. Her discipline will be a torment to him, and her decrees a hard test until he trusts her with all his heart. 18 Then she will come straight back to him again and gladden and reveal her secrets to him. 19 But if he strays from her, she will desert him and abandon him to his fate. 20 WATCH YOUR CHANCE and defend yourself against wrong, and do not be over-modest in your own cause; 21 for there is a modesty that leads to sin, as well as a modesty that brings honour and favour. 22 Do not be untrue to yourself in deference to another, or so diffident that you fail in your duty. 24 Never remain silent when a word might put things right, for wisdom shows itself by speech,

and a man's education must find expression in words. 25 Do not argue against the truth, but have a proper sense of your own ignorance. 26 Never be ashamed to admit your mistakes, nor try to swim against the current. 27 Do not let yourself be a doormat to a fool or curry favour with the powerful. 28 Fight to the death for truth, and the Lord God will fight on your side. 29 Do not be forward in your speech but slack and neglectful in your work. 30 Do not play the lion in your home or swagger among your servants. 31 Do not keep your hand open to receive and close it when it is your turn to give.

**5** Do not rely upon your money and say, 'I am independent.' 2 Do not yield to every impulse you can gratify or follow the desires of your heart. 3 Do not say, 'I am my own master'; you may be sure the Lord will call you to account. 4 Do not say, 'I sinned, yet nothing happened to me'; it is only that the Lord is very patient. 5 Do not be so confident of pardon that you sin again and again. 6 Do not say, 'His mercy is so great, he will pardon my sins, however many .' To him belong both mercy and wrath, and sinners feel the weight of his retribution. 7 Come back to the Lord without delay; do not put it off from one day to the next, or suddenly the Lord's wrath will be upon you, and you will perish at the time of reckoning. 8 Do not rely upon ill-gotten gains, for they will not avail in time of calamity. 9 Do not winnow in every wind or walk along every path. 10 Stand firmly by what you know and be consistent in what you say. 11 Be quick to listen, but take time over your answer. 12 Answer a man if you know what to say, but if not, hold your tongue. 13 Honour or shame can come through speaking, and a man's tongue may be his downfall. 14 Do not get a name for being a gossip or lay traps with your tongue; for as there is shame in store for the thief, so there is harsh censure for duplicity. 15 Avoid the little faults as well as the great

**6** Do not change from a friend into an enemy, for a bad name brings shame and disgrace, and this is the mark of duplicity. 2 Never be roused by violent passions; they will tear you apart like a bull, 3 they will eat up your leaves, destroy your fruit, and leave you a withered tree. 4 Evil passion ruins the man who harbours it, to the delight of his gloating enemies. 5 Pleasant words win many friends, and an affable manner makes acquaintance easy. 6 Accept a greeting from everyone, but advice from only one in a thousand. 7 When you make a friend, begin by testing him, and be in no hurry to trust him. 8 Some friends are loyal when it suits them but desert you in time of trouble. 9 Some friends turn into enemies and shame you by making the quarrel public. 10 Another sits at your table, but is nowhere to be found in time of trouble; 11 when you are prosperous, he will be your second self and make free with your servants, 12 but if you come down in the world, he will turn against you and you will not see him again. 13 Hold your enemies at a distance, and keep a wary eye on your friends. 14 A faithful friend is a secure shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. 15 A faithful friend is beyond

price; his worth is more than money can buy. 16 A faithful friend is an elixir of life, found only by those who fear the Lord. 17 The man who fears the Lord keeps his friendships in repair for he treats his neighbour as himself. 18 MY SON, seek wisdom's discipline while you are young, and when your hair is white, you will find her still. 19 Come to her like a farmer ploughing and sowing; then wait for her plentiful harvest. If you cultivate her, you will labour for a little while, but soon you will be eating her crops. 20 How harsh she seems to the undisciplined! The fool cannot abide her; 21 like a stone she is a burden that tests his strength, but he is quick to toss her aside. 22 Wisdom well deserves her name, for she is not accessible to many. 23 Listen, my son, accept my judgement; do not reject my advice. 24 Put your feet in wisdom's fetters and your neck into her collar. 25 Stoop to carry her on your shoulders and do not chafe at her bonds. 26 Come to her whole- heartedly, and keep to her ways with all your might. 27 Follow her track, and she will make herself known to you; once you have grasped her, never let her go. 28 In the end you will find the relief she offers; she will transform herself into joy for you. 29 Her fetters will become your strong defence and her collar a gorgeous robe. 30 Her yoke is a golden ornament and her bonds a purple cord. 31 You shall put her on like a gorgeous robe and wear her like a splendid crown. 32 If it is your wish, my son, you can be trained; if you give your mind to it, you can become clever; 33 if you enjoy listening, you will learn; if you are attentive, you will grow wise. 34 When you stand among your elders, decide who is wise and join him. 35 Listen gladly to every godly argument and see that no wise proverb escapes you. 36 If you discover a wise man, rise early to visit him; let your feet wear out his doorstep. 37 Ponder the decrees of the Lord and study his commandments at all times. He will strengthen your mind and grant your desire for wisdom.

**6** Do no evil, and evil will not come upon you; 2 turn away from wrong, and it will avoid you. 3 Do not sow in the furrows of injustice, for fear of reaping a sevenfold crop. 4 Do not ask the Lord for high office or the king for preferment. 5 Do not pose as a righteous man before the Lord or play the sage in the king's presence. 6 Do not aspire to be a judge, unless you have the strength to put an end to injustice; for you may be intimidated by a man of rank and so compromise your integrity. 7 Do not commit an offence against the community and so incur a public disgrace. 8 Do not pile sin upon sin, for oven one is enough to make you guilty. 9 Do not say, 'My liberality will be taken into account; when I make an offering to God Most High he will accept: 10 Do not grow weary of praying or neglect the giving of charity. 11 Never laugh at a man in his bitter humiliation, for there is One who both humbles and exalts. 12 Do not plot to deceive your brother or pay back a friend in his own coin. 13 Refuse ever to tell a lie; it is a habit from which no good comes. 14 Never be garrulous among your elders or repeat yourself when you pray. 15 Do not resent manual labour or farm -work, for it was

ordained by the Most High. 16 Do not enlist in the ranks of sinners; remember that retribution will not delay. 17 Humble yourself to the uttermost, for the doom of the impious is fire and worms. 18 Do not part with a friend for gain, or a true brother for all the gold of Ophir. 19 Do not lose the chance of a wise and good wife, for her attractions are worth more than gold. 20 Do not ill-treat a slave who works honestly or a hired servant whose heart is in his work. 21 Love a good slave from the bottom of your heart and do not grudge him his freedom. 22 Have you cattle? Take care of them, and if they bring you profit, keep them. 23 Have you sons? Discipline them and break them in from their earliest years. 24 Have you daughters? See that they are chaste, and do not be too lenient with them. 25 Marry your daughter, and a great load will be off your hands; but give her to a sensible husband. 26 If you have a wife after your own heart, do not divorce her: but do not trust yourself to one you cannot love. 27 Honour your father with all your heart and do not forget your mother's birth-pangs; 28 remember that your parents brought you into the world; how can you repay what they have done for you? 29 Fear the Lord with all your heart and reverence his priests. 30 Love your Maker with all your might and do not leave his ministers without support. 31 fear the Lord and honour me priest and give him his dues, as you have been commanded, the firstfruits, the guilt-offering, and the shoulder of the victim, the dedication sacrifice, and the firstfruits of holy things. 32 Be open-handed also with the poor, so that your own well-being may be complete. 33 Every living man appreciates generosity; do not withhold your kindness even when a man is dead. 34 Do not turn your back on those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn. 35 Do not hesitate to visit the sick, for by such visits you will win their affection. 36 Whatever you are doing, remember the end that awaits you; then all your life you will never go wrong.

**8** Do not pit yourself against a great man, for fear of falling into his power. 2 Do not quarrel with a rich man; you may be sure he will outbid you. For money has been the ruin of many and has misled the minds of kings. 3 Do not argue with a long-winded man, and so add fuel to his fire. 4 Never make fun of an ill-mannered man, or you may hear your ancestors insulted. 5 Do not rebuke a man who is already penitent; remember that we are all guilty. 6 Despise no man for being old; some of us are growing old as well. 7 Do not be smug over another man's death; remember that we must all die. 8 Do not neglect the studies of the learned, but apply yourself to their maxims; from these you will learn discipline, and how to be the servant of princes. 9 Do not ignore the discourse of your elders, for they themselves learned from their fathers; they can teach you to understand and to have an answer ready in time of need. 10 Do not kindle a sinner's coals, for fear of being burnt in the flames of his fire. 11 Do not let a man's insolence bring you to your feet; he will only sit waiting to trap you with your own words. 12 Do not lend to a man with more influence than yourself, or, if you do, write

off the loan as a loss. 13 Do not stand surety beyond your means, and, when you do stand surety, be prepared to pay. 14 Do not go to law with a judge, for in deference to his position they will give him the verdict. 15 Do not go travelling with a reckless man: you may find him a burden on you. He will do as he fancies, and his folly will bring death on you as well. 16 Do not fall out with a hot -tempered man or walk with him in unfrequented places; he thinks nothing of bloodshed, and where no help is at hand he will set upon you. 17 Never discuss your plans with a fool, for he cannot keep a secret. 18 Do nothing private in the presence of a stranger; you do not know what use he will make of it. 19 Do not tell what is in your mind to all comers or accept favours from them.

**9** Do not be jealous over the wife you cherish, and so put into her head the idea of wronging you. 2 Do not surrender yourself to a woman and let her trample down your strength. 3 Do not go near a loose woman, for fear of falling into her snares. 4 Do not keep company with a dancing-girl, or you may be caught by her tricks. 5 Do not let your mind dwell on a virgin, or you may be trapped into paying damages for her. 6 Never surrender yourself to prostitutes, for fear of losing all you possess, 7 nor gaze about you in the city streets or saunter in deserted corners. 8 Do not let your eye linger on a woman's figure or your thoughts dwell on beauty not yours to possess. Many have been seduced by the beauty of a woman, which kindles passion like fire. 9 Never sit at table with another man's wife or join her in a drinking party, for fear of succumbing to her charms and slipping into fatal disaster. 10 Do not desert an old friend; a new one is not worth as much. A new friend is like new wine; you do not enjoy drinking it until it has matured. 11 Do not envy a bad man his success; you do not know what fate is in store for him. 12 Take no pleasure in the pleasures of the wicked; remember that they will not go scot-free all their lives. 13 Keep clear of a man who has power to kill, and you will not be haunted by the fear of death. If you do approach him, make no false step or you will risk losing your life. Tell yourself that you are making your way among pitfalls, or walking on the battlements of the city. 14 Take the measure of your neighbours as best you can, and accept advice from those who are wise. 15 Let your discussion be with intelligent men and all your talk about the law of the Most High. 16 Choose the company of good men at table, and take pride in fearing the Lord. 17 A craftsman is recognized by his skilful hand and a councillor by his words of wisdom. 18 A gossip is the terror of his town, detested for his unguarded talk.

**10** wise ruler trains his people, and gives them sound and orderly government. 2 Like ruler, like ministers; like sovereign, like subjects; 3 a king untutored is the people's ruin, but wise rulers make a city fit to live in.

Man's life under divine providence

4 THE GOVERNMENT Of the World is in the hand of the Lord; at the right time he appoints the right man to rule it. 5 In the Lord's hand is all human success; it is he who confers honour on the legislator. 6 Do not nurse a grievance against your neighbour for every offence, and do not resort to acts of insolence. 7 Arrogance is hateful to God and man, and injustice is offensive to both. 8 Empire passes from nation to nation because of injustice, insolence, and greed. 9 What has man to be so proud of? He is only dust and ashes, subject even in life to bodily decay. 10 A long illness mocks the doctor's skill; today's king is tomorrow's corpse. 11 When a man dies, he comes into an inheritance of maggots and vermin and worms. 12 The origin of pride is to forsake the Lord, man's heart revolting against his Maker: 13 as its origin is sin, so persistence in it brings on a deluge of depravity. Therefore the Lord sends upon them signal punishments and brings them to utter disaster. 14 The Lord overturns the thrones of princes and enthrones the gentle in their place. 15 The Lord pulls up nations by the roots and plants the humble instead. 16 The Lord lays waste the territory of nations, destroying them to the very foundations of the earth. 17 Some he shrivels away to nothing, so that all memory of them vanishes from the earth. 18 Pride was not the Creator's design for man nor violent anger for those born of woman. 19 What creature is worthy of honour? Man. What men? Those who fear the Lord. What creature is worthy of contempt? Man. What men? Those who break the commandments. 20 As the members of the family honour their head, so the Lord honours those who fear him. 22 The rich, the famous, and the poor- their only boast is the fear of the Lord. 23 It is unjust to despise a poor man who is intelligent, and wrong to honour a man who is a sinner. 24 The prince, the judge, and the ruler win high honours, but none of them is as great as the godfearing man. 25 The wise slave will have free men to wait on him, and a man of sense will not grumble at it. 26 DO NOT BE TOO CLEVER to do a day's work or boast when you have nothing to live on. 27 It is better to work and have more than enough than to boast and go hungry. 28 My son, in all modesty, keep your self- respect and value yourself at your true worth. 29 Who will speak up for a man who is his own enemy, or respect one who disparages himself ? 30 A poor man may be honoured for his wisdom, a rich man for his wealth; 31 if a man is honoured in poverty, how much more in wealth! And if he is despised in wealth, how much more in poverty!

