

PROVERBS



The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to transmit insights whereby one might learn to cope with life (1.2–6). Its emphasis is on teachings gathered from tradition of the elders (e.g., 4.1–4) and from experience (e.g., 6.6–11). In contrast to many other books of the Hebrew Bible, major themes such as the Mosaic and Davidic covenants are absent; Temple worship and sacrifice are rarely mentioned.

Although some sayings are neutral observations, on the whole a moral ideal is inculcated. Guided by the principle that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (9.10; 1.7; 15.33), the sages emphasize values such as honesty, diligence, trustworthiness, self-restraint, and appropriate attitudes toward wealth and poverty. Proverbs acknowledges the limitations of human wisdom (16.1–2,9; 21.30), yet the book offers a clear view of divine reward and punishment: Wisdom (generally equated with righteousness) brings success; folly (or wickedness) leads to destruction. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes, however, show that this schematic account of divine justice remained a problem for the sages.

The authorship of this composite work is multiple and essentially anonymous. Some of the material appears to be preexilic, but the book was completed in the post-exilic period. The attribution to Solomon (1.1; 10.1; 25.1) derives from traditional accounts of his legendary wisdom (1 Kings 4.29–34) and lends authority to the collection. The book is typical of the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible and also of the ancient Near East, especially Egypt. In fact, most scholars agree that 22.17–23.11 is in some way dependent upon the “Instruction” of the Egyptian sage, Amen-em-ope (ca. 1100 BCE). Royal scribes are responsible for much of the material in Proverbs; hence the sayings sometimes reflect an elite point of view. But the learned editors of the book also preserve the folk wisdom of ancient Israelite villages and extended families.

The original audience of Proverbs was primarily young men preparing for adult responsibilities; a male-centered perspective prevails in the book. There is intense interest in finding a “good wife” (e.g., 12.4) and in governing a household successfully. In chs 1–9, presented as the instruction of a father to his son, the center of attention is a vibrant feminine personification of divine Wisdom. She is opposed to the foolish woman (ch 9) and to the complex, threatening figure of the “strange woman” (chs 2,5,7).

Proverbs contains several sub-collections of short proverbial sayings framed by sets of longer wisdom poems in chs 1–9 and 30–31. The book opens (1.1–7) with a title (1.1) followed by a programmatic statement of purpose and theme (1.2–7). Then comes a lengthy instruction in Wisdom (1.8–9.18), consisting of extended poems in second-person address, with commands and admonitions usually completed by motive clauses. Personified Wisdom and her opposites, the “strange woman” and the foolish woman, are prominent. A collection of proverbial sayings follows (10.1–22.16), each of which is typically two lines in parallel thought, as is characteristic of Hebrew poetry. Antithetical parallelism predominates in chs 10–15; synonymous or synthetic parallelism (in which the second line repeats or extends the thought of the first) in 16.1–22.16. Another collection is “the words of the wise” (22.17–24.34), which are teachings, chiefly brief admonitions, patterned after the Egyptian “Instruction of Amen-em-ope” (esp. 22.17–23.11), with an appendix of additional “sayings of the wise” in 24.23–34. Another collection of sayings (25.1–29.27), credited to the

officials of King Hezekiah" (25.1), comprises two main sub-units, chs 25–27 and 28–29. The words of Agur and other sayings (30.1–33) are a wisdom dialogue and a prayer (vv. 1–9) followed by admonitions and numerical sayings (vv. 10–33). The words of Lemuel (31.1–9) consist of teachings on sobriety and responsibility attributed to King Lemuel's mother. Ending the collection, and expressing both closure and completeness by its acrostic form, is the section in praise of the woman of worth (31.10–31), a poem on the ideal wife, the embodiment of Wisdom.

The reader should begin with chs 1–9, which form an extended invitation to the pursuit of Wisdom. Especially noteworthy are the programmatic statements of 1.1–7 and 8–19 and the speeches of divine Wisdom in 1.20–33 and 8.1–36. The sayings collections of chs 10–29 may be approached as exercises in judicious reading. The artful arrangement of discrete proverbs creates a certain coherence in the Hebrew by means of catchwords, plays on words, alliteration and assonance, and thematic associations. Some sayings have been repeated in other collections (e.g., 21.9 = 25.24); others are meaningfully paired (e.g., 17.27–28; 26.4–5), or gathered in thematic groups (e.g., 25.1–7). Although these verbal characteristics and thematic arrangements may have been an aid to memorization, the care given to these groupings indicates that the interpretation of the sayings is meant to be an exacting discipline (cf. 26.7,9). Individual proverbs are not simply to be mechanically applied; rather they should be read in creative tension with one another. Proverbs invites the reader to intellectual discipline as a life-giving synthesis of keen observation and reflection, ethical concern, and piety.

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David,
king of Israel:

- 2 For learning about wisdom and instruction,
for understanding words of insight,
- 3 for gaining instruction in wise dealing,
righteousness, justice, and equity;
- 4 to teach shrewdness to the simple,
knowledge and prudence to the young—
- 5 let the wise also hear and gain in learning,

and the discerning acquire skill,
6 to understand a proverb and a figure,
the words of the wise and their riddles.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning
of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 Hear, my child, your father's instruction,
and do not reject your mother's teaching;

1.1–7: Introduction. 1: *Proverbs of Solomon*, see the Introduction (10.1; 25.1). 2–6: The purpose of the book. Addressed to the *simple* and the *young*, as well as the *wise*, Proverbs teaches discernment and ethical responsibility. A highly practical discipline, wisdom entails living in accord with *righteousness, justice, and equity*. 6: *Figure*, an allusive saying or an extended metaphor, as in 1.20–33. *Riddle*, a comparison or analogy that provokes reflection and requires readers to decide the meaning (e.g., 30.15–16, 18–19). 7: A basic wisdom theme. Reverence toward God is the prerequisite to knowledge (9.10; 15.33; 31.30b; Job 28.28; Ps 111.10; Sir 1.14). *Fools* are not simply unintelligent, but unethical in their conduct.

1.8–9.18: Instruction in Wisdom. These chapters contain mostly long poems, in contrast to the short proverbial sayings of chs 10–29.

1.18–19: Instruction as a moral safeguard against the temptations of the wicked. 8: *My child* (lit. "my son"), a typical usage of the sages when referring to the teacher-student relationship (vv. 10, 15; 2.1; 4.10; Sir 2.1; 3.12, 17). The pairing of the *father's instruction* and the *mother's teaching* alludes to the family as the place where wisdom instruction first takes place (see 6.20; 23.22; 31.1). The term *teaching* (Heb

PROVERBS 1.9–1.33

- 9 for they are a fair garland for your head,
and pendants for your neck.
- 10 My child, if sinners entice you,
do not consent.
- 11 If they say, "Come with us, let us lie
in wait for blood;
let us wantonly ambush the
innocent;
- 12 like Sheol let us swallow them alive
and whole, like those who go down
to the Pit.
- 13 We shall find all kinds of costly
things;
we shall fill our houses with booty.
- 14 Throw in your lot among us;
we will all have one purse"—
- 15 my child, do not walk in their way,
keep your foot from their paths;
- 16 for their feet run to evil,
and they hurry to shed blood.
- 17 For in vain is the net baited
while the bird is looking on;
- 18 yet they lie in wait—to kill
themselves!
and set an ambush—for their own
lives!
- 19 Such is the end^a of all who are
greedy for gain;
it takes away the life of its
possessors.
- 20 Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.
- 21 At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she
speaks:
- 22 "How long, O simple ones, will you
love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their
scoffing
- and fools hate knowledge?
- 23 Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known
to you.
- 24 Because I have called and you refused,
have stretched out my hand and no
one heeded,
- 25 and because you have ignored all my
counsel
and would have none of my
reproof,
- 26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
- 27 when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a
whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come
upon you.
- 28 Then they will call upon me, but I
will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but
will not find me.
- 29 Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the
LORD,
- 30 would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
- 31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of
their way
and be sated with their own
devices.
- 32 For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools
destroys them;
- 33 but those who listen to me will be
secure
and will live at ease, without dread
of disaster."

^a Gk: Heb *are the ways*

"torah") is used elsewhere in the Bible as a term for covenant law. In Proverbs, however, it refers primarily to wisdom instruction. But see Sir 24, which identifies the two. **12:** *Sheol . . . the Pit*, common expressions for death and the place and state of the dead. **16:** An editorial quotation of Isa 59.7. **17:** The sage cites a popular proverb to affirm that the consequences of crime ought to be obvious.

1.20–33: Wisdom personified as a prophet. She speaks publicly in the city streets and gates. In language that echoes the prophets (for v. 22 see Jer 4.14,21; v. 24 see Isa 65.2,12; 66.4; Jer 7.13,24–27), Wisdom pronounces dire threats against those who will not listen to her (vv. 26–32). **22:** The *simple* (see 1.4) are considered teachable, but *scoffers* and *fools* are generally represented as (fatally) resistant to instruction (see 1.7; 15.12; 26.3).

2 My child, if you accept my words
and treasure up my commandments
within you,
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to
understanding;
3 if you indeed cry out for insight,
and raise your voice for
understanding;
4 if you seek it like silver,
and search for it as for hidden
treasures—
5 then you will understand the fear of
the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge
and understanding;
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the
upright;
he is a shield to those who walk
blamelessly,
8 guarding the paths of justice
and preserving the way of his
faithful ones.
9 Then you will understand
righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to
your soul;
11 prudence will watch over you;
and understanding will guard
you.
12 It will save you from the way of evil,
from those who speak perversely,
13 who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
14 who rejoice in doing evil

and delight in the perverseness
of evil;
15 those whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.
16 You will be saved from the loose^a
woman,
from the adulteress with her
smooth words,
17 who forsakes the partner of her youth
and forgets her sacred covenant;
18 for her way^b leads down to death,
and her paths to the shades;
19 those who go to her never come back,
nor do they regain the paths of life.
20 Therefore walk in the way of the
good,
and keep to the paths of the just.
21 For the upright will abide in the land,
and the innocent will remain in it;
22 but the wicked will be cut off from
the land,
and the treacherous will be rooted
out of it.
3 My child, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my
commandments;
2 for length of days and years of life
and abundant welfare they will give
you.
3 Do not let loyalty and faithfulness
forsake you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your
heart.

a Heb *strange* *b* Cn: Heb *house*

2.1–22: The fruits of the search for wisdom are summarized in this carefully fashioned poem of 22 lines (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet; cf. the acrostic pattern of 31.10–31). 4: Wisdom is frequently compared to a *treasure* or wealth (see 3.14–16; 8.18–19; Job 28.15–19). 5: 1.7n. 10: *Heart*, not only the seat of affections, but the center of the whole person, including will and thought (4.23). 16: *Loose woman*, lit. “strange woman” (Heb “*zarah*,” see 5.3,20; 7.5; 22.14); *adulteress*, lit. “alien” or “foreign woman” (Heb “*nokriyyah*,” see 5.20; 6.24; 7.5; 23.27; Ezra 10.2,10–11,14,17–18,44; Neh 13.26–27). 17: *Her sacred covenant*, here as in Mal 2.10–16, imagery of unfaithfulness in marriage is associated with breaking a religious covenant. 19: See 7.26–27.

3.1–12: Instruction in fear of the LORD. 3: Wisdom teachings and values are often described in imagery that suggests protective amulets worn on the body (see 6.21; 7.3) or ornaments (see 1.9; 3.22). Cf. Deut 6.8–9. 7: See 1.7n. 9: *First fruits*, see Ex 23.19; Deut 26.1–11. This is the only direct instruction

PROVERBS 3.4–3.26

4 So you will find favor and good
repute
in the sight of God and of people.

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own
insight.

6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your
paths.

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from
evil.

8 It will be a healing for your flesh
and a refreshment for your body.

9 Honor the LORD with your substance
and with the first fruits of all your
produce;

10 then your barns will be filled with
plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with
wine.

11 My child, do not despise the LORD's
discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
12 for the LORD reproves the one he
loves,
as a father the son in whom he
delights.

13 Happy are those who find wisdom,
and those who get understanding,

14 for her income is better than silver,
and her revenue better than gold.

15 She is more precious than jewels,

and nothing you desire can
compare with her.

16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and
honor.

17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to those who lay
hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called
happy.

19 The LORD by wisdom founded the
earth;
by understanding he established the
heavens;

20 by his knowledge the deeps broke
open,
and the clouds drop down the dew.

21 My child, do not let these escape
from your sight:

keep sound wisdom and prudence,
22 and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.

23 Then you will walk on your way
securely
and your foot will not stumble.

24 If you sit down, you will not be
afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will
be sweet.

25 Do not be afraid of sudden panic;
or of the storm that strikes the
wicked;

26 for the LORD will be your confidence

a Gk: Heb lie down

concerning Temple worship in Proverbs (cf. 15.8; 21.3; 28.13). 11–12: Suffering can be a sign of beneficent divine *discipline* (Deut 8.5; Job 5.17; Ps 94.12–13; Sir 6.18–37).

