
משלי ✡ PROVERBS

The bulk of the *Book of Proverbs* is made up of two collections: 10–22:16, called ‘The Proverbs of Solomon’ (375 aphorisms) and Chs 25–29, introduced by ‘Some more of Solomon’s proverbs, transcribed at the court of Hezekiah’ (128 aphorisms). Appendices have been added to each collection: to the first, ‘Sayings of the sages’ (22:17–24:22) and ‘The following are also taken from the sages’ (24:23–34); to the second, ‘The sayings of Agur’ (30:1–14), followed by numerical proverbs (30:15–33) and ‘The sayings of Lemuel’ (31:1–9). The book starts with a long introduction (Chs 1–9), in which a father commends wisdom to his child, and closes with an acrostic poem in praise of the ideal wife. The order of the proverbs is unimportant and differs in the *LXX*; they are listed without concern for logical sequence. The two main collections show the *Mashal* in its most primitive form and consist exclusively of brief aphorisms but, in the appendices, the form is more elaborate; the short numerical poems of 30:15–33 and 6:16–19 add the charm of a presentation that joins riddles to their edifying matter, a device already practised in earlier times (see Am 1).

The teaching of the book offers an optimistic view of retribution: Wisdom (equated with righteousness and often personified) brings success but folly (or wickedness) brings destruction; this doctrine is also that of Deuteronomy and other books of the Bible. But the sages were aware of the limitations of taught or learnt lessons: no wisdom can prevail against Yahweh (21:30), whose work is both mysterious and definitive (16:1–2, 9), as the books of Job and Qoheleth expound.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

The earliest sections are attributed to Solomon who, according to 1K 5:12, was the author of ‘three thousand proverbs’ and who was considered to have been the greatest sage of Israel. The impersonal tone of the proverbs makes it impossible to assign any particular maxim to him but there is no reason to doubt that this collection dates from his time; the maxims of the second collection were already ancient when they were transcribed at the court of Hezekiah (ca. 700 BCE). These collections form the core of the book and give it its full name, “The Proverbs of Solomon” (1:1); but the subtitles of the smaller sections show that this title is not to be taken too literally, embracing the aphorisms of anonymous sages (22:17–24:34) and the sayings of Agur and Lemuel (30:1–31:9). Even if these two names are fictitious, they testify to a respect for the wisdom of other lands, as can be found in some of the ‘sayings of the sages’ (22:17–23:11), based on the Egyptian maxims of Amenemophis, committed to writing at the beginning of the 1st Millennium BCE.

The nucleus of the book, Chs 10–29, may safely be dated in the pre-Exilic period; the date of Chs 30–31 is uncertain. The prologue (Chs 1–9) is certainly later; it has literary affinities with post-Exilic writings, which suggest the 5th Century BCE as the date of its composition; this is also presumably when the whole book was given its definitive form.

משלי פרק א

א מִשְׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל:
ב לְדַעַת חִכְמָה וּמוֹסֵר
ג לְהַבִּין אִמְרֵי בִינָה:
ד לְקַחַת מוֹסֵר הַשֶּׁפֶל
ה צֶדֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמִשְׁרִים:
ו לְתַת לַפְתָּאִים עֲרֻמָּה
ז לְנַעַר דַּעַת וּמִזְמָה:
ח יִשְׁמַע חָכָם וְיוֹסֵף לֵקַח
ט וְנַבְּזֹן תַּחְבֻּלוֹת יִקְנֶה:
י לְהַבִּין מִשְׁלַי וּמִלִּיצָה
יא דְּבַרֵּי חִכְמָיִם וְחִידָתָם:

PROVERBS 1

- 1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 For learning what wisdom and discipline are,
for understanding words of deep meaning,
- 3 for acquiring a disciplined insight,
uprightness, justice, and fair dealing;
- 4 to teach sound judgement to the simple,
and knowledge and reflection to the young.
- 5 Let the wise listen and learn yet more,
and the discerning acquire the art of guidance,
- 6 To perceive the meaning of proverbs and obscure sayings,
the sayings of the sages and their riddles.

PROVERBS 1

- 1 The initial *mem* is presented as an enlarged letter, just as it appears in almost all *Hebrew MSS*. The noun translated 'proverbs' (מִשְׁלֵי) is derived from the root מָשַׁל, which means 'likeness'; the related Niphal verb means 'to be like'. The noun can mean an object lesson based on or using a comparison or analogy: it may be a short pithy statement (Ezk 16:44), object lesson drawn from experience (Ps 78:2–6), saying or by-word (Dt 28:37), or an oracle of future blessing (Ezk 21:1–5). Here, it means an object lesson that helps one choose a course of action to follow or avoid. The name שְׁלֹמֹה ('of Solomon') is a genitive of authorship; the name forms a wordplay on מִשְׁלֵי, - it is almost synonymous with proverbs.
- 2 Vv. 2–6 form a complete sentence in Hebrew, which states the purpose of the sage: to awaken students and provide them with moral formation leading to their maturity.
- 3 For 'disciplined insight', the MT reads the genitive-construct phrase, 'discipline of prudence'; the Peshitta adds a ך and reads 'discipline and prudence': the MT is the more difficult reading in terms of syntax, so is preferred as the original.
- 4 The adjective translated 'simple' means easily influenced by either wisdom or folly.
- 5 The NJB inverts the order of vv. 5 and 6.
- 6 'Obscure sayings' (the NRSV has 'a figure') are metaphors, parables, or allegories, such as in vv. 20–33; a 'riddle' is a comparison or analogy that enforces a lesson when the hearer discerns its intention and is able to complete it (see 25:14, 26:7, 30:18–19).

ז יִרְאַת יְהוָה רֵאשִׁית דַּעַת
 חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסֵר אוֹלִים בָּזוּ:
 ח שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוֹסֵר אָבִיךָ
 וְאַל־תִּטְּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ:
 ט כִּי לִוִּית חֵן הֵם לְרֹאשְׁךָ
 וְעֲנָקִים לְגֵרְגֶרְתְּךָ:
 י בְּנִי
 יא אִם־יִפְתּוּךָ חֲטָאִים אֶל־תֵּבֵא
 אִם־יֹאמְרוּ לָכֶּה אֶתְּנוּ
 נֶאֱרָבָה לָדָם
 נִצְפְּנָה לְנִקְי חָנָם:
 יב נִבְלָעִם כְּשֹׂאֹל חַיִּים
 וְתַמִּימִים כַּיּוֹרְדֵי בּוֹר:

- 7 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge;
 fools spurn wisdom and discipline.
 8 Listen, my child, to your father's instruction,
 do not reject your mother's teaching.
 9 They will be a crown of grace for your head,
 a circlet for your neck.
 10 My child,
 if sinners try to seduce you, do not go with them.
 11 If they say, "Come with us:
 let us lie in wait to shed blood;
 let us wantonly ambush the innocent.
 12 We can swallow them alive, like Sheol,
 and whole, like those who sink into the Pit.

- 7 The biblical expression, '*the fear of Yahweh*' (see #Ex 20:20 and #Dt 6:2) means approximately what we call religion or devotion to God. It is at once the basis (9:10, 15:33, Job 28:28, Ps 111:10, Si 1:14,20) and the crown (Si 1:18, 19:20, 25:10-11, 40:26-27) of an essentially religious type of wisdom, encouraging a personal relationship with the God of the Covenant, in which fear and love, submission and confidence, coincide. '*Fools*' does not here refer to the stupid but to those whose conduct is reprehensible.
 8 The imperative, שְׁמַע, forms an urgent exhortation which expects immediate compliance with parental instruction.
 9 The word חֵן ('*grace*') refers to qualities that make a person pleasant and agreeable, e.g. a gracious and charming person; the metaphor compares the teachings that produce these qualities to an attractive wreath.
 10 The term חֲטָא is the common word for 'sinner' in the OT; because the related verb is used once of sling-shot throwers who miss the mark (Jg 20:16), the idea of sin is often explained as 'missing the moral mark'. However, the term should not be restricted to the idea of a sin of ignorance or simply falling short of the moral ideal: its meaning is more likely seen in the related Accadian term, 'to revolt'. It is active rebellion against authority and is used here in reference to a gang of robbers.
 11 The verb אֲרַב ('*to lie in wait*') is used for planning murder (Dt 19:11), kidnapping (Jg 21:20) or seduction (Pr 23:28).
 12 The noun שְׂאֹל can mean 1: '*death*' (cf. NCV); 2: '*the grave*' (cf. KJV, NIV & NLT); 3: '*Sheol*' as the realm of departed spirits (cf. NAB '*the nether world*'); and 4: '*extreme danger*'. Here, it is parallel to בּוֹר ('*the Pit*'), so it is most likely '*Sheol*' (cf. NJB, NRSV & NETB).

יג כִּלְהוֹן יִקָּר נִמְצָא
 נִמְלֵא בְּתֵינוּ שָׁלָל:
 יד גּוֹרֵלֶךְ תִּפִּיל בְּתוֹכֵנוּ
 טו בֵּיס אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּנוּ:
 טז בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲתָם
 מְנַע רַגְלֶךָ מִנִּתְיָבָתָם:
 כז כִּי רַגְלֵיהֶם לָרַע יָרוּצוּ
 וְיִמְהָרוּ לְשַׁפְּדֵדִים:
 ח כִּי־חֲנָם מִזֶּרֶה הִרְשֵׁת
 בְּעֵינַי כֹּל־בַּעַל כִּנְף:
 יח וְהֵם לְדָמָם יֵאָלְבוּ
 יִצְפְּנוּ לְנַפְשָׁתָם:
 ט כֵּן אַרְחוֹת כֹּל־בָּצַע בָּצַע
 אֶת־נַפְשׁ בְּעֻלּוֹ יִקַּח:

13 We shall find treasures of every sort;
 we shall fill our houses with plunder.
 14 Throw in your lot with us:
 one purse between us all."
 15 My child, do not follow them in their way,
 keep yourself out of their path,
 16 for their feet hasten to evil,
 they are quick to shed blood.
 17 For the net is spread in vain
 if any winged creature can see it.
 18 It is for their own blood such people lie in wait:
 their ambush is against their own selves!
 19 Such are the paths of all who seek dishonest gain,
 which robs of their lives all who take it for their own.

- 13 The noun שָׁלָל ('plunder') is as an adverbial accusative of material; it is often used for the spoils of war (Dt 20:14, Jos 7:21, Jg 8:24–25, 1S 30:20) but here refers to stolen goods (cf. Is 10:2, Pr 16:19). The enticement is to join a criminal gang and adopt a life of crime to enjoy ill-gotten gains.
- 14 The 1st line is a figurative expression urging the naive to join their life of crime and divide their loot equally.
- 15 The literal translation of 'yourself' is 'your foot'; the term רַגֶל ('foot') is a synecdoche of part for the whole person.
- 16 This verse, italicised in the *NJB*, is missing from the best *LXX MSS*, and is generally thought to be a gloss borrowed from Is 59:7.
- 17 The meaning of this verse is, apparently, that as the bird avoids the net if it has seen the hunter spread it, so the youth duly admonished will know how to avoid the pitfalls of life. This popular proverb affirms that the consequences of crime are too obvious to be missed.
- 18 They think that they will shed innocent blood but it is their own blood they shed: their greed leads to their destruction.
- 19 In place of 'are the paths', here following the *MT* (אַרְחוֹת) & *NJB*, the *NRSV*, following the *LXX* (reading אַחֲרִית), has 'is the end'.

כ חכמות בחוץ תרנה
 ברחבות תתן קולה:
 כא בראש המיזות תקרא
 בפתחי שערים בעיר אמריה תאמר:
 כב עד-מתי | פתים תאהבו-פתי
 ולצים לצון חמדו להם
 וכסילים ישנאו-דעת:
 כג תשובו לתוכחתי
 הנה אביעה לכם רוחי
 אודיעה דברי אתכם:
 כד יען קראתי ותמאנו
 נטיתי ידי ואין מקשיב:
 כה ותפרעו כל-עצתי
 ותוכחתי לא אביתם:

20 Wisdom calls aloud in the streets;
 she raises her voice in the public squares.
 21 She calls out at the street corners;
 she delivers her message at the city gates.
 22 “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity
 and will mockers delight themselves in mockery,
 and fools hate knowledge?
 23 Pay attention to my warning.
 To you I will pour out my heart
 and tell you what I have to say.
 24 Since I have called and you have refused me,
 and I have beckoned and no one has taken notice,
 25 and you have neglected all my advice
 and rejected all my warnings,

20 ‘In’ follows the LXX; the MT has ‘outside’. Like the prophets (see Jr 5:1, 7:2), Wisdom personified (see #8:22) goes walking through the city streets, waylaying the inhabitants to press her teaching on them, denouncing their heedlessness and false sense of security (see Am 6:1, 9:10, Zp 1:12). She speaks publicly at the city gates, where she can find an audience; in language that echoes the prophets, (for v. 24 compare Is 65:2, 12, 66:4, Jr 7:13, 24–27) she pronounces dire threats against those who will not listen (vv. 26–32).

21 The literal translation of ‘street corners’ (the NRSV has ‘busiest corner’) is ‘at the top of the noisy (street)’ but the text is uncertain; the LXX has ‘on top of the walls’ (ἐπ’ ὧμας δὲ τειχέων).

22 At the start of the 2nd line, the WEB adds ‘How long’, as do a number of other English translations.

23 The noun תוכחת (‘warning’) is used in all kinds of disputes, including rebuking, arguing, reasoning, admonishing, and chiding.