**11** A poor man with wisdom can hold his head high and take his seat among the great. 2 Do not overrate one man for his good looks or be repelled by another man's appearance. 3 The bee is small among winged creatures, yet her produce takes first place for sweetness. 4 Do not pride yourself on your fine clothes or be haughty when honours come to you; for the Lord can perform marvels which are hidden from the eyes of men. 5 Many kings have been reduced to sitting on the ground, while a mere nobody has worn the crown. 6 Many rulers have

been stripped of their honours, and great men have found themselves at the mercy of others. 7 Do not find fault before examining the evidence; think first, and criticize afterwards. 8 Do not answer without first listening, and do not interrupt when another is speaking. 9 Never take sides in a quarrel not your own or become involved in the disputes of rascals. 10 My son, do not engage in too many transactions; if you attempt too much, you will come to grief. When you are in pursuit, you will not overtake; when you are in flight, you will not escape. 11 One man slaves and strains and hurries and is all the farther behind. 12 Another is slow-witted and in need of help, lacking in strength and abounding in poverty; but the Lord turns a kindly eye upon him and lifts him up out of his miserable plight. 13 He raises him to dignity to the amazement of all. 14 Good fortune and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, all come from the Lord. 17 His gifts to the devout are lasting; his approval brings unending success. 18 A man may grow rich by stinting and sparing, but what does he get for his pains? 19 When he says, 'I have earned my rest, now I can live on my savings', he does not know how long it will be before he must die and leave his wealth to others. 20 Stand by your contract and give your mind to it; grow old at your work. 21 Do not envy a rogue his success; trust the Lord and stick to your job. It is no difficult thing for the Lord to make a poor man rich in a moment. 22 The Lord's blessing is the reward of piety, which blossoms in one short hour. 23 Do not say, 'What use am I? What good can the future hold for me?' 24 And do not say, 'I am independent; nothing can ever go wrong for me.' 25 Hardship is forgotten in time of success, and success in time of hardship. 26 Even on the day a man dies it is easy for the Lord to give him his deserts. 27 One hour's misery wipes out all memory of delight, and a man's end reveals his true character. 28 Call no man happy before he dies, for not until death is a man known for what he is. 29 DO NOT INVITE all Comers into your home; dishonesty has many disguises. 30 A proud man's mind is like a decoy-partridge in its cage, or like a spy watching for a false step. 31 He waits for a chance to twist good into evil or to cast blame on innocent actions. 32 A small spark kindles many coals, and the insinuations of a bad man end in bloodshed. 33 Beware of a scoundrel and his evil plots, or he may ruin your reputation for ever. 34 Admit a stranger to your home and he will stir up trouble and make you a stranger to your own flesh and blood.

**12** If you do a good deed, make sure to whom you are doing it; then you will have credit for your kindness. 2 A good turn done to a godfearing man will be rewarded, if not by him, then by the Most High. 3 No good comes to the persistent wrong-doer or to the man who never gives alms; 5 refuse him bread; give him nothing at all; he will only use your gifts to get the better of you, and you will suffer a double wrong in return for the favours you have done him. 6 The Most High himself hates sinners and sends bad men what they deserve. 7 Give to a good man, but never help a sinner; keep your good works for the humble, not

the insolent. 8 Prosperity does not reveal your friends; adversity does not conceal your enemies. 9 When all goes well a man's enemies are friendly, but in hard times even his friend will desert him. 10 Never trust your enemy; he will turn vicious as sure as metal rusts. 11 If he appears humble and obsequious, take care! Be on your guard against him! Behave towards him like a man who polishes a mirror to make sure that it does not corrode away. 12 Do not have him at your side, or he will trip you up and supplant you. Do not let him sit at your right hand, or he will soon be wanting your own seat; and in the end you will see the force of my words and recall my warning with regret. 13 Who sympathizes with a snake-charmer when he is bitten, or with a tamer of wild animals? 14 No more does anyone pity the man who keeps bad company and involves himself in another's wickedness. 15 He may stand by you for a while, but, if you falter, his friendship will not last. 16 An enemy has honey on his lips, but in his heart he plans to trip you into the ditch. He may have tears in his eyes, but give him a chance and he will not stop at bloodshed. 17 If disaster overtakes you, you will find him there ahead of you, ready, with a pretence of help, to pull your feet from under you. 18 Then he will nod his head and rub his hands and spread gossip, showing his true colours.

**13** Handle pitch and it will make you dirty; keep company with an arrogant man and you will grow like him. 2 Do not lift a weight too heavy for you, keeping company with a man greater and richer than yourself. How can a jug be friends with a kettle? If they knock together, the one will be smashed. 3 A rich man does wrong, and adds insult to injury; a poor man is wronged, and must apologize into the bargain. 4 If you can serve his turn, a rich man will exploit you, but if you are in need, he will leave you alone. 5 If you are in funds, he will be your constant companion, and drain you dry without a twinge of remorse. 6 He may need you; and then he will deceive you, and will be all smiles and encouragement, paying you compliments and asking, 'What can I do for you?' 7 embarrassing you with his hospitality, until he has drained you two or three times over; but in the end he will laugh at you. Afterwards, when he sees you, he will pass you by, nodding his head over you. 8 Take care not to be led astray and humiliated when you are enjoying yourself. 9 If a great man invites you, be slow to accept, and he will be the more pressing in his invitation. 10 Do not be forward, for fear of a rebuff, but do not keep aloof, or you may be forgotten. 11 Do not presume to converse with him as an equal or be over-confident if he holds you long in talk. The more he speaks, the more he is testing you, examining you even while he smiles. 12 The man who cannot keep your secrets is without comp. and will not spare you harm or imprisonment; 13 so keep your secrets to yourself and be very careful, for you are walking on the brink of ruin. 15 Every animal loves its like, and every man his neighbour. 16 All creatures flock together with their kind, and men form attachments with their own sort. 17 What has a wolf in

common with a lamb, or a sinner with a man of piety? 18 What peace can there be between hyena and dog, what peace between rich man and pauper? 19 As lions prey on the wild asses of the desert, so the rich batten on the poor. 20 As humility disgusts the proud, so is the rich man disgusted by the poor. 21 If a rich man staggers, he is held up by his friends; a poor man falls, and his friends disown him as well. 22 When a rich man slips, many come to his rescue; if he says something outrageous, they make excuses for him. A poor man makes a slip, and they all criticize him; even if he talks sense, he is not given a hearing. 23 A rich man speaks, and all are silent; then they praise his speech to the skies. A poor man speaks, and they say, 'Who is this?', and if he stumbles, they give him an extra push. 24 W E A L T H I S G O O D, if sin has not tainted it; poverty is a crime only to the ungodly. 25 It is a man's heart that changes the look on his face either for better or worse. 26 The sign of a happy heart is a cheerful face, but the invention of proverbs involves wearisome thought.

**14** Happy the man who has never let slip a careless word, who has never felt the sting of remorse! 2 Happy the man whose conscience does not accuse him, whose hope has never been disappointed! 3 It is not proper for a mean man to be rich: what use is money to a miser? 4 He deprives himself only to hoard for other men; others will live in luxury on his riches. 5 How can a man be hard on himself and kind to others? His possessions bring him no enjoyment. 6 No one is worse than the man who is grudging to himself: his niggardliness is its own punishment. 7 If ever he does good, it is by mistake, and then in the end he reveals his meanness. 8 It is a hard man who has a grudging eye; he turns his back on need and looks the other way. 9 A covetous man's eye is not satisfied with his share; greedy injustice shrivels the soul. 10 A miser grudges bread and keeps an empty table. 11 My son, if you can afford it, do yourself well, always offering to the Lord the sacrifice due to him. 12 Remember that death is not to be postponed; the hour of your appointment with the grave is undisclosed. 13 Before you die, do good to your friend; reach out as far as you can to help him. 14 Do not miss a day's enjoyment or forgo your share of innocent pleasure. 15 Are you to leave to others all you have laboured for and let them draw lots for your hard-earned wealth? 16 Give and receive; indulge yourself; you need not expect luxuries in the grave. 17 Man's body wears out like a garment; for the ancient sentence stands: You shall die. 18 In the thick foliage of a growing tree one crop of leaves falls and another grows instead; so the generations of flesh and blood pass with the death of one and the birth of another. 19 All man's works decay and vanish, and the workman follows them into oblivion. 20 HAPPY THE MAN who fixes his thoughts on wisdom and uses his brains to think, 21 the man who contemplates her ways and ponders her secrets. 22 Stalk her like a hunter and lie in wait beside her path! 23 The man who peers in at her windows and listens at her keyhole, 24 who camps beside her house, driving his tent-

peg into her wall, 25 who pitches his tent close by her, where it is best for men to live- 26 he will put his children in her shade and camp beneath her branches, 27 sheltered by her from the heat, and dwelling in the light of her presence.

**15** The man who fears the Lord will do all this, and if he masters the law, wisdom will be his. 2 She will come out to meet him like a mother; she will receive him like a young bride. 3 For food she will give him the bread of understanding and for drink the water of knowledge. 4 He will lean on her and not fall; he will rely on her to save him from disgrace. 5 She will promote him above his neighbours, and find words for him when he speaks in the assembly. 6 He shall be crowned with joy and exultation; lasting honour shall be his heritage. 7 Fools shall never possess wisdom; sinners shall catch no glimpse of her. 8 She holds aloof from arrogance, far from the thoughts of liars. 9 Worship is out of place on the lips of a sinner, unprompted as he is by the Lord. 10 Worship is the outward expression of wisdom, and the Lord himself inspires it. 11 Do not say, 'The Lord is to blame for my failure'; it is for you to avoid doing what he hates. 12 Do not say, 'It was he who led me astray'; he has no use for sinful men. 13 The Lord hates every kind of vice; you cannot love it and still fear him. 14 When he made man in the beginning, he left him free to take his own decisions; 15 if you choose, you can keep the commandments; whether or not you keep faith is yours to decide. 16 He has set before you fire and water; reach out and take which you choose; 17 before man lie life and death, and whichever he prefers is his. 18 For in his great wisdom and mighty power the Lord sees everything. 19 He keeps watch over those who fear him; no human act escapes his notice. 20 But he has commanded no man to be wicked, nor has he given licence to commit sin.

**16** DO NOT SET YOUR HEART on a large family of ne'er-do-wells or be content if your sons are godless. 2 However many they are, do not think yourself happy, unless the fear of the Lord is in them. 3 Do not count on their living to be old or rely on their numbers; for one son can be better than a thousand; better indeed to die childless than to have godless children. 4 Thanks to one man of good sense a city may be populous, while a tribe of lawless men becomes a desert. 5 Many a time have I seen this with my own eyes, and still weightier examples have come to my ears. 6 Where sinners gather, the fire breaks out; retribution blazes up in a rebellious nation. 7 There was no pardon for the giants of old, who revolted in all their strength. 8 There was no reprieve for Lot's adopted home, abhorrent in its arrogance. 9 There was no mercy for the doomed nation, exterminated for their sins- 10 those six hundred thousand warriors marshalled in stubborn defiance. 11 Even if only one man were obstinate, it would be a miracle for him to escape punishment. For mercy and anger belong to the Lord; he shows his power in forgiveness, or in the flood of his wrath. 12 His mercy is great,

but great also is his condemnation; he judges a man by what he has done. 13 He does not let the sinner escape with his loot or try the patience of the godly too long. 14 He opens a way for every work of mercy, and everyone is treated according to his own deserts. 17 Do not say, 'I am hidden from the Lord; who is there in heaven to give a thought to me? Among so many I shall not be noticed; what is my life compared with the measureless creation 18 Heaven itself, the highest heaven, the abyss and the earth are shaken at his coming; 19 the very mountains and the foundations of the world tremble when he looks upon them. 20 What human mind can grasp this, or comprehend his ways? 21 As a squall takes men unawares, so most of his works are done in secret. 22 Who is to declare his acts of justice or wait for his remote decree?' 23 These are the thoughts of a small mind, the absurdities of a senseless and misguided man. 24 LISTEN TO ME, MY SON, and learn sense; pay close attention to what I say; 25 I will show you exact discipline and teach you accurate knowledge. 26 When the Lord created his works in the beginning, and after making them defined their boundaries, 27 he disposed them in an eternal order and fixed their influences for all time. They do not grow hungry or weary, or abandon their tasks; 28 one does not jostle another; they never disobey his word. 29 The Lord then looked at the earth and filled it with his good things. 30 With every kind of living creature he covered the ground, into which they must all return.

**17** The Lord created man from the earth and sent him back to it again. 2 He set a fixed span of life for men and granted them authority over everything on earth. 3 He clothed them with strength like his own, forming them in his own image. 4 He put the fear of man into all creatures and gave him lordship over beasts and birds. 6 He gave men tongue and eyes and ears, the power of choice and a mind for thinking. 7 He filled them with discernment and showed them good and evil. 8 He kept watch over their hearts, to display to them the majesty of his works. 10 They shall praise his holy name, proclaiming the grandeur of his works. 11 He gave them knowledge as well and endowed them with the life-giving law. 12 He established a perpetual covenant with them and revealed to them his decrees. 13 Their eyes saw his glorious majesty, and their ears heard the glory of his voice. 14 He said to them, 'Guard against all wrongdoing', and taught each man his duty towards his neighbour. 15 Their conduct always lies open before him, never hidden from his scrutiny. 17 For every nation he appointed a ruler, but chose Israel to be his own possession. 19 So whatever they do is clear to him as daylight; he keeps constant watch over their lives. 20 Their wrongdoing is not hidden from the Lord; he observes all their sins. 22 A man's good deeds he treasures like a signet-ring, and his kindness like the apple of his eye. 23 In the end he will rise up and give the wicked their deserts, bringing down their recompense on their own heads. 24 Yet he leaves a way open for the penitent to return to him, and gives the waverer strength to endure. 25 Turn to the Lord and have done with sin;

make your prayer in his presence, and so lessen your offence. 26 Come back to the Most High, renounce wrongdoing, and hate intensely what he abhors. 27 Who will praise the Most High in the grave in place of the living who give him thanks? 28 When a man is dead and ceases to be, his gratitude dies with; it is when he is alive and well that he praises the Lord. 29 How great is the Lord's mercy and his pardon to those who turn to him! 30 Not everything is within man's reach, for the human race is not immortal. 31 Is anything brighter than the sun? Yet the sun suffers eclipse, So flesh and blood have evil thoughts. 32 The Lord marshals the armies of high heaven, but all men are dust and ashes.