3.13–20: In praise of Wisdom. 13: *Happy are those*, a characteristic formula in wisdom rhetoric (8.34; 20.7; 28.14; 29.18; 31.28). In the New Testament the Beatitudes ("Blessed are"; Mt 5.3–11; Lk 6.20–23) reflect the equivalent formula in Greek. 14–15: Cf. Job 28.15–19. 16: The Egyptian goddess of truth and justice, Maat, was portrayed with the symbol of *life* in one hand, wealth and dignity in the other. 18: *Tree of life*, a widespread ancient Near Eastern symbol of longevity and well-being (Gen 2.9; 3.22; Sir 1.20; 14.26; 24.12–17; Rev 2.7; 22.2). 19–20: Wisdom's role in creation (8.22–31). The *deep*s and the *dew* represent the waters below and above, at the perimeter of God's well-ordered creation (8.29; Gen 1.6–9; 7.11; Job 38.8–11; Ps 104.5–9).

3.21–35: An admonition followed by six prohibitions, and a statement about the fate of the righteous and wicked. 27: The language suggests that the issue concerns loans and their repayment; see 6.1–5; 11.24. 29: Cf. 26.24–26.

- and will keep your foot from being caught.
- 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,^a
when it is in your power to do it.
- 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Go,
and come again,
tomorrow I will give it"—when
you have it with you.
- 29 Do not plan harm against your
neighbor
who lives trustingly beside you.
- 30 Do not quarrel with anyone without
cause,
when no harm has been done
to you.
- 31 Do not envy the violent
and do not choose any of their
ways;
- 32 for the perverse are an abomination
to the LORD,
but the upright are in his
confidence.
- 33 The LORD's curse is on the house of
the wicked,
but he blesses the abode of the
righteous.
- 34 Toward the scorners he is scornful,
but to the humble he shows favor.
- 35 The wise will inherit honor,
but stubborn fools, disgrace.
- 4 Listen, children, to a father's
instruction,
and be attentive, that you may
gain^b insight;
- 2 for I give you good precepts:
do not forsake my teaching.
- 3 When I was a son with my father,
tender, and my mother's favorite,
4 he taught me, and said to me,
"Let your heart hold fast my words;
keep my commandments, and live.

- 5 Get wisdom; get insight: do not
forget, nor turn away
from the words of my mouth.
- 6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep
you;
love her, and she will guard you.
- 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get
wisdom,
and whatever else you get, get
insight.
- 8 Prize her highly, and she will
exalt you;
she will honor you if you
embrace her.
- 9 She will place on your head a fair
garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful
crown."
- 10 Hear, my child, and accept my words,
that the years of your life may
be many.
- 11 I have taught you the way of wisdom;
I have led you in the paths of
uprightness.
- 12 When you walk, your step will not be
hampered;
and if you run, you will not
stumble.
- 13 Keep hold of instruction; do not
let go;
guard her, for she is your life.
- 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
and do not walk in the way of
evildoers.
- 15 Avoid it; do not go on it;
turn away from it and pass on.
- 16 For they cannot sleep unless they have
done wrong;
they are robbed of sleep unless they
have made someone stumble.
- 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness

^a Heb from its owners ^b Heb know

4.1-9: Get Wisdom. The sage urges ardent loyalty toward Wisdom. The student will *love her* and *embrace her* as if she were a beloved wife (5.15-20; 7.4). 10-27: The two ways: wisdom's *way* or *path* (vv. 11,18) is contrasted with the *path* or *way of the wicked* (vv. 14,19). The image of *way* or *path* for conduct of life occurs frequently in the book (1.15-16; 2.7-20; 3.6,17,23; 5.5-8,21; 6.23; 7.25; 8.13,20,32; 9.6; 10.9; 11.5; 16.17; 28.6).

PROVERBS 4.18–5.17

- and drink the wine of violence.
 18 But the path of the righteous is like
 the light of dawn,
 which shines brighter and brighter
 until full day.
 19 The way of the wicked is like deep
 darkness;
 they do not know what they
 stumble over.
 20 My child, be attentive to my words;
 incline your ear to my sayings.
 21 Do not let them escape from
 your sight;
 keep them within your heart.
 22 For they are life to those who
 find them,
 and healing to all their flesh.
 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
 for from it flow the springs of life.
 24 Put away from you crooked speech,
 and put devious talk far from you.
 25 Let your eyes look directly forward,
 and your gaze be straight
 before you.
 26 Keep straight the path of your feet,
 and all your ways will be sure.
 27 Do not swerve to the right or to
 the left;
 turn your foot away from evil.

- 5** My child, be attentive to my wisdom;
 incline your ear to my
 understanding,
 2 so that you may hold on to prudence,
 and your lips may guard
 knowledge.
 3 For the lips of a loose^a woman drip
 honey,
 and her speech is smoother
 than oil;
 4 but in the end she is bitter as
 wormwood,

- sharp as a two-edged sword.
 5 Her feet go down to death;
 her steps follow the path to Sheol.
 6 She does not keep straight to the path
 of life;
 her ways wander, and she does not
 know it.
 7 And now, my child,^b listen to me,
 and do not depart from the words
 of my mouth.
 8 Keep your way far from her,
 and do not go near the door of her
 house;
 9 or you will give your honor to others,
 and your years to the merciless,
 10 and strangers will take their fill of
 your wealth,
 and your labors will go to the
 house of an alien;
 11 and at the end of your life you will
 groan,
 when your flesh and body are
 consumed,
 12 and you say, "Oh, how I hated
 discipline,
 and my heart despised reproof!
 13 I did not listen to the voice of my
 teachers
 or incline my ear to my instructors.
 14 Now I am at the point of utter ruin
 in the public assembly."
 15 Drink water from your own cistern,
 flowing water from your own well.
 16 Should your springs be scattered
 abroad,
 streams of water in the streets?
 17 Let them be for yourself alone,
 and not for sharing with strangers.

^a Heb *strange* ^b Gk *Vg*; Heb *children*

5.1–23: The dangers of the "strange woman." The identity of the forbidden woman is unclear. Elsewhere she is compared to a prostitute and is implicated in adultery (7.10,19). Here the focus on her alien status as a "strange woman" (Heb "zarah," vv. 3,20a) and "foreign woman" (Heb "nokriyyah," v. 20b; cf. vv. 8–10) might reflect in part the postexilic prohibition of marriage to foreign women (Ezra 9–10, cf. vv. 8–10) might reflect in part the postexilic prohibition of marriage to foreign women (Ezra 9–10, Neh 13.23–30). **5:** *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. **14:** *Ruin in the public assembly*, cf. Ezra 10.8. Shame was a strong social sanction in ancient Israelite society, just as honor was a powerful reward (3.35; 5.9; 6.33; 25.7c–10; etc.). **15–20:** The wise man will *rejoice* in exclusive intimacy with his lawful *wife*. *Cistern*, *well*, and *fountain* are metaphors for the woman (Song 4.12,15). **19:** Cf. Song 4.5.

18 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your
youth,
19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe.
May her breasts satisfy you at all
times;
may you be intoxicated always by
her love.
20 Why should you be intoxicated, my
son, by another woman
and embrace the bosom of an
adulteress?
21 For human ways are under the eyes of
the LORD,
and he examines all their paths.
22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare
them,
and they are caught in the toils of
their sin.
23 They die for lack of discipline,
and because of their great folly they
are lost.
6 My child, if you have given your
pledge to your neighbor,
if you have bound yourself to
another,^a
2 you are snared by the utterance of
your lips,^b
caught by the words of your
mouth.
3 So do this, my child, and save
yourself,
for you have come into your
neighbor's power:
go, hurry,^c and plead with your
neighbor.
4 Give your eyes no sleep
and your eyelids no slumber;
5 save yourself like a gazelle from the
hunter,^d
like a bird from the hand of the
fowler.

6 Go to the ant, you lazybones;

consider its ways, and be wise.
7 Without having any chief
or officer or ruler,
8 it prepares its food in summer,
and gathers its sustenance in
harvest.
9 How long will you lie there,
O lazybones?
When will you rise from your
sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
11 and poverty will come upon you like
a robber,
and want, like an armed warrior.
12 A scoundrel and a villain
goes around with crooked speech,
13 winking the eyes, shuffling the feet,
pointing the fingers,
14 with perverted mind devising evil,
continually sowing discord;
15 on such a one calamity will descend
suddenly;
in a moment, damage beyond
repair.
16 There are six things that the LORD
hates,
seven that are an abomination
to him:
17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent
blood,
18 a heart that devises wicked plans,
feet that hurry to run to evil,
19 a lying witness who testifies falsely,
and one who sows discord in a
family.

a Or a stranger b Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb the words of your mouth c Or humble yourself d Cn: Heb from the hand

6.1-19: Warning. **1-5:** Do not offer your property as collateral for your neighbor's debts (11.15; 17.18; 20.16; 22.26-27; Sir 8.12-13; 29.1-7,14-20). **6-11:** Avoid laziness (20.4,13; 22.13; 24.30-34; 26.13-16). Didactic comparisons between human behavior and the characteristics of plants and animals are a recognized form of wisdom speech (Prov 30.15-19,24-31; see also Judg 9.8-15; 1 Kings 4.33-34). **12-15:** Beware of disreputable characters. For *winking the eyes* as a sign of duplicity, see 10.10; 16.30; Sir 27.22. **16-19:** A numerical saying (see 30.18-31; Am 1.3-2.8) about seven vices.

PROVERBS 6.20–7.5

- 20 My child, keep your father's commandment,
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
- 21 Bind them upon your heart always;
tie them around your neck.
- 22 When you walk, they^a will lead you;
when you lie down, they^a will watch over you;
and when you awake, they^a will talk with you.
- 23 For the commandment is a lamp and
the teaching a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are
the way of life,
- 24 to preserve you from the wife of
another,^b
from the smooth tongue of the
adulteress.
- 25 Do not desire her beauty in your
heart,
and do not let her capture you with
her eyelashes;
- 26 for a prostitute's fee is only a loaf of
bread,^c
but the wife of another stalks a
man's very life.
- 27 Can fire be carried in the bosom
without burning one's clothes?
- 28 Or can one walk on hot coals
without scorching the feet?
- 29 So is he who sleeps with his
neighbor's wife;
no one who touches her will go
unpunished.
- 30 Thieves are not despised who
steal only
- to satisfy their appetite when they
are hungry.
- 31 Yet if they are caught, they will pay
sevenfold;
they will forfeit all the goods of
their house.
- 32 But he who commits adultery has no
sense;
he who does it destroys himself.
- 33 He will get wounds and dishonor,
and his disgrace will not be wiped
away.
- 34 For jealousy arouses a husband's fury,
and he shows no restraint when he
takes revenge.
- 35 He will accept no compensation,
and refuses a bribe no matter how
great.
- 7 My child, keep my words
and store up my commandments
with you;
- 2 keep my commandments and live,
keep my teachings as the apple of
your eye;
- 3 bind them on your fingers,
write them on the tablet of your
heart.
- 4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
and call insight your intimate
friend,
- 5 that they may keep you from the
loose^d woman,

a Heb it b Gk: MT *the evil woman*

c Cn Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *for because of a harlot to a piece of bread* d Heb *strange*

6.20–35: The perils of adultery. The man who *sleeps with his neighbor's wife* (v. 29) suffers dire consequences, including the implacable *husband's fury* (v. 34). As is typical in chs 1–9, the focus here is on advice to men. Women are not addressed directly; they appear as dangerous temptations (vv. 24–25) or as exemplary wives and mothers (v. 20). **20–22:** See 3.3n.; Deut 6.6–8. **26:** The contrast between the "cost" of the *prostitute* and the *wife of another* suggests that the issue was not simply one of sexual conduct itself but the danger posed to the social system, including the system of inheritance, by adultery, which could result in uncertainty about paternity.

7.1–27: Another warning against the "strange woman." **1–5:** The young man is advised to cling to Wisdom as *sister* and *friend* (as if she were a beloved; see Song 4.9–12; 5.1). She will keep him safe from the *loose woman* (lit. "strange woman") or the *adulteress* (lit. "alien" or "foreign woman"; see 2.16; 5.1–23). **2–3:** See 3.3n. *Apple of your eye*, i.e., pupil. **4:** *Sister*, in poetry, a term of endearment for the beloved, not implying kinship (see Song 4.9). **6–27:** The teacher vividly describes a seduction leading to

from the adulteress with her
smooth words.

- 6 For at the window of my house
I looked out through my lattice,
7 and I saw among the simple ones,
I observed among the youths,
a young man without sense,
8 passing along the street near her
corner,
taking the road to her house
9 in the twilight, in the evening,
at the time of night and darkness.
- 10 Then a woman comes toward him,
decked out like a prostitute, wily of
heart.^a
11 She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;
12 now in the street, now in the squares,
and at every corner she lies in
wait.
13 She seizes him and kisses him,
and with impudent face she says to
him:
14 "I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
15 so now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have
found you!
16 I have decked my couch with
coverings,
colored spreads of Egyptian linen;
17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love until
morning;
let us delight ourselves with love.
19 For my husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.
20 He took a bag of money with him;
he will not come home until full
moon."