24 The particle יען (‘since’) introduces a causal clause which forms part of an extended protasis; the apodosis is v. 26.

25 The verb פרע means ‘to let go’ or ‘to leave alone’; it can refer to unkempt hair of the head (Lv 10:6) or lack of moral restraint (Ex 32:25, Pr 28:19). Here, it means ‘to neglect’ the offer of wisdom.

כו גַּם־אֲנִי בְּאִידְכֶם אֶשְׁחַק
 אֲלַעַג בְּבֹא פַחַדְכֶם:
 כז בְּבֹא כְשֹׁאָה | פַּחַדְכֶם
 וְאִידְכֶם כְּסוּפָה יֵאָתֶה
 בְּבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם צָרָה וְצוּקָה:
 כח אֲזִי יִקְרְאוּנִי וְלֹא אֶעֱנֶה
 יִשְׁחַרְוּנִי וְלֹא יִמְצְאוּנִי:
 כט תַּחַת כִּי־שָׂנְאוּ דַעַת
 וַיִּרְאֹת יְהוָה לֹא בַחֲרוּ:
 ל לא־אָבוּ לַעֲצָתִי
 נֶאֱצְוּ כָּל־תּוֹכַחְתִּי:
 לא וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִפְּרֵי דֶרֶכָם
 וּמִמַּעֲצֹתֵיהֶם יִשְׁבְּעוּ:
 לב כִּי מְשׁוּבֹת פְּתִים תַּהַרְגֵם
 וְשִׁלּוֹת כְּסִילִים תַּאֲבֹדֵם:

26 I, for my part, shall laugh at your distress;
 I shall jeer when terror befalls you,
 27 when terror befalls you, like a storm,
 when your distress arrives, like a whirlwind,
 when ordeal and anguish bear down on you.
 28 Then they will call me but I shall not answer;
 they will look eagerly for me and will not find me.
 29 Because they have hated knowledge;
 they have not chosen the fear of Yahweh.
 30 They have taken no notice of my advice;
 they have spurned all my warnings.
 31 Therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their own way
 and choke themselves with their own scheming.
 32 For the errors of the simple will kill them;
 the complacency of fools works their own ruin.

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- 26 Laughing at the consequences of the fool's rejection of wisdom conveys hardness against the fool; it reveals the folly of rejecting wisdom (e.g. Ps 2:4) and vindicates wisdom and the appropriateness of the disaster.
 27 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here (transposition of two letters) would benefit from further explanation.
 28 The verb שָׁחַר ('to look') is used figuratively of intensely looking (seeking) for deliverance out of trouble.
 29 The causal particle כִּי introduces a 2nd accusation of sin and reason for punishment.
 30 This is how the morally stubborn fool acts (e.g. 15:5).
 31 The expression, 'eat the fruit of', is figurative, comparing the consequences of sin to agricultural growth that culminates in produce.
 32 The verb הָרַג ('to kill') is the end of the naive who refuse to change: the word is broad enough to include murder, massacre, killing in battle, and execution; here, it is judicial execution by God, using their own foolish choices as the means to ruin.

לֹג וְשָׁמַעַ לִי יִשְׁכֹּן-בְּטָח
וְשָׁאֲנָן מִפֶּחַד רָעָה:

³³ But whoever listens to me may live secure
and will have quiet, fearing no mischance.”

³³ The noun בְּטָח (*‘security’*) functions as an adverbial accusative of manner: ‘in security’; the phrase refers to living in a permanent settled condition without fear of danger (e.g. Dt 33:12, Ps 16:9). It is the antithesis of the dread of disaster facing the fool and the simple.

משלי פרק ב

א בְּנִי אִם־תִּקַּח אֲמָרִי
וּמִצְוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אֶתְךָ:
ב לְהִקְשִׁיב לְחִכְמָה אֲזַנְךָ
תִּטֶּה לִבְךָ לְתִבּוּנָה:
ג כִּי אִם לְבִינָה תִקְרָא
לְתִבּוּנָה תִתֵּן קוֹלְךָ:
ד אִם־תִּבְקֹשֶׁה כַּכֶּסֶף
וּכְמַטְמוֹנִים תַּחֲפֹשֶׁה:
ה אִזְ תִּבִּין יִרְאֵת יְהוָה
וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצָא:
ו כִּי־יִהְיֶה יִתֵּן חִכְמָה
מִפִּי דַעַת וְתִבּוּנָה:

PROVERBS 2

- 1 My child, if you take my words to heart,
if you set store by my commandments,
- 2 turning your ear to wisdom,
turning your heart to understanding,
- 3 yes, if your plea is for clear perception,
if you cry out for understanding,
- 4 if you look for it as though for silver,
search for it as though for buried treasure,
- 5 then you will understand what the fear of Yahweh is,
and discover the knowledge of God;
- 6 for Yahweh himself is giver of wisdom;
from his mouth issue knowledge and understanding;

PROVERBS 2

- ¹ Vv. 1–11 form one long conditional sentence in the Hebrew text: **1** the protasis ('if...') encompasses vv. 1–4 and **2** the apodosis consists of 2 parallel panels in vv. 5–8 and vv. 9–11, both of which are introduced by the particle **אִם** ('then').
- ² The word 'ear' is a metonymy of cause: the word is used as the instrument of hearing; but, in parallel with 'heart', it indicates one aspect of the mental process of hearing and understanding: a 'hearing ear' describes an obedient or responsive person.
- ³ The noun translated 'perception' recalls the second purpose of the book (1:2); it is also cognate to the last word of 2:2, forming a transition. The two objects of the prepositions in this verse are actually personifications, as if they could be summoned.
- ⁴ These two similes affirm that the value placed on the object will influence the eagerness and diligence in the pursuit and development of wisdom (e.g. Job 28:9–11); the point is not only that the object sought is valuable, but that the effort will be demanding but rewarding.
- ⁵ The verb **תִּבִּין** ('understand') refers to ability to grasp, discern or be sensitive to what it means to fear God.
- ⁶ The expression 'from his mouth' is an anthropomorphism: it indicates that God is the immediate source or author of the wisdom. It is worth noting that in the incarnation many of these anthropomorphisms become literal in the person of Jesus ('The Word'), who reveals the Father.

ז	וּצְפֹן יִצְפֹּן לְיֹשְׁרִים תּוֹשִׁיָּה מִגֹּן לְהִלְכֵי תָם:	7	he reserves his advice for the honest, a shield to those whose ways are sound;
ח	לְנֹצֵר אֲרָחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְדֶרֶךְ חֲסִידוֹ יִשְׁמֹר:	8	he stands guard over the paths of equity; he keeps watch over the way of his faithful ones;
ט	אִזְ תֵּבִין צְדָק וּמִשְׁפָּט וּמִיִּשְׁרִים כָּל־מַעַל־טוֹב:	9	then you will understand uprightness and justice, and equity: every good path;
י	כִּי־תָבוֹא חֲכָמָה בְּלִבְךָ וְדַעַת לִנְפְשְׁךָ יִנָּעַם:	10	when wisdom comes into your heart and knowledge fills your soul with delight,
יא	מִזְמָה תִּשְׁמֹר עָלֶיךָ תְּבוּנָה תִּנְצָרְכָה:	11	prudence will be there to watch over you, and understanding will be your guardian.
יב	לְהַצִּילְךָ מִדֶּרֶךְ רָע מֵאִישׁ מִדְּבַר תִּהְפְּכוֹת:	12	It will keep you from the way of the wicked, from those whose speech is deceitful,
יג	הַעֲזֹבִים אֲרָחוֹת יֹשֶׁר לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכ־חֹשֶׁךְ:	13	from those who leave the paths of honesty to walk the roads of darkness:

⁷ In place of וּצְפֹן, here following the *Ketiv* (Qal perfect, supported by LXX & Peshitta), the *Qere* has יִצְפֹּן (Qal imperfect, supported by Tg & Vg).

⁸ The noun חֲסִידוֹ ('his faithful ones') describes those who show 'covenantal faithful love' or 'loyal love' to God and his people; the description of the righteous by this term indicates their active participation in the covenant, for which God has promised his protection.

⁹ The term טוֹב ('good') functions as an attributive genitive.

¹⁰ The term נִפְשְׁךָ ('your soul') functions as a synecdoche of part (soul) for the whole person (you); it also might function as a metonymy of association for emotions and passions or mental cognition.

¹¹ The word מִזְמָה ('prudence') is the ability to know the best course of action for achieving one's goal; it is knowledge and understanding with a purpose. This kind of knowledge enables one to make the right choices that will protect him from blunders and their consequences.

¹² The term רָע ('wicked', following NETB – the NJB & NRSV have 'evil') means 'bad', 'harmful' or 'painful'; rather than referring to the abstract concept of wickedness in general, the term probably refers to wicked people because of the parallelism with the 2nd line.

¹³ Darkness is often metaphorical for sinfulness, ignorance, or oppression: their way of life lacks spiritual illumination.

יְד	הַשְׂמֵחִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע	14	those who find their joy in doing wrong,
	וְגִילוּ בַתְּהַפְכוֹת רָע:		and their delight in deceitfulness,
טו	אֲשֶׁר אַרְחֲתֵיהֶם עֲקָשִׁים	15	whose tracks are twisted,
	וְנִלְוִזִים בְּמַעְגְלוֹתָם:		and the paths that they tread crooked.
טז	לְהַצִּילְךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה	16	To save you from the strange woman,
	מִנְכַּרְיָה אֹמְרִיָה הַחֲלִיקָה:		from the adulteress, with her smooth words.
יז	הַעֲזֹבַת אֱלֹהֶיךָ נְעוּרֶיהָ	17	She has left the partner of her younger days;
	וְאֶת־בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁכָחָה:		she has forgotten the sacred covenant.
יח	כִּי שָׁחָה אֶל־מֹת בֵּיתָהּ	18	Her house is tilting towards Death;
	וְאֶל־רַפָּאִים מַעְגְלֶיהָ:		down to the Shades go her paths.
יט	כָּל־בָּאִיהָ לֹא יָשׁוּבוֹן	19	Of those who go to her, not one returns,
	וְלֹא־יִשְׁיִגּוּ אַרְחוֹת חַיִּים:		they never regain the paths of life.
כ	לְמַעַן תֵּלֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ טוֹבִים	20	Thus, you will tread the way of good people,

- ¹⁴ A more literal translation of ‘deceitfulness’ (as NJB) is ‘the perverseness of evil’ (as NRSV, NASB); the noun רָע (*‘evil’*) functions as an attributed genitive which is modified by the construct noun תְּהַפְכוֹת (*‘perversity’*), which functions as an attributive adjective.
- ¹⁵ The adjective עֲקָשִׁים (*‘twisted’*) uses the morphological pattern of adjectives that depict permanent bodily defects, e.g. blindness or lameness: their actions are morally defective and, apart from repentance, are permanently crooked and twisted.
- ¹⁶ Adultery is identified (2:17) with apostasy from the Covenant of God (see also #5:15); it leads to Sheol (2:18, 5:5–6, 7:26–27).
- ¹⁷ The term translated ‘sacred covenant’ (בְּרִית), here following the NRSV) could refer to the Mosaic Covenant that prohibits adultery (as NJB – ‘Covenant of God’), or, more likely, the marriage covenant (as NETB; cf. also TEV, CEV).
- ¹⁸ For the 1st line, the NRSV has the conjectural, “for her way leads down to death.” The syntax is difficult: the verb שָׁחָה is the Qal perfect 3rd person feminine singular, which must take a feminine singular subject – most likely the ‘strange woman’ of vv. 16–17; however, most English versions take בֵּיתָהּ (*‘her house’* – masculine noun + 3rd person feminine singular suffix) as the subject.
- ¹⁹ The phrase ‘regain the paths of life’ is a figurative expression for experiencing joy and fullness of blessing.
- ²⁰ The conjunction לְמַעַן (*‘thus’*) introduces the concluding result of heeding the admonition to attain wisdom (vv. 1–11) and to avoid the evil men and women and their destructive ways (vv. 12–19).

וְאַרְחוֹת צְדִיקִים תִּשְׁמֹר:
 כֹּא כִי־יִשְׁרִים יִשְׁכְּנוּ־אֶרֶץ
 וְתַמִּימִים יִוְתְּרוּ בָּהּ:
 כב וְרָשָׁעִים מֵאֶרֶץ יִכָּרְתוּ
 וּבֹגְדִים יִסָּחוּ מִמֶּנָּה:

persisting in the paths of the upright.

- ²¹ For the land will be for the honest to live in,
 the innocent will have it for their home.
²² But the wicked will be cut off from the land,
 and the faithless torn away from it.

²¹ The term תַּמִּימִים (*‘the innocent’*) describes those who live with integrity; they are innocent in that they live above reproach according to the requirements of the Law.

²² The consonantal form יִסָּחוּ is vocalised in the MT as יִסְחוּ (Qal imperfect 3rd person masculine plural from יָסַח, *‘to tear away’*) but this produces an awkward sense: “*They (the righteous in vv. 20–21) will tear away the faithless from it.*” Due to the parallelism, some suggest emending the form to יִנָּסְחוּ (Niphal imperfect 3rd person masculine plural): “*The faithless will be torn away from it.*” However, the Tg points the form as יִסָּחוּ, which reflects an old Qal passive vocalisation – probably the best solution to the problem and that followed here.