**18** He who lives for ever is the Creator of the whole universe; 2 right belongs to the Lord alone. 4 To no man is it given to unfold the story of his works; who can trace his marvels to their source? 5 No one can measure his majestic power, still less, tell the full tale of all his mercies. 6 Man can neither increase nor diminish them, nor fathom the wonders of the Lord. 7 When a man comes to the end of them he is still at the beginning, and when he has finished he will still be perplexed. 8 What is man and what use is he? What do his good or evil deeds signify? 9 His span of life is at the most a hundred years; 10 compared with endless time, his few years are like one drop of sea-water or a single grain of sand. 11 This is why the Lord is patient with them, lavishing his mercy upon them. 12 He sees and knows the harsh fate in store for them, and therefore gives full play to his forgiveness. 13 Man's compassion is only for his neighbour, but the Lord's compassion is for every living thing. He corrects and trains and teaches and brings them back as a shepherd his flock. 14 He has compassion on those who accept discipline and are eager to obey his decrees. 15 My son, do good without scolding; do not spoil your generosity with hard words. 16 Does not the dew give respite from the sweltering heat? So a word can do more than a gift. 17 A kind word counts for more than a rich present; with a gracious man you will find both. 18 A fool cannot refrain from tactless criticism, and a grudging giver makes no eyes sparkle. 19 Before you speak, learn; and before you fall sick, consult a doctor. 20 Before judgement comes, examine yourself, and you will find pardon in the hour of scrutiny. 21 Before you fall ill, humble yourself; show your penitence as soon as you sin. 22 Let nothing hinder the prompt discharge of your vows; do not wait till death to be absolved. 23 Before you make a vow, give it due thought; do not be like those who try the Lord's patience. 24 Think of the wrath you must face in the hour of death, when the time of reckoning comes, and he turns away his face. 25 In time of plenty remember the time of famine, poverty and need in days of wealth. 26 Between dawn and dusk times may alter; all change comes quickly, when the Lord wills it. 27 A wise man is always on his guard; when sin is rife, he will beware of negligence. 28 Every man of sense makes acquaintance with wisdom, and to him who finds her she gives cause for thankfulness. 29 Skilled speakers display their special wisdom by a flow

of apt proverbs.

### Maxims of prudence and self-discipline

30 DO NOT LET your passions be your guide, but restrain your desires.

31 If you indulge yourself with all that passion fancies, it will make you the butt of your enemies. 32 Do not revel in great luxury, or the expense of it may ruin you. 33 Do not beggar yourself by feasting on borrowed money, when there is nothing in your purse.

**19** A drunken workman never grows rich; carelessness in small things leads little by little to ruin. 2 Wine and women rob the wise of their wits, and a frequenter of prostitutes becomes more and more reckless, 3 till sores and worms take possession of him, and his recklessness becomes his undoing. 4 To trust a man hastily shows a shallow mind, and to sin is to do an injury to yourself. 5 To delight in wickedness is to court condemnation, 6 but evil loses its hold on the man who hates gossip. 7 Never repeat what you hear, and you will never be the loser. 8 Tell no tales about friend or foe; unless silence makes you an accomplice, never betray a man's secret 9 Suppose he has heard you and learnt to distrust you, he will seize the first chance to show his hatred. 10 Have you heard a rumour? Let it die with you. Never fear, it will not make you burst. 11 A fool with a secret goes through agony like a woman in childbirth. 12 As painful as an arrow through the thigh is a rumour in the heart of a fool. 13 Confront your friend with the gossip about him; he may not done it; or if he did it, he will know not to do it again. 14 Confront your neighbour; he may not have said it; or if he did say it, he will know not to say it again. 15 Confront your friend; it will often turn out to be slander; do not believe everything you hear. 16 A man may let slip more than he intends; whose tongue is always free from guilt? 17 Confront your neighbour before you threaten him, and let the law of the Most High take its course. 20 All wisdom is the fear of the Lord and includes the fulfilling of the law. 22 The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom, nor is there good sense in the advice of sinners. 23 There is a cleverness that is loathsome, and some fools are merely ignorant. 24 Better to be godfearing and lack brains than to have great intelligence and break the law. 25 A meticulous cleverness may lead to injustice, and a man may make himself offensive in order that right may prevail. 26 There is a scoundrel who stoops and wears mourning, but who is a fraud at heart. 27 He covers his face and pretends to be deaf, but when nobody is looking, he will steal a march on you; 28 and if lack of strength prevents him from doing wrong, he will still harm you at the first opportunity. 29 Yet you can tell a man by his looks and recognize good sense at first sight. 30 A man's clothes, and the way he laughs, and his gait, reveal his character.

**20** A reproof may be untimely, and silence may show a man's good

sense. 2 Yet how much better it is to complain than to nurse a grudge, and confession saves a man from disgrace. 4 Like a eunuch longing to seduce a girl is the man who tries to do right by violence. 5 One man is silent and is found to be wise; another is hated for his endless chatter. 6 One man is silent, at a loss for an answer; another is silent, biding his time. 7 The wise man is silent until the right moment, but a swaggering fool is always speaking out of turn. 8 A garrulous man makes himself detested, and one who abuses his position arouses hatred. 9 A MAN SOMETIMES FINDS profit in adversity, and a windfall may result in loss. 10 Sometimes liberality does not benefit the giver, sometimes it brings a double return. 11 The quest for honour may lead to disgrace, but there are those who have risen from obscurity to eminence. 12 A man may make a good bargain, but pay for it seven times over. 13 A wise man endears himself when he speaks, but fools scatter compliments in vain. 14 A gift from a fool will bring you no benefit; it looks bigger to him than it does to you. 15 He gives small gifts accompanied by long lectures, and opens his mouth as wide as the town crier. He gives a loan today and asks it back tomorrow, obnoxious fellow that he is! 16 The fool says, 'I have no friends, I get no thanks for my kindnesses; though they eat my bread, they speak ill of me.' 17 How everyone will laugh at him -and how often! 18 Better a slip on the stone floor than a slip of the tongue; and the fall of the wicked comes just as suddenly. 19 An ill-mannered man is like an unseasonable story, continually on the lips of the ill-bred. 20 A proverb will fall flat when uttered by a fool, for he will produce it at the wrong time. 21 Poverty may keep a man from doing wrong; when the day's work is over, conscience will not trouble him. 22 A man's diffidence may be his undoing, or the foolish figure he cuts in the eyes of the world. 23 A man may be shamed into making promises to a friend and needlessly turn him into an enemy. 24 A lie is an ugly blot on a man's name, and is continually on the lips of those who know no better. 25 It is better to be a thief than a habitual liar, but both will come to the same bad end. 26 A lying disposition brings disgrace; the shame of it can never be shaken off. 27 A wise man advances himself when he speaks, and a man of sense makes himself pleasant to the great. 28 The man who tills his land heaps up a harvest, and he who pleases the great reaps pardon for his wrongdoing. 29 Hospitality and presents make wise men blind; like a gag in the mouth they silence criticism. 30 Hidden wisdom and buried treasure, what use is there in either? 31 Better a man who hides his folly than one who hides his wisdom!

**21** Have you done wrong, my son? Do it no more, but ask pardon for your past wrongdoing. 2 Avoid wrong as you would a viper, for if you go near, it will bite you; its teeth are like a lion's teeth and can destroy the lives of men. 3 Every breach of the law is like a two-edged sword; it inflicts an incurable wound. 4 By intimidation and insolence a man forfeits his wealth; thus a proud man will be stripped of his possessions.

5 The Lord listens to the poor man's appeal, and his verdict follows without delay. 6 To hate reproof is to go the way of sinners, but whoever fears the Lord will repent wholeheartedly. 7 A great talker is known far and wide, but a sensible man is aware of his failings. 8 To build a house with borrowed money is like collecting stones for your own tomb. 9 A gathering of lawless men is like a bundle of tow, which ends by going up in flames. 10 The road of sinners is smoothly paved, but it leads straight down to the grave. 11 Whoever keeps the law keeps his thoughts under control; the fear of the Lord has its outcome in wisdom. 12 A MAN WHO IS NOT CLEVER cannot be taught, but there is a cleverness which only breeds bitterness. 13 A wise man's knowledge is like a river in full spate, and his advice is a life-giving spring. 14 A fool's mind is a leaky bucket: it cannot hold anything it learns. 15 If an instructed man hears a wise saying, he applauds it and improves on it. If a rake hears it, he is annoyed and throws it behind his back. 16 Listening to a fool is like travelling with a heavy pack, but there is delight to be found in intelligent conversation. 17 The assembly welcomes a word from the wise man, and thinks over what he says. 18 A fool's wisdom is like a tumbledown house; his knowledge is a string of ill-digested sayings. 19 To fools education is like fetters, like a handcuff on the wrist. 20 To the wise education is a golden ornament like a bracelet on the arm. 21 A fool laughs out loud; a clever man smiles quietly, if at all. 22 A fool rushes into a house; while a man of experience hangs back politely. 23 A boor peers into the house from the doorstep, while a well-bred man stands outside. 24 It is bad manners to listen at doors; a man of sense would think it a crushing disgrace. 25 The glib only repeat what others have said, but the wise weigh every word. 26 Fools speak before they think; wise men think first and speak afterwards. 27 When a bad man curses his adversary, he is cursing himself. 28 A tale-bearer blackens his own character and makes himself hated throughout the neighbourhood.

**22** An idler is like a filthy stone; everyone jeers at his disgrace. 2 An idler is like a lump of dung; whoever picks it up shakes it off his hand. 3 There is shame in being father to a spoilt son, and the birth of a daughter means loss. 4 A sensible daughter wins a husband, but an immodest one is a grief to her father. 5 A brazen daughter disgraces both father and husband and is despised by both. 6 Unseasonable talk is like music in time of mourning, but the lash of wisdom's discipline is always in season. 7 Teaching a fool is like mending pottery with glue, or like rousing a sleeper from heavy sleep. 8 As well reason with a drowsy man as with a fool; when you have finished, he will say, 'What was that?' 11 Mourn over the dead for the eclipse of his light; mourn over the fool for the eclipse of his wits. Mourn less bitterly for the dead, for he is at rest; but the fool's life is worse than death. 12 Mourning for the dead lasts seven days, but for a godless fool it lasts all his life. 13 Do not talk long with a fool or visit a stupid man. Beware of him, or you may be in

trouble and find yourself bespattered when he shakes himself. Avoid him, if you are looking for peace, and you will not be worn out by his folly. 14 What is heavier than lead? What is its name but 'Fool'? 15 Sand, salt, and a lump of iron are less of a burden than a stupid man. 16 A tie- beam fixed firmly into a building is not shaken loose by an earthquake; so a mind kept firm by intelligent advice will not be daunted in a crisis. 17 A mind solidly backed by intelligent thought is like the stucco that decorates a smooth wall. 18 As a fence set on a hill -top cannot stand against the wind, so a mind made timid by foolish fancies is not proof against any terror. 19 Hurt the eye and tears will flow; hurt the mind and you will find it sensitive. 20 Throw a stone at the birds and you scare them away; abuse a friend and you break off your friendship. 21 If you have drawn your sword on a friend, do not give up hope, there is still a way back. 22 If you have quarrelled with your friend, never fear, there can still be a reconciliation. But abuse, scorn, a secret betrayed, a stab in the back-- these will make any friend keep his distance. 23 Win your neighbour's confidence while he is poor, and you will share the joy of his prosperity; stand by him in time of trouble, and you will be his partner when he comes into a fortune. 24 As furnace-fumes and smoke come before the flame, so insults come before bloodshed. 25 I will not be afraid to protect my friend nor will I turn my back on him. 26 If harm should befall me on his account, everyone who hears of it will beware of him. 27 OH FOR A SENTRY to guard my mouth and a seal of discretion to close my lips, to keep them from being my downfall, and to keep my tongue from causing my ruin!