- 21 With much seductive speech she
persuades him;
with her smooth talk she
compels him.
22 Right away he follows her,
and goes like an ox to the
slaughter,
or bounds like a stag toward
the trap^b
23 until an arrow pierces its entrails.
He is like a bird rushing into a snare,
not knowing that it will cost him
his life.
- 24 And now, my children, listen to me,
and be attentive to the words of my
mouth.
25 Do not let your hearts turn aside to
her ways;
do not stray into her paths.
26 For many are those she has laid low,
and numerous are her victims.
27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
going down to the chambers of
death.

- 8 Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise
her voice?
2 On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her
stand;
3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she
cries out:
4 "To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.
5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack
it.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Cn Compare Gk:
Meaning of Heb uncertain

death. 10: It is not clear whether the woman is a *prostitute*, or simply dressed like one. Since she is married (vv. 19-20), a liason with her would constitute adultery (see 6.24-35). 17: *Myrrh*, an aromatic resin; *aloes and cinnamon*, aromatic spices from India. 22-27: The emphasis on the "strange woman's" inexorable pull toward death heightens her stark opposition to Wisdom, personified as a woman who offers life (3.16; 8.35-36). *Sheol*, 1.12n.

8.1-36: Wisdom speaks (cf. Sir 24.1-34). 1-5: Wisdom publicly addresses all *people*, but especially the *simple* in need of instruction (1.20-22). 6-11: Wisdom's value is incomparable (see 2.4n.; cf. Job

PROVERBS 8.6–8.30

- 6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is
right;
7 for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to
my lips.
8 All the words of my mouth are
righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked
in them.
9 They are all straight to one who
understands
and right to those who find
knowledge.
10 Take my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than choice
gold;
11 for wisdom is better than jewels,
and all that you may desire cannot
compare with her.
12 I, wisdom, live with prudence,^a
and I attain knowledge and
discretion.
13 The fear of the LORD is hatred
of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way
of evil
and perverted speech I hate.
14 I have good advice and sound
wisdom;
I have insight, I have strength.
15 By me kings reign,
and rulers decree what is just;
16 by me rulers rule,
and nobles, all who govern rightly.
17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently
find me.
18 Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and prosperity.
19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine
gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
21 endowing with wealth those who love
me,
and filling their treasuries.
22 The LORD created me at the
beginning^b of his work,^c
the first of his acts of long ago.
23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of
the earth.
24 When there were no depths I was
brought forth,
when there were no springs
abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains had been
shaped,
before the hills, I was brought
forth—
26 when he had not yet made earth and
fields,^d
or the world's first bits of soil.
27 When he established the heavens, I
was there,
when he drew a circle on the face
of the deep,
28 when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains
of the deep,
29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not
transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations
of the earth,
30 then I was beside him, like a master
worker;^d
and I was daily his^e delight,
rejoicing before him always,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Or *me as the*
beginning ^c Heb *way* ^d Another reading is *little*
child ^e Gk: Heb lacks *his*

28.15–19). 12–16: Her authority is that by which *kings reign* (Sir 4.15). 17–21: Wisdom's blessings begin with returning the *love of those who love her* (v. 17; Sir 4.14; Wis 6.12–13). 22–31: Wisdom recounts her divine origin, before anything was created (Sir 1.4; 24.9). She was with God as a *master worker* (v. 30), and thus had a role in creation (Sir 1.9–10; Wis 7.22; 9.9). Wisdom is seen *delighting in* God's human creatures (v. 31; Sir 1.15; 24.7–12). 22: *Created*, the proper translation of the Heb word ("qanah") is debated, but "acquired" (see 4.5,7) or even "engendered, conceived" (see Gen 4.1) are also

PROVERBS 8.31–10.1

- 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.
- 32 “And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep
my ways.
- 33 Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
- 34 Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
- 35 For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD;
- 36 but those who miss me injure
themselves;
all who hate me love death.”

- 9 Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
- 2 She has slaughtered her animals, she
has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.
- 3 She has sent out her servant-girls, she
calls
from the highest places in the town,
- 4 “You that are simple, turn in here!”
To those without sense she says,
- 5 “Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
- 6 Lay aside immaturity,” and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”
- 7 Whoever corrects a scoffer wins
abuse;
whoever rebukes the wicked
gets hurt.
- 8 A scoffer who is rebuked will only
hate you;
the wise, when rebuked, will
love you.

- 9 Give instruction^b to the wise, and
they will become wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will
gain in learning.
- 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning
of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One
is insight.
- 11 For by me your days will be
multiplied,
and years will be added to your life.
- 12 If you are wise, you are wise for
yourself;
if you scoff, you alone will bear it.
- 13 The foolish woman is loud;
she is ignorant and knows nothing.
- 14 She sits at the door of her house,
on a seat at the high places of the
town,
- 15 calling to those who pass by,
who are going straight on their
way,
- 16 “You who are simple, turn in here!”
And to those without sense she
says,
- 17 “Stolen water is sweet,
and bread eaten in secret is
pleasant.”
- 18 But they do not know that the dead^c
are there,
that her guests are in the depths of
Sheol.

10 The proverbs of Solomon.
A wise child makes a glad father,

^a Or *simpleness* ^b Heb lacks *instruction*
^c Heb *shades*

possible. 24–29: See Gen 1; Job 38.4–11; Ps 104.5–9. 32–36: The speech concludes with an offer of *life* in place of *death*.

9.1–18: Wisdom invites the unwise, or *simple*, to her banquet (vv. 1–6), but the foolish woman also seeks their attention (vv. 13–18). Between the invitations are aphorisms about *scoffers* and the *wise* (vv. 7–12). 1: The *seven pillars* of her house may allude to the pillars on which the earth was founded (Job 9.6; 26.11; Ps 75.3; cf. 8.29–30). 2: Wine was sometimes *mixed* with spices. 5: Cf. Sir 24.19; 51.23–30. 10: Cf. 1.7. 17: *Stolen water . . . bread*, probably veiled references to illicit sex (see 5.15–17; Sir 23.17). 18: Like the “strange woman” of ch 7, the foolish woman is associated with death. *Sheol*, 1.12n.

10.1–22.16: Proverbial sayings. The originally separate sayings in this collection are often bound

PROVERBS 10.2–10.20

- but a foolish child is a mother's grief.
- 2 Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
but righteousness delivers from death.
- 3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry,
but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.
- 4 A slack hand causes poverty,
but the hand of the diligent makes rich.
- 5 A child who gathers in summer is prudent,
but a child who sleeps in harvest brings shame.
- 6 Blessings are on the head of the righteous,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
- 7 The memory of the righteous is a blessing,
but the name of the wicked will rot.
- 8 The wise of heart will heed commandments,
but a babbling fool will come to ruin.
- 9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,
but whoever follows perverse ways will be found out.
- 10 Whoever winks the eye causes trouble,
but the one who rebukes boldly makes peace."
- 11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
- 12 Hatred stirs up strife,
but love covers all offenses.
- 13 On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found,
but a rod is for the back of one who lacks sense.
- 14 The wise lay up knowledge,
but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near.
- 15 The wealth of the rich is their fortress;
the poverty of the poor is their ruin.
- 16 The wage of the righteous leads to life,
the gain of the wicked to sin.
- 17 Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,
but one who rejects a rebuke goes astray.
- 18 Lying lips conceal hatred,
and whoever utters slander is a fool.
- 19 When words are many, transgression is not lacking,
but the prudent are restrained in speech.
- 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver;

a Gk: Heb *but a babbling fool will come to ruin*

together by catchwords and thematic associations. There is a general equation between wise and righteous on the one hand, fool and wicked on the other. Antithetical parallelism is characteristic of chs 10–15; chs 16–22 favor synonymous or synthetic parallelism in which the second line repeats or extends the thought of the first. **10.1:** *Proverbs of Solomon*, see Introduction. This opening proverb takes up the motif of father-son instruction from chs 1–9 (15.20; Sir 3.1–16). **2–3:** These two sayings assume that divine retribution occurs in the present life. Misfortune, including an early or unhappy *death*, is punishment for sin, while righteousness is rewarded with long and prosperous life (cf. 3.2,16; 9.11; 10.27; 13.21). Other proverbs complicate this doctrine of divine reward and punishment (e.g., 15.16; 16.8), and the books of Job and Ecclesiastes challenge it profoundly. **4–5:** See 6.6–11. **10:** *Winks the eye*, cf. 6.13; Sir 27.22. **11:** *Fountain of life*, an image repeatedly associated with the wise and wisdom (see 13.14; 14.27; 16.22). **15–16:** V. 15 is a neutral observation about the reality of *wealth* and *poverty*; v. 16 adds ethical comment on the *gain of the wicked*. Cf. 11.28 and 18.11, where the protection of wealth is declared to be illusory. **18–21:** Proper speech is a frequent topic in wisdom literature (e.g., 2.12; 12.13–14,17–19,22–23; 13.3;

PROVERBS 10.21–11.13

- the mind of the wicked is of little worth.
- 21 The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.
- 22 The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.^a
- 23 Doing wrong is like sport to a fool, but wise conduct is pleasure to a person of understanding.
- 24 What the wicked dread will come upon them, but the desire of the righteous will be granted.
- 25 When the tempest passes, the wicked are no more, but the righteous are established forever.
- 26 Like vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so are the lazy to their employers.
- 27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.
- 28 The hope of the righteous ends in gladness, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing.
- 29 The way of the LORD is a stronghold for the upright, but destruction for evildoers.
- 30 The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not remain in the land.
- 31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off.
- 32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.
- 11** A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but an accurate weight is his delight.

- 2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.
- 3 The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.
- 4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.
- 5 The righteousness of the blameless keeps their ways straight, but the wicked fall by their own wickedness.
- 6 The righteousness of the upright saves them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their schemes.
- 7 When the wicked die, their hope perishes, and the expectation of the godless comes to nothing.
- 8 The righteous are delivered from trouble, and the wicked get into it instead.
- 9 With their mouths the godless would destroy their neighbors, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.
- 10 When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there is jubilation.
- 11 By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.
- 12 Whoever belittles another lacks sense, but an intelligent person remains silent.
- 13 A gossip goes about telling secrets, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence.

^a Or and toil adds nothing to it

Sir 19.4–12; 23.7–11). 25: *Tempest*, a divine manifestation; see Job 27.20; Hos 8.7. 11.1: On dishonest trade, cf. 16.11; 20.10,23; Lev 19.35–37; Deut 25.13–16. 2: The *humble* are closely associated with the wise (15.33; 18.12; 22.4; Sir 3.17–24). 12–13: A pair of proverbs contrasting indiscreet speech with the virtue of the *silent* and the *trustworthy* (20.19; 25.9; Sir 27.16–17). 15: Cf. 6.1–5. 22: This saying,

PROVERBS 11.14–12.4

- 14 Where there is no guidance, a nation^a falls,
but in an abundance of counselors
there is safety.
- 15 To guarantee loans for a stranger
brings trouble,
but there is safety in refusing
to do so.
- 16 A gracious woman gets honor,
but she who hates virtue is covered
with shame.^b
The timid become destitute,^c
but the aggressive gain riches.
- 17 Those who are kind reward
themselves,
but the cruel do themselves
harm.
- 18 The wicked earn no real gain,
but those who sow righteousness
get a true reward.
- 19 Whoever is steadfast in righteousness
will live,
but whoever pursues evil will die.
- 20 Crooked minds are an abomination to
the LORD,
but those of blameless ways are his
delight.
- 21 Be assured, the wicked will not go
unpunished,
but those who are righteous will
escape.
- 22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout
is a beautiful woman without good
sense.
- 23 The desire of the righteous ends only
in good;
the expectation of the wicked in
wrath.
- 24 Some give freely, yet grow all the
richer;
others withhold what is due, and
only suffer want.
- 25 A generous person will be enriched,
and one who gives water will
get water.
- 26 The people curse those who hold
back grain,
but a blessing is on the head of
those who sell it.
- 27 Whoever diligently seeks good seeks
favor,
but evil comes to the one who
searches for it.
- 28 Those who trust in their riches will
wither,^d
but the righteous will flourish like
green leaves.
- 29 Those who trouble their households
will inherit wind,
and the fool will be servant to the
wise.
- 30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of
life,
but violence^e takes lives away.
- 31 If the righteous are repaid on earth,
how much more the wicked and the
sinner!
- 12** Whoever loves discipline loves
knowledge,
but those who hate to be rebuked
are stupid.
- 2 The good obtain favor from the
LORD,
but those who devise evil he
condemns.
- 3 No one finds security by wickedness,
but the root of the righteous will
never be moved.
- 4 A good wife is the crown of her
husband,
but she who brings shame is like
rottenness in his bones.

a Or an army *b* Compare Gk Syr: Heb lacks *but she . . . shame* *c* Gk: Heb lacks *The timid . . . destitute* *d* Cn: Heb *fall* *e* Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *a wise man*

arresting for its imagery and its male-centered point of view, is best taken as criticism of superficial esteem for beauty (see 31.30). **24–26:** The paradox of v. 24 is explained by v. 25: A *generous person* inspires others to reciprocate (cf. v. 17). In contrast, *those who hold back grain* (especially in time of scarcity, to maximize personal gain), receive a *curse*. **27:** Divine *favor* is chiefly meant here (cf. 8.35; 12.2; 18.22). **28,30:** Cf. Ps 1.3; 92.12–14. **12.1:** The wise cultivate *discipline*, and listen to criticism (13.1). **4:** The original addressees of the book were principally young men, for whom the choice of a *good wife* was an acute interest (cf. 18.22; 19.13–14; 31.10–31; Sir 26.1–3,13–18). **9:** The “better” saying, a favorite form