משלי פרק ג

- א בְּנִי תֹרַתִי אֶל־תִּשְׁכַּח
וּמִצְוֹתַי יִצָּר לִבְךָ:
ב כִּי אֲרֹךְ יָמִים וּשְׁנוֹת חַיִּים
וְשָׁלוֹם יוֹסִיפוּ לָךְ:
ג חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת אֶל־יַעֲזֹבְךָ
קֶשֶׁרם עַל־גְּרוֹתֶיךָ
פְּתִיבָם עַל־לֹוֹחַ לִבְךָ:
ד וּמִצָּא־חֵן וּשְׂכָל־טוֹב
בְּעֵינֵי אֱלֹהִים וָאָדָם:
ה בָּטַח אֶל־יְהוָה בְּכָל־לִבְךָ
וְאַל־בִּינְתֶּךָ אֶל־תִּשְׁעֹן:
ו בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ דַּעְהוּ
וְהוּא יִישַׁר אֲרָחְתֶּיךָ:

PROVERBS 3

- 1 My child, do not forget my teaching,
let your heart keep my principles,
2 since they will increase your length of days,
your years of life and your welfare.
3 Let mercy and truth never leave you:
tie them round your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 Thus, you will find favour and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.
5 Trust wholeheartedly in Yahweh,
put no faith in your own perception.
6 Acknowledge him in every course you take,
and he will see that your paths are smooth.

PROVERBS 3

- 1 In the 2nd line, the verb יָצָר ('keep') is a Qal jussive and the noun לִבְךָ ('your heart') functions as the subject.
2 The noun translated 'welfare' (שָׁלוֹם) literally means 'peace' but it can also be used of personal health and well-being.
3 The two words, חֶסֶד & אֱמֶת ('mercy and truth', following NETB) are used together over 20 times; sometimes, they are treated in parallel clauses and sometimes they are paired in a hendiadys, to be understood as 'faithful mercy'. Here, they are pictured as concrete objects to tie around one's neck, so at that level they are distinct even though they complement each other.
4 The NJB has 'success' in place of 'good repute', here following the NRSV.
5 The word בָּטַח ('trust') is used in the OT both in a literal, physical sense (to physically lean upon something for support) and in a figurative sense (to rely upon someone or something for help or protection).
6 The literal translation of 'acknowledge' is 'know'.

ז אֲלֹתֶיךָ חָכְם בְּעֵינָיֶךָ
 יִרְאֵה אֶת־יְהוָה וְסוּר מֵרָע:
 ח רַפְאוֹת תִּהְיֶה לְשָׁרְךָ
 וְשִׁקּוּי לְעַצְמוֹתֶיךָ:
 ט כְּבֹד אֶת־יְהוָה מֵהוֹנֶךָ
 וּמֵרֵאשִׁית כָּל־תְּבוּאָתְךָ:
 י וַיִּמְלֵאוּ אִסְמִיךָ שֶׁבַע
 וְתִירוֹשׁ יִקְבֶּיךָ יִפְרָצוּ:
 יא מוֹסֵר יְהוָה בְּנֵי אֶל־תִּמְאָס
 וְאֶל־תִּקַּח בְּתוֹכָהֶם:
 יב כִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהָב יְהוָה יוֹכִיחַ
 וְכָאֵב אֶת־בֶּן יִרְצֶה:
 יג אֲשֶׁר־יֵאֱדָם מֵצֵא חֲכָמָה
 וְאֵדָם יִפִּיק תְּבוּנָה:

7 Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom;
 fear Yahweh and turn back on evil.
 8 This will be a healing to your body,
 relief to your bones.
 9 Honour Yahweh with what goods you have
 and with the first fruits of all your produce.
 10 Then your barns will be filled to repletion,
 your vats overflowing with new wine.
 11 My child, do not scorn discipline from Yahweh;
 do not resent his reproof.
 12 For Yahweh reproves those he loves,
 as a father the child whom he loves.
 13 Blessed are those who have discovered wisdom,
 those who have acquired understanding!

7 If one fears the LORD and turns away from evil, then he is depending on the LORD and not wise in his own eyes.

8 'Body' follows the LXX and Peshitta; the MT has 'stomach' or 'navel'. Note the unusual/unexpected dagesh on the *resh* in לְשָׁרְךָ.

9 The imperative כְּבֹד ('honour') functions as a command, instruction, counsel, or exhortation.

10 In place of 'to repletion' (here following the MT), the NJB, following the LXX, has 'with corn'. The offering of the first fruits (see #Dt 26:1) is the sole cultic observance explicitly commanded by the Proverbs but there is frequent mention of prayer.

11 Worthy of note is the idea that suffering is a 'discipline', a sign of divine love (see also Heb 12:5–6).

12 Another reading for 'reproves' (following the NJB & NRSV) is 'chastens'. The Maqaf in אֶת־אֲשֶׁר is not present in most major MSS but is here added following the MAM text (presented in grey, as it is there).

13 The word אֲשֶׁר ('blessed', as NJB & NETB) has a loftier meaning than 'happy' (as NRSV) – happiness depends on one's circumstances; this word reflects that inner joy and heavenly bliss which comes to the person who is pleasing to God, whose way is right before God.

יד כִּי טוֹב סִחְרָה מִסִּחְר־כֶּסֶף
 וּמִחֲרוֹץ תְּבוּאָתָהּ:
 טו יָקָרָה הִיא מִפְּנִיִּים מִפְּנִיִּים
 וְכֹל־חֲפָצֶיךָ לֹא יִשְׁוּוּ־בָּהּ:
 טז אַרְךְ יָמִים בְּיָמֶיהָ
 בְּשִׂמְאוּלָּהּ עֶשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד:
 יז דְּרָכֶיהָ דְּרָכֵי־נֹעַם
 וְכֹל־נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם:
 יח עֵץ־חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ
 וְתַמְכִּיהָ מֵאֲשֶׁר:
 יט יְהוָה בַּחֲכָמָה יִסַּד־אָרֶץ
 בִּוְגֹן שָׁמַיִם בְּתַבּוּנָהּ:
 כ בְּדַעְתּוֹ תְּהוֹמוֹת נִבְקְעוּ
 וְשַׁחֲקִים יִרְעֲפוּ־טֹל:
 כא בְּנִי אַל־יִלְזוּ מֵעֵינֶיךָ
 נֹצֵר תְּשִׂיָּה וּמִזְמָה:

14 Gaining her is more rewarding than silver,
 her yield is more valuable than gold.
 15 She is beyond the price of pearls;
 nothing you could covet is her equal.
 16 In her right hand is length of days;
 in her left hand are riches and honour.
 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
 her paths all lead to contentment.
 18 She is a tree of life for those who hold her fast,
 those who cling to her live happy lives.
 19 In wisdom, Yahweh laid the earth's foundations;
 in understanding, he spread out the heavens.
 20 Through his knowledge, the depths were cleft open,
 and the clouds distil the dew.
 21 My child, do not let these escape from your sight:
 keep sound wisdom and prudence.

14 The feminine pronoun here and in the following verses refers to Wisdom.

15 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here (an added letter) warrants further explanation.

16 The NRSV has 'long life' in place of 'length of days', here following the NJB.

17 The NJB has 'delight' in place of 'pleasantness', here following the NRSV & NETB.

18 The metaphor compares wisdom to the symbol of vitality and fullness of life; this might be an allusion to Gn 3:22, suggesting that what was lost in the Fall may be recovered through wisdom: long and beneficial life.

19 Wisdom had a role in Creation (vv. 19–20), which is sustained by water from the 'depths' (Ex 20:4) and 'dew' from above.

20 The word תְּהוֹמוֹת alludes to the chaotic 'deep' of in Gn 1:2.

21 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "My child, hold to sound advice and prudence, never let them out of your sight."

כב וַיְהִיו חַיִּים לְנַפְשְׁךָ
 וְחֹן לְגִרְגָּתֶיךָ:
 כג אַז תֵּלֵךְ לְבִטָּח דֶּרֶכְךָ
 וְרַגְלְךָ לֹא תִגּוֹף:
 כד אִם-תִּשְׁכַּב לֹא-תִפְחַד
 וְשִׁכְבָּתְךָ וְעֵרְבָה שְׁנָתְךָ:
 כה אֶל-תִּירָא מִפֶּחַד פֶּתְאִים
 וּמִשְׁאַת רָשָׁעִים כִּי תִבֹּא:
 כו כִּי-יִהְיֶה יְהוָה בְּכִסְלְךָ
 וְשָׁמַר רַגְלְךָ מִלִּכְד:
 כז אֶל-תִּמְנַע-טוֹב מִבְּעָלָיו
 בְּהִיּוֹת לְאֵל יָדֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת:
 כח אֶל-תֹּאמַר לְרַעִיד לְרַעֲךָ |
 לָךְ וְשׁוֹב וּמָחָר אֶתֶּן וְיֵשׁ אִתְּךָ:
 כט אֶל-תַּחֲרֹשׁ עַל-רַעֲךָ רָעָה
 וְהוּא-יוֹשֵׁב לְבִטָּח אִתְּךָ:

22 They will give life to your soul
 and beauty to adorn your neck.
 23 You will go on your way in safety;
 your feet will not stumble.
 24 When you go to bed, you will not be afraid;
 once in bed, your sleep will be sweet.
 25 Have no fear either of sudden terror
 or of attack mounted by wicked men,
 26 since Yahweh will be your guarantor,
 he will keep your steps from the snare.
 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
 if it is in your power to perform it.
 28 Do not say to your neighbour, "Go and come again!
 I will give it to you tomorrow," if you can do it now.
 29 Do not plot harm against your neighbour
 who is living unsuspecting beside you.

22 The verb 'adorn' does not appear in the MT (nor NJB) but is here added (following the NRSV/NETB) for clarity.

23 The noun translated 'feet' is actually singular in the MT.

24 In place of 'go to bed', the NRSV, following the LXX, has 'sit down'.

25 The literal translation of 'sudden terror' is 'terror of suddenness'.

26 The NRSV has 'confidence' in place of 'guarantor', here following the NJB.

27 The literal translation of 'those to whom it is due' is 'its owners'. The Kethib/Qere difference here (removal of a letter) requires explanation.

28 'Neighbour' originally meant companion, friend, associate, i.e. one with whom one had a specific relationship; however, in Proverbs, the word has a wider sense of 'fellow human' (see 6:1,3,29, 25:9, 27:17). In place of לְרַעֲךָ, here following the Kethib, the Qere has | לְרַעֲךָ.

29 The literal translation of 'plot' is 'plough' or 'cut in'.

ל אל־תִּרְיֹב תְּרֹב עִם־אָדָם חֲנָם
 אִם־לֹא גָמְלָךְ רָעָה:
 לא אל־תִּקְנָא בְּאִישׁ חָמָס
 וְאַל־תִּבְחַר בְּכָל־דַּרְכָּיו:
 לב כִּי תֹעֲבֶת יְהוָה נָלוֹז
 וְאֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל סוֹדוֹ:
 לג מֵאֶרֶץ יְהוָה בֵּית רָשָׁע
 וְנוֹה צְדִיקִים יִבְרָךְ:
 לד אִם־לִלְצִים הוּא־יִלְיָן
 וְלַעֲנָיִים וְלַעֲנָוִים יִתֵּן־חֵן:
 לה כְּבוֹד חֲכָמִים יִנְחֻלוּ
 וְכִסְיֵלִים מָרִים קִלְוֹן:

- 30 Do not pick a groundless quarrel with anyone
 who has done you no harm.
 31 Do not envy the man of violence;
 never model your conduct on his;
 32 for the wilful wrongdoer is abhorrent to Yahweh,
 who confides only in the honest.
 33 Yahweh's curse lies on the house of the wicked,
 but he blesses the home of the upright.
 34 He mocks those who mock,
 but accords his favour to the humble.
 35 Glory is the portion of the wise;
 all that fools inherit is contempt.

30 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here appears to be a case of vav/yod confusion.

31 The seeming prosperity of the godless ('the violent', 'the perverse', 'wicked', 'mockers', 'fools' – various terms for the enemies of Yahweh) had always been a threat to the constancy of the Israelites (see 24:1,19, Ps 73) and later became a serious theological problem (Job 21:7, Jr 12:1, *et cetera*).

32 Things that are repugnant to the Lord are usually the most heinous of crimes and gross violations of rituals.

33 The term translated 'wicked' in the 1st line is singular but that translated 'upright' in the 2nd is plural; in scripture, such changes often hint at God's reluctance to curse, but eagerness to bless (e.g., Gn 12:3).

34 In place of וְלַעֲנָיִים, here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has וְלַעֲנָוִים.

35 'Inherit' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'raising'.