**23** Lord, Father, and Ruler of my life, do not abandon me to the tongue's control or allow me to fall on its account. 2 Oh for wisdom's lash to curb my thoughts and to discipline my mind, without overlooking my mistakes or condoning my sins! 3 Then my mistakes would not multiply nor my sins increase, humiliating me before my opponents and giving my enemy cause to gloat. 4 Lord, Father, and God of my life, do not let me have a supercilious eye. 5 Protect me from the onslaught of desire; 6 let neither gluttony nor lust take hold of me, nor give me over to the power of shameless passion. 7 Hear, my sons, how to discipline the mouth, take warning, and you will never be caught out. 8 It is by his own words that the sinner is ensnared; he is tripped up by his own scurrility and pride. 9 Do not inure your mouth to oaths or make a habit of naming the Holy One. 10 As a slave constantly under the lash is never free from weals, so the man who has oaths and the sacred name for ever on his lips will never be clear of guilt. 11 A man given to swearing is lawless to the core; the scourge will never be far from his house. If he goes back on his word, he must bear the blame; if he wilfully neglects it, he sins twice over; if his oath itself was insincere, he cannot be his house will be filled with trouble. 12 There is a kind of speech that is the counterpart of death; may it never be found among Jacob's descendants! The pious keep clear of such conduct and do not wallow in sin. 13 Do

not make a habit of coarse, vulgar talk, or you will be bound to say something sinful. 14 Remember your father and mother when you take your seat among the great, or you may forget yourself in their presence and make a fool of yourself through bad habit; then you will wish you had never been born, and curse the day of your birth. 15 A man addicted to scurrilous talk will never learn better as long as he lives. 16 TWO KINDS OF MEN add sin to sin, and a third brings retribution on himself. Hot lust that blazes like a fire can never be quenched till life is destroyed. A man whose whole body is given to sensuality never stops till the fire consumes him. 17 To a seducer every loaf is as sweet as the last, and he does not weary until he dies. 18 The man who strays from his own bed says to himself, 'Who can see me? All around is dark and the walls hide me; nobody can see me, why need I worry? The Most High will not take note of my sins.' 19 The eyes of men are all he fears; he forgets that the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, observing every step men take and penetrating every secret. 20 Before the universe was created, it was known to him, and so it is since its completion. 21 This man will pay the penalty in the public street, caught where he least expected it. 22 So too with the woman who is unfaithful to her husband, presenting him with an heir by a different father: 23 first, she disobeys the law of the Most High; secondly, she commits an offence against her husband; thirdly, she has prostituted herself by bearing bastard children. 24 She shall be disgraced before the assembly, and the consequences will fall on her children. 25 Her children will not take root, nor will fruit grow on her branches. 26 A curse will rest on her memory, and her shame will never be blotted out. 27 All who survive her will learn that nothing is better than the fear of the Lord or sweeter than obeying his commandments.

### The praise of wisdom

**24** HEAR THE PRAISE of wisdom from her own mouth, as she speaks with pride among her people, 2 before the assembly of the Most High and in the presence of the heavenly host: 3 'I am the word which was spoken by the Most High; it was I who covered the earth like a mist. 4 My dwelling- place was in high heaven; my throne was in a pillar of cloud. 5 Alone I made a circuit of the sky and traversed the depth of the abyss. 6 The waves of the sea, the whole earth, every people and nation were under my sway. 7 Among them all I looked for a home: in whose territory was I to settle? 8 Then the Creator of the universe laid a command upon me; my Creator decreed where I should dwell. He said, "'Make your home in Jacob; find your heritage in Israel.'" 9 Before time began he created me, and I shall remain for ever. 10 In the sacred tent I ministered in his presence, and so I came to be established in Zion. 11 Thus he settled me in the city he loved and gave me authority in Jerusalem. 12 I took root among the people whom the Lord had honoured by choosing them to be his special possession. 13 'There I

grew like a cedar of Lebanon, like a cypress on the slopes of Hermon,  
14 like a date- palm at Engedi, like roses at Jericho. I grew like a fair  
olive -tree in the vale, or like a plane -tree planted beside the water. 15  
Like cassia or camel- thorn I was redolent of spices; I spread my  
fragrance like choice myrrh, like galban, aromatic shell, and gum resin;  
I was like the smoke of incense in the sacred tent. 16 Like a terebinth I  
spread out my branches, laden with honour and grace. 17 I put forth  
lovely shoots like the vine, and my blossoms were a harvest of wealth  
and honour. 19 'Come to me , you who desire me, and eat your fill of my  
fruit. 20 The memory of me is sweeter than syrup, the possession of me  
sweeter than honey dripping from the comb. 21 Whoever feeds on me  
will be hungry for more, and whoever drinks from me will thirst for  
more. 22 To obey me is to be safe from disgrace; those who work in  
wisdom will not go astray.' 23 All this is the covenant- book of God Most  
High, the law which Moses enacted to be the heritage of the assemblies  
of Jacob. 25 He sends out wisdom in full flood like the river Pishon or  
like the Tigris at the time of firstfruits; 26 he overflows with  
understanding like the Euphrates or like Jordan at the time of harvest.  
27 He pours forth instruction like the Nile, like the Gihon at the time of  
vintage. 28 No man has ever fully known wisdom; from first to last no  
one has fathomed her; 29 for her thoughts are vaster than the ocean  
and her purpose deeper than the great abyss. 30 As for me, I was like a  
canal leading from a river, a watercourse into a pleasure- garden. 31 I  
said, 'I will water my garden, drenching its flower- beds'; and at once my  
canal became a river and my river a sea. 32 I will again make discipline  
shine like the dawn, so that its light may be seen from afar. 33 I will  
again pour out doctrine like prophecy and bequeath it to future  
generations. 34 Truly, my labour has not been for myself alone but for  
all seekers of wisdom.

**25** THERE ARE THREE SIGHTS which warm my heart and are beautiful  
in the eyes of the Lord and of men: concord among brothers, friendship  
among neighbours, and a man and wife who are inseparable. 2 There  
are three kinds of men who arouse my hatred, who disgust me by their  
manner of life: a poor man who boasts, a rich man who lies, and an old  
fool who commits adultery. 3 If you have not gathered wisdom in your  
youth, how will you find it when you are old? 4 Sound judgement sits  
well on grey hairs and wise advice comes well from older men. 5  
Wisdom is fitting in the aged, and ripe counsel in men of eminence. 6  
Long experience is the old man's crown, and his pride is the fear of the  
Lord. 7 I can think of nine men I count happy, and I can tell you of a  
tenth: a man who can take delight in his children, and one who lives to  
see his enemy's downfall; 8 happy the husband of a sensible wife, the  
farmer who does not plough with ox and ass together, the man whose  
tongue never betrays him, and the servant who has never worked for an  
inferior! 9 Happy the man who has found a friend, and the speaker who  
has an attentive audience! 10 How great is the man who finds wisdom!

But no greater than he who fears the Lord. 11 The fear of the Lord excels all other gifts; to what can we compare the man who has it?

### Counsels upon social behaviour

13 ANY WOUND but a wound in the heart! Any spite but a woman's! 14 Any disaster but one caused by hate! Any vengeance but the vengeance of an enemy! 15 There is no venom worse than a snake's, and no anger worse than an enemy's. 16 I would sooner share a home with a lion or a snake than keep house with a spiteful wife. 17 Her spite changes her expression, making her look as surly as a bear. 18 Her husband goes to a neighbour for his meals and cannot repress a bitter sigh. 19 There is nothing so bad as a bad wife; may the fate of the wicked overtake her! 20 It is as easy for an old man to climb a sand- dune as for a quiet husband to live with a nagging wife. 21 Do not be enticed by a woman's beauty or set your heart on possessing her. 22 If a man is supported by his wife he must expect tantrums, shamelessness, and outrage. 23 A bad wife brings humiliation, downcast looks, and a wounded heart. Slack of hand and weak of knee is the man whose wife fails to make him happy. 24 Woman is the origin of sin, and it is through her that we all die. 25 Do not leave a leaky cistern to drip or allow a bad wife to say what she likes. 26 If she does not accept your control, divorce her and send her away.

26 A good wife makes a happy husband; she doubles the length of his life. 2 A staunch wife is her husband's joy; he will live out his days in peace. 3 A good wife means a good life; she is one of the Lord's gifts to those who fear him. 4 Rich or poor, they are light- hearted, and always have a smile on their faces. 5 Three things there are that alarm me, and a fourth I am afraid to face: the scandal of the town, the gathering of a mob, and calumny -all harder to bear than death; 6 but it is heart -ache and grief when a wife is jealous of a rival and everyone alike feels the lash of her tongue. 7 A bad wife is a chafing yoke; controlling her is like clutching a scorpion. 8 A drunken wife is a great provocation; she cannot keep her excesses secret. 9 A loose woman betrays herself by her bold looks; you can tell her by her glance. 10 Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter; if she finds you off your guard, she will take her chance. 11 Beware of her impudent looks and do not be surprised if she disobeys you. 12 As a parched traveller with his tongue hanging out drinks from any spring that offers, she will open her arms to every embrace, and her quiver to the arrow. 13 A wife's charm is the delight of her husband, and her womanly skill puts flesh on his bones. 14 A silent wife is a gift from the Lord; her restraint is more than money can buy. 15 A modest wife has charm upon charm; no scales can weigh the worth of her chastity. 16 As beautiful as the sunrise in the Lord's heaven is a good wife in a well- ordered home. 17 As bright as the light on the sacred lamp -stand is a beautiful face in the settled prime of life. 18 Like

a golden pillar on a silver base is a shapely leg with a firm foot. 19 My son, guard your health in the bloom of your youth, and do not waste your vigour on what belongs to others. 20 Search the whole plain for a fertile plot; sow your own seed, trusting in your pedigree. 21 Then the children you leave behind will prosper, confident in their parentage. 22 A woman of the streets counts as mere spittle, a married woman as a mortuary for her lovers. 23 A godless woman is a good match for a lawless husband, a pious one for a man who fears the Lord. 24 A brazen woman courts disgrace, but a virtuous one is modest even before her husband. 25 A wilful woman is a shameless bitch, but a modest one fears the Lord. 26 A woman who honours her husband is accounted wise by all, but if she despises him, all know her as proud and godless. A good wife makes a happy husband; she doubles the length of his life. 27 A strident, garrulous wife is like a trumpet sounding the charge; in a home like hers a man lives in the tumult of war. 28 TWO THINGS GRIEVE My heart, and a third excites my anger: a soldier in distress through poverty, wise men treated with contempt, and a man deserting right conduct for wrong- the Lord will bring him to the scaffold. 29 How hard it is for a merchant to keep clear of wrong or for a shopkeeper to be innocent of dishonesty!

**27** Many have cheated for gain; a money-grubber will always turn a blind eye. 2 As a peg is held fast in the joint between stones, so dishonesty squeezes in between selling and buying. 3 Unless a man holds resolutely to the fear of the Lord, his house will soon be in ruins. 4 Shake a sieve, and the rubbish remains; start an argument, and discover a man's faults. 5 As the work of a potter is tested in the furnace, so a man is tried in debate. 6 As the fruit of the tree reveals the skill of its grower, so the expression of a man's thought reveals his character. 7 Do not praise a man till you hear him in discussion, for this is the test. 8 If justice is what you seek, you will succeed, and wear it like a splendid robe. 9 Birds of a feather roost together, and honesty comes home to those who practise it. 10 A lion lies in wait for its prey, and so do sins for those who do wrong. 11 The conversation of the pious is constantly wise, but a fool is as changeable as the moon. 12 Grudge every minute spent among fools, but linger among the thoughtful. 13 The conversation of fools is repulsive; they make a joke of unbridled vice. 14 Their cursing and swearing make the hair stand on end; when such men quarrel, others stop their ears. 15 The quarrels of the proud lead to bloodshed; their abuse offends the ear. 16 The betrayer of secrets loses his credit and can never find an intimate friend. 17 Love your friend and keep faith with him, but if you betray his secrets, keep out of his way; 21 as a man kills his enemy, so you have killed your neighbour's friendship. 22 As a bird that is allowed to escape your hand, your neighbour, once lost, will not be caught again. 21 He has gone too far for you to pursue him, and escaped like a gazelle from a trap. 22 A wound may be bandaged, an insult pardoned, but the betrayer of secrets has nothing to

hope for. A man who winks is plotting mischief; those who know him will keep their distance. 23 He speaks sweetly enough to your face and admires whatever you say, but later he will change his tune and use your own words to trip you. 24 There are many things I hate, but him above all; the Lord will hate him too. 25 Whoever throws a stone up in the air is throwing it at his own head and a treacherous blow means wounds all round. 26 Dig a pit and you will fall into it; set a trap and you will be caught by it. 27 The wrong a man does recoils on him, and he does not know where it has come from. 28 An arrogant man deals in mockery and insults, but retribution lies in wait for him like a lion. 29 Those who rejoice at the downfall of good men will be trapped and consumed with pain before they die. 30 Rage and anger, these also I abhor, but a sinner has them ready at hand.

**28** The vengeful man will face the vengeance of the Lord, who keeps strict account of his sins. 2 Forgive your neighbour his wrongdoing; then, when you pray, your sins will be forgiven. 3 If a man harbours a grudge against another, is he to expect healing from the Lord? 4 If he has no mercy on his fellow-man, is he still to ask forgiveness for his own sins? 5 If a mere mortal cherishes rage, where is he to look for pardon? 6 Think of the end that awaits you, and have done with hate; think of mortality and death, and be true to the commandments; 7 think of the commandments, and do not be enraged at your neighbor; think of the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults. 8 To avoid a quarrel is a setback for sin, for it is a hot temper that kindles quarrels. 9 A sinner sows trouble between friends and spreads scandal where before there was peace. 10 A fire is kept hot by stoking and a quarrel by persistence. A man's rage is in proportion to his strength, and his anger in proportion to his wealth. 11 A hasty argument kindles a fire, and a hasty quarrel leads to bloodshed. 12 Blow on a spark to make it glow, or spit on it to put it out; both results come from the one mouth. 13 Curses on the gossip and the tale-bearer! For they have been the ruin of many peaceable men. 14 The talk of a third party has wrecked the lives of many and driven them from country to country; it has destroyed fortified towns and demolished the houses of the great. 15 The talk of a third party has brought divorce on staunch wives and deprived them of all they have laboured for. 16 Whoever pays heed to it will never again find rest or live in peace of mind. 17 The lash of a whip raises weals, but the lash of a tongue breaks bones. 18 Many have been killed by the sword, but not so many as by the tongue. 19 Happy the man who is sheltered from its onslaught, who has not been exposed to its fury, who has not borne its yoke, or been chained with its fetters! 20 For its yoke is of iron, its fetters of bronze. 21 The death it brings is an evil death; better the grave than the tongue! 22 But it has no power over the godfearing; they cannot be burned in its flames. 23 Those who desert the Lord fall victim to it; among them it will burn like fire and not be quenched. It will launch itself against them like a lion and tear them like a leopard. 24 As

you enclose your garden with a thorn hedge, and lock up your silver and gold, 25 so weigh your words and measure them, and make a door and a bolt for your mouth. 26 Beware of being tripped by your tongue and falling into the power of a lurking enemy.