- 5 The thoughts of the righteous are just;
the advice of the wicked is
treacherous.
- 6 The words of the wicked are a deadly
ambush,
but the speech of the upright
delivers them.
- 7 The wicked are overthrown and are
no more,
but the house of the righteous will
stand.
- 8 One is commended for good sense,
but a perverse mind is despised.
- 9 Better to be despised and have a
servant,
than to be self-important and lack
food.
- 10 The righteous know the needs of their
animals,
but the mercy of the wicked is
cruel.
- 11 Those who till their land will have
plenty of food,
but those who follow worthless
pursuits have no sense.
- 12 The wicked covet the proceeds of
wickedness,^a
but the root of the righteous bears
fruit.
- 13 The evil are ensnared by the
transgression of their lips,
but the righteous escape from
trouble.
- 14 From the fruit of the mouth one is
filled with good things,
and manual labor has its reward.
- 15 Fools think their own way is right,
but the wise listen to advice.
- 16 Fools show their anger at once,
but the prudent ignore an insult.
- 17 Whoever speaks the truth gives honest
evidence,
but a false witness speaks
deceitfully.
- 18 Rash words are like sword thrusts,

- but the tongue of the wise brings
healing.
- 19 Truthful lips endure forever,
but a lying tongue lasts only a
moment.
- 20 Deceit is in the mind of those who
plan evil,
but those who counsel peace
have joy.
- 21 No harm happens to the righteous,
but the wicked are filled with
trouble.
- 22 Lying lips are an abomination to the
LORD,
but those who act faithfully are his
delight.
- 23 One who is clever conceals
knowledge,
but the mind of a fool^b broadcasts
folly.
- 24 The hand of the diligent will rule,
while the lazy will be put to forced
labor.
- 25 Anxiety weighs down the human
heart,
but a good word cheers it up.
- 26 The righteous gives good advice
to friends,^c
but the way of the wicked leads
astray.
- 27 The lazy do not roast^d their game,
but the diligent obtain precious
wealth.^d
- 28 In the path of righteousness there is
life,
in walking its path there is no
death.
- 13** A wise child loves discipline,^e
but a scoffer does not listen to
rebuke.

a Or covet the catch of the wicked *b* Heb the heart
of fools *c* Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
d Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Cn: Heb A wise
child the discipline of his father

of speech of the sages, conveys insight through paradox (15.16–17; 16.8,19,32; 17.1,12; 19.1,22; 21.9,19; 22.1; 25.24; 27.5,10c; 28.6; Eccl 4.6,13; 7.1–3; 9.4). On this saying, cf. Sir 10.27. **10:** Cf. 27.23. The second line is an oxymoron; what passes for *mercy* with the *wicked* is *cruel*. **11:** Cf. 28.19. **13–23:** See 10.18–21n. **17:** The setting is the law court (cf. 14.25; 25.18). **25:** Cf. 15.13; 17.22. **27:** Some

PROVERBS 13.2–13.24

- 2 From the fruit of their words good
persons eat good things,
but the desire of the treacherous is
for wrongdoing.
- 3 Those who guard their mouths
preserve their lives;
those who open wide their lips
come to ruin.
- 4 The appetite of the lazy craves, and
gets nothing,
while the appetite of the diligent is
richly supplied.
- 5 The righteous hate falsehood,
but the wicked act shamefully and
disgracefully.
- 6 Righteousness guards one whose way
is upright,
but sin overthrows the wicked.
- 7 Some pretend to be rich, yet have
nothing;
others pretend to be poor, yet have
great wealth.
- 8 Wealth is a ransom for a person's life,
but the poor get no threats.
- 9 The light of the righteous rejoices,
but the lamp of the wicked
goes out.
- 10 By insolence the heedless make strife,
but wisdom is with those who take
advice.
- 11 Wealth hastily gotten^a will dwindle,
but those who gather little by little
will increase it.
- 12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.
- 13 Those who despise the word bring
destruction on themselves,
but those who respect the
commandment will be
rewarded.
- 14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain
of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of
death.
- 15 Good sense wins favor,
but the way of the faithless is their
ruin.^b
- 16 The clever do all things intelligently,
but the fool displays folly.
- 17 A bad messenger brings trouble,
but a faithful envoy, healing.
- 18 Poverty and disgrace are for the one
who ignores instruction,
but one who heeds reproof is
honored.
- 19 A desire realized is sweet to the soul,
but to turn away from evil is an
abomination to fools.
- 20 Whoever walks with the wise
becomes wise,
but the companion of fools suffers
harm.
- 21 Misfortune pursues sinners,
but prosperity rewards the
righteous.
- 22 The good leave an inheritance to their
children's children,
but the sinner's wealth is laid up
for the righteous.
- 23 The field of the poor may yield much
food,
but it is swept away through
injustice.
- 24 Those who spare the rod hate their
children,
but those who love them are
diligent to discipline them.

^a Gk Vg: Heb *from vanity* ^b Cn Compare Gk Syr
Vg Tg: Heb *is enduring*

are too *lazy* to cook their own food, or even to hunt for *game* in the first place (cf. 13.4; 19.24). 13.2: Good words bring good results (12.14). 7–8: A pair of proverbs that plays on ambiguities of the *rich* and *poor*. V. 8b suggests that the *poor* are not subject to criminal *threats* such as robbery and blackmail. 9: *Light* and *lamp* are symbols of life (20.20; 24.20; Job 3.20; Ps 97.11). 12: *Tree of life*, as in 3.18; 11.30; a symbol of the fullness of life. 13: *Word* and *commandment* here originally referred to the teaching of the sages, but soon came to be understood also as references to the Torah (Deut 30.11,14; Sir 24.23; Bar 4.1). 14: See 10.11n. 17: The *messenger* played a vital role in the ancient world (cf. 22.21; 25.13,25; 26.6). 21–22: A proverb pair teaching that prosperity as a reward for righteousness carries over from one generation to the next. 24: *Spare the rod*, the sages oppose cruelty (even against animals, cf. 12.10), but they take physical punishment for granted as a necessary means of discipline (cf. 22.15; 23.13–14; 26.3).

25 The righteous have enough to satisfy
their appetite,
but the belly of the wicked is
empty.

14 The wise woman^a builds her
house,
but the foolish tears it down with
her own hands.

2 Those who walk uprightly fear the
LORD,
but one who is devious in conduct
despises him.

3 The talk of fools is a rod for their
backs,^b
but the lips of the wise preserve
them.

4 Where there are no oxen, there is no
grain;
abundant crops come by the
strength of the ox.

5 A faithful witness does not lie,
but a false witness breathes out lies.

6 A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain,
but knowledge is easy for one who
understands.

7 Leave the presence of a fool,
for there you do not find words of
knowledge.

8 It is the wisdom of the clever to
understand where they go,
but the folly of fools misleads.

9 Fools mock at the guilt offering,^c
but the upright enjoy God's favor.

10 The heart knows its own bitterness,
and no stranger shares its joy.

11 The house of the wicked is destroyed,
but the tent of the upright
flourishes.

12 There is a way that seems right to a
person,
but its end is the way to death.^d

13 Even in laughter the heart is sad,
and the end of joy is grief.

14 The perverse get what their ways
deserve,

and the good, what their deeds
deserve.^e

15 The simple believe everything,
but the clever consider their steps.

16 The wise are cautious and turn away
from evil,
but the fool throws off restraint
and is careless.

17 One who is quick-tempered acts
foolishly,
and the schemer is hated.

18 The simple are adorned with^f folly,
but the clever are crowned with
knowledge.

19 The evil bow down before the good,
the wicked at the gates of the
righteous.

20 The poor are disliked even by their
neighbors,
but the rich have many friends.

21 Those who despise their neighbors are
sinners,
but happy are those who are kind
to the poor.

22 Do they not err that plan evil?
Those who plan good find loyalty
and faithfulness.

23 In all toil there is profit,
but mere talk leads only to poverty.

24 The crown of the wise is their
wisdom,^g
but folly is the garland^h of fools.

25 A truthful witness saves lives,
but one who utters lies is a
betrayer.

26 In the fear of the LORD one has
strong confidence,
and one's children will have a
refuge.

^a Heb *Wisdom of women* ^b Cn: Heb *a rod of pride*

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain ^d Heb *ways of death*

^e Cn: Heb *from upon him* ^f Or *inherit*

^g Cn Compare Gk: Heb *riches* ^h Cn: Heb *is the folly*

29.15; Sir 22.6; 30.1–13). 14.1: *Builds her house* might refer to personified Wisdom (9.1; cf. 24.3–4). 2: Beginning with ch 14, proverbs that mention the LORD appear with increasing frequency. 6–12: Several proverbs in this section concern discernment, which can be a matter of life and death (cf. 12.15; 16.25). 13: Cf. Eccl 7.2–4. 20–21: A proverb pair: V. 20 observes a social reality (cf. 19.4–7; Sir 6.8–12); v. 21 applies to it a moral evaluation (cf. v. 31; 17.5). 27: See 10.11n. 29–30: Self-control is a primary virtue

PROVERBS 14.27–15.16

- 27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
so that one may avoid the snares of death.
- 28 The glory of a king is a multitude of people;
without people a prince is ruined.
- 29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,
but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.
- 30 A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh,
but passion makes the bones rot.
- 31 Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the needy honor him.
- 32 The wicked are overthrown by their evildoing,
but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity.^a
- 33 Wisdom is at home in the mind of one who has understanding,
but it is not^b known in the heart of fools.
- 34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
but sin is a reproach to any people.
- 35 A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor,
but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.
- 15** A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- 2 The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge,^c
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
- 3 The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.
- 4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

- 5 A fool despises a parent's instruction,
but the one who heeds admonition is prudent.
- 6 In the house of the righteous there is much treasure,
but trouble befalls the income of the wicked.
- 7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the minds of fools.
- 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is his delight.
- 9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but he loves the one who pursues righteousness.
- 10 There is severe discipline for one who forsakes the way,
but one who hates a rebuke will die.
- 11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD,
how much more human hearts!
- 12 Scoffers do not like to be rebuked;
they will not go to the wise.
- 13 A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance,
but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.
- 14 The mind of one who has understanding seeks knowledge,
but the mouths of fools feed on folly.
- 15 All the days of the poor are hard,
but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.
- 16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD

^a Gk Syr: Heb *in their death* ^b Gk Syr: Heb lacks not ^c Cn: Heb *makes knowledge good*

in wisdom thought (e.g., 12.16; 15.18; 19.19; 20.3; 25.28; Sir 28.8,11–12). Here “passion” refers not to sexual passion but to strong, unregulated emotions of any sort. **31**: Cf. 22.16; 28.3. The same view is often found in the prophets (e.g., Ezek 22.29; Am 4.1; Zech 7.10). **35**: Cf. 16.14; 19.12. **15.8**: Sincerity in worship is essential (v. 29; 21.3,27). **11**: *Sheol*, the underworld, and *Abaddon* (lit. “Destruction”) are the place and state of the dead (cf. 1.12; for v. 11b, cf. 20.27; Sir 42.18). **16–17**: A proverb pair that puts into question the value of prosperity (cf. 16.8; 17.1). *Dinner of vegetables*, simple fare in contrast to the

- 1 than great treasure and trouble
with it.
- 17 Better is a dinner of vegetables where
love is
than a fatted ox and hatred with it.
- 18 Those who are hot-tempered stir up
strife,
but those who are slow to anger
calm contention.
- 19 The way of the lazy is overgrown
with thorns,
but the path of the upright is a
level highway.
- 20 A wise child makes a glad father,
but the foolish despise their
mothers.
- 21 Folly is a joy to one who has no
sense,
but a person of understanding
walks straight ahead.
- 22 Without counsel, plans go wrong,
but with many advisers they
succeed.
- 23 To make an apt answer is a joy to
anyone,
and a word in season, how good it
is!
- 24 For the wise the path of life leads
upward,
in order to avoid Sheol below.
- 25 The LORD tears down the house of
the proud,
but maintains the widow's
boundaries.
- 26 Evil plans are an abomination to the
LORD,
but gracious words are pure.
- 27 Those who are greedy for unjust gain
make trouble for their
households,
but those who hate bribes will
live.
- 28 The mind of the righteous ponders
how to answer,

- but the mouth of the wicked pours
out evil.
- 29 The LORD is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the
righteous.
- 30 The light of the eyes rejoices the
heart,
and good news refreshes the body.
- 31 The ear that heeds wholesome
admonition
will lodge among the wise.
- 32 Those who ignore instruction despise
themselves,
but those who heed admonition
gain understanding.
- 33 The fear of the LORD is instruction in
wisdom,
and humility goes before honor.
- 16 The plans of the mind belong to
mortals,
but the answer of the tongue is
from the LORD.
- 2 All one's ways may be pure in one's
own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
- 3 Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.
- 4 The LORD has made everything for its
purpose,
even the wicked for the day of
trouble.
- 5 All those who are arrogant are an
abomination to the LORD;
be assured, they will not go
unpunished.
- 6 By loyalty and faithfulness iniquity is
atoned for,
and by the fear of the LORD one
avoids evil.
- 7 When the ways of people please
the LORD,
he causes even their enemies to be
at peace with them.

luxury of a *fatted ox*. **23:** A prized goal of the sages (cf. 25.11). **25:** *Boundaries*, the markers that indicate the extent of a field (see 22.28; Deut 19.4). Since the powerful might attempt to encroach on the land of *widows* and orphans (Job 24.2–3), these persons were held to be under special divine protection (see 23.10–11). **27:** Cf. 17.23; Sir 20.29. **16.1:** No human activity escapes divine providence (vv. 9,33; 19.21; 20.24; 21.30–31). **2:** See 17.3; 21.2; 24.12. **4:** Everything belongs to the LORD's purposes (see Sir 33.7–15; 39.16–35). **6:** *Loyalty and faithfulness* might refer to human or divine actions (see 3.3; 14.22).