משלי פרק ד

- א שִׁמְעוּ בָנִים מוֹסֵר אָב
וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לַדַּעַת בִּינָה:
ב כִּי לֶקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם
תּוֹרָתִי אֶל־תַּעֲזֹבוּ:
ג כִּי־בֶן הָיִיתִי לְאָבִי
רַךְ וְיָחִיד לִפְנֵי אִמִּי:
ד וִירָנִי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי
יִתְמָד־דְּבָרִי לְבָד
שָׁמַר מִצְוֹתַי וַחֲיָה:
ה קִנְיָה חֲכָמָה קִנְיָה בִּינָה
אֶל־תִּשְׁכַּח וְאֶל־תֵּט מֵאֲמַר־יָפִי:
ו אֶל־תַּעֲזֹבָהּ וְתִשְׁמָרָךְ
אֶהְבָּהּ וְתִצְרָךְ:
ז רֵאשִׁית חֲכָמָה קִנְיָה חֲכָמָה

PROVERBS 4

- 1 Listen, my children, to a father's instruction:
pay attention and learn what understanding is.
2 What I offer you is sound doctrine:
do not forsake my teaching.
3 I too was once a child with a father;
in my mother's eyes a tender, only child.
4 He taught me, and said to me,
"Let your heart treasure what I have to say;
keep my principles so that you will live."
5 Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding;
never forget her, never deviate from my words.
6 Do not desert her, she will keep you safe;
love her, she will watch over you.
7 The first principle of wisdom is: acquire wisdom;

PROVERBS 4

- 1 Literally translated, the 2nd line reads, "pay attention so that you may know understanding."
2 The perfect tense in the 1st line has the nuance of instantaneous perfect: the sage is now calling the disciples to listen.
3 The LXX introduces the ideas of 'obedient' and 'beloved' for the terms here translated as 'tender' and 'only'; this seems to be a free rendering, if not a translation of a different Hebrew textual tradition – the MT makes good sense and requires no emendation.
4 The imperative with the *vav* in the last line ('you will live') expresses volitional sequence after the preceding imperative.
5 This verse uses repetition for the imperative 'acquire' to underscore the importance of getting wisdom; it then uses two verb forms for the one prepositional phrase to stress the warning.
6 The 3FS referent is personified Wisdom.
7 To win wisdom, one must first realise how essential it is and that it demands self-sacrifice.

וּבְכָל־קִנְיָנְךָ קִנְהַ בִּינָה:
 ח סִלְסֵלָה וְתִרְוַמְמָךְ
 תִּכְבְּדֶךָ כִּי תִחַבֶּקֶנָּה:
 ט תִּתֵּן לְרֹאשְׁךָ לְוִיתָחַן
 עֹטֶרֶת תְּפָאֶרֶת תִּמְגֶּנֶךָ:
 י שְׁמַע בְּנִי וְקַח אֲמָרִי
 וִירְבוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:
 יא בְּדֶרֶךְ חֲכָמָה הִרִיתִיךָ
 הִדְרַכְתִּיךָ בְּמַעְגְלֵי־יֶשֶׁר:
 יב בְּלִכְתְּךָ לֹא־יֵצֵר צִעְדְּךָ
 וְאִם־תָּרוֹץ לֹא תִפְשָׁל:
 יג הִחֲזֵק בְּמוֹסֵר אֶל־תִּרְף
 נֹצֵרָה כִּי־הִיא חַיִּיךָ:
 יד בְּאֶרֶח רָשָׁעִים אַל־תֵּבֵא
 וְאַל־תֵּאֱשֹׁר בְּדֶרֶךְ רָעִים:

at the cost of all you have, acquire understanding!
 8 Hold her close and she will make you great;
 embrace her and she will be your pride.
 9 She will provide a graceful garland for your head,
 bestow a crown of honour on you.”
 10 Listen, my child, take my words to heart,
 and the years of your life will be many.
 11 I have educated you in the ways of wisdom;
 I have guided you along the path of honesty.
 12 When you walk, your going will be unhindered;
 if you run, you will not stumble.
 13 Hold fast to discipline, never let her go,
 guard her, for she is your life.
 14 Do not follow the path of the wicked;
 do not walk the in the way of evildoers.

-
- 8 The meaning of the Hebrew phrase here translated as ‘hold her close’ is uncertain; it could also mean ‘exalt her’ (the NRSV has ‘prize her highly’). The LXX has ‘surround her with a palisade’ (to protect her).
 9 The personification of Wisdom continues with the bestowal of a wreath for the head.
 10 Literally translated, the 2nd line reads, “and the years of life will be many for you.”
 11 The Hiphil perfects in this verse (translated in the past tense here, following the NJB & NRSV) could also be taken as ‘instantaneous perfects’ and translated in the present tense, as a footnote to NETB suggests; however, NETB actually translates them in the future tense.
 12 The progression from walking to running is an idiom called ‘anabasis’, suggesting that, as greater and swifter progress is made, there will be nothing to impede the progress (cf. Is 40:31).
 13 The form נֹצֵרָה (‘guard her’) has an anomalous doubled letter (the dagesh in צ).
 14 The verb אֶשֶׁר (‘to walk’) should not be confused with the identically spelled homonym, אָשֶׁר (‘to pronounce happy’).

טו פִּרְעָהּוּ אֶל־תִּעְבְּר־בּוֹ
 שְׁטָה מֵעַלְיוֹ וְעִבֵּר:
 טז כִּי לֹא יִשְׁנּוּ אִם־לֹא יַעֲשׂוּ
 וְנִגְזְלָה שְׁנָתָם אִם־לֹא יִכְשִׁילוּ:
 יז כִּי לֶחֱמוֹ לֶחֶם רָשָׁע
 וַיֵּין חֲמָסִים יִשְׁתּוּ:
 יח וְאַרְחַ צְדִיקִים כְּאוֹר נֶגֶה
 הוֹלֵךְ וְאוֹר עַד־נֶכּוֹן הַיּוֹם:
 יט דֶּרֶךְ רָשָׁעִים כְּאֶפְלָה
 לֹא יֵדְעוּ בְּמָה יִכָּשְׁלוּ:
 כ בְּנֵי לְדַבְרֵי הַקְּשִׁיבָה
 לֹא־אֶמְרֵי הַט־אֲזַנָּךְ:
 כא אֶל־יִלְיָזוּ מֵעֵינֶיךָ
 שְׁמֹרֶם בְּתוֹךְ לִבְבְּךָ:
 כב כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לְמַצְאֵיהֶם

15 Avoid it, do not take it;
 turn your back on it, pass it by.
 16 For they don't sleep unless they do evil;
 their sleep is removed unless they make someone fall.
 17 For the bread of wickedness is what they eat,
 and the wine of violence is what they drink.
 18 The path of the upright is like the light of dawn,
 its brightness growing to the fullness of day.
 19 The way of the wicked is as dark as night;
 they cannot tell the obstacles they stumble over.
 20 My child, pay attention to what I am telling you;
 listen carefully to my words.
 21 Do not let them out of your sight;
 keep them deep in your heart.
 22 For they are life to those who find them

-
- 15 The verb עִבֵּר ends both lines: in the 1st, it warns against following wrong paths; in the 2nd, it means to go one's own way.
 16 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here appears to be a simple case of vav/yod confusion.
 17 There are two ways to interpret the genitives in this verse: 1 – genitives of apposition (wickedness and violence *are* their food and drink); 2 – genitives of source (they derive their livelihood from the evil they do).
 18 The 2nd line refers to the coming of high noon, when the sun is at its brightest.
 19 The simile of the 1st line describes ignorance or spiritual blindness, sinfulness, calamity, or despair.
 20 Note the use of the body in this section: ear (v. 20), eyes (v. 21), flesh (v. 22), heart (v. 23), lips (v. 24), eyes (v. 25), feet (v. 26), and hands and feet (v. 27). Each is a synecdoche of part representing the whole: the total accumulation signifies the complete person in the process.
 21 The phrase, 'let them out' translates the Hiphil verb, יִלְיָזוּ, which follows the Aramaic with gemination.
 22 In place of 'all their flesh', here following the NRSV, the NJB reads 'all humanity', taking the phrase 'all flesh' metonymically.

וּלְכָל־בֶּשָׂרוֹ מִרְפָּא:
 כג מִכָּל־מִשְׁמֶר נֹצֵר לִבָּךְ
 כד כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ תּוֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים:
 הֲסֵר מִמֶּךָ עֲקָשׁוֹת פֶּה
 כה וּלְזוֹת שְׁפָתַיִם הֲרַחֵק מִמֶּךָ:
 עֵינֶיךָ לְנֹכַח יִבִּיטוּ
 כו וְעַפְעָפִיךָ יִישְׁרוּ נִגְדֶּךָ:
 כז פֶּלֶס מִעַגְל רִגְלֶךָ
 וְכָל־דַּרְכֶּיךָ יִכָּנוּ:
 אֶל־תִּטְטִימִן וּשְׂמֹאֹל
 הֲסֵר רִגְלֶךָ מֵרָע:

and health to all their flesh.

- 23 More than all else, keep watch over your heart,
since here are the wellsprings of life.
- 24 Remove perverse speech from your mouth;
keep devious talk far from your lips.
- 25 Let your eyes be fixed ahead;
let your gaze be straight before you.
- 26 Keep the path you tread level
so that all your ways remain firm.
- 27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left;
keep your foot clear of evil.

²³ The word ‘wellsprings’ (as NJB) translates תּוֹצְאוֹת, which can mean ‘sources’ or ‘outgoings’.

²⁴ For this verse, here following NETB (where the interpretation is about one’s own words), the NJB interprets it as advice to avoid the lies and deceptions of others, reading, “Turn your back on the mouth that misleads; keep your distance from lips that deceive.” The NRSV seemingly takes the former interpretation but is less clear, reading, “Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.”

²⁵ The jussives in this verse are both Hiphil, the first is from the verb ‘to gaze’ (נִבֵּט) and the second from the verb ‘to be straight’ (יִשָּׁר).

²⁶ The NJB interprets the verb in the first line as a jussive.

²⁷ The two verbs in this verse are from different roots but nonetheless share the same semantic domain. The first verb is תִּטְטִי, a jussive from נָטָה, which means ‘to turn aside’ (Hiphil); the second verb is the Hiphil imperative of תָּט, which means ‘to cause to turn to the side’. The disciple is not to leave the path of righteousness, but to stay on the path he must leave evil.

משלי פרק ה

- א בְּנִי לְחִכְמָתִי הִקְשִׁיבָה
לְתִבּוּנֹתַי הַטֹּאֲנָה:
ב לְשֹׁמֵר מִזְמוֹת
וְדַעַת שְׁפָתֶיךָ יִנָּצְרוּ:
ג כִּי נֶפֶת תִּטְפֶּנָּה שְׁפָתַי זֶרָה
וְחֶלֶק מִשְׁמֵן חֶבֶה:
ד וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ מָרָה כָּל־עֵנָה
חֲדָה בְּחָרֶב פְּיוֹת:
ה רַגְלֶיהָ יִרְדּוּת מוֹת
שְׁאוֹל צִעְדֶּיהָ יִתְמָכוּ:
ו אֶרֶח חַיִּים פֶּן־תִּפְלֹס
נָעוּ מִעֲגֻלָּתֶיהָ לֹא תִדְעַ:
ז וְעַתָּה בָנִים שִׁמְעוּ־לִי
וְאַל־תִּסּוּרוּ מֵאֲמַר־יָפִי:

PROVERBS 5

- 1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom;
listen carefully to what I know;
2 so that you may preserve discretion
and your lips may guard knowledge.
3 For the lips of the adulteress drip with honey,
her palate is more unctuous 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,
Sheol the goal of her steps.
6 Far from following the path of life,
her course is uncertain and she does not know it.
7 And now, my child, listen to me,
never deviate from what I say.

PROVERBS 5

- 1 In this chapter, a warning (vv. 1–15) to avoid the adulteress who leads to death (2:16–19, 7:26–27, 9:18), is followed by encouragement to rejoice in one's own spouse (the 'cistern' of v. 15 and 'fountain' of v. 18).
2 The NJB, following the LXX, adds the following line at the end of this verse: "Take no notice of a loose-living woman." (Rahlfs includes it at the beginning of v. 3: *μὴ πρόσσεχε φαύλην γυναικίαν*) Here, we follow the MT & NRSV.
3 Dripping honey is an implied comparison between the product and her words, which are flattering and smooth.
4 'Wormwood' refers to the aromatic plant that contrasts with the sweetness of honey; some follow the LXX and translate it as 'gall'.
5 The death-related terms here *could* be hyperbolic of a ruined life but probably refer more literally to the consequences of a life of debauchery.
6 The sad part of this verse is that this woman does not know how unstable her life is, or how uneven.
7 'Child' follows the LXX, NJB & NRSV; the MT has 'children'.