**29** A DEVOUT MAN lends to his neighbour; by supporting him he keeps the commandments. 2 Lend to your neighbour in his time of need; repay your neighbour punctually. 3 Be as good as your word and keep faith with him, and your needs will always be met. 4 Many treat a loan as a windfall and bring trouble on those who helped them. 5 Until he gets a loan, a man kisses his neighbour's hand and talks with bated breath about his money; but when it is time to repay, he postpones it, pays back only perfunctory promises, and alleges that the time is too short. 6 If he can pay, his creditor will scarcely get back half, and will count himself lucky at that; if he cannot pay, he has defrauded the other of his money, and gratuitously made an enemy of him; he will pay him back in curses and insults and with shame instead of honour. 7 Because of such dishonesty many refuse to lend, for fear of being needlessly defrauded. 8 Nevertheless be patient with the penniless, and do not keep him waiting for your charity; 9 for the commandment's sake help the poor, and in his need do not send him away empty-handed. 10 Be ready to lose money for a brother or a friend; do not leave it to rust away under a stone. 11 Store up for yourself the treasure which the Most High has command and it will benefit you more than gold. 12 Let almsgiving be the treasure in your strong-room, and it will rescue you from every misfortune. 13 It will arm you against the enemy better than stout shield or strong spear. 14 A good man will stand surety for his neighbour; only a man who has lost all sense of shame will fail him. 15 If a man stands surety for you, do not forget his kindness, for he has staked his very self for you. 16 A sinner wastes the property of his surety, 17 and an ungrateful man fails his rescuer. 18 Suretyship has ruined the prosperity of many and wrecked them like a storm at sea; it has driven men of influence into exile, and set them wandering in foreign countries. 19 When a sinner commits himself to suretyship, his pursuit of gain will involve him in lawsuits. 20 Help your neighbour to the best of your ability, but beware of becoming too deeply involved. 21 The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothes, and a home with its decent privacy; 22 better the life of a poor man in his own hut than a sumptuous banquet in another man's house. 23 Be content with whatever you have, and do not get a name for living on hospitality. 24 It is a poor life going from house to house, keeping your mouth shut because you are a visitor. 25 You receive the guests and hand the drinks without being thanked for it and into the bargain must listen to words that rankle: 26 'Come here, stranger, and lay the table; whatever you have there, hand it to me.' 27 'Be off, stranger! Make way for a more important guest; my brother has come to stay, and I need the guest-room.' 28 How hard it is for a sensible man to bear criticism from the household or abuse from

his creditor!

**30** A MAN WHO LOVES HIS SON will whip him often so that when he grows up he may be a joy to him. 2 He who disciplines his son will find profit in him and take pride in him among his acquaintances. 3 He who gives his son a good education will make his enemy jealous and will boast of him among his friends. 4 When the father dies, it is as if he were still alive, for he has left a copy of himself behind him. 5 While he lived he saw and rejoiced, and when he died he had no regrets. 6 He has left an heir to take vengeance on his enemies and to repay the kindness of his friends. 7 A man who spoils his son will bandage every wound and will be on tenterhooks at every cry. 8 An unbroken horse turns out stubborn, and an unchecked son turns out headstrong. 9 Pamper a boy and he will shock you; play with him and he will grieve you. 10 Do not share his laughter, for fear of sharing his pain; you will only end by grinding your teeth. 11 Do not give him freedom while he is young or overlook his errors. 12 Break him in while he is young, beat him soundly while he is still a child, or he may grow stubborn and disobey you and cause you vexation. 13 Discipline your son and take pains with him or he may offend you by some disgraceful act. 14 BETTER A POOR MAN who is healthy and fit than a rich man racked by disease. 15 Health and fitness are better than any gold, and bodily vigour than boundless prosperity. 16 There is no wealth to compare with health of body, no festivity to equal a joyful heart. 17 Better death than a life of misery, eternal rest than a long illness. 18 Good things spread before a man without appetite are like offerings of food placed on a tomb. 19 What use is a sacrifice to an idol which can neither taste nor smell? So it is with the man afflicted by the Lord. 20 He gazes at the food before him and sighs as a eunuch sighs when he embraces a girl. 21 Do not give yourself over to sorrow or distress yourself deliberately. 22 A merry heart keeps a man alive, and joy lengthens his span of days. 23 Indulge yourself, take comfort, and banish sorrow; for sorrow has been the death of many, and no advantage ever came of it. 24 Envy and anger shorten a man's life, and anxiety brings premature old age. 25 A man with a gay heart has a good appetite and relishes the food he eats.

**31** A rich man loses weight by wakeful nights, when the cares of wealth drive sleep away; 2 sleepless worry keeps him wide awake, just as serious illness banishes sleep. 3 A rich man toils to amass a fortune, and when he relaxes he enjoys every luxury. 4 A poor man toils to make a slender living, and when he relaxes he finds himself in need. 5 Passion for gold can never be right; the pursuit of money leads a man astray. 6 Many a man has come to ruin for the sake of gold and found disaster staring him in the face. 7 Gold is a pitfall to those who are infatuated with it, and every fool is caught by it. 8 Happy the rich man who has remained free of its taint and has not made gold his aim! 9 Show us that man, and we will congratulate him; he has performed a miracle among

his people. 10 Has anyone ever come through this test unscathed? Then he has good cause to be proud. Has anyone ever had it in his power to sin and refrained, or to do wrong and has not done it? 11 Then he shall be confirmed in his prosperity, and the whole people will hail him as a benefactor. 12 IF YOU ARE SITTING at a grand table, do not lick your lips and exclaim, 'What a spread!' 13 Remember, it is a vice to have a greedy eye. There is no greater evil in creation than the eye; that is why it must shed tears at every turn. 14 Do not reach for everything you see, or jostle your fellow-guest at the dish; 15 judge his feelings by your own and always behave considerately. 16 Eat what is set before you like a gentleman; do not munch and make yourself objectionable. 17 Be the first to stop for good manners' sake and do not be insatiable, or you will give offence. 18 If you are dining in a large company, do not reach out your hand before others. 19 A man of good upbringing is content with little, and he is not short of breath when he goes to bed. 20 The moderate eater enjoys healthy sleep; he rises early, feeling refreshed. But sleeplessness, indigestion, and colic are the lot of the glutton. 21 If you cannot avoid overeating at a feast, leave the table and find relief by vomiting. 22 Listen to me, my son; do not disregard me, and in the end my words will come home to you. Whatever you do, do it shrewdly, and no illness will come your way. 23 Everyone has a good word for a liberal host, and the evidence of his generosity is convincing. 24 The whole town grumbles at a mean host, and there is precise evidence of his meanness. 25 Do not try to prove your manhood by drinking, for wine has been the ruin of many. 26 As the furnace tests iron when it is being tempered, so wine tests character when boastful men are wrangling. 27 Wine puts life into a man, if he drinks it in moderation. What is life to a man deprived of wine? Was it not created to warm men's hearts? 28 Wine brings gaiety and high spirits, if a man knows when to drink and when to stop; 29 but wine in excess makes for bitter feelings and leads to offence and retaliation. 30 Drunkenness inflames a fool's anger to his own hurt; it saps his strength and exposes him to injury. 31 At a banquet do not rebuke your fellow-guest or make him feel small while he is enjoying himself. This is no time to take up a quarrel with him or pester him to pay his debts.

**32** If they choose you to preside at a feast, do not put on airs; behave to them as one of themselves. Look after the others before you sit down; 2 do not take your place until you have discharged all your duties. Let their enjoyment be your pleasure, and you will win the prize for good manners. 3 Speak, if you are old - it is your privilege- but come to the point and do not interrupt the music. 4 Where entertainment is provided, do not keep up a stream of talk; it is the wrong time to show off your wisdom. 5 Like a signet of ruby in a gold ring is a concert of music at a banquet. 6 Like a signet of emerald in a gold setting is tuneful music with good wine. 7 Speak, if you are young, when the need arises, but twice at the most, and only when asked. 8 Be brief, say much in few

words, like a man who knows and can still hold his tongue. 9 Among the great do not act as their equal or go on chattering when another is speaking, 10 As lightning travels ahead of thunder, so popularity goes before a modest man. 11 Leave in good time and do not be the last to go; go straight home without lingering. 12 There you may amuse yourself to your heart's content, and run no risk of arrogant talk. 13 And one thing more: give praise to your Maker, who has filled your cup with his blessings. 14 THE MAN WHO FEARS THE LORD will accept his discipline, and the diligent will receive his approval. 15 The genuine student will find satisfaction in the law, but it will prove a stumbling-block to the insincere. 16 Those who fear the Lord will discover what is right, and will make his decrees shine out like a lamp. 17 A sinner will not accept criticism; he will find precedents to justify his choice. 18 A sensible man can always take a hint; but an arrogant heathen does not know the meaning of diffidence 19 Never do anything without deliberation, and afterwards you will have no regrets. 20 Do not travel by a road full of obstacles and stumble along through its boulders. 21 Do not be careless on a clear road 22 but watch where you are going. 23 Whatever you are doing, rely on yourself, for this too is a way of keeping the commandments. 24 To rely on the law is to heed its commandments, and to trust the Lord is to want for nothing.

**33** Disaster never comes the way of the man who fears the Lord: in times of trial he will be rescued again and again. 2 A wise man never hates the law, but the man who is insincere about it is like a boat in a squall. 3 A sensible man trusts the law and finds it as reliable as the divine oracle. 4 Prepare what you have to say, if you want a hearing; marshal your learning and then give your answer. 5 The feelings of a fool turn like a cart-wheel, and his thoughts spin like an axle. 6 A sarcastic friend is like a stallion which neighs no matter who is on its back. 7 Why is one day more important than another, when every day in the year has its light from the sun? 8 It was by the Lord's decision that they were distinguished; he appointed the various seasons and festivals: 9 some days he made high and holy, and others he assigned to the common run of days. 10 All men alike come from the ground; Adam was created out of earth. 11 Yet in his great wisdom the Lord distinguished them and made them go various ways: 12 some he blessed and lifted high, some he hallowed and brought near to himself, some he cursed and humbled and removed from their place. 13 As clay is in the potter's hands, to be moulded just as he chooses, so are men in the hands of their Maker, to be dealt with as he decides. 14 Good is the opposite of evil, and life of death; yes, and the sinner is the opposite of the godly. 15 Look at all the works of the Most High: they go in pairs, one the opposite of the other. 16 I was the last to wake up, I was like a gleaner following the grape-pickers; by the Lord's blessing I arrived in time to fill my winepress as full as any of them. 17 Remember that I did not toil for myself alone, but for all who seek learning. 18 Listen to me, you

dignitaries; leaders of the assembly, give me your attention. 19 As long as you live, give no one power over yourself- son or wife, brother or friend. Do not give your property to another, in case you change your mind and want it back. 20 As long as you have life and breath, never change places with anyone. 21 It is better for your children to ask from you than for you to be dependent on them. 22 Whatever you are doing, keep the upper hand, and allow no blot on your reputation. 23 Let your life run its full course, and then, at the hour of death, distribute your estate. 24 Fodder, and stick, and burdens for the donkey; bread, and discipline, and work for the servant! 25 Make your slave work, if you want rest for yourself; if you leave him idle, he will be looking for his liberty. 26 The ox is tamed by yoke and harness, the bad servant by racks and tortures. 27 Put him to work to keep him from being idle, for idleness is a great teacher of mischief. 28 Set him to work, for that is what he is for, and if he disobeys you, load him with fetters. 29 Do not be too exacting towards anyone or do anything contrary to justice. 30 If you have a servant, treat him as an equal, because you bought him with blood. 31 If you have a servant, treat him like a brother; you will need him as much as you need yourself. If you ill-treat him and he takes to his heels, where will you go to look for him?

**34** Vain hopes delude the senseless, and dreams give wings to a fool's fancy. 2 It is like clutching a shadow, or chasing the wind, to take notice of dreams. 3 What you see in a dream is nothing but a reflection, like the image of a face in a mirror. 4 Purity cannot come out of filth; how then can truth issue from falsehood? 5 Divination, omens, and dreams are all futile, mere fantasies, like those of a woman in labour. 6 Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most High, pay no attention to them. 7 Dreams have led many astray and ruined those who built their hopes on them. 8 Such delusions can add nothing to the completeness of the law; the wisdom spoken by the faithful is complete in itself. 9 An educated man knows many things, and a man of experience understands what he is talking about. 10 An inexperienced man knows little, but a man who travels grows in ability. 11 I have seen many things in the course of my travels, and understand more than I can tell. 12 I have often been in deadly danger and escaped, thanks to the experience I had gained.

### True piety and the mercy of God

13 THOSE WHO FEAR the Lord shall live, for their trust is in one who can keep them safe. 14 The man who fears the Lord will have nothing else to fear; he will never be a coward, because his trust is in the Lord. 15 How blest is the man who fears the Lord! He knows where to look for support. 16 The Lord keeps watch over those who love him, their strong shield and firm support, a shelter from scorching wind and midday heat, a safeguard against stumbles and falls, 17 He raises the

spirits and makes the eyes sparkle, giving health, and life, and blessing. 18 A sacrifice derived from ill-gotten gains is contaminated, a lawless mockery that cannot win approval. 19 The Most High is not pleased with the offering of the godless, nor do endless sacrifices win his forgiveness. 20 To offer a sacrifice from the possessions of the poor is like killing a son before his father's eyes. 21 Bread is life to the destitute, and it is murder to deprive them of it. 22 To rob your neighbour of his livelihood is to kill him, and the man who cheats a worker of his wages sheds blood. 23 When one builds and another pulls down, what have they gained except hard work? 24 When one prays and another curses, which is the Lord to listen to? 25 Wash after touching a corpse and then touch it again, and what have you gained by your washing? 26 So it is with the man who fasts for his sins and goes and does the same again; who will listen to his prayer? what has he gained by his penance?