PROVERBS 16.8–16.33

- 8 Better is a little with righteousness
than large income with injustice.
- 9 The human mind plans the way,
but the LORD directs the steps.
- 10 Inspired decisions are on the lips of a
king;
his mouth does not sin in judgment.
- 11 Honest balances and scales are
the LORD's;
all the weights in the bag are
his work.
- 12 It is an abomination to kings to
do evil,
for the throne is established by
righteousness.
- 13 Righteous lips are the delight of
a king,
and he loves those who speak what
is right.
- 14 A king's wrath is a messenger
of death,
and whoever is wise will appease it.
- 15 In the light of a king's face there
is life,
and his favor is like the clouds that
bring the spring rain.
- 16 How much better to get wisdom than
gold!
To get understanding is to be
chosen rather than silver.
- 17 The highway of the upright
avoids evil;
those who guard their way preserve
their lives.
- 18 Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- 19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit
among the poor
than to divide the spoil with
the proud.
- 20 Those who are attentive to a matter
will prosper,
and happy are those who trust in
the LORD.
- 21 The wise of heart is called perceptive,
and pleasant speech increases
persuasiveness.
- 22 Wisdom is a fountain of life to one
who has it,
but folly is the punishment of fools.
- 23 The mind of the wise makes their
speech judicious,
and adds persuasiveness to
their lips.
- 24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to
the body.
- 25 Sometimes there is a way that seems
to be right,
but in the end it is the way
to death.
- 26 The appetite of workers works for
them;
their hunger urges them on.
- 27 Scoundrels concoct evil,
and their speech is like a scorching
fire.
- 28 A perverse person spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close
friends.
- 29 The violent entice their neighbors,
and lead them in a way that is not
good.
- 30 One who winks the eyes plans^a
perverse things;
one who compresses the lips brings
evil to pass.
- 31 Gray hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained in a righteous life.
- 32 One who is slow to anger is better
than the mighty,
and one whose temper is controlled
than one who captures a city.
- 33 The lot is cast into the lap,
but the decision is the LORD's
alone.

^a Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *to plan*

10–15: A small collection of sayings concerning the *king*. 10: *Inspired decisions*, the king speaks with indisputable authority (20.8). 11: See 11.1n. 14: *King's wrath*, cf. 19.12; 20.2. 15: Royal favor is compared to life-giving sunshine (Num 6.25; Hos 6.3). 18: See 11.2. 22: See 10.11n. 25: Also 14.12. 29: Cf. 1.10–19. 30: See 6.12–15; 10.10. 31: *Gray hair* is prized as evidence of a long life, the reward of the wise and virtuous (20.29; Sir 25.3–6). 33: Nothing happens by chance; even the fall of *the lot* (18.18) is

- 17 Better is a dry morsel with quiet
than a house full of feasting
with strife.
- 2 A slave who deals wisely will rule
over a child who acts
shamefully,
and will share the inheritance as
one of the family.
- 3 The crucible is for silver, and the
furnace is for gold,
but the LORD tests the heart.
- 4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips;
and a liar gives heed to a
mischievous tongue.
- 5 Those who mock the poor insult their
Maker;
those who are glad at calamity will
not go unpunished.
- 6 Grandchildren are the crown of
the aged,
and the glory of children is their
parents.
- 7 Fine speech is not becoming to a fool;
still less is false speech to a ruler.^a
- 8 A bribe is like a magic stone in the
eyes of those who give it;
wherever they turn they prosper.
- 9 One who forgives an affront fosters
friendship,
but one who dwells on disputes will
alienate a friend.
- 10 A rebuke strikes deeper into a
discerning person
than a hundred blows into a fool.
- 11 Evil people seek only rebellion,
but a cruel messenger will be sent
against them.
- 12 Better to meet a she-bear robbed of
its cubs
than to confront a fool immersed in
folly.
- 13 Evil will not depart from the house
of one who returns evil for good.

- 14 The beginning of strife is like letting
out water;
so stop before the quarrel
breaks out.
- 15 One who justifies the wicked and one
who condemns the righteous
are both alike an abomination to
the LORD.
- 16 Why should fools have a price
in hand
to buy wisdom, when they have no
mind to learn?
- 17 A friend loves at all times,
and kinsfolk are born to share
adversity.
- 18 It is senseless to give a pledge,
to become surety for a neighbor.
- 19 One who loves transgression
loves strife;
one who builds a high threshold
invites broken bones.
- 20 The crooked of mind do not prosper,
and the perverse of tongue fall into
calamity.
- 21 The one who begets a fool gets
trouble;
the parent of a fool has no joy.
- 22 A cheerful heart is a good medicine,
but a downcast spirit dries up
the bones.
- 23 The wicked accept a concealed bribe
to pervert the ways of justice.
- 24 The discerning person looks to
wisdom,
but the eyes of a fool to the ends of
the earth.
- 25 Foolish children are a grief to their
father
and bitterness to her who
bore them.

^a Or a noble person

determined by God. 17.1: Cf. 15.16–17. 3: Cf. 27.21; Sir 2.5. 5: Cf. 14.31. 8: A *bribe* works (see 18.16; 21.14); elsewhere bribery is condemned (cf. v. 23). 10: A *hundred blows*, the law limits corporal punishment to forty blows (Deut 25.3). 12: *She-bear*, cf. 2 Sam 17.8; Hos 13.8. 14: *Letting out water*, as when a dam is breached, the torrent is unstoppable. 16: *Price in hand*, perhaps a reference to tuition paid to wisdom teachers. 18: Cf. 6.1–5; 11.15; 20.16. 19: *Builds a high threshold*, a “cause and effect” proverb. Just as a badly built (and perhaps ostentatious) *threshold invites* problems, so does transgression serve as an invitation to conflict. 23: Cf. v. 8; 15.27; Sir 20.29. 24: *The eyes of a fool* seek unattainable goals.

PROVERBS 17.26–18.21

- 26 To impose a fine on the innocent is not right,
or to flog the noble for their integrity.
- 27 One who spares words is knowledgeable;
one who is cool in spirit has understanding.
- 28 Even fools who keep silent are considered wise;
when they close their lips, they are deemed intelligent.
- 18** The one who lives alone is self-indulgent,
showing contempt for all who have sound judgment.^a
- 2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing personal opinion.
- 3 When wickedness comes, contempt comes also;
and with dishonor comes disgrace.
- 4 The words of the mouth are deep waters;
the fountain of wisdom is a gushing stream.
- 5 It is not right to be partial to the guilty,
or to subvert the innocent in judgment.
- 6 A fool's lips bring strife,
and a fool's mouth invites a flogging.
- 7 The mouths of fools are their ruin,
and their lips a snare to themselves.
- 8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
- 9 One who is slack in work is close kin to a vandal.
- 10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run into it and are safe.
- 11 The wealth of the rich is their strong city;
in their imagination it is like a high wall.
- 12 Before destruction one's heart is haughty,
but humility goes before honor.
- 13 If one gives answer before hearing,
it is folly and shame.
- 14 The human spirit will endure sickness;
but a broken spirit—who can bear?
- 15 An intelligent mind acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
- 16 A gift opens doors;
it gives access to the great.
- 17 The one who first states a case seems right,
until the other comes and cross-examines.
- 18 Casting the lot puts an end to disputes
and decides between powerful contenders.
- 19 An ally offended is stronger than a city;^b
such quarreling is like the bars of a castle.
- 20 From the fruit of the mouth one's stomach is satisfied;
the yield of the lips brings satisfaction.
- 21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Gk Syr Vg Tg;
Meaning of Heb uncertain

27–28: A proverb pair on the ambiguity of silence (cf. 10.19; Sir 20.5–6). **18.4:** *Deep waters*, an ambiguous metaphor: Speech can be profound and life-giving, or it can be dangerous (v. 21; 10.11). By the first alternative, the two lines would be synonymous, otherwise antithetical. **8:** Some people take in slander with relish; it affects them deeply (also 26.22). **10–11:** A proverb pair: The *name of the LORD* is reliable (Ps 61.3; 124.8); the protection of *wealth* may prove to be imaginary (10.15–16; 11.4). **13:** Cf. v. 2; Sir 11.8. **17–18:** Both sides of a case must be heard; intractable *disputes* are settled by *casting the lot* (i.e., seeking the LORD's decision, see 16.33). **19:** The Heb text is poorly preserved, but the point is that

PROVERBS 18.22–19.20

- 8 and those who love it will eat
its fruits.
- 22 He who finds a wife finds a
good thing,
and obtains favor from the LORD.
- 23 The poor use entreaties,
but the rich answer roughly.
- 24 Some^a friends play at friendship^b
but a true friend sticks closer than
one's nearest kin.
- 19 Better the poor walking in
integrity
than one perverse of speech who is
a fool.
- 2 Desire without knowledge is
not good,
and one who moves too hurriedly
misses the way.
- 3 One's own folly leads to ruin,
yet the heart rages against
the LORD.
- 4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor are left friendless.
- 5 A false witness will not go
unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
- 6 Many seek the favor of the generous,
and everyone is a friend to a giver
of gifts.
- 7 If the poor are hated even by their
kin,
how much more are they shunned
by their friends!
When they call after them, they are
not there.^c
- 8 To get wisdom is to love oneself;
to keep understanding is to prosper.
- 9 A false witness will not go
unpunished,
and the liar will perish.
- 10 It is not fitting for a fool to live
in luxury,

- much less for a slave to rule over
princes.
- 11 Those with good sense are slow
to anger,
and it is their glory to overlook an
offense.
- 12 A king's anger is like the growling of
a lion,
but his favor is like dew on
the grass.
- 13 A stupid child is ruin to a father,
and a wife's quarreling is a
continual dripping of rain.
- 14 House and wealth are inherited from
parents,
but a prudent wife is from
the LORD.
- 15 Laziness brings on deep sleep;
an idle person will suffer hunger.
- 16 Those who keep the commandment
will live;
those who are heedless of their
ways will die.
- 17 Whoever is kind to the poor lends to
the LORD,
and will be repaid in full.
- 18 Discipline your children while there is
hope;
do not set your heart on their
destruction.
- 19 A violent tempered person will pay
the penalty;
if you effect a rescue, you will only
have to do it again.^c
- 20 Listen to advice and accept
instruction,
that you may gain wisdom for the
future.

^a Syr Tg: Heb *A man of* ^b Cn Compare Syr Vg Tg:
Meaning of Heb uncertain ^c Meaning of Heb
uncertain

quarreling prevents reconciliation, *like the bars of a castle*. 23: Cf. Sir 13.3. 19.1: *Better the poor*, see 15.16–17; 16.8; 17.1; 28.6. 4: *The poor are left friendless*, see vv. 6–7; 14.20; Eccl 9.16; Sir 6.8–12; 13.21. 5: The *false witness* is a frequent topic (see v. 9; 6.19; 12.17; 14.5,25; 21.28; 25.7c–10,18; Ex 20.16; 23.1–3,7). 10: The sages sometimes reflect the perspective of the upper classes (30.22; Eccl 10.6–7). 13–14: This teaching patently occupies the viewpoint of the male head of household (18.22; 21.9,19; 25.24; 27.15). 16: *The commandment*, of the parent or sage, but ultimately also of the LORD (see 13.13). 17: See 14.31; 17.5; 28.27. 18: *While there is hope*, during childhood, when lasting formation can occur (22.6). 21: See 16.1,9,33; 21.30–31. 24: One can be too lazy even to eat (v. 15; 12.27; 13.4;

PROVERBS 19.21–20.17

- 21 The human mind may devise many plans,
but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established.
- 22 What is desirable in a person is loyalty,
and it is better to be poor than a liar.
- 23 The fear of the LORD is life indeed;
filled with it one rests secure and suffers no harm.
- 24 The lazy person buries a hand in the dish,
and will not even bring it back to the mouth.
- 25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence;
reprove the intelligent, and they will gain knowledge.
- 26 Those who do violence to their father and chase away their mother are children who cause shame and bring reproach.
- 27 Cease straying, my child, from the words of knowledge,
in order that you may hear instruction.
- 28 A worthless witness mocks at justice,
and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.
- 29 Condemnation is ready for scoffers,
and flogging for the backs of fools.
- 20** Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,
and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.
- 2 The dread anger of a king is like the growling of a lion;
anyone who provokes him to anger forfeits life itself.
- 3 It is honorable to refrain from strife,
but every fool is quick to quarrel.
- 4 The lazy person does not plow in season;
harvest comes, and there is nothing to be found.
- 5 The purposes in the human mind are like deep water,
but the intelligent will draw them out.
- 6 Many proclaim themselves loyal,
but who can find one worthy of trust?
- 7 The righteous walk in integrity—
happy are the children who follow them!
- 8 A king who sits on the throne of judgment
winnows all evil with his eyes.
- 9 Who can say, "I have made my heart clean;
I am pure from my sin"?
- 10 Diverse weights and diverse measures
are both alike an abomination to the LORD.
- 11 Even children make themselves known by their acts,
by whether what they do is pure and right.
- 12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye—the LORD has made them both.
- 13 Do not love sleep, or else you will come to poverty;
open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.
- 14 "Bad, bad," says the buyer,
then goes away and boasts.
- 15 There is gold, and abundance of costly stones;
but the lips informed by knowledge are a precious jewel.
- 16 Take the garment of one who has given surety for a stranger;
seize the pledge given as surety for foreigners.
- 17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet,
but afterward the mouth will be full of gravel.