ח הִרְחַק מֵעָלֶיהָ דֶּרֶכָּךְ
וְאַל-תִּקְרַב אֶל-פֶּתַח בֵּיתָהּ:
ט פֶּן-תִּתֵּן לְאַחֲרִים הוֹדֶךָ
וְשָׁנֶיךָ לְאֶכְזָרִי:
י פֶּן-יִשְׁבְּעוּ זָרִים כֶּחָךְ
וְעֲצֶיךָ בְּבֵית נָכְרִי:
יא וְנִהְיֶיךָ בְּאַחֲרִיתֶךָ
בְּכָלֹת בְּשָׁרְךָ וּשְׂאֲרֶךָ:
יב וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵיךְ שָׁנְאַתִּי מוֹסֵר
וְתוֹכַחַת נָאֵץ לְבִי:
יג וְלֹא-שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּקוֹל מוֹרִי
וְלֹמַלְמַדִּי לֹא-הִטִּיתִי אָזְנִי:
יד כִּמְעַט הָיִיתִי בְּכָל-רָע
בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל וְעַדָּה:
טו שְׁתֵּה-מַיִם מִבּוֹרְךָ

8 Keep your way far from her;
do not draw near the door of her house,
9 or you will give your honour to others,
and your years to the merciless,
10 and strangers will take their fill of your wealth,
and your produce go the house of a stranger.
11 And, at your ending, you will groan,
your body and flesh having been consumed.
12 And you will exclaim, "Alas, I hated discipline,
my heart spurned all correction.
13 For, I would not attend to the voice of my masters;
and I would not listen to those who tried to teach me.
14 Now I have come to nearly every kind of misery,
in midst of the whole assembly."
15 Drink the water from your own cistern,

-
- 8 There is a contrast made between 'keep far away' (הִרְחַק) and 'do not draw near' (וְאַל-תִּקְרַב).
- 9 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "or she will hand over your honour to others, the years of your life to a man without pity."
- 10 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "and strangers will batten on your property."
- 11 The NJB transposes 'you will groan' to the end of the verse; here, we follow the NRSV.
- 12 For 'spurned all correction', here following the NJB, the NRSV reads 'despised reproof'.
- 13 The *vav* at the start of the 1st line functions in an explanatory sense.
- 14 For the 2nd line, here following NETB, the NJB reads, "in the assembly and in the community." However, the two words, 'assembly' and 'community' form a hendiadys, meaning the entire assembly.
- 15 'Cistern' and 'spring' are metaphors for the lawful wife. The condemnation of adultery (see #2:16) is now complemented by this eulogy of marital fidelity and of the lawful wife (vv. 15–19). For further passages in praise of the ideal wife, a gift from God and the consolation of her

וְנִזְלִים מִתּוֹךְ בְּאֵרֶךְ:
 טז יִפּוּצוּ מֵעִינִתֶיךָ חוּצָה
 בְּרַחֲבוֹת פְּלָגֵי־מַיִם:
 יז יִהְיוּ־לְךָ לְבִדְךָ
 וְאֵין לְזָרִים אֶתְּךָ:
 יח יִהְי־מְקוֹרְךָ בְּרוּךְ
 וְשִׂמְח מֵאִשֶּׁת נְעוּרֶךָ:
 יט אֵילַת אֲהָבִים וַיַּעֲלֵת־חֵן
 דְּדֵיךָ יְרוּךְ בְּכָל־עַתָּה
 בְּאַהֲבָתָה תִּשְׁגֶּה תָּמִיד:
 כ וְלִמָּה תִּשְׁגֶּה בְּנִי בְּזָרָה
 וְתַחֲבֹק חֶק נְכָרִיָּה:
 כא כִּי נֶכַח | עֵינֵי יְהוָה דֹּרְכֵי־אִישׁ

fresh water from your own spring.
 16 Should your springs be scattered abroad,
 streams of water in the streets?
 17 Let them be for you alone,
 and not for strangers with you.
 18 May your fountain be blessed!
 Find joy in the wife you married in your youth,
 19 fair as a deer, graceful as a doe:
 hers the breasts that ever fill you with delight,
 hers the love that ever holds you captive.
 20 Why be seduced, my son, by someone else's wife,
 and fondle the breast of a stranger?
 21 For the eyes of Yahweh observe human ways;

husband, see 18:22, 19:14 (and, by contrast, 11:22, 19:13, 21:9,19, 25:24, 27:15, 31:3) and particularly the enthusiastic commendation of the perfect wife with which the book ends (31:10–31). Perhaps here too, as in 31:10ff, behind the characteristics of the lawful wife we should see a symbolic portrait of Wisdom personified.

- 16 For this verse, here following the *NRSV* and *NETB*, the *NJB*, which does not interpret it as a (rhetorical) question reads, “*Even if your fountains overflow outside, your streams of water in the public squares:*”
- 17 The point is that what is private is not to be shared with strangers; it belongs in the home and in the marriage. The water from that cistern is not to be channelled to strangers or to the public.
- 18 The positive instruction is now given: Find pleasure in a fulfilling marriage. The ‘*fountain*’ is another in the series of implied comparisons with the sexual pleasure that must be fulfilled at home.
- 19 The imagery for intimate love in marriage is now employed to stress the beauty of sexual fulfilment as it was intended. The ‘*doe*’ and ‘*deer*’, both implied comparisons, exhibit the grace and love of the wife.
- 20 Other readings for ‘*seduced*’ (here following the *NJB*) are ‘*intoxicated*’ (*NRSV*) and ‘*captivated*’ (*NETB*).
- 21 The pronoun in the 2nd line is actually singular in the *MT* but is representative of all humans.

וְכָל־מַעֲלֹתֵי מַפְלָס:
כב עֲוֹנוֹתָיו יִלְכְּדֵנוּ אֶת־הָרָשָׁע
וּבְחִבְלֵי חַטָּאתוֹ יִתְמָד:
כג הוּא יָמוּת בְּאֵין מוֹסֵר
וּבְרַב אֲוִלְתּוֹ יִשָּׂגָה:

and he surveys all their paths.

²² The iniquities of the wicked ensnare them;
they are caught in the meshes of their own sin.

²³ For want of discipline, he dies,
led astray by his own excessive folly.

²² The term, '*the wicked*', is not found in the LXX and could be an old scribal error.

²³ The four recommendations that follow, 6:1-5, 6-11, 12-15, 16-19, interrupt the sage's discourse, which resumes at 6:20.

משלי פרק ו

א בְּנִי אִם־עֲרַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ
תִּקְעֵת לְזֹר כִּפִּידֶךָ:
ב נֹקֶשֶׁת בְּאִמְרֵי־פִידֶךָ
נִלְפֶדֶת בְּאִמְרֵי־פִידֶךָ:
ג עֲשֵׂה זֹאת אִפְּוֹא | בְּנִי וְהִנָּצַל
כִּי בָאתָ בְּכַף־רֵעֶךָ
לֶךְ הִתְרַפֵּס וְרֵהֵב רַעֲיֶיךָ:
ד אֶל־תִּתֵּן שֹׁנָה לְעֵינֶיךָ
וְתִנּוּמָה לְעַפְעָפֶיךָ:
ה הִנָּצַל כַּצִּיבִי מִיָּד
וְכִצְפּוֹר מִיָּד יְקוֹשׁ:
ו לֶךְ־אֶל־נַמְלָה עֲצֹל
רְאֵה דְרָכֶיהָ וְחִכֶּם:
ז אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהּ קָצִין
שֹׁטֵר וּמַשִּׁל:

PROVERBS 6

- 1 My child, if you have gone surety for your neighbour,
if you have guaranteed to bond of a stranger,
- 2 then you have committed yourself with your lips,
you are ensnared by the words of your mouth.
- 3 So, do this, my child, to extricate yourself,
since you have come into your neighbour's hand:
Go, humble yourself, plead with your neighbour,
- 4 give your eyes no sleep,
your eyelids no rest,
- 5 break free like a gazelle from the trap,
like a bird from the fowler's clutches.
- 6 Idler, go to the ant;
ponder her ways and grow wise:
- 7 No one gives her orders,
no overseer, no master,

PROVERBS 6

- 1 Surety was practised in ancient Israel; the earliest proverbs warn against its abuse (11:15), though Ben Sira commends it as charitable.
- 2 The NJB opens both lines with 'if' but making these lines part of the condition seems to make little sense.
- 3 The literal translation of 'power' is 'hand'.
- 4 The NRSV & NETB have 'slumber' in place of 'rest', here following the NJB.
- 5 'From the trap' follows the LXX; the MT has 'from the hand' (the NRSV has 'from the hunter').
- 6 Knowledge of nature is part of the sage's intellectual equipment (see 30:24–31, 1K 5:13 *et cetera*).
- 7 The conjunction *vav* on the last word has the classification of alternative, so the 2nd line could equally-well be read, "no overseer or master."

ח תִּכְיֶן בְּקִיץ לַחֲמָה

אָגְרָה בְּקִצֵּיר מֵאֲכָלָהּ:

ἢ πορεύηται πρὸς τὴν μέλισσαν καὶ μάθῃ ὡς ἐργάτις ἐστὶν
τὴν τε ἐργασίαν ὡς σεμνὴν ποιεῖται,
ἥς τοὺς πόρους βασιλεῖς καὶ ἰδιῶται πρὸς ὑγίειαν πρὸς φέρονται,
ποθεῖνῃ δὲ ἐστὶν πᾶσιν καὶ ἐπίδοξος·
καίπερ οὖσα τῇ ῥώμῃ ἁσθενής,
τὴν σοφίαν τιμήσασα προήχθη.

ט עַד־מָתִי עֲצָל | תִּשְׁכַּב

מָתִי תִקּוּם מִשְׁנָתְךָ:

י מַעַט שְׁנוֹת מַעַט תְּנוּמוֹת

מַעַט | חֶבֶק יָדַי לְשֹׁכֵב:

יא וּבֶאֱכָמְהֶלֶךְ רֹאשֶׁךְ

וּמַחֲסֶרְךָ כְּאִישׁ מִגָּן:

יב אָדָם בְּלִיעַל אִישׁ אֶזְרוֹ

הוֹלֵךְ עֲקָשׁוֹת פֶּה:

יג קֶרֶץ בְּעֵינָיו מִלֵּל בְּרִגְלוֹ

מָרָה בְּאַצְבָּעֵתָיו:

8 yet, all through the summer, she gets her food ready,
and gathers her supplied at harvest time.

Or go to the bee and see how diligent she is
and how considerable the work she does.

Kings and commanders take what she yields for their health;
she is sought after and revered by all.

Her strength may be feeble,
but because she does homage to wisdom, she wins respect.

9 How long do you intend to lie there, idler?
When are you going to rise from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little drowsiness,
a little folding of the arms to lie back,

11 and poverty comes like a vagrant
and, like an armed man, dearth.

12 A scoundrel, a vicious man,
he goes around with crooked speech,

13 winking his eye, shuffling his foot,
beckoning with his finger.

8 The 6 lines here presented in green follow the LXX (the translation is from a footnote in the NJB); they are not present in any Hebrew MSS.

9 The use of the 2 rhetorical questions is designed to forcefully rebuke the lazy person: the sluggard is spending too much time reposing.

10 In this verse, the author is probably imitating (ironically) the words of the idler, who just want to take a 'little nap'.

11 The NRSV has 'robber' in place of 'vagrant'; the NJB has 'beggar' in place of 'armed warrior' (here following the MT and NRSV).

12 The term translated 'crooked' (following the NRSV & NETB) can refer to something that is physically twisted or something morally perverse.

13 The sinister sign language and gestures of the perverse individual seem to indicate any kind of look or gesture that is put on and therefore a form of deception if not a way of making insinuations.

יד תִּהְיֶה פְּכוּת | בְּלִבּוֹ
 חָרַשׁ רָע בְּכָל־עֵת
 מַדְנִים מְדִינִים יִשְׁלַח:
 טו עַל־כֵּן פֶּתְאִם יָבוֹא אִידּוֹ
 פֶּתַע יִשְׁבֹּר וְאִין מִרְפָּא:
 טז שֵׁשֶׁ־הֵנָּה שָׂנֵא יְהוָה
 וְשִׁבְעַת תּוֹעֲבוֹת תּוֹעֲבַת נַפְשׁוֹ:
 יז עֵינָיִם רָמוֹת לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֶר
 יָדַיִם שׁוֹפְכוֹת דַּם־נָקִי:
 יח לֵב חָרַשׁ מַחֲשֵׁבוֹת אָוֶן
 רַגְלַיִם מְמַהְרֹת לָרוּץ לָרָעָה:
 יט יָפִיחַ בַּזָּבִים עֵד שָׁקֶר
 וּמְשַׁלַּח מְדִנִּים בֵּין אֲחִים:
 כ נָצַר בְּנֵי מִצְוֹת אָבִיךָ
 וְאַל־תִּטֹּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ:
 כא קְשֶׁרֶם עַל־לִבְךָ תָּמִיד

14 Trickery is in his heart,
 always scheming evil;
 he sows dissension.
 15 Disaster will overtake him sharply for this;
 suddenly, irretrievably, he will be broken.
 16 There are six things that Yahweh hates,
 seven that he abhors:
 17 A haughty look, a lying tongue,
 hands that shed innocent blood,
 18 a heart that weaves wicked plots,
 feet that hurry to run to evil,
 19 a false witness who lies with every breath,
 and one who sows dissension among brothers.
 20 Keep your father's commands, my child,
 do not spurn your mother's teaching.
 21 Bind them ever to your heart,

14 The *Kethib* here has a contracted plural form (מַדְנִים) whereas the *Qere* has the normal plural form (מְדִינִים).

15 The word translated 'suddenly' is an adverbial accusative.

16 Vv. 16–19 are typical 'numerical proverbs' (see #30:15 and Am 1:3–2:8) about seven ugly vices. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from further explanation.

17 The hands are the instruments of murder and God hates bloodshed.

18 For the 2nd line, here following the *NRSV*, the *NJB* reads, "feet that hurry to do evil." The *MT* has two verbs but the *LXX* omits the second ('run').

19 God hates perjury and a lying witness, which is a direct violation of the Law (Ex 20).

20 The *NJB* has 'precept' in place of 'commands', here following *NETB*.

21 In this verse, there may be an allusion to Dt 6, where the people were told to bind the Law on their foreheads and arms.