**35** Keeping the law is worth many offerings; to heed the commandments is to sacrifice a thank-offering. 2 A kindness repaid is an offering of flour, and to give alms is a praise-offering. 3 The way to please the Lord is to renounce evil; and to renounce wrongdoing is to make atonement. 4 Yet do not appear before the Lord empty-handed; 5 perform these sacrifices because they are commanded. 6 When the just man brings his offering of fat to the altar, its fragrance rises to the presence of the Most High. 7 The just man's sacrifice is acceptable; it will never be forgotten. 8 Be generous in your worship of the Lord and present the firstfruits of your labour in full measure. 9 Give all your gifts cheerfully and be glad to dedicate your tithe. 10 Give to the Most High as he has given to you, as generously as you can afford. 11 For the Lord always repays; you will be repaid seven times over. 12 Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it, and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is a judge who knows no partiality. 13 He has no favourites at the poor man's expense, but listens to his prayer when he is wronged. 14 He never ignores the appeal of the orphan or the widow when she pours out her complaint. 15 How the tears run down the widow's cheeks, and her cries accuse the man who caused them! 16 To be accepted a man must serve the Lord as he requires, and then his prayer will reach the clouds. 17 The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, but he is not consoled until it reaches its destination. He does not desist until the Most High intervenes, gives the just their rights, and sees justice done. 18 The Lord will not be slow, neither will he be patient with the wicked, until he crushes the sinews of the merciless and sends retribution on the heathen; 19 until he blots out the insolent, one and all, and breaks the power of the unjust; until he gives all men their deserts, judging their actions by their intentions; until he gives his people their rights and gladdens them with his mercy. 20 His mercy is as timely in days of trouble as rain-clouds in days of drought.

**36** HAVE PITY ON US, O LORD, thou God of all; look down, 2 and send thy terror upon all nations. 3 Raise thy hand against the heathen, and let them see thy power. 4 As they have seen thy holiness displayed among us, so let us see thy greatness displayed among them. 5 Let them learn, as we also have learned, that there is no God but only thou, O Lord. 6 Renew thy signs, repeat thy miracles, win glory for thy hand, for thy right arm. 7 Rouse thy wrath, pour out thy fury, destroy the adversary, wipe out the enemy. 8 Remember the day thou hast appointed and hasten it, and give men cause to recount thy wonders. 9 Let fiery anger devour the survivors, and let the oppressors of thy people meet their doom. 10 Crush the heads of hostile princes, who say, 'There is no one to match us.' 11 Gather all the tribes of Jacob, and grant them their inheritance, as thou didst long ago. 12 Have pity, O Lord, on the people called by thy name, Israel, whom thou hast named thy first-born. 13 Show mercy to the city of thy sanctuary, Jerusalem, the city of thy rest. 14 Fill Zion with the praise of thy triumph; fill thy people with thy glory. 15 Thou didst create them at the beginning; acknowledge them now and fulfil the prophecies spoken in thy name. 16 Reward those who wait for thee; prove thy prophets trustworthy. 17 Listen, O Lord, to the prayer of thy servants, who claim Aaron's blessing upon thy people. Let all who live on earth acknowledge that thou art the Lord, the eternal God.

#### Man in society

18 ALL IS FOOD for the stomach, A but one food is better than another. 19 As the palate identifies game by its taste, so the discerning mind detects lies. 20 A warped mind makes trouble, but a man of experience can pay it back. 21 A woman will take any man for husband, but a man may prefer one girl to another. 22 A woman's beauty makes a man happy, and there is nothing he desires more. 23 If she has a kind and gentle tongue, then her husband is luckier than most men. 24 The man who wins a wife has the beginnings of a fortune, a helper to match his needs and a pillar to support him. 25 Where there is no hedge, property is plundered; and where there is no wife, the wanderer sighs for a home. 26 Does anyone trust a roving bandit who swoops on town after town? No more will they trust a homeless man who lodges wherever night overtakes him.

**37** Every friend says, 'I too am your friend'; but some are friends in name only. 2 What a mortal grief it is when a dear friend turns into an enemy! 3 Oh this propensity to evil, how did it creep in to cover the earth with treachery? 4 A friend may be all smiles when you are happy, but turn against you when trouble comes. 5 Another shares your toil for the sake of a meal, and yet may protect you against an enemy. 6 Never forget a friend or neglect him when prosperity comes your way. 7 Every counsellor says his own advice is best, but some have their own advantage in view. 8 Beware of the man who offers advice, and find out

beforehand where his interest lies. His advice will be weighted in his own favour and may tip the scales against you. 9 He may say, 'Your road is clear', and stand aside to see what happens. 10 Do not consult a man who is suspicious of you or reveal your intentions to those who envy you. 11 Never consult a woman about her rival or a coward about war, a merchant about a bargain or a buyer about a sale, a skinflint about gratitude

or a hard-hearted man about a kind action, an idler about work of any sort, a casual labourer about finishing the job, or a lazy servant about an exacting task do not turn to them for any advice. 12 Rely rather on a godfearing man whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments, whose interests are like your own, who will sympathize if you have a setback. 13 But also trust your own judgement, for it is your most reliable counsellor. 14 A man's own mind has sometimes a way of telling him more than seven watchmen posted high on a tower. 15 But above all pray to the Most High to keep you on the straight road of truth. 16 Every undertaking begins in discussion, and consultation precedes every action. 17 Here you can trace the mind's variety. 18 Four kinds of destiny are offered to men, good and evil, life and death; and always it is the tongue that decides the issue. 19 A man may be clever enough to teach others and yet be useless to himself. 20 A brilliant speaker may make enemies and end by dying of hunger, 21 if the Lord has withheld the gift of popular appeal, because he is devoid of wisdom. 22 If a man is wise in the conduct of his own life, his good sense can be trusted when he speaks. 23 If a man is wise and instructs his people, then his good sense can be trusted. 24 A wise man will have praise heaped on him, and all who see him will count him happy. 25 The days of a man's life can be numbered, but the days of Israel are countless. 26 A wise man will possess the confidence of his people, and his name will live for ever. 27 MY SON, TEST YOURSELF all your life long; take note of what is bad for you and do not indulge in it. 28 For not everything is good for everyone; we do not all enjoy the same things. 29 Do not be greedy for every delicacy or eat without restraint. 30 For illness is a sure result of overeating, and gluttony is next door to colic. 31 Gluttony has been the death of many; be on your guard and prolong your life.

**38** Honour the doctor for his services, for the Lord created him. 2 His skill comes from the Most High, and he is rewarded by kings. 3 The doctor's knowledge gives him high standing and wins him the admiration of the great. 4 The Lord has created medicines from the earth, and a sensible man will not disparage them. 5 Was it not a tree that sweetened water and so disclosed its properties? 6 The Lord has imparted knowledge to men, that by their use of his marvels he may win praise; 7 by using them the doctor relieves pain 8 and from them the pharmacist makes up his mixture. There is no end to the works of the Lord, who spreads health over the whole world. 9 My son, if you have an

illness, do not neglect it, but pray to the Lord, and he will heal you. 10 Renounce your faults, amend your ways, and cleanse your heart from all sin. 11 Bring a savoury offering and bring flour for a token and pour oil on the sacrifice; be as generous as you can. 12 Then call in the doctor, for the Lord created him; do not let him leave you, for you need him. 13 There may come a time when your recovery is in their hands; 14 then they too will pray to the Lord to give them success in relieving pain and finding a cure to save their patient's life. 15 When a man has sinned against his Maker, let him put himself in the doctor's hands. 16 My son, shed tears for the dead; raise a lament for your grievous loss. Shroud his body with proper ceremony, and do not neglect his burial. 17 With bitter weeping and passionate lament make your mourning worthy of him. Mourn for a few days as propriety demands, and then take comfort for your grief. 18 For grief may lead to death, and a sorrowful heart saps the strength. 19 When a man is taken away, suffering is over, but to live on in poverty goes against the grain. 20 Do not abandon yourself to grief; put it from you and think of your own end. 21 Never forget! there is no return; you cannot help him and can only injure yourself. 22 Remember that his fate will also be yours: Mine today and yours tomorrow.' 23 When the dead is at rest, let his memory rest too; take comfort as soon as he has breathed his last. 24 A SCHOLAR'S WISDOM Comes of ample leisure; if a man is to be wise he must be relieved of other tasks. 25 How can a man become wise who guides the plough, whose pride is in wielding his goad, who is absorbed in the task of driving oxen, and talks only about cattle? 26 He concentrates on ploughing his furrows, and works late to give the heifers their fodder. 27 So it is with every craftsman or designer who works by night as well as by day, such as those who make engravings on signets, and patiently vary the design; they concentrate on making an exact representation, and sit up late to finish their task. 28 So it is with the smith, sitting by his anvil, intent on his iron-work. The smoke of the fire shrivels his flesh, as he wrestles in the heat of the furnace. The hammer rings again and again in his ears, and his eyes are on the pattern he is copying. He concentrates on completing the task, and stays up late to give it a perfect finish. 29 So it is with the potter, sitting at his work, turning the wheel with his feet, always engrossed in the task of making up his tally; 30 he moulds the clay with his arm, crouching forward to apply his strength. He concentrates on finishing the glazing, and stays awake to clean out the furnace. 31 All these rely on their hands, and each is skilful at his own craft. 32 Without them a city would have no inhabitants no settlers or travellers would come to it. 33 Yet they are not in demand at public discussions or prominent in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench or understand the decisions of the courts. They cannot expound moral or legal principles and are not ready with maxims. 34 But they maintain the fabric of this world, and their prayers are about their daily work.

**39** How different it is with the man who devotes himself to studying the law of the Most High, who investigates all the wisdom of the past, and spends his time studying the prophecies! 2 He preserves the sayings of famous men and penetrates the intricacies of parables. 3 He investigates the hidden meaning of proverbs and knows his way among riddles. 4 The great avail themselves of his services, and he is seen in the presence of rulers. He travels in foreign countries and learns at first hand the good or evil of man's lot. 5 He makes a point of rising early to pray to the Lord, his Maker, and prays aloud to the Most High, asking pardon for his sins. 6 If it is the will of the great Lord, he will be filled with a spirit of intelligence; then he will pour forth wise sayings of his own and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. 7 He will have sound advice and knowledge to offer, and his thoughts will dwell on the mysteries he has studied. 8 He will disclose what he has learnt from his own education, and will take pride in the law of the Lord's covenant. 9 Many will praise his intelligence; it will never sink into oblivion. The memory of him will not die but will live on from generation to generation; 10 the nations will talk of his wisdom, and his praises will be sung in the assembly. 11 If he lives long, he will leave a name in a thousand, and if he goes to his rest, his reputation is secure. 12 I HAVE STILL MORE in my mind to express; I am full like the moon at mid-month. 13 Listen to me, my devout sons, and blossom like a rose planted by a stream. 14 Spread your fragrance like incense, and bloom like a lily. Scatter your fragrance; lift your voices in song, praising the Lord for all his works. 15 Ascribe majesty to his name and give thanks to him with praise, with songs on your lips, and with harps; let these be your words of thanksgiving: 16 'All that the Lord has made is very good; all that he commands will happen in due time.' 17 No one should ask, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?' At the proper time all such questions will be answered. When he spoke the water stood up like a heap, and his word created reservoirs for it. 18 When he commands, his purpose is fulfilled, and no one can thwart his saving power. 19 He sees the deeds of all mankind; there is no hiding from his gaze. 20 From the beginning to the end of time he keeps watch, and nothing is too marvellous for him. 21 No one should ask, 'What is this?' or 'Why is that?' Everything has been created for its own purpose. 22 His blessing is like a river in flood which inundates the parched ground. 23 But the doom he assigns the heathen is his wrath, as when he turned a watered plain into a salt desert. 24 For the devout his paths are straight, but full of pitfalls for the wicked. 25 From the beginning good things were created for the good, and evils for sinners. 26 The chief necessities of human life are water, fire, iron, and salt, flour, honey, and milk, the juice of the grape, oil, and clothing. 27 All these are good for the godfearing, but turn to evil for sinners. 28 There are winds created to be agents of retribution, with great whips to give play to their fury; on the day of reckoning, they exert their force and give full vent to the anger of their Maker. 29 Fire and hail, famine and deadly disease, all these were created for retribution; 30 beasts of

prey, scorpions and vipers, and the avenging sword that destroys the wicked. 31 They delight in carrying out his orders, always standing ready for his service on the earth; and when their time comes, they never disobey. 32 I have been convinced of all this from the beginning; I have thought it over and left it in writing: 33 all the works of the Lord are good, and he supplies every need as it occurs. 34 No one should say, 'This is less good than that', for all things prove good at their proper time. 35 Come then, sing with heart and voice, and praise the name of the Lord.