26.15). 20.1: Caution concerning *wine* and *strong drink* (23.19–21, 29–35; 31.4–5; Sir 19.2; 31.25–26, 29–30). 2: Royal *anger* is a threat to the king's subjects (16.14–15; 19.12). 4: See 6.6–11. 5: *Like deep water*, see 18.4. 8: *Winnows*, by his sharp judgment (v. 26). 10: See v. 23; 11.1n. 14: In the bargaining process, the *buyer* claims to be losing, even when the deal is a good one. 16: See 6.1–5; 27.13. The *stranger* or *foreigner*, with no ties of kinship in the community, makes a poor security risk. 17: *Full of gravel*, see Lam 3.16. 20: *Lamp will go out*, see 13.9. 21: *Estate quickly acquired*, not properly

- 18 Plans are established by taking advice;
wage war by following wise
guidance.
- 19 A gossip reveals secrets;
therefore do not associate with a
babblor.
- 20 If you curse father or mother,
your lamp will go out in utter
darkness.
- 21 An estate quickly acquired in the
beginning
will not be blessed in the end.
- 22 Do not say, "I will repay evil";
wait for the LORD, and he will help
you.
- 23 Differing weights are an abomination
to the LORD,
and false scales are not good.
- 24 All our steps are ordered by the
LORD;
how then can we understand our
own ways?
- 25 It is a snare for one to say rashly, "It
is holy,"
and begin to reflect only after
making a vow.
- 26 A wise king winnows the wicked,
and drives the wheel over them.
- 27 The human spirit is the lamp of the
LORD,
searching every inmost part.
- 28 Loyalty and faithfulness preserve the
king,
and his throne is upheld by
righteousness."
- 29 The glory of youths is their strength,
but the beauty of the aged is their
gray hair.
- 30 Blows that wound cleanse away evil;
beatings make clean the innermost
parts.
- 21** The king's heart is a stream of
water in the hand of the LORD;
he turns it wherever he will.
- 2 All deeds are right in the sight of the
doer,

- but the LORD weighs the heart.
- 3 To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the LORD
than sacrifice.
- 4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart—
the lamp of the wicked—are sin.
- 5 The plans of the diligent lead surely
to abundance,
but everyone who is hasty comes
only to want.
- 6 The getting of treasures by a lying
tongue
is a fleeting vapor and a snare^b of
death.
- 7 The violence of the wicked will sweep
them away,
because they refuse to do what
is just.
- 8 The way of the guilty is crooked,
but the conduct of the pure is right.
- 9 It is better to live in a corner of the
housetop
than in a house shared with a
contentious wife.
- 10 The souls of the wicked desire evil;
their neighbors find no mercy in
their eyes.
- 11 When a scoffer is punished, the
simple become wiser;
when the wise are instructed, they
increase in knowledge.
- 12 The Righteous One observes the
house of the wicked;
he casts the wicked down to ruin.
- 13 If you close your ear to the cry of the
poor,
you will cry out and not be heard.
- 14 A gift in secret averts anger;
and a concealed bribe in the
bosom, strong wrath.
- 15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the
righteous,
but dismay to evildoers.

^a Gk: Heb *loyalty* ^b Gk: Heb *seekers*

inherited. 25: A sacred *vow* (see Lev 27.1–25) should not be made casually (Eccl 5.1–6). 26: *The wheel*, a threshing implement (v. 8; Isa 28.27). 29: See 16.31n. 21.1: Even the mind of a *king* is controlled by God (vv. 30–31). 2: See 16.2. 3: See 15.8,29; 28.9,13; 1 Sam 15.22; Hos 6.6; Mic 6.6–8. 9: *In a corner of the housetop*, i.e., in a small room constructed there (cf. 2 Kings 4.10); see 19.13–14n. 14: See 17.8n.

PROVERBS 21.16–22.10

- 16 Whoever wanders from the way of understanding
will rest in the assembly of the dead.
- 17 Whoever loves pleasure will suffer want;
whoever loves wine and oil will not be rich.
- 18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous,
and the faithless for the upright.
- 19 It is better to live in a desert land
than with a contentious and fretful wife.
- 20 Precious treasure remains^a in the house of the wise,
but the fool devours it.
- 21 Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness
will find life^b and honor.
- 22 One wise person went up against a city of warriors
and brought down the stronghold in which they trusted.
- 23 To watch over mouth and tongue
is to keep out of trouble.
- 24 The proud, haughty person, named "Scoffer,"
acts with arrogant pride.
- 25 The craving of the lazy person is fatal,
for lazy hands refuse to labor.
- 26 All day long the wicked covet,^c
but the righteous give and do not hold back.
- 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;
how much more when brought with evil intent.
- 28 A false witness will perish,
but a good listener will testify successfully.
- 29 The wicked put on a bold face,

- but the upright give thought to^d their ways.
- 30 No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel,
can avail against the LORD.
- 31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the LORD.
- 22** A good name is to be chosen
rather than great riches,
and favor is better than silver or gold.
- 2 The rich and the poor have this in common:
the LORD is the maker of them all.
- 3 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for it.
- 4 The reward for humility and fear of the LORD
is riches and honor and life.
- 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;
the cautious will keep far from them.
- 6 Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.
- 7 The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.
- 8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.
- 9 Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the poor.
- 10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife goes out;
quarreling and abuse will cease.

^a Gk: Heb *and oil* ^b Gk: Heb *life and righteousness*
^c Gk: Heb *all day long one covets covetously*
^d Another reading is *establish*

18: The meaning of *ransom* here is obscure; perhaps it means that trouble befalls the *wicked* instead of the *righteous*, as in 11.8. **19:** See 19.13–14n. **22:** *One wise person*, see Eccl 9.14–15. **28:** See 19.5n. **30–31:** Such sayings indicate that the sages recognized the limitations of human wisdom, in view of the LORD's greater wisdom and providence (cf. 16.1,9,33; 19.21; 20.18,24). **22.1:** On the value of a *good name*, see Eccl 7.1; Sir 41.12–13. **2:** See 29.13; Job 31.15. **7:** *The borrower is the slave*, not only a figurative expression; debt slavery was a reality in ancient Israel (Ex 21.2–7; 2 Kings 4.1; Neh 5.5). **13:** See 26.13. **14:** See 2.16–19; 7.10–27. **15:** See 13.24n.

- 11 Those who love a pure heart and are
gracious in speech
will have the king as a friend.
12 The eyes of the LORD keep watch
over knowledge,
but he overthrows the words of the
faithless.
13 The lazy person says, “There is a lion
outside!
I shall be killed in the streets!”
14 The mouth of a loose^a woman is a
deep pit;
he with whom the LORD is angry
falls into it.
15 Folly is bound up in the heart of
a boy,
but the rod of discipline drives it
far away.
16 Oppressing the poor in order to
enrich oneself,
and giving to the rich, will lead
only to loss.
17 The words of the wise:

Incline your ear and hear my words,^b
and apply your mind to my
teaching;
18 for it will be pleasant if you keep
them within you,
if all of them are ready on
your lips.
19 So that your trust may be in
the LORD,
I have made them known to you
today—yes, to you.
20 Have I not written for you thirty
sayings

- of admonition and knowledge,
21 to show you what is right and true,
so that you may give a true answer
to those who sent you?
22 Do not rob the poor because they are
poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
23 for the LORD pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who
despoil them.
24 Make no friends with those given to
anger,
and do not associate with hotheads,
25 or you may learn their ways
and entangle yourself in a snare.
26 Do not be one of those who give
pledges,
who become surety for debts.
27 If you have nothing with which
to pay,
why should your bed be taken from
under you?
28 Do not remove the ancient landmark
that your ancestors set up.
29 Do you see those who are skillful in
their work?
They will serve kings;
they will not serve common people.

23 When you sit down to eat with
a ruler,
observe carefully what^c is
before you,
2 and put a knife to your throat

^a Heb *strange* ^b Cn Compare Gk: Heb *Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise* ^c Or *who*

22.17–24.34: The words of the wise. This collection is closely related to the Egyptian “Instruction of Amen-em-ope” (ca. 1100 BCE). In contrast to the short, discrete sayings of chs 10–21, the form here changes to longer units of second-person address, like the Egyptian “Instruction” (cf. chs 1–9). Several sayings, especially in 22.17–23.11, appear to be Hebrew adaptations of Amen-em-ope’s teaching. **22.17–21:** A prologue, patterned after the introduction to the “Instruction of Amen-em-ope.” **20:** *Thirty sayings*, Amen-em-ope is composed of thirty sections. It is not clear how there are thirty units in this collection. **21:** *Those who sent you*, instruction equips students to serve as reliable delegates for important people (cf. v. 29; 13.17; 25.13; 26.6). **22:** Priority is given here, as in Amen-em-ope, to concern for *the poor*. **28:** *Ancient landmark*, not a memorial stone but a marker indicating property boundaries; see Deut 19.14; 27.17. **23.1–3:** Etiquette at the table of the powerful is an important topic in Amen-em-ope and other Egyptian instruction texts; see also Sir 31.12–18. **4–5:** *Like an eagle*, this passage is very close to

PROVERBS 23.3-23.31

- if you have a big appetite.
- 3 Do not desire the ruler's^a delicacies,
for they are deceptive food.
- 4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
be wise enough to desist.
- 5 When your eyes light upon it,
it is gone;
for suddenly it takes wings to itself,
flying like an eagle toward heaven.
- 6 Do not eat the bread of the stingy;
do not desire their delicacies;
- 7 for like a hair in the throat, so
are they.^b
"Eat and drink!" they say to you;
but they do not mean it.
- 8 You will vomit up the little you have
eaten,
and you will waste your pleasant
words.
- 9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
who will only despise the wisdom
of your words.
- 10 Do not remove an ancient landmark
or encroach on the fields of
orphans,
- 11 for their redeemer is strong;
he will plead their cause
against you.
- 12 Apply your mind to instruction
and your ear to words of
knowledge.
- 13 Do not withhold discipline from your
children;
if you beat them with a rod, they
will not die.
- 14 If you beat them with the rod,
you will save their lives from Sheol.
- 15 My child, if your heart is wise,
my heart too will be glad.
- 16 My soul will rejoice
when your lips speak what is right.
- 17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,
but always continue in the fear of
the LORD.
- 18 Surely there is a future,
and your hope will not be cut
off.
- 19 Hear, my child, and be wise,
and direct your mind in the way.
- 20 Do not be among winebibbers,
or among gluttonous eaters
of meat;
- 21 for the drunkard and the glutton will
come to poverty,
and drowsiness will clothe them
with rags.
- 22 Listen to your father who begot you,
and do not despise your mother
when she is old.
- 23 Buy truth, and do not sell it;
buy wisdom, instruction, and
understanding.
- 24 The father of the righteous will
greatly rejoice;
he who begets a wise son will be
glad in him.
- 25 Let your father and mother be glad;
let her who bore you rejoice.
- 26 My child, give me your heart,
and let your eyes observe^c my
ways.
- 27 For a prostitute is a deep pit;
an adulteress^d is a narrow well.
- 28 She lies in wait like a robber
and increases the number of the
faithless.
- 29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has strife? Who has
complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
- 30 Those who linger late over wine,
those who keep trying mixed wines.
- 31 Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.

^a Heb *his* ^b Meaning of Heb uncertain
^c Another reading is *delight in* ^d Heb *an alien woman*

Amen-em-ope, in which the flight of geese symbolizes fleeting wealth. 10-11: See 15.25n.; 22.28n.
13-14: See 13.24n.; Sir 22.6; 30.1-13. *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. 27: See 2.16n.; 6.26; 7.10. 29-35:
A vivid description of the ill effects of drunkenness (cf. vv. 20-21; 20.1; 31.4-5). 34: The text is difficult.