עֲנִידִם עַל־גְּרָגְרִיתְךָ:
 כב בַּהֲתַלְכְּךָ | תִּנְחָה אֹתְךָ
 בְּשֹׁכְבְּךָ תִּשְׁמַר עֲלֶיךָ
 וְהִקְצוֹת הִיא תִּשְׁיַחְךָ:
 כג כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹזֶר
 וְדֶרֶךְ חַיִּים תּוֹכְחוֹת מוֹסֵר:
 כד לְשִׁמְרֶךָ מֵאִשֶּׁת רָעָה
 מִחֻלְלֵת לְשׁוֹן נָכְרִיָּה:
 כה אַל־תַּחְמֹד יִפְיָהּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ
 וְאַל־תִּקְחֶהּ בְּעַפְעָפֶיהָ:
 כו כִּי בַעַד־אִשָּׁה זֹנָה עַד־כֶּכֶר לֶחֶם
 וְאִשָּׁת אִישׁ נָפֶשׁ יִקְרָה תְּצוּד:
 כז כִּי בַעַד־אִשָּׁה זֹנָה עַד־כֶּכֶר לֶחֶם
 וְאִשָּׁת אִישׁ נָפֶשׁ יִקְרָה תְּצוּד:
 כח אִם־יִהְיֶה אִישׁ עַל־הַגָּחָלִים
 וְרָגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה:
 כט כֵּן הֵבֵא אֶל־אִשְׁתִּי רַעְהוּ

tie them round your neck.
 22 While you are active, they will guide you,
 when you fall asleep, they will watch over you,
 when you wake up, they will converse with you.
 23 For the commandment is a lamp, the teaching is a light;
 correction and discipline are the way to life,
 24 preserving you from the woman of bad character,
 from the wheedling talk of the adulteress.
 25 Do not covet her beauty in your heart
 or let her captivate you with the play of her eyes.
 26 A prostitute can be bought with a hunk of bread,
 but a married woman aims to snare a precious life.
 27 Can a man carry fire inside his shirt
 without setting his clothes alight?
 28 Can you walk on red-hot coals
 without burning your feet?
 29 Just so, the man who makes love to his neighbour's wife:

22 In all three lines here, the MT has 'it' in place of 'they'.

23 The NJB has 'precept' in place of 'commandment', here following the NRSV & NETB.

24 In place of 'adulteress' (literally, 'evil woman'), here following the MT & NRSV, the NJB has 'wife of another', following the LXX.

25 Lusting after someone in the heart, according to Jesus, is a sin of the same kind as the act, not just the first step toward it (Mt 5:28).

26 The adulteress is more dangerous than the prostitute is: the latter is content with a cash payment; the former demands a man's whole life.

27 Fire here represents the sinful woman drawn close, and the burning of the clothes the inevitable consequences of the liaison.

28 The initial particle here indicates that this is another rhetorical question, like that in v. 27.

29 The verb בוא with the preposition אל ('come to') is frequently used as a euphemism for sexual relations.

לֹא יִנָּקָה כָּל־הַנֹּגֵעַ בָּהּ:
 לֹא־יִבּוּזוּ לַגֵּנֵב כִּי יִגְנוֹב ל
 לְמַלֵּא נַפְשׁוֹ כִּי יִרְעֵב:
 וְנִמְצָא יִשְׁלַם שִׁבְעָתַיִם לֹא
 אֶת־כָּל־הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ יִתֵּן:
 נֶאֱפָף אִשָּׁה חֲסֵר־לֵב לֵב
 מְשַׁחֵית נַפְשׁוֹ הוּא יַעֲשֶׂנָּה:
 נֹגַע־זִקְלוֹן יִמְצָא לֵג
 וְחִרְפָּתוֹ לֹא תִמָּחֶה:
 כִּי־קִנְאָה חֲמַת־גִּבּוֹר לֵד
 וְלֹא־יַחֲמוֹל בְּיוֹם נָקָם:
 לֹא־יִשָּׂא פָנָיו כָּל־כֹּפֶר לֹה
 וְלֹא־יֵאָכֵל כִּי תִרְבֶּה־שָׂחָד:

no one who touches her will get off unpunished.
 30 People attach but little blame to a thief
 who steals to fulfil his need when he is hungry.
 31 Yet, even he, if caught, will have to repay sevenfold
 and hand over all his family resources.
 32 However, the adulterer has no sense;
 he works his own destruction.
 33 All he will get is blows and contempt,
 and dishonour never to be blotted out.
 34 For jealousy inflames the husband
 who will show no mercy on the day of vengeance.
 35 He will not consider any compensation;
 lavish what gifts you may, he will not be placated.

30 For the 2nd line, here following *NETB*, the *NJB* reads, “*who steals only to satisfy his hunger.*”

31 Though excused by hunger, the thief must restore with interest. Ex 22:1–8 prescribes double restitution; here, ‘sevenfold’ is an arbitrary figure to emphasise how costly restitution can be.

32 The literal translation of ‘sense’ is ‘heart’.

33 Even though the text says that the man caught in adultery ruins his life, it does not mean that he was put to death, although that could have happened. He might receive blows and wounds from the husband (v. 34) and shame and disgrace from the spiritual community.

34 The idea here is that the husband will not spare the guilty man any of the punishment.

35 For the 2nd line, here following the *NJB*, the *NRSV* reads, “*and refuses a bribe no matter how great.*”

משלי פרק ז

א בְּנִי שְׁמֹר אִמְרֵי
וּמִצְוֹתַי תִּצְפֹּן אֹתָם:
ב שְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְחַיָּה
וְתוֹרָתִי כְּאִשּׁוֹן עֵינֶיךָ:
ג קִשְׂרָם עַל־אֶצְבָּעֶיךָ
כְּתֹבָם עַל־לוּחַ לִבְּךָ:
ד אֲמַר לַחֲכָמָה אֶחָתִי אֵת
וּמִדָּע לִבִּינָה תִקְרָא:
ה לְשֹׁמְרֶךָ מֵאִשָּׁה זָרָה
מִמְכַּרְיָהּ אִמְרֵיהָ הַחֲלִיקָה:
ו כִּי בַחֲלוֹן בֵּיתִי
בְּעַד אֲשַׁנְבִּי נִשְׁקַפְתִּי:
ז וְאֵרָא בַּפֶּתָאִים אֲבִינָה בְּבָנִים
נָעַר חֲסֵר־לֵב:

PROVERBS 7

- 1 My child, keep my words,
and treasure my precepts.
- 2 Keep my commands and you will live,
keep my teaching as the apple of your eye.
- 3 Bind these to your fingers;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
- 4 Say to Wisdom, "You are my sister!"
Call Understanding your relation,
to save yourself from the loose woman,
from the adulteress, with her seductive words.
- 6 For, at the window of my house,
I was looking out through the lattice
and I saw, among the naïve, I noticed among the lads,
one boy who had no sense.

PROVERBS 7

- 1 This chapter promotes wisdom as a safeguard against adultery.
- 2 The NJB has 'precepts' in place of 'commands', here following NETB.
- 3 This verse is an allusion to Dt 6:8: binding the teachings on the fingers and writing them on the tablets here are implied comparisons for preserving the teaching in memory so that it can be recalled and used with ease.
- 4 The metaphor is meant to signify that the disciple will be closely related to and familiar with wisdom and understanding.
- 5 The literal translation of both 'loose woman' and 'adulteress' is 'strange woman'.
- 6 The NJB opens with 'while I was', in place of 'for', here following the NRSV.
- 7 In place of 'naïve', here following NETB, the NJB has 'callow youths' and the NRSV has 'simple ones'.

ח עֶבֶר בַּשּׁוּק אֶצֶל פֶּנֶה
וְדֶרֶךְ בֵּיתָה יֵצֵד:
ט בְּנֶשֶׁף-בַּעֲרֵב יוֹם
בְּאִישׁוֹן לַיְלָה וּאֶפְלָה:
י וְהִנֵּה אִשָּׁה לִקְרָאתוֹ
שֵׁית זֹזְנָה וְנִצְרַת לֵב:
יא הַמִּיָּה הִיא וְסִרְרַת
בְּבֵיתָה לֹא-יִשְׁכְּנוּ רַגְלֶיהָ:
יב פֶּעַם | בַּחוּץ פֶּעַם בְּרַחֲבוֹת
וְאֶצֶל כָּל-פֶּנֶה תֵּאָרֵב:
יג וְהַחֲזִיקָה בּוֹ וְנִשְׁקָה לוֹ
הַעֲזָה פָּנֶיהָ וּתֹאמַר לוֹ:
יד זְבַחִי שְׁלָמִים עָלַי
הַיּוֹם שְׁלַמְתִּי נִדְרֵי:
טו עַל-כֵּן יֵצְאֹתִי לִקְרָאתָךְ
לִשְׁחַר פָּנֶיךָ וְאִמְצֹאָךְ:

8 Passing along the street near her corner,
he reached the path to her house,
9 in the twilight, in the evening,
at dead of night and in the dark.
10 And look, a woman is coming to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute, false of heart.
11 She is loud and brazen;
her feet cannot rest at home.
12 Now in the street, now in the squares,
she lurks at every corner.
13 She catches hold of him, she kisses him,
the bold-faced creature says to him,
14 "I had to offer a sacrifice,
I have discharged my vows today.
15 That is why I came out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and now I have found you.

8 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Going along the lane, near the corner where she lives."

9 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB reads, "at twilight when day is declining."

10 The meaning of the Hebrew text of the 2nd line is uncertain.

11 The 2nd line uses a synecdoche, a part for the whole; the point is that she never stays home but is out and about all the time.

12 The NJB reads 'once' in place of 'now' (twice in the 1st line), here following the NRSV.

13 The Hiphil perfect of עָזַז ('to be strong') means she has an impudent face, a bold or brazen expression.

14 The NJB has 'communion sacrifice' in the 1st line, here following the NRSV. NETB interprets rather differently, reading, "I have fresh meat at home," which presumably understands that there was some meat left over from the offering.

15 In place of 'to seek you eagerly', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'to look for you'; the literal translation is 'to look diligently for your face'.

טז מְרַבְּדִים רַבְּדָתִי עֲרֻשֵׁי
חֲטָבוֹת אֶטוֹן מִצְרַיִם:
יז נִפְתִּי מִשְׁכָּבִי
מֵר אֱהָלִים וְקִנְמוֹן:
יח לֵבָה נִרוּה דָדִים עַד־הַבֹּקֶר
נִתְעַלְסָה בְּאֱהָבִים:
יט כִּי אֵין הָאִישׁ בְּבֵיתוֹ
הֵלֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ מֵרְחוֹק:
כ צִרְו־הַכֶּסֶף לָקַח בִּידוֹ
לְיוֹם הַכֶּסֶּא יָבֵא בֵיתוֹ:
כא הִטָּתוּ בְּרַב לִקְחָהּ
בַּחֲלֵק שְׁפָתֶיהָ תִּדְיַחְנוּ:
כב הוֹלֵךְ אַחֲרֶיהָ פֶּתָאם
כֶּשֶׁזׁר אֶל־טֶבַח יָבֵא
וְכַעֲכֶם אֶל־מוֹסֵר אֲוִיל:
כג עַד יַפְלֹחַ חֵץ בְּבִדּוֹ

16 I have spread coverlets over my divan,
embroidered stuff and Egyptian linen.
17 I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh,
with aloes and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love until morning;
let us enjoy the delights of love!
19 For my husband is not at home,
he has gone on a very long journey,
20 taking his money bags with him;
he will not be back until the moon is full."
21 With her persistent coaxing, she persuades him,
lures him on with her wheedling patter.
22 Forthwith, he follows her,
like an ox on its way to the slaughterhouse,
or a dog caught in a noose,
23 like a stag with an arrow stuck in its liver,

16 The NJB has 'material' in place of 'linen', here following the NRSV.

17 The three perfumes mentioned here would all have been expensive luxuries.

18 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Come on, we will make love as much as we like, until morning."

19 The literal translation of 'my husband' is 'the man'; the LXX interpreted it as 'my husband' (*ἀνὴρ μου*), no doubt taking the article as a possessive.

20 The woman's speech ends at this verse.

21 The term לָקַח ('persuades') was used earlier in Proverbs for wise instruction; now it is used ironically for enticement.

22 The 3rd line here follows the LXX (*καὶ ὥσπερ κύνων ἐπὶ δεσμύτι*); the MT is uncertain (JPS has, "or as one in fetters to the correction of the fool") – the NJB has 'like a madman on his way to the stocks' and the NRSV, anticipating the 1st line of v. 23, has 'or bounds like a stag toward the trap'.

23 The figure of an arrow piercing the liver may refer to the pangs conscience that the guilty must reap along with the spiritual and physical ruin.

כְּמִהַר צִפּוֹר אֶל־פֶּחַ
 וְלֹא־יָדַע כִּי־בִנְפָשׁוֹ הוּא:
 כד וְעַתָּה בָּנִים שְׁמַעוּ־לִי
 וְהִקְשִׁיבוּ לְאִמְרֵי־פִי:
 כה אַל־יֵשֶׁט אֶל־דַּרְכֶיהָ לִבְךָ
 אַל־תֵּתַע בְּנִתִיבוֹתֶיהָ:
 כו כִּי־רַבִּים חַלְלִים הִפִּילָהּ
 וְעֲצָמַיִם כָּל־הֶרְגָהּ:
 כז דַּרְכֵי שְׁאוֹל בֵּיתָהּ
 יִרְדּוּת אֶל־חֲדָרֵי־מָוֶת:

like the bird that dashes into the net
 without realising that its life is at stake.

- 24 And now, my sons, listen to me,
 pay attention to the words I have to say:
 25 Do not let your heart stray into her ways,
 or wander 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,
 the descent to the courts of death.

24 The literal translation of 'sons' (rather than the 'children' used elsewhere) works well here, considering the nature of the cautionary tale of the preceding verse.

25 The NRSV has 'hearts' in place of 'heart' (note that 'sons' are being addressed here).

26 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "She has done many to death, and the strongest have all been her victims."