40 HARD WORK IS THE LOT of every man, and a heavy yoke is laid on the sons of Adam, from the day when they come from their mothers' womb until the day of their return to the mother of all; 2 troubled thoughts and fears are theirs, and anxious expectation of the day of their death. 3 Whether a man sits in royal splendour on a throne or grovels in dust and ashes, 4 whether he wears the purple and a crown or is clothed in sackcloth, 5 his life is nothing but anger and jealousy, worry and perplexity, fear of death, and guilt, and rivalry. Even when he goes to bed at night, sleep only brings to mind the same things in a new form, 6 His rest is little or nothing; he begins to struggle as hard in his sleep as in the day. Disturbed by nightmares, he fancies himself a fugitive from the battlefield; 7 and at the moment when he reaches safety, he wakes up, astonished to find his fears groundless. 8 To all living creatures, man and beast- and seven times over to sinners- 9 come death and bloodshed, quarrel and sword, disaster, famine, ruin, and plague. 10 All these were created for the wicked, and on their account the flood happened. 11 All that is of earth returns to earth again, and all that is of water finds its way back to the sea. 12 Bribery and injustice will all vanish, but good faith will last for ever. 13 The wealth of the wicked will dry up like a torrent and die away like a great roll of thunder in a storm. 14 As a generous man will have cause for rejoicing, so law-breakers will come to utter ruin. 15 The shoots of an impious stock put out few branches; their tainted roots are planted on sheer rock. 16 The rush that grows on every river- bank is pulled up before any other grass, 17 but kindness is like a luxuriant garden, and almsgiving lasts for ever. 18 To be employed and to be one's own master, both are sweet, but it is better still to find a treasure. 19 Offspring and the founding of a city perpetuate a man's name, but better still is a perfect wife. 20 Wine and music gladden the heart, but better still is the love of wisdom. 21 Flute and harp make pleasant melody, but better still is a pleasant voice. 22 A man likes to see grace and beauty, but better still the green shoots in a cornfield. 23 A friend or companion is always welcome, but better still to be man and wife. 24 Brothers and helpers are a stand- by in time of trouble, but better still is almsgiving. 25 Gold and silver make a man stand firm, but better still is good advice. 26 Wealth and strength make for confidence, but better still is the fear of the Lord. To fear the Lord is to lack nothing and never to be in need

of support. 27 The fear of the Lord is like a luxuriant garden; it shelters a man better than any riches. 28 My son, do not live the life of a beggar; it is better to die than to beg. 29 When a man starts looking to another man's table,

his existence is not worth calling life. It is demoralizing to live on another man's food, and a wise, well-disciplined man will guard against it. 30 When a man has lost all shame, he speaks as if begging were sweet, but inside him there is a blazing fire.

**41** Death, how bitter is the thought of you to a man living at ease among his possessions, free from anxiety, prosperous in all things, and still vigorous enough to enjoy a good meal! 2 Death, how welcome is your sentence to a destitute man whose strength is failing, worn down by age and endless anxiety, resentful and at the end of his patience! 3 Do not be afraid of death's summons; remember those who have gone before you, and those who will come after. 4 This is the Lord's decree for all living men; why try to argue with the will of the Most High? Whether life lasts ten years, or a hundred, or a thousand, there will be no questions asked in the grave. 5 What a loathsome brood are the children of sinners, brought up in haunts of vice! 6 Their inheritance dwindles away, and their descendants suffer a lasting disgrace. 7 A godless father is blamed by his children for the disgrace they endure on his account. 8 Woe to you, godless men who have abandoned the law of God Most High! 9 When you are born, you are born to a curse, and when you die, a curse is your lot. 10 Whatever comes from earth returns to earth; so too the godless go from curse to ruin. 11 Men grieve over the death of the body, but sinners have no good name to survive them. 12 Take thought for your name, for it will outlive you longer than a thousand hoards of gold. 13 The days of a good life are numbered, but a good name lasts for ever. 14 MY CHILDREN, BE TRUE to ur training and live in peace. Wisdom concealed and treasure hidden- what is the use of either? 15 Better a man who hides his folly than one who hides his wisdom! 16 Show deference then to my teaching: shame is not always to be encouraged, or given unqualified approval in all circumstances. 17 Be ashamed to be found guilty of fornication by your parents or of lies by a ruler or prince; 18 of crime by a judge or magistrate, or of a breach of the law by the assembly and people; of dishonesty by a partner or friend, 19 or of theft by the neighbourhood; be ashamed before the truth of God and his covenant. Be ashamed of bad manners at table, of giving or receiving with a sneer, 20 of refusing to return a greeting, or of ogling a prostitute. 21 Be ashamed of turning away a relative, of robbing someone of his rightful share, or of eyeing Mother man's wife. 22 Be ashamed of meddling with his slave- girl, and keep away from her bed. Be ashamed of reproaching your friends, or following up your charity with a lecture. 23 Be ashamed of repeating what you have heard and of betraying a secret. 24 Then you will be showing a proper shame and will

be popular with everyone.

**42** But at other times you must not be ashamed, or you will do wrong out of deference to others. 2 Do not be ashamed of the law and covenant of the Most High or of justice, for fear you acquit the guilty; 3 of settling accounts with a partner or a travelling -companion, or of sharing an inheritance with the other heirs; 4 of using accurate weights and measures, or of business dealings, large or small, 5 and making a profit out of trade; of frequent disciplining of children, or of drawing blood from the back of a worthless servant. 6 If your wife is untrustworthy, or where many hands are at work it is well to keep things under lock and key. 7 When you make a deposit, see that it is counted and weighed, and when you give or receive, have it all in writing. 8 Do not be ashamed to correct the ignorant and foolish, or a greybeard guilty of fornication. Then you will be showing your sound upbringing and will win everyone's approval. 9 A daughter is a secret anxiety to her father, and the worry of her keeps him awake at night; when she is young, for fear she may grow too old to marry, and when she is married, for fear she may lose her husband's love; 10 when she is a virgin, for fear she may be seduced and become pregnant in her father's house, when she has a husband, for fear she may misbehave, and after marriage, for fear she may be barren. 11 Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter, or she may give your enemies cause to gloat, making you the talk of the town and a byword among the people, and shaming you in the eyes of the world. 12 Do not let her display her beauty to any man, or gossip in the women's quarters. 13 For out of clothes comes the moth, and out of woman comes woman's wickedness. 14 Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace. The wonders of creation. 15 NOW I WILL CALL to mind the works of the Lord and describe what I have seen; by the words of the Lord his works are made. 16 As the sun in its brilliance looks down on everything, so the glory of the Lord fills his creation. 17 Even to his angels the Lord has not given the power to tell the full story of his marvels, which the Lord Almighty has established so that the universe may stand firm in his glory. 18 He fathoms the abyss and the heart of man, he is versed in their intricate secrets; for the Lord possesses all knowledge and observes the signs of all time. 19 He discloses the past and the future, and uncovers the traces of the world's mysteries. 20 No thought escapes his notice, and not a word is hidden from him. 21 He has set in order the masterpieces of his wisdom, he who is from eternity to eternity; nothing can be added, nothing taken away, and he needs no one to give him advice. 22 How beautiful is all that he has made, down to the smallest spark that can be seen! 23 His works endure, all of them active for ever and all responsive to their various purposes. 24 All things go in pairs, one the opposite of the other; he has made nothing incomplete. 25 One thing supplements the virtues of another. Who could ever contemplate his glory enough ?

**43** What a masterpiece is the clear vault of the sky!

How glorious is the spectacle of the heavens!

The sun comes into view proclaiming as it rises  
how marvellous a thing it is, made by the Most High.

At noon it parches the earth,  
and no one can endure its blazing heat.

The stoker of a furnace works in the heat,  
but three times as hot is the sun scorching the hills.

It breathes out fiery vapours,  
and its glare blinds the eyes.

Great is the Lord who made it,  
whose word speeds it on its course.

He made the moon also to serve in its turn,  
a perpetual sign to mark the divisions of time.

From the moon, feast- days are reckoned;  
it is a light that wanes as it completes its course.

The moon gives its name to the month;  
it waxes marvellously as its phases change,  
a beacon to the armies of heaven,  
shining in the vault of the sky.

The brilliant stars are the beauty of the sky,  
a glittering array in the heights of the Lord.

At the command of the Holy One they stand in their appointed places;  
they never default at their post.

Look at the rainbow and praise its Maker;  
it shines with a supreme beauty,

rounding the sky with its gleaming arc,  
a bow bent by the hands of the Most High.

His command speeds the snow -storm  
and sends the swift lightning to execute his sentence.

To that end the storehouses are opened,  
and the clouds fly out like birds.

By his mighty power the clouds are piled up  
and the hailstones broken small.

The crash of his thunder makes the earth writhe,  
and, when he appears, an earthquake shakes the hills.

At his will the south wind blows,  
the squall from the north and the hurricane.

He scatters the snow -flakes like birds alighting;  
they settle like a swarm of locusts.

The eye is dazzled by their beautiful whiteness,  
and as they fall the mind is entranced.

He spreads frost on the earth like salt,  
and icicles form like pointed stakes.

A cold blast from the north,  
and ice grows hard on the water,  
settling on every pool,  
as though the water were putting on a breastplate.

He consumes the hills, scorches the wilderness,  
and withers the grass like fire.

Cloudy weather quickly puts all to rights,  
and dew brings welcome relief after heat.

By the power of his thought he tamed the deep  
and planted it with islands.

Those who sail the sea tell stories of its dangers,  
which astonish all who hear them;

in it are strange and wonderful creatures,  
all kinds of living things and huge sea-monsters.

By his own action he achieves his end,  
and by his word all things are held together.

However much we say, we cannot exhaust our theme;  
to put it in a word: he is all.

Where can we find the skill to sing his praises ?

For he is greater than all his works.

The Lord is terrible and very great,  
and marvellous is his power.

Honour the Lord to the best of your ability,  
and he will still be high above all praise.

Summon all your strength to declare his greatness,  
and be untiring, for the most you can do will fall short.

Has anyone ever seen him, to be able to describe him ?

Can anyone praise him as he truly is ?

We have seen but a small part of his works,  
and there remain many mysteries greater still.

The Lord has made everything  
and has given wisdom to the godly.

Heroes of Israel's past

LET us Now SING the praises of famous men,

ú the heroes of our nation's history,  
through whom the Lord established his renown,  
and revealed his majesty in each succeeding age.  
Some held sway over kingdoms  
and made themselves a name by their exploits.  
Others were sage counsellors,  
who spoke out with prophetic power.  
Some led the people by their counsels  
and by their knowledge of the nation's law;  
out of their fund of wisdom they gave instruction.  
Some were composers of music or writers of poetry.  
Others were endowed with wealth and strength,  
living peacefully in their homes.  
All these won fame in their own generation  
and were the pride of their times.  
Some there are who have left a name behind them  
to be commemorated in story.  
There are others who are unremembered;  
they are dead, and it is as though they had never existed,  
as though they had never been born  
or left children to succeed them.  
Not so our forefathers; they were men of loyalty,  
whose good deeds have never been forgotten.  
Their prosperity is handed on to their descendants,  
and their inheritance to future generations.  
Thanks to them their children are within the covenants

the whole race of their descendants.

Their line will endure for all time,  
and their fame will never be blotted out.

Their bodies are buried in peace,  
but their name lives for ever.

Nations will recount their wisdom,  
and God's people will sing their praises.

Enoch pleased the Lord and was carried off to heaven,  
an example of repentance to future generations.

Noah was found perfect and righteous,  
and thus he made amends in the time of retribution;  
therefore a remnant survived on the earth,  
when the flood came.

A perpetual covenant was established with him,  
that never again should all life be swept away by a flood.

Great Abraham was the father of many nations;  
no one has ever been found to equal him in fame.

He kept the law of the Most High;  
he entered into covenant with him,  
setting upon his body the mark of the covenant;  
and, when he was tested, he proved faithful.

Therefore the Lord swore an oath to him,  
that nations should find blessing through his descendants,  
that his family should be countless as the dust of the earth  
and be raised as high as the stars,  
and that their possessions should reach from sea to sea,

from the Great River to the ends of the earth.

To Isaac he made the same promise

for the sake of his father Abraham,

a blessing for all mankind and a covenant;

and so he transmitted them to Jacob.

He confirmed him in the blessings he had received

and gave him the land he was to inherit,

dividing it into portions,

which he allotted to the twelve tribes.

From Jacob's stock the Lord raised up a loyal servant,

who won the approval of all mankind,

beloved by God and men,

Moses of blessed memory.

The Lord made him equal in glory to the angels

and gave him power to strike terror into his enemies.

At his request he put an end to the portents,

and enhanced his reputation with kings.

He gave him commandments for his people

and showed him a vision of his own glory.

For his loyalty and humility he consecrated him,

choosing him out of all mankind.

He let him hear his voice

and led him into the dark cloud.

Face to face, he gave him the commandments,

a law that brings life and knowledge,

so that he might teach Jacob the covenant

and Israel his decrees.

He raised to a like holy office

Moses' brother Aaron from the tribe of Levi.

He made a perpetual covenant with him,  
conferring on him the priesthood of the nation.

He honoured him with splendid ornaments  
and clothed him in gorgeous vestments.

He robed him in perfect splendour  
and armed him with the emblems of power,  
the breeches, the mantle, and the tunic.

Round his robe he placed pomegranates  
and a circle of many golden bells,  
to make music as he walked,  
ringing aloud throughout the temple  
as a reminder to his people.

He gave him the sacred vestment adorned by an embroiderer  
with gold and violet and purple;

the oracle of judgement with the tokens of truth;

the scarlet thread spun with a craftsman's art;

the precious stones, engraved like seals,

and placed by the jeweller in a gold setting,

with inscriptions to serve as reminders,

one for each of the tribes of Israel;

the gold crown upon his turban,

engraved like a seal with 'Holy to the Lord'.

What rich adornments to feast the eyes!