- 32 At the last it bites like a serpent,
and stings like an adder.
33 Your eyes will see strange things,
and your mind utter perverse
things.
34 You will be like one who lies down in
the midst of the sea,
like one who lies on the top of
a mast.^a
35 "They struck me," you will say,^b
"but I was not hurt;
they beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I awake?
I will seek another drink."
24 Do not envy the wicked,
nor desire to be with them;
2 for their minds devise violence,
and their lips talk of mischief.
3 By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is
established;
4 by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant
riches.
5 Wise warriors are mightier than
strong ones,^c
and those who have knowledge
than those who have strength;
6 for by wise guidance you can wage
your war,
and in abundance of counselors
there is victory.
7 Wisdom is too high for fools;
in the gate they do not open
their mouths.
8 Whoever plans to do evil
will be called a mischief-maker.
9 The devising of folly is sin,
and the scoffer is an abomination
to all.
10 If you faint in the day of adversity,
your strength being small;

- 11 if you hold back from rescuing those
taken away to death,
those who go staggering to the
slaughter;
12 if you say, "Look, we did not
know this"—
does not he who weighs the heart
perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over
your soul know it?
And will he not repay all according
to their deeds?
13 My child, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the
honeycomb are sweet to
your taste.
14 Know that wisdom is such to
your soul;
if you find it, you will find a
future,
and your hope will not be cut off.
15 Do not lie in wait like an outlaw
against the home of the
righteous;
do no violence to the place where
the righteous live;
16 for though they fall seven times, they
will rise again;
but the wicked are overthrown by
calamity.
17 Do not rejoice when your enemies
fall,
and do not let your heart be glad
when they stumble,
18 or else the LORD will see it and be
displeased,
and turn away his anger
from them.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb
lacks *you will say* ^c Gk Compare Syr Tg: Heb A
wise man is strength

but the comparison is evidently to the dizziness and nausea of seasickness (cf. Ps 107.26–27). **24.3:** *A house is built*, cf. v. 27; 9.1; 14.1. **5–6:** Strategy can outdo might (21.22; but contrast 21.30–31). **10–12:** A good person should intervene on behalf of victims of violence. The one *who weighs the heart* is the LORD (16.2; 21.2). **13:** *Eat honey*, a figure for acquiring wisdom (v. 14; cf. 16.24; Ps 19.10). **16:** *Seven times*, i.e., any number of times; the righteous will *rise again*, in contrast to *the wicked*. **17:** See Job 31.29.

PROVERBS 24.19–25.6

- 19 Do not fret because of evildoers.
Do not envy the wicked;
20 for the evil have no future;
the lamp of the wicked will go
out.
- 21 My child, fear the LORD and the
king,
and do not disobey either of
them;^a
22 for disaster comes from them
suddenly,
and who knows the ruin that both
can bring?
- 23 These also are sayings of the wise:

Partiality in judging is not good.
24 Whoever says to the wicked, "You
are innocent,"
will be cursed by peoples, abhorred
by nations;
25 but those who rebuke the wicked will
have delight,
and a good blessing will come upon
them.
26 One who gives an honest answer
gives a kiss on the lips.
- 27 Prepare your work outside,
get everything ready for you in the
field;
and after that build your house.
- 28 Do not be a witness against your
neighbor without cause,
and do not deceive with your lips.
29 Do not say, "I will do to others as
they have done to me;
I will pay them back for what they
have done."

- 30 I passed by the field of one who was
lazy,
by the vineyard of a stupid person;^a
31 and see, it was all overgrown with
thorns;
the ground was covered with
nettles,
and its stone wall was broken
down.
- 32 Then I saw and considered it;
I looked and received instruction.
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to rest,
34 and poverty will come upon you like
a robber,
and want, like an armed warrior.

25 These are other proverbs of Solomon that the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah copied.

- 2 It is the glory of God to conceal
things,
but the glory of kings is to search
things out.
- 3 Like the heavens for height, like the
earth for depth,
so the mind of kings is
unsearchable.
- 4 Take away the dross from the silver,
and the smith has material for
a vessel;
- 5 take away the wicked from the
presence of the king,
and his throne will be established in
righteousness.
- 6 Do not put yourself forward in the
king's presence
or stand in the place of the great;

^a Gk: Heb *do not associate with those who change*

20: Job 18.5–6; 21.17. 23: A title for another short collection (vv. 23–34). 23b–25: 28.21; Lev 19.15; Deut 16.19. 26: *Kiss on the lips*, obscure; the gesture would seem to demonstrate friendship or trustworthiness. 27: Literally, food comes before shelter; figuratively, any major undertaking requires proper preparation. 29: Cf. vv. 17–18. 30–34: See 6.6–11.

25.1–29.27: Another sayings collection. 25.1: *Officials of King Hezekiah* are scribes of this famous king of Judah in the late eighth to early seventh century BCE; *copied* probably refers to the editing and arranging of sayings. 2–3: Like God, the king questions but cannot be questioned. 4–5: For the metaphor of refining metals, see also 27.21–22. 6–7: See Sir 7.4; 13.10. 7c–10: A caution against rash accusations. *Shame*, see 5.14n. 11: A goal of the sages: right and timely expressions (cf. 15.23). 15b: A "fitly

PROVERBS 25.7–26.1

7 for it is better to be told, “Come up here,”
than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

- What your eyes have seen
8 do not hastily bring into court;
for^a what will you do in the end,
when your neighbor puts you to shame?
9 Argue your case with your neighbor directly,
and do not disclose another’s secret;
10 or else someone who hears you will bring shame upon you,
and your ill repute will have no end.
- 11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold
is a wise rebuke to a listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest
are faithful messengers to those who send them;
they refresh the spirit of their masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without rain
is one who boasts of a gift never given.
15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded,
and a soft tongue can break bones.
16 If you have found honey, eat only enough for you,
or else, having too much, you will vomit it.
17 Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor’s house,
otherwise the neighbor will become weary of you and hate you.

- 18 Like a war club, a sword, or a sharp arrow
is one who bears false witness against a neighbor.
19 Like a bad tooth or a lame foot
is trust in a faithless person in time of trouble.
20 Like vinegar on a wound^b
is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.
Like a moth in clothing or a worm in wood,
sorrow gnaws at the human heart.^c
21 If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat;
and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink;
22 for you will heap coals of fire on their heads,
and the LORD will reward you.
23 The north wind produces rain,
and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.
24 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a contentious wife.
25 Like cold water to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country.
26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain
are the righteous who give way before the wicked.
27 It is not good to eat much honey,
or to seek honor on top of honor.
28 Like a city breached, without walls,
is one who lacks self-control.
- 26** Like snow in summer or rain in harvest,
so honor is not fitting for a fool.

^a Cn: Heb or else ^b Gk: Heb Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, like vinegar on lye
^c Gk Syr Tg: Heb lacks Like a moth . . . human heart

“spoken” paradox (cf. 15.4; Sir 28.17–18). 18: See 19.5n. 21–22: *Coals of fire*, in an Egyptian ritual perhaps known to the biblical sages, submitting to coals on the head demonstrated contrition. The sense here seems to be that undeserved kindness awakens the remorse and hence conversion of the *enemies*; cf. 24.17–18. 24: See 21.9n. 26: *Muddied spring*, the comparison is to livestock trampling and otherwise fouling the clear water. 26.1–12: Concerning fools and their folly. 4–5: Juxtaposing the two sayings

PROVERBS 26.2–26.28

- 2 Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying,
an undeserved curse goes nowhere.
- 3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,
and a rod for the back of fools.
- 4 Do not answer fools according to their folly,
or you will be a fool yourself.
- 5 Answer fools according to their folly,
or they will be wise in their own eyes.
- 6 It is like cutting off one's foot and drinking down violence,
to send a message by a fool.
- 7 The legs of a disabled person hang limp;
so does a proverb in the mouth of a fool.
- 8 It is like binding a stone in a sling
to give honor to a fool.
- 9 Like a thornbush brandished by the hand of a drunkard
is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.
- 10 Like an archer who wounds everybody
is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard.^a
- 11 Like a dog that returns to its vomit
is a fool who reverts to his folly.
- 12 Do you see persons wise in their own eyes?
There is more hope for fools than for them.
- 13 The lazy person says, "There is a lion in the road!
There is a lion in the streets!"
- 14 As a door turns on its hinges,
so does a lazy person in bed.
- 15 The lazy person buries a hand in the dish,
and is too tired to bring it back to the mouth.
- 16 The lazy person is wiser in self-esteem
than seven who can answer discreetly.
- 17 Like somebody who takes a passing dog by the ears
is one who meddles in the quarrel of another.
- 18 Like a maniac who shoots deadly firebrands and arrows,
so is one who deceives a neighbor and says, "I am only joking!"
- 20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
- 21 As charcoal is to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.
- 22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
- 23 Like the glaze^b covering an earthen vessel
are smooth^c lips with an evil heart.
- 24 An enemy dissembles in speaking
while harboring deceit within;
- 25 when an enemy speaks graciously, do not believe it,
for there are seven abominations concealed within;
- 26 though hatred is covered with guile,
the enemy's wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
- 27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling.
- 28 A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Cn: Heb *silver of dross* ^c Gk: Heb *burning*

provokes reflection on their competing claims. Depending on the circumstances, one might interpret *according to their folly* to mean "in fools' terms" (v. 4) or "as fools deserve" (v. 5). 7: A *fool* is by definition unable to benefit from *a proverb*. 8: The *sling* is used to hurl objects; to fasten *a stone* defeats the purpose. 9: The expression may indicate uselessness (cf. vv. 7–8), or the use of a proverb in a hurtful way. 13–16: The lazy person. 13: A ridiculous excuse; *a lion* is not likely to appear in the city *streets* and squares (cf. 22.13). 15: See 19.24n. 17–28: A loose collection on the consequences of various forms of antisocial speech and behavior. 22: See 18.8n. 27: A kind of "poetic justice" (cf. Ps 7.15; Eccl 10.8;

27 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day
may bring.

2 Let another praise you, and not your
own mouth—
a stranger, and not your own lips.

3 A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty,
but a fool's provocation is heavier
than both.

4 Wrath is cruel, anger is
overwhelming,
but who is able to stand before
jealousy?

5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.

6 Well meant are the wounds a friend
inflicts,
but profuse are the kisses of an
enemy.

7 The sated appetite spurns honey,
but to a ravenous appetite even the
bitter is sweet.

8 Like a bird that strays from its nest
is one who strays from home.

9 Perfume and incense make the heart
glad,
but the soul is torn by trouble.^a

10 Do not forsake your friend or the
friend of your parent;
do not go to the house of your
kindred in the day of your
calamity.

Better is a neighbor who is nearby
than kindred who are far away.

11 Be wise, my child, and make my heart
glad,
so that I may answer whoever
reproaches me.

12 The clever see danger and hide;
but the simple go on, and suffer for
it.

13 Take the garment of one who has
given surety for a stranger;

seize the pledge given as surety for
foreigners.^b

14 Whoever blesses a neighbor with a
loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
will be counted as cursing.

15 A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a contentious wife are alike;

16 to restrain her is to restrain the wind
or to grasp oil in the right hand.

17 Iron sharpens iron,
and one person sharpens the wits^d
of another.

18 Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat
its fruit,
and anyone who takes care of a
master will be honored.

19 Just as water reflects the face,
so one human heart reflects
another.

20 Sheol and Abaddon are never
satisfied,
and human eyes are never satisfied.

21 The crucible is for silver, and the
furnace is for gold,
so a person is tested^e by being
praised.

22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle
along with crushed grain,
but the folly will not be driven out.

23 Know well the condition of
your flocks,
and give attention to your herds;

24 for riches do not last forever,
nor a crown for all generations.

25 When the grass is gone, and new
growth appears,

^a Gk: Heb *the sweetness of a friend is better than one's own counsel* ^b Vg and 20.16: Heb *for a foreign woman* ^c Meaning of Heb uncertain ^d Heb *face* ^e Heb *lacks is tested*

Sir 27.25–27). **27.4:** *Who is able?* A rhetorical question, implying the answer, “no one” (cf. 18.14). **6:** *Profuse*, false, in contrast to *well meant* discipline imposed by *a friend*. **7b:** A paradox, as in 25.15b. **10:** Line b is explained by lines c–d. **13:** See 6.1–5. **14:** The proper or improper timing of an act significantly determines its nature; see Eccl 3.1–8. **15–16:** See 19.13–14n. **20:** For *Sheol and Abaddon*, see 15.11n. **21:** Cf. 17.3, where it is the LORD who tests. **23–27:** This short poem can be read as practical advice on tending *flocks* and *herds* (see 12.10; Sir 7.22). In light, however, of the *crown* mentioned in 24 and the widespread ancient image of the king as shepherd (e.g., 1 Kings 22.17; Ps 23.1; Isa 44.28),

PROVERBS 27.26-28.20

and the herbage of the mountains is gathered,
 26 the lambs will provide your clothing,
 and the goats the price of a field;
 27 there will be enough goats' milk for your food,
 for the food of your household and nourishment for your servant-girls.