27 The noun, 'Sheol' (שְׁאוֹל), when parallel to 'the courts of death', probably means the grave. It is a genitive of location, indicating the goal of the road(s). Her house is not the grave; it is, however, the sure way to it. The young man's life is not destroyed in one instant; it is taken from him gradually as he enters into a course of life that will leave him as another victim of the wages of sin. The point of the warning is to prevent such a course from starting. Sin can certainly be forgiven, but the more involvement in this matter the greater the alienation from the healthy community.

משלי פרק ח

א הלא־חכמה תקרא
ותבונה תתן קולה:
ב בראש־מַרְמִים עַל־דֶּרֶךְ
בֵּית נְתִיבוֹת נִצָּבָה:
ג לִיד־שַׁעֲרִים לְפִי־קָרָת
מְבֹא פְתָחִים תִּרְנָה:
ד אֲלֵיכֶם אִישִׁים אֶקְרָא
וְקוֹלִי אֶל־בְּנֵי אָדָם:
ה הִבֵּינוּ פְתָאִים עֲרֻמָּה
וְכִסְיֵלִים הִבֵּינוּ לֵב:
ו שְׁמָעוּ כִּי־נִגִּידִים אֲדַבֵּר
וּמִפֶּתַח שְׁפָתַי מִישָׁרִים:
ז כִּי־אִמֶּת יִהְיֶה חֶכְמִי
וְתוֹעֵבַת שְׁפָתַי רָשָׁע:

PROVERBS 8

- 1 Is not Wisdom calling?
Is not Understanding raising her voice?
- 2 On the heights overlooking the road,
at the crossroads, she takes her stand.
- 3 By the gates, at the entrance to the city,
on the access roads, she cries out:
- 4 "I am calling to you, all people,
and my cry is to all that live.
- 5 Simpletons, learn how to behave,
fools, come to your senses.
- 6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right.
- 7 My mouth proclaims the truth,
for evil is abhorrent to my lips.

PROVERBS 8

- 1 Chs. 8–9 mark the height of the teaching of Proverbs on wisdom (see #8:22). The same theme is developed in later books: Si 1:1–20, 24:1–34, Ws 6–9 (see also Job 28).
- 2 Throughout this section, the feminine singular pronoun refers to Wisdom personified.
- 3 Perhaps this verse alludes to a travelling salesman, who attracts custom by boasting of the quality of his wares.
- 4 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "my words are addressed to all humanity."
- 5 The literal translation of 'come to your senses' is 'listen to your heart (i.e. intellect)'.
- 6 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Listen, I have something important to tell you, when I speak my words are right."
- 7 The literal translation of 'my mouth' is 'the roof of the mouth'.

ח בצדק כל־אמרי־פי
 אין בהם נפתל ועקש:
 ט כלם נכחים למבין
 וישרים למצאי דעת:
 י קחו־מוסרי ואל־בסר
 ודעת מחרוץ נבחר:
 יא כי־טובה חכמה מפנינים
 וכל־חפצים לא ישוו־בה:
 יב אני־חכמה שכנתי ערמה
 ודעת מזמות אמצא:
 יג יראת יהוה שנאת־רע
 גאה וגאון ודרך־רע
 ופי תהפכות שנאתי:
 יד לי־עצה ותושיה
 אני בינה לי גבורה:

8 All the words from my mouth are upright,
 nothing twisted there, nothing crooked.
 9 They are all straight to one who understands
 and right to those who find knowledge.
 10 Accept my discipline rather than silver,
 and knowledge of me in preference to finest gold.
 11 For Wisdom is more precious than jewels,
 and nothing else is so worthy of desire.
 12 "I, Wisdom, share house with Discretion,
 I am mistress of the art of thought.
 13 Fear of Yahweh means hatred of evil.
 I hate pride and arrogance,
 wicked behaviour and a lying mouth.
 14 To me belong good advice and prudence,
 I am perception: power is mine!

-
- ⁸ The verb פתל means 'to twist' and, in the Niphal, it means 'to wrestle'. It is used in Gn 30:8 for the naming of Naphtali, with the motivation for the name from this verb: "with great struggling." Here, it describes speech that is twisted.
- ⁹ For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Everything is plain, if you can understand; straight, if you have acquired knowledge."
- ¹⁰ The NRSV has 'instruction' in place of 'discipline', here following the MT & NJB.
- ¹¹ NETB has 'rubies' in place of 'jewels', here following the NJB & NRSV.
- ¹² The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain; the NRSV reads, "I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I attain knowledge and discretion."
- ¹³ The NJB parenthesises the 1st line.
- ¹⁴ In the 1st half of this verse, instead of אני, some propose reading simply לי, as the renderings in the LXX, Vg, and Peshitta suggest. Then, in place of the לי that comes in the same colon, read ולי. While the MT is a difficult reading, it can be translated as it is, and it is difficult to know exactly what the ancient versions were reading, because their translations could have been derived from either text.

טו בִּי מַלְכִּים יִמְלֻכוּ
 וְרוֹזְנִים יַחְקֻקוּ צֶדֶק:
 טז בִּי שָׂרִים יִשְׁרוּ
 וְנֹדִיבִים כָּל־שֹׁפְטֵי צֶדֶק:
 יז אֲנִי אֶהְבִּיה אֶהְבֵּי אֶהֱב
 וּמִשְׁחָרִי יִמְצְאֵנִי:
 יח עֲשֶׂר־זָכוּד אֶתִּי
 הוֹן עָתֶק וְצִדְקָה:
 יט טוֹב פְּרִי מַחְרוּץ וּמִפָּז
 וְתְבוּאַתִּי מִכֶּסֶף נִבְחָר:
 כ בָּאֶרֶח־צִדְקָה אֶהְלֹךְ
 בְּתוֹךְ נְתִיבוֹת מִשְׁפָּט:
 כא לַהֲנַחִיל אֶהְבֵּי יֵשׁ
 וְאַצְרֵתִיהֶם אֲמֵלֵא:
 εὐὰ ἀναγγεῖλω ὑμῖν τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν γινόμενα,
 μνημονεύσω τὰ ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀρρομῆσαι.

15 By me, monarchs rule
 and princes decree what is right.
 16 By me, rulers govern,
 so do nobles, all who govern rightly.
 17 I love those who love me;
 whoever searches eagerly for me finds me.
 18 With me are riches and honour,
 lasting wealth and saving justice.
 19 The fruit I give is better than gold, even the finest;
 the return I make is better than pure silver.
 20 I walk in the way of uprightness,
 in the path of justice,
 21 to endow my friends with my wealth
 and to fill their treasuries.
 If I declare to you the things of daily occurrence,
 I will remember to recount the things of old.

15 In place of 'princes', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'rulers' and NETB has 'potentates'.

16 Some Hebrew MSS read 'all rulers of the earth' in place of 'all who govern rightly'.

17 This verse is sometimes read before v. 15 to improve the logic of the argument. The Kethib/Qere difference here (removal of a letter) would benefit from a full explanation.

18 In place of 'saving justice', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'prosperity'.

19 The repetition of 'gold' in the 1st line (literally, 'than gold, than fine gold') is understood by NETB as a verbal hendiadys and translated as 'pure gold'.

20 For the 2nd line, here following the NJB, NETB reads, "in the midst of the pathway of justice."

21 The 2 lines here presented in green follow the LXX (the translation is from a footnote in the NJB); they are not present in any Hebrew MSS.

כב יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו
 קדם מפעליו מאז:
 כג מעולם נסכתי מראש
 מקדמי־ארץ:
 כד באין־תהמות חוללתי
 באין מעינות נכבדי־מים:
 כה בטרם הרים הטבעו
 לפני גבעות חוללתי:
 כו עד־לא עשה ארץ וחוצות
 וראש עפרות תבל:
 כז בהכינו שמים שם אני
 בחקו חוג על־פני תהום:
 כח באמצו שחקים ממעל
 בעוז עינות תהום:

22 “Yahweh created me, first fruits of his fashioning,
 before the oldest of his works.
 23 From everlasting, I was firmly set,
 from the beginning, before the earth came into being.
 24 The deep was not, when I was born,
 nor were the springs, with their abounding waters.
 25 Before the mountains were settled,
 before the hills, I came to birth –
 26 before he had made the earth, the countryside,
 and the first elements of the world.
 27 When he fixed the heavens firm, I was there,
 when he drew a circle on the surface of the deep,
 28 when he thickened the clouds above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,

-
- 22 The verb קנני is translated as ‘has created me’ by the LXX, Peshitta and Tg, cf. Si 1:4,9, 24:8–9. The translation ‘acquired me’ or ‘possessed me’ (Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion) was adopted by the Vg, probably with an eye to the heretic Arius, who maintained that the Word (= Wisdom) was a created being. The expression ‘first fruits of his fashioning’ (literally ‘first fruits of his way’ or ‘of his ways’, according to the LXX and Peshitta) is linked to the title ‘firstborn of every creature’ given to Christ by Paul (Col 1:15) and to the title ‘principle of God’s creation’ (Rv 3:14).
 23 Another translation of ‘firmly set’ (נסך) is ‘anointed’, according to one possible sense of the word. Some prefer the usual meaning of ‘pour’ or ‘found’ (as of metal).
 24 The ‘deep’ refers to the watery abyss on which rest both the earth’s disc and the canopy of heaven (see Gn 1, Job 38, Ps 104).
 25 In place of ‘were settled’, the NRSV has ‘had been shaped’.
 26 The NRSV has ‘fields’ in place of ‘countryside’; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.
 27 The ‘circle’ here represents the horizon (as NETB translates).
 28 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “when the sources of the deep began to swell.”

כט בְּשׁוּמוֹ לַיָּם | חֲקֹו
 וּמִים לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ-פִּי
 בְּחֻקּוֹ מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ:
 ל וְאֵהִי אֶצְלוֹ אֹמֶן
 וְאֵהִי שֶׁעֲשׂוּעִים יוֹם | יוֹם
 מִשְׁחַקַּת לִפְנָיו בְּכָל-עֵת:
 לא מִשְׁחַקַּת בְּתֵבֶל אֶרֶץ
 וְשֶׁעֲשִׂי אֶת-בְּנֵי אָדָם:
 לב וְעַתָּה בָּנִים שִׁמְעוּ-לִי
 וְאֲשֵׁרֵי דֶרֶכִי יִשְׁמְרוּ:
 לג שִׁמְעוּ מוֹסֵר וְחֲכָמוֹ
 וְאַל-תִּפְרְעוּ:
 לד אֲשֵׁרֵי אָדָם שִׁמְעֵ לִי
 לְשָׁקֵד עַל-דִּלְתֵּי יוֹם | יוֹם
 לְשֹׁמֵר מְזוֹזֹת פֶּתָחַי:

29 when he assigned the sea its boundaries,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he traced the foundations of the earth,
 30 I was beside the master craftsman,
 delighting him day after day,
 ever rejoicing in his presence,
 31 rejoicing everywhere on his earth,
 delighting to be with the children of men.
 32 “And now, my children, listen to me.
 Happy are those who keep my ways.
 33 Listen to my instruction and become wise,
 do not reject it.
 34 Blessed, whoever listens to me,
 who, day after day, keeps watch at my gates
 to guard my portals.

29 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV (and MT), the NJB reads, “and the waters will not encroach on the shore.”

30 ‘Master craftsman’ translates a rare Hebrew word (אֹמֶן). The meaning ‘artisan’ or ‘artist’ is attested by Jr 52:15, Sg 7:2, and confirmed by the LXX. Wisdom collaborates with the Creator (cf. Si 1:9–10, Ws 7:22). Another translation, based on a slight correction, makes Wisdom the ‘beloved child’ or ‘faithful servant’ of the Creator.

31 The NJB has ‘at play’ in place of ‘rejoicing’, here following the NRSV (as also in v. 30).

32 The conclusion of the speech (vv. 32–36) is an offer of ‘life’ (v. 35) in place of ‘death’ (v. 36).

33 The literal translation of ‘instruction’ is ‘discipline’.

34 The word ‘whoever’ translates literally as ‘the man who’.

לֵה כִּי מִצְאִי מֵצֵאִי מֵצֵא חַיִּים
 וַיִּפֶּק רָצוֹן מִיְהוָה:
 לוּ וַחֲטֵאִי חָמַס נַפְשׁוֹ
 כָּל־מִשְׁנָאִי אֶהְבּוּ מוֹת:

35 For whoever finds me finds life,
 and obtains the favour of Yahweh.

36 However, whoever misses me harms himself;
 all who hate me are in love with death."

35 In place of (the 2nd) מֵצֵאִי (a plural participle), here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has מֵצֵא (a singular perfect verb).