What a miracle of art! What a proud honour!  
Before him no such splendour existed,  
and no one outside his family has ever put them on,  
no one except his sons  
and his descendants in perpetuity.  
Twice every day without fail  
they present his sacrifice of a whole -offering.  
It was Moses who ordained him  
and anointed him with sacred oil,  
in token of the perpetual covenant made with him  
and with his descendants as long as the heavens endure,  
that he should be the Lord's minister in the priestly office  
and bless his people in his name.  
He chose him out of all mankind  
to bring offerings to the Lord,  
incense and the fragrance of memorial sacrifice,  
to make atonement for the people.  
He entrusted to him his commandments,  
with authority to pronounce legal decisions,  
to teach Jacob his decrees  
and enlighten Israel about his law.  
Upstarts grew jealous of him  
and conspired against him in the desert,  
Dathan and Abiram with their supporters  
and Korah's band in their violent anger.  
The Lord saw and refused his sanction;

he destroyed them in the heat of his wrath,  
and worked a miracle against them  
by consuming them in a blazing fire.  
But he added fresh honours to Aaron  
and gave him a special privilege,  
allotting to the priests the choicest firstfruits,  
to ensure that they above all should have bread in plenty.  
For they eat the sacrifices of the Lord,  
which he gave to Aaron and his descendants.  
But he was to have no inheritance in the land of his people,  
no portion allotted to him among them;  
for the Lord himself is his portion, his inheritance.  
Phinehas son of Eleazar ranks third in renown  
for being zealous in his reverence for the Lord,  
and for standing firm with noble courage,  
when the people were in revolt;  
by so doing he made atonement for Israel.  
Therefore a covenant was established with him,  
assuring him command of the sanctuary and of the nation,  
conferring on him and his descendants  
the high -priesthood for ever.

Just as a covenant was made with David son of Jesse of the tribe of  
Judah,  
that the royal succession should always pass from father to son,  
so the succession was to pass from Aaron to his descendants.  
May the Lord grant you a wise mind

to judge his people with justice,  
so that their prosperity may never vanish  
and their glory may be handed on to future generations!  
Joshua son of Nun was a mighty warrior,  
who succeeded Moses in the prophetic office.  
He lived up to his name  
as a great liberator of the Lord's chosen people,  
able to take reprisals on the enemies who attacked them,  
and to put Israel in possession of their territory.  
How glorious he was when he raised his hand  
and brandished his sword against cities!  
Never before had a man made such a stand,  
for he was fighting the Lord's battles.  
Was it not through him that the sun stood still  
and made one day as long as two?  
He called on the Most High, the Mighty One,  
when the enemy was pressing him on every side,  
and the great Lord answered his prayer  
with a violent storm of hail.  
He overwhelmed that nation in battle  
and crushed his assailants as they fled down the pass,  
to make the nations recognize his strength in arms  
and teach them that he fought under the very eyes of the Lord,  
for he followed the lead of the Mighty One.  
In the time of Moses he had proved his loyalty,  
he and Caleb son of Jephunneh:

they stood their ground against the whole assembly,  
restrained the people from sin,  
and silenced their wicked grumbling.  
Out of six hundred thousand warriors  
these two alone escaped with their lives  
to enter the land and take possession of it,  
the land flowing with milk and honey.  
You brought retribution on your children  
and made them grieve over your folly,  
because it divided the sovereignty  
and produced out of Ephraim a rebel kingdom.  
But the Lord never ceases to be merciful;  
he does not destroy what he himself has made;  
he will not wipe out the children of his chosen servant  
or cut short the line of the man who has loved him.  
So he granted a remnant to Jacob  
and let one scion of David survive.  
So Solomon died like his forefathers  
and left one of his sons to succeed him,  
a man of weak intelligence, the fool of the nation,  
Rehoboarn, whose policy drove the people to revolt.  
Then Jeroboam son of Nebat led Israel into sin  
and started Ephraim on its wicked course.  
Their sins increased beyond measure,  
until they were driven into exile from their native land;  
for they had explored every kind of wickedness,

until retribution came upon them.

Then Elijah appeared, a prophet like fire,  
whose word flamed like a torch.

He brought famine upon them,  
and his zeal made their numbers small.

By the word of the Lord he shut up the sky  
and three times called down fire.

How glorious you were, Elijah, in your miracles!

Who else can boast such deeds ?

You raised a corpse from death  
and from the grave, by the word of the Most High.

You sent kings and famous men  
from their sick-beds down to their deaths.

You heard a denunciation at Sinai,  
a sentence of doom at Horeb.

So you anointed kings for vengeance,  
and prophets to succeed you.

You were taken up to heaven in a fiery whirlwind,  
in a chariot drawn by horses of fire.

It is written that you are to come at the appointed time with warnings,  
to allay the divine wrath before its final fury,  
to reconcile father and son,  
and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

Happy are those who saw you  
and were honoured with your love!

When Elijah had vanished in a whirlwind,

Elisha was filled with his spirit.  
Throughout his life no ruler made him tremble;  
no one could make him subservient.  
Nothing was too difficult for him;  
even in the grave his body kept its prophetic power.  
In life he worked miracles,  
and in death his deeds were marvellous.  
In spite of all this the people did not repent  
or renounce their sins,  
until they were carried off as plunder from their land  
and scattered over the whole earth.  
Only a tiny nation was left,  
with a ruler from the house of David;  
and of these some did what was pleasing to the Lord,  
but others heaped sin upon sin.  
Hezekiah fortified his city,  
bringing water within its walls;  
he drilled through the rock with tools of iron  
and made cisterns for the water.  
In his reign Sennacherib invaded the country.  
He sent Rab -shakeh from Lachish,  
who made threats against Zion  
and grew arrogant in his boasting.  
Then they were unnerved in heart and hand;  
they suffered the anguish of a woman in labour.  
So they called on the merciful Lord,

spreading out their hands in supplication to him.

The Holy One quickly answered their prayer from heaven  
by sending Isaiah to the rescue;

he struck down the Assyrian camp,  
and his angel wiped them out.

For Hezekiah did what was pleasing to the Lord,  
and kept firmly to the ways of his ancestor David,  
as he was instructed by Isaiah,  
the great prophet whose vision could be trusted.

In his time the sun went back,  
and he added many years to the king's life.

With inspired power he saw the future  
and comforted the mourners in Zion.

He revealed things to come before they happened,  
the secrets of the future to the end of time.

The memory of Josiah is fragrant as incense  
blended by the skill of the perfumer,  
sweet as honey to every palate  
or as music at a banquet.

He did what was right: he reformed the nation  
and rooted out their loathsome and lawless practices.

He was whole- heartedly loyal to the Lord  
and in lawless times made godliness prevail.

Except David, Hezekiah, and Josiah,  
all were guilty of wrongdoing,  
for they deserted the law of the Most High;

and so the royal line of Judah came to an end.  
They surrendered their power to others  
and their glory to a foreign nation,  
who set fire to the chosen city, the city of the sanctuary,  
and left its streets deserted, as Jeremiah prophesied;  
for they had ill-treated him,  
a prophet consecrated even before his birth  
to uproot, to destroy, and to demolish,  
but also to build and to plant.  
Ezekiel had a vision of the Glory,  
which was revealed enthroned on the chariot of the cherubim.  
The Lord remembered his enemies and sent a storm,  
but he did good to those who kept to the straight path.  
May the bones of the twelve prophets also  
send forth new life from the ground where they lie!  
For they put new heart into Jacob,  
and rescued the people by their confident hope.  
How can we tell the greatness of Zerubbabel,  
who was like a signet-ring on the Lord's right hand?  
With him was Joshua son of Jehozadak;  
in their days they built the house,  
raising a holy temple to the Lord,  
destined for eternal glory.  
Great is the memory of Nehemiah,  
who raised our fallen walls,  
constructed gates and bars,

and rebuilt our ruined homes.

No one on earth has been created to equal Enoch,  
for he was taken up from the earth.

No man has been born to be Joseph's peer,  
the ruler of his brothers and the strength of his people;  
and the Lord kept watch over his body.

Shem and Seth were given distinction among men,  
but Adam holds pre-eminence over all creation.

It was the high priest Simon son of Onias  
in whose lifetime the house was repaired,  
in whose days the temple was fortified.

He laid the foundation for the high double wall,  
the high retaining wall of the temple precinct.

In his day they dug the reservoir,  
a cistern broad as the sea.

He applied his mind to protecting his people from ruin  
and strengthened the city against siege.

How glorious he was, surrounded by the people,  
when he came from behind the temple curtain!

He was like the morning star appearing through the clouds  
or the moon at the full;

like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High  
or the light of the rainbow on the gleaming clouds;

like a rose in spring

or lilies by a fountain of water;

like a green shoot upon Lebanon on a summer's day

or burning incense in the censer;  
like a cup of beaten gold,  
decorated with every kind of precious stone;  
like an olive -tree laden with fruit  
or a cypress with its top in the clouds.

When he put on his gorgeous vestments,  
robed himself in perfect splendour,  
and went up to the holy altar,  
he added lustre to the court of the sanctuary.

When the priests were handing him the portions of the sacrifice,  
as he stood by the altar hearth  
with his brothers round him like a garland,  
he was like a young cedar of Lebanon  
in the midst of a circle of palms.

All the sons of Aaron in their magnificence  
stood with the Lord's offering in their hands  
before the whole congregation of Israel.

To complete the ceremonies at the altar  
and adorn the offering of the Most High, the Almighty,  
he held out his hand for the libation cup  
and poured out the blood of the grape,  
poured its fragrance at the foot of the altar  
to the Most High, the King of all.

Then the sons of Aaron shouted  
and blew their trumpets of beaten silver;  
they sounded a mighty fanfare

as a reminder before the Lord.

Instantly the people as one man fell on their faces  
to worship the Lord their God, the Almighty, the Most High.

Then the choir broke into praise,  
in the full sweet strains of resounding song,  
while the people of the Most High  
were making their petitions to the merciful Lord,  
until the liturgy of the Lord was finished  
and the ritual complete.

Then Simon came down and raised his hands  
over the whole congregation of Israel,  
to pronounce the Lord's blessing,  
proud to take his name on his lips;  
and a second time they bowed in worship  
to receive the blessing from the Most High.

C O M E T H E N, P R A I S E the God of the universe,  
who everywhere works great wonders,  
who from our birth ennobles our life  
and deals with us in mercy.

23 May he grant us a joyful heart,  
and in our time send Israel lasting peace.

24 May he confirm his mercy towards us,  
and in his own good time grant us deliverance.

ZS Two nations I detest,

and a third is no nation at all:

a6 the inhabitants of Mount Seir, the Philistines,

and the senseless folk that live at Shechem.

In this book I have written

lessons of good sense and understanding,

I, Jesus son of Sirach, of Jerusalem,

whose mind was a fountain of wisdom.

Happy the man who occupies himself with these lessons,

who lays them to heart and grows wise!

29 If he lives by them, he will be equal to anything,

with the light of the Lord shining on his path.

Epilogue

I THANK THEE, my Lord and King,

ú I praise thee, my God and Saviour,

I give thee thanks,

because thou hast been my protector and helper,

rescuing me from death,

from the trap laid by a slanderous tongue

and from lips that utter lies.

In the face of my assailants thou didst come to my help;

in the fullness of thy mercy and glory thou didst rescue me

from grinding teeth which waited to devour me,

from hands that threatened my life,

from the many troubles I endured,

from the choking fire around me,

from the flames I had not kindled,

from the deep recesses of the grave,

from the foul tongue and its lies-

a wicked slander spoken in the king's presence.

I came near to death;

I was on the brink of the grave.

They surrounded me on every side,

and there was no one to help me.

I looked for human aid and there was none.

Then I remembered thy mercy, Lord,

thy deeds in bygone days;

thou dost deliver those who patiently trust thee

and free them from the power of their enemies.

So I sent up a prayer from the earth 9

and begged for rescue from death.

I cried, 'Lord, thou art my Father; 10

do not desert me in time of trouble,

when I am helpless in the face of arrogance.

I will praise thee continually,

I will sing hymns of thanksgiving.'

And my prayer was granted;

for thou didst save me from death

and rescue me from my desperate plight.

Therefore I will thank thee and praise thee

and bless thee, O Lord.

When I was still young, before I set out on my travels, I 3

I asked openly for wisdom in my prayers.

In the forecourt of the sanctuary I laid claim to her, I 4

and I shall seek her out to the end.

From the first blossom to the ripening of the grape 1 5  
she has been the delight of my heart.

From my youth my steps have followed her without swerving.

I had hardly begun to listen when I was rewarded, 1 6  
and I gained for myself much instruction.

I made progress in my studies; I 1  
all honour to him who gives me wisdom!

I determined to practise what I had learnt;

I pursued goodness, and shall never regret it.

I strove for wisdom with all my might,  
and was scrupulous in whatever I did.

I spread out my hands to heaven above,  
deploring my ignorance;

I set my heart on possessing wisdom,  
and by keeping myself pure I found her.

With her I gained understanding from the first;  
therefore I shall never be at a loss.

Because I passionately yearned to discover her,  
I won a noble prize.

The Lord gave me eloquence as my reward,  
and with it I will praise him.

Come to me, you who need instruction,  
and lodge in my house of learning.

Why do you admit to a lack of these things,  
yet leave your great thirst unslaked ?

I have made my proclamation:

Buy for yourselves without money,  
bend your neck to the yoke,  
be ready to accept discipline;  
you need not go far to find it.'

See for yourselves how little were my labours  
compared with the great peace I have found.

Your share of instruction may cost you a large sum of silver  
but it will bring you a large return in gold.

May you take delight in the Lord's mercy  
and never be ashamed of praising him.

Do your duty in good time,  
and in his own time he will reward you.

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