28 The wicked flee when no one pursues,
 but the righteous are as bold as a lion.

- 2 When a land rebels it has many rulers;
 but with an intelligent ruler there is lasting order.^a
- 3 A ruler^b who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.
- 4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
 but those who keep the law struggle against them.
- 5 The evil do not understand justice,
 but those who seek the LORD understand it completely.
- 6 Better to be poor and walk in integrity
 than to be crooked in one's ways even though rich.
- 7 Those who keep the law are wise children,
 but companions of gluttons shame their parents.
- 8 One who augments wealth by exorbitant interest
 gathers it for another who is kind to the poor.
- 9 When one will not listen to the law,
 even one's prayers are an abomination.
- 10 Those who mislead the upright into evil ways

- will fall into pits of their own making,
 but the blameless will have a goodly inheritance.
- 11 The rich is wise in self-esteem,
 but an intelligent poor person sees through the pose.
- 12 When the righteous triumph, there is great glory,
 but when the wicked prevail,
 people go into hiding.
- 13 No one who conceals transgressions will prosper,
 but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.
- 14 Happy is the one who is never without fear,
 but one who is hard-hearted will fall into calamity.
- 15 Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people.
- 16 A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor;
 but one who hates unjust gain will enjoy a long life.
- 17 If someone is burdened with the blood of another,
 let that killer be a fugitive until death;
 let no one offer assistance.
- 18 One who walks in integrity will be safe,
 but whoever follows crooked ways will fall into the Pit.^c
- 19 Anyone who tills the land will have plenty of bread,
 but one who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.
- 20 The faithful will abound with blessings,

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Cn: Heb A poor person ^c Syr: Heb fall all at once

it may also contain implicit royal advice. **28.3:** *Rain that leaves no food*, when grain is ripe for harvest, a hard rain can ruin the crop (cf. 26.1). **4:** *The law*, Heb "torah" (cf. vv. 7,9; 29.18), the term can designate both the sage's teaching (e.g., 3.1), and the LORD's revealed law, or Torah. **5:** See 29.7n. **8:** By the principle of retribution, the oppressor should not be allowed to profit (cf. 13.22; 14.31; 19.17; Ex 22.25). **14:** For the form of the saying, see 3.13n. **21:** *For a piece of bread*, bribery is at issue here (cf. 18.5;

- but one who is in a hurry to be rich will not go unpunished.
- 21 To show partiality is not good—
yet for a piece of bread a person may do wrong.
- 22 The miser is in a hurry to get rich
and does not know that loss is sure to come.
- 23 Whoever rebukes a person will
afterward find more favor
than one who flatters with
the tongue.
- 24 Anyone who robs father or mother
and says, “That is no crime,”
is partner to a thug.
- 25 The greedy person stirs up strife,
but whoever trusts in the LORD will
be enriched.
- 26 Those who trust in their own wits are
fools;
but those who walk in wisdom
come through safely.
- 27 Whoever gives to the poor will lack
nothing,
but one who turns a blind eye will
get many a curse.
- 28 When the wicked prevail, people go
into hiding;
but when they perish, the righteous
increase.
- 29** One who is often reproved, yet
remains stubborn,
will suddenly be broken beyond
healing.
- 2 When the righteous are in authority,
the people rejoice;
but when the wicked rule, the
people groan.
- 3 A child who loves wisdom makes a
parent glad,
but to keep company with
prostitutes is to squander one’s
substance.
- 4 By justice a king gives stability to the
land,
but one who makes heavy exactions
ruins it.

- 5 Whoever flatters a neighbor
is spreading a net for the neighbor’s
feet.
- 6 In the transgression of the evil there is
a snare,
but the righteous sing and rejoice.
- 7 The righteous know the rights of the
poor;
the wicked have no such
understanding.
- 8 Scoffers set a city aflame,
but the wise turn away wrath.
- 9 If the wise go to law with fools,
there is ranting and ridicule without
relief.
- 10 The bloodthirsty hate the blameless,
and they seek the life of the
upright.
- 11 A fool gives full vent to anger,
but the wise quietly holds it back.
- 12 If a ruler listens to falsehood,
all his officials will be wicked.
- 13 The poor and the oppressor have this
in common:
the LORD gives light to the eyes of
both.
- 14 If a king judges the poor with equity,
his throne will be established
forever.
- 15 The rod and reproof give wisdom,
but a mother is disgraced by a
neglected child.
- 16 When the wicked are in authority,
transgression increases,
but the righteous will look upon
their downfall.
- 17 Discipline your children, and they will
give you rest;
they will give delight to your heart.
- 18 Where there is no prophecy, the
people cast off restraint,
but happy are those who keep
the law.
- 19 By mere words servants are not
disciplined,
for though they understand, they
will not give heed.

24.23b). 29.7: See 28.5. Wisdom literature often associates evil with a failure to perceive the true nature of things. 9: *With fools*, it is impossible to conduct a reasonable dispute (see 26.4). 13: Cf. 22.2. 18:

PROVERBS 29.20-30.10

- 20 Do you see someone who is hasty
in speech?
There is more hope for a fool than
for anyone like that.
- 21 A slave pampered from childhood
will come to a bad end.^a
- 22 One given to anger stirs up strife,
and the hothead causes much
transgression.
- 23 A person's pride will bring
humiliation,
but one who is lowly in spirit will
obtain honor.
- 24 To be a partner of a thief is to hate
one's own life;
one hears the victim's curse, but
discloses nothing.^b
- 25 The fear of others^c lays a snare,
but one who trusts in the LORD
is secure.
- 26 Many seek the favor of a ruler,
but it is from the LORD that one
gets justice.
- 27 The unjust are an abomination to the
righteous,
but the upright are an abomination
to the wicked.

30 The words of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle.

- Thus says the man: I am weary,
O God,
I am weary, O God. How can I
prevail?^d
- 2 Surely I am too stupid to be human;
I do not have human
understanding.
- 3 I have not learned wisdom,

- nor have I knowledge of the
holy ones.^e
- 4 Who has ascended to heaven and
come down?
Who has gathered the wind in the
hollow of the hand?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a
garment?
Who has established all the ends of
the earth?
What is the person's name?
And what is the name of the
person's child?
Surely you know!
- 5 Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take
refuge in him.
- 6 Do not add to his words,
or else he will rebuke you, and you
will be found a liar.
- 7 Two things I ask of you;
do not deny them to me before
I die:
- 8 Remove far from me falsehood and
lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that I need,
9 or I shall be full, and deny you,
and say, "Who is the LORD?"
or I shall be poor, and steal,
and profane the name of my God.
- 10 Do not slander a servant to a master,

^a Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Meaning of Heb uncertain ^c Or human fear ^d Or I am spent.
Meaning of Heb uncertain ^e Or Holy One

Prophecy, lit. vision (see 1 Sam 3.1); law, see 28.4n. **24:** *Partner of a thief*, not an actual accomplice, but someone with knowledge of the crime who *discloses nothing* (see Lev 5.1).

30.1-33: The words of Agur and other sayings. V. 1a is a title, but the extent of Agur's sayings (perhaps as far as v. 9) is uncertain. **1:** *Oracle*, others understand the Heb to mean "from Massa," a region of northern Arabia (Gen 25.14; 1 Chr 1.30). If so, Agur is a non-Israelite. The rest of v. 1 is all but untranslatable. **2-3:** The writer acknowledges *human* limitations. **4:** Rhetorical questions implying the answer "God"; cf. Job 38.4-41. **5-6:** A pious response to vv. 1-4 (see Ps 18.30; 2 Sam 22.31; Deut 4.2; 12.32). **7-9:** A prayer to be kept from *falsehood*, and to be given *neither poverty nor riches* (see Sir 31.1-4).

30.10-33: Admonitions and numerical sayings. Several of these sayings may have originated as riddles

- or the servant will curse you, and
you will be held guilty.
- 11 There are those who curse their
fathers
and do not bless their mothers.
- 12 There are those who are pure in their
own eyes
yet are not cleansed of their
filthiness.
- 13 There are those—how lofty are their
eyes,
how high their eyelids lift!—
- 14 there are those whose teeth are
swords,
whose teeth are knives,
to devour the poor from off the
earth,
the needy from among mortals.
- 15 The leech^a has two daughters;
“Give, give,” they cry.
Three things are never satisfied;
four never say, “Enough”:
- 16 Sheol, the barren womb,
the earth ever thirsty for water,
and the fire that never says,
“Enough.”^a
- 17 The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be pecked out by the ravens of
the valley
and eaten by the vultures.
- 18 Three things are too wonderful
for me;
four I do not understand:
- 19 the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a snake on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a girl.
- 20 This is the way of an adulteress:
she eats, and wipes her mouth,
and says, “I have done no wrong.”
- 21 Under three things the earth trembles;
under four it cannot bear up:
- 22 a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when gluttoned with food;
- 23 an unloved woman when she gets
a husband,
and a maid when she succeeds her
mistress.
- 24 Four things on earth are small,
yet they are exceedingly wise:
- 25 the ants are a people without
strength,
yet they provide their food in
the summer;
- 26 the badgers are a people without
power,
yet they make their homes in
the rocks;
- 27 the locusts have no king,
yet all of them march in rank;
- 28 the lizard^b can be grasped in
the hand,
yet it is found in kings’ palaces.
- 29 Three things are stately in their stride;
four are stately in their gait:
- 30 the lion, which is mightiest among
wild animals
and does not turn back before any;
- 31 the strutting rooster,^c the he-goat,
and a king striding before^a
his people.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain ^b Or spider

^c Gk Syr Tg Compare Vg; Meaning of Heb uncertain

(e.g., vv. 15–16, 18–19). 11–14: Four types of sinners: the unfilial, self-satisfied, arrogant, and avaricious. 15–16: Two sayings on the insatiable. *Sheol*, the abode of the dead. *Barren womb*, see Gen 30.1. *Fire*, see Am 7.4. 18–19: Four wonders, comparable as regards a mysterious and irrecoverable way (Wis 5.10–11). 20: A moralizing comment on v. 19d; *eats*, engages in illicit sex (5.15; 9.17; Sir 23.17; 26.12). 21–23: Four intolerable situations. *Maid . . . mistress*, see Gen 16.3–4. 24–28: Four small yet instructive creatures. 29–31: Four examples of grandeur, or perhaps pomposity (the comparison with a king might be ironic; cf. vv. 27–28).

PROVERBS 30.32–31.22

- 32 If you have been foolish, exalting
yourself,
or if you have been devising evil,
put your hand on your mouth.
33 For as pressing milk produces curds,
and pressing the nose produces
blood,
so pressing anger produces strife.

31 The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:

- 2 No, my son! No, son of my womb!
No, son of my vows!
3 Do not give your strength to women,
your ways to those who destroy
kings.
4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
it is not for kings to drink wine,
or for rulers to desire strong
drink;
5 or else they will drink and forget
what has been decreed,
and will pervert the rights of all
the afflicted.
6 Give strong drink to one who is
perishing,
and wine to those in bitter
distress;
7 let them drink and forget their
poverty,
and remember their misery
no more.
8 Speak out for those who cannot
speak,
for the rights of all the destitute.^b
9 Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor
and needy.

- 10 A capable wife who can find?
She is far more precious than
jewels.
11 The heart of her husband trusts
in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
14 She is like the ships of the merchant,
she brings her food from far away.
15 She rises while it is still night
and provides food for her
household
and tasks for her servant-girls.
16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she
plants a vineyard.
17 She girds herself with strength,
and makes her arms strong.
18 She perceives that her merchandise is
profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
20 She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to
the needy.
21 She is not afraid for her household
when it snows,
for all her household are clothed in
crimson.
22 She makes herself coverings;

^a Cn: Heb *where* ^b Heb *all children of passing away*

31.1–9: The words of Lemuel. **1:** *King Lemuel*, otherwise unknown; like Agur (30.1), he may be non-Israelite. *Oracle*, see 30.1n. **2–9:** The king's mother warns him against *women* and *wine* (viewed here as weakening distractions), lest he neglect his duty to care for the powerless.

31.10–31: The woman of worth. An acrostic poem (one in which each successive verse begins with the successive letter of the Heb alphabet) from the point of view of the *husband* (vv. 11,23,28), about the ideal *wife* (v. 10). The woman exemplifies strength, independence, courage, kindness, wisdom, and piety. **10:** *Capable*, variously rendered as “good,” “perfect,” “virtuous,” “noble,” “worthy,” or “valiant” (see 12.4; Ruth 3.11). *More precious than jewels*, like personified Wisdom herself (3.15; 8.11). **21–22:** Both she and her family are warmly, and luxuriously, dressed. **23:** See v. 31; 22.22; 24.7; Job 29.7–10; 31.21; the city gate was the locale of commercial and legal transactions (see Deut 22.15; Ruth 4.1–12). **27:** *She*

PROVERBS 31.23–31.31

- her clothing is fine linen and purple.
 23 Her husband is known in the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land.
 24 She makes linen garments and sells them; she supplies the merchant with sashes.
 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.
 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
 27 She looks well to the ways of her household,

- and does not eat the bread of idleness.
 28 Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her:
 29 “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”
 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
 31 Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates.

looks well to (Heb “tsopiyyah”), perhaps a play on “sophia” (Gk “wisdom”). 31: *Give her a share in*, here the husband would appear to hold ultimate authority over the household and its resources; another possible translation is “praise for her.”