36 The Qal active participle translated as 'harms' functions verbally here.

משלי פרק ט

- א חִכְמוֹת בָּנְתָה בֵּיתָה
חָצְבָה עֲמוּדֵיהָ שִׁבְעָה:
ב טַבַּחַה טַבַּחַה מִסְכָּה יֵינָה
אָף עֲרֵכָה שִׁלְחָנָה:
ג שִׁלְחָה נְעֻרֹתֶיהָ תִּקְרָא
עַל־גַּפֵּי מְרֹמֵי קִרְתִּי:
ד מִי־פִתִּי יֹסֵר הִנֵּה
חֲסֵר־לֵב אָמְרָה לוֹ:
ה לִבּוֹ לַחֲמוֹ בִּלְחָמִי
וְשָׁתוּ בֵּין מִסְכָּתִי:
ו עֲזְבוּ פִתְאִים וְחַיּוֹ
וְאֲשֶׁרוּ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בִּינָה:
ז יֹסֵר | לֹץ לִקְחָה לוֹ קִלּוֹן
וּמוֹכִיחַ לְרָשָׁע מוֹמּוֹ:
ח אֶל־תּוֹכַח לֹץ פֶּן־יִשְׁנֹאֵךְ

PROVERBS 9

- 1 Wisdom has built herself a house;
she has hewn her seven pillars,
- 2 She has slaughtered her beast, drawn her wine;
she has laid bare her table.
- 3 She has despatched her maidservants
and called from the highest places in the city,
- 4 Who is simple? Let him come this way."
To those without sense she says,
- 5 "Come and eat my bread,
drink the wine that I have drawn!
- 6 Leave foolishness behind you and you will live,
go forwards in the ways of perception."
- 7 Reprove a mocker and you attract contempt;
rebuke the wicked and you attract dishonour.
- 8 Do not rebuke the mocker, he will hate you;

PROVERBS 9

- 1 The 'pillars' are indications of a wealthy household with an interior courtyard. The number 'seven' is here symbolic of perfection.
- 2 Wisdom has prepared a sumptuous banquet in her house and sends out her maids (v. 3) to call the simple to come and eat (vv. 4-5).
- 3 For 'highest places in the city', here (loosely) following the NRSV, then NJB has 'the heights above the city'.
- 4 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB has, "To the fools she says."
- 5 The expressions, 'eat' and 'drink', carry the implied comparison forward, suggesting that the simple are to appropriate the teachings of wisdom.
- 6 An alternative translation for 'foolishness' could be 'immaturity'.
- 7 Vv. 7-12 are aphorisms subsequently inserted as commentary on v. 6.
- 8 The negated jussive in the 1st line is paralleled antithetically by the imperative in the 2nd line.

הוֹכַח לַחֲכָם וַיֵּאָהֱבֶךָ:
 ט תֵּן לַחֲכָם וַיִּחַכְם-עוֹד
 הוֹדַע לְצַדִּיק וַיִּוְסַף לֵקָח:
 י תַּחֲלַת חֲכָמָה יֵרָאֵת יְהוָה
 וְדַעַת קְדוֹשִׁים בִּינָה:
 יא כִּי־בִי יִרְבּוּ יָמָיִךְ
 וַיִּוְסִיפוּ לְךָ שָׁנוֹת חַיִּים:
 יב אִם־חֲכָמָתָ חֲכָמָתָ לְךָ
 וְלֹאֲתָ לַבְּדִיךָ תִּשָּׂא:
 ὃς ἐρεῖδεται ἐπὶ ψεύδεσιν, οὗτος ποιμανεῖ ἀνέμους,
 ὃ δ' αὐτὸς αὐτὸς οὐδ' ὄρεα πετόμενα.
 יג אִשָּׁת בְּסִילוֹת הַמִּיָּה
 פְּתִיּוֹת וּבִלְיָדָעָה מָה:
 יד וַיֵּשֶׁבָה לִפְתָּח בֵּיתָהּ
 עַל־כִּפֹּא מְרֹמֵי קֶרֶת:
 טו לִקְרָא לְעַבְרֵי־דָרֶךְ

rebuke the wise and he will love you for it.
 9 Be open with the wise, he grows wiser still;
 teach the upright, he will gain yet more.
 10 The first principle of wisdom is the fear of Yahweh;
 and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
 11 For by me your days will be multiplied,
 and your years of life will be increased.
 12 Are you wise? You are wise to your own good.
 A mocker? The burden is yours alone.
 Forsake folly, that you may reign forever;
 and seek discretion and direct understanding in knowledge.
 13 The woman called Folly acts on impulse,
 is foolish and knows nothing.
 14 She sits at the door of her house,
 on a throne at the highest point in the city,
 15 calling to the passers-by,

9 The NRSV opens with 'give instruction to' in place of 'be open with'.

10 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "what God' holy ones know – this is understanding." The word translated 'Holy One' is plural and is translated as 'holy men' in the Tg; however, it was probably meant to signify the majestic nature of God.

11 The verb וַיִּוְסִיפוּ is the Hiphil imperfect, 3MP; but, as there is no expressed subject, the verb may be taken as a passive ('will be increased').

12 The 2 lines here presented in green follow the LXX (the translation is from a footnote in the NJB); they are not present in any Hebrew MSS.

13 In place of 'woman called Folly', here following NETB, the NJB & NRSV have 'foolish woman'. Here, we take the text as being a genitive of apposition, and assume the passage is comparing Folly personified to the lady, Wisdom, of the preceding verses (cf. #17).

14 In place of 'at the highest point', the NJB has 'high up' (cf. v. 3).

15 For the 2nd line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "who are going straight on their way."

הַמִּישְׁרִים אֲרַחוּתָם:
טז מִי־פָתִי יִסֵּר הִנֵּה
וְחִסְר־לֵב וְאִמְרָה לֹו:
יז מִים־גְּנוּבִים יִמְתְּקוּ
וְלֶחֶם סֵתֵרִים יִנְעֵם:
יח וְלֹא־יָדַע בִּי־רָפָאִים שֵׁם
בְּעַמְקֵי שְׁאוֹל קִרְאִיהָ:

who are walking straight past on their way,
16 "Who is simple? Turn aside, come over here."
And to those without sense she says,
17 "Stolen waters are sweet,
and bread tastes better when eaten in secret."
18 But the fool does not know this is where the Shades are,
and that her guests are already in the vales of Sheol.

¹⁶ For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "To the fool she says." (Cf. v. 4.)

¹⁷ Folly is now personified in her turn, and her activities contrasted with those of wisdom (9:1–6). The meaning of the parable is plain: there are two ways to open human beings, of virtue or of vice (4:18–19, Dt 30:15–20, Ps 1; see also *Didache*, *Pseudo-Barnabas* and *Qumran MSS*). There are two invitations offered to human beings, two banquets that may attend. They must choose for themselves (cf. Rm 12:21, 2Co 6:14ff, Tt 1:15).

¹⁸ The NRSV has 'dead' in place of 'Shades'. 'Sheol' is the abode of the dead.

משלי פרק י

PROVERBS 10

משלי שלמה^א 1 The proverbs of Solomon.

בן חכם ישמח-אב		A wise child is a father's joy,
ובן כסיל תוגת אמו:		a foolish child a mother's grief.
לא-יועילו אוצרות רשע	ב	2 Treasures wickedly come by give no benefit,
וצדקה תציל ממוות:		but uprightness brings delivery from death.
לא-ירעיב יהוה נפש צדיק	ג	3 Yahweh does not let the upright go hungry,
והנות רשעים יהדף:		but he thwarts the greed of the wicked.
ראש עשה כף-רמיה	ד	4 A slack hand brings poverty
ויד חרוצים תעשיר:		but the hand of the diligent brings wealth.
אגר בקיץ בן משכיל	ה	5 Reaping at harvest time is the mark of the prudent,
נרדם בקציר בן מביש:		sleeping at harvest time is the sign of the worthless.
ברכות לראש צדיק	ו	6 Blessings are on the head of the upright,
ופי רשעים יכסה חמס:		but the mouth of the godless is a cover for violence.

PROVERBS 10

- ¹ The section, 10:1–22:16, is the oldest of the book; there is no order apparent in the collection other than a few relationships between maxims.
- ² An early or unhappy death was considered as punishment for sin; hence, long life is the portion of the just or wise (3:2, 4:10, 9:11, 10:27). The perspective of the writer is worldly; it must all happen here before one dies and goes to Sheol; hence, God must show justice by rewarding the righteous and the wicked (as in v. 3, see also Ps 37). This doctrine of retribution appears frequently here (compare 11:21) and in the rest of the Bible, but the books of Job and Ecclesiastes are warnings against over-simplification.
- ³ In place of 'greed', here following the NJB, the NRSV & NETB have 'craving'; the Hebrew word (הֵוֶה) can mean 'desire' in a bad sense.
- ⁴ The literal translation of 'a slack hand' is 'the palm of slackness'.
- ⁵ The term, 'sleeping', is figurative: an implied comparison that has become idiomatic (like the contemporary English expression "asleep on the job"). It means that this one is lazy or oblivious to the needs of the hour.
- ⁶ The 2nd line is identical to that of v. 11. The LXX has 'premature mourning shuts the mouth of the godless' (στόμα δὲ ἀσεβῶν καλύψει πένθος ἄωρον).

זָכַר צְדִיק לְבָרָכָה ז
וְשֵׁם רָשָׁעִים יִרְקָב: ח
חֶכֶם-לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת ו
וְאֹיֵל שְׁפָתַיִם יִלְבֹּט: ט
הוֹלֵךְ בְּתֵם יֵלֶךְ בְּטָח י
וּמַעֲקֹשׁ דְּרָכָיו יוֹדֵעַ: י
קָרַץ עֵין יִתֵּן עֲצָבָה י
וְאֹיֵל שְׁפָתַיִם יִלְבֹּט: יא
מִקּוֹר חַיִּים פִּי צְדִיק יב
וּפִי רָשָׁעִים יִכְסֶה חֹמֶס: יג
שׁוֹנְאָה תִּעְרָר מִדִּנִּים י
וְעַל כָּל-פֶּשְׁעִים תִּכְסֶה אֲהָבָה: יד
בְּשִׁפְתַי נְבוֹן תִּמְצָא חֲכָמָה י
וְשֹׁבֵט לִגּוֹ חֲסֵר-לֵב: י
חֲכָמִים יַצְפְּנוּ-דַּעַת י

7 The memory of the righteous is a blessing;
the name of the wicked rots away.
8 The wise of heart takes orders,
but a babbling fool heads for ruin.
9 Anyone whose ways are honourable walks secure,
but whoever follows crooked ways is soon unmasked.
10 A wink of the eye brings trouble;
a bold rebuke brings peace.
11 The mouth of the upright is a life-giving fountain,
but the mouth of the godless is a cover for violence.
12 Hatred provoked disputes,
but love excuses all offences.
13 On the lips of the discerning is found wisdom,
on the back of the fool, the stick.
14 Wise people store up knowledge,

- 7 'Memory' and 'name' are often paired as synonyms: memory, in this sense, has to do with reputation, fame, which will be good or bad by righteousness or wickedness, respectively.
- 8 The literal translation of 'a babbling fool' is 'the fool of lips'.
- 9 Security follows integrity because the lifestyle is blameless: The righteous is certain of the course to be followed and does not fear retribution.
- 10 The 2nd line here follows the LXX (ὁ δὲ ἐλέγχων μετὰ παρρησίας εἰργονοποιεῖ); the MT has 'the talkative fool runs to his ruin', which repeats v. 8b.
- 11 Note that, in the LXX, the 2nd line here follows the MT (στόμα δὲ ἀσεβοῦς καλύψει ἀπώλεια) – cf. #6.
- 12 Love acts like forgiveness; hatred looks for and exaggerates faults but love seeks ways to make sins disappear (cf. 1P 4:8).
- 13 The term, 'discerning', describes someone who is critically perceptive and has understanding; he can be relied on to say things that are wise.
- 14 The verb צָפַן ('to store up') may mean: either the wise acquire and do not lose wisdom; or they do not tell all that they know, that is, they treasure it up for a time when they will need it. The fool, by contrast, talks without thinking.

וּפִי־אֵוִיל מַחְתָּה קִרְבָּה:
 טו הֲזֶן עֲשִׂיר קִרִּית עֲזֹז
 מַחְתָּת דָּלִים רִישָׁם:
 טז פְּעֻלַּת צַדִּיק לַחַיִּים
 תְּבוֹאָת רָשָׁע לַחֲטָאִת:
 יז אֲרַח לַחַיִּים שׁוֹמֵר מוֹסֵר
 וְעֶזְב תּוֹכַחַת מִתְּעָה:
 יח מְכַסֶּה שְׁנָאָה שְׁפִתֵי־שָׁקֶר
 וּמוֹצֵא דָבָה הוּא כֶּסֶל:
 יט בְּרַב דְּבָרִים לֹא יִחְדַּל־פֶּשַׁע
 וְחוֹשֵׁד שְׁפִתָּיו מִשְׁכִּיל:
 כ כֶּסֶף נִבְחַר לְשׁוֹן צַדִּיק
 לֵב רָשָׁעִים כְּמַעֵט:
 כא שְׁפִתֵי צַדִּיק יִרְעוּ רַבִּים
 וְאֵוִילִים בַּחֲסֶר־לֵב יָמוּתוּ:

but the mouth of a fool makes ruin imminent.
 15 The wealth of the rich is their stronghold;
 poverty is the undoing of the weak.
 16 The wage of the upright affords life,
 but sin is all the wicked earns.
 17 Whoever abides by discipline walks towards life;
 whoever ignores correction goes astray.
 18 Liars' lips are a cover for hatred;
 whoever utters slander is a fool.
 19 A flood of words is never without fault;
 whoever controls the lips is wise.
 20 The tongue of the upright is purest silver;
 the heart of the wicked is of little worth.
 21 The lips of the upright nourish many peoples,
 but fools die for want of sense.

-
- 15 As it stands, this is a mere observation about the difference that wealth makes but it should be noted that, in 18:11, it is considered to be only an imaginary protection (see also 11:4).
 16 In the 2nd line, 'sin' is a metonym for judgement.
 17 'Walks' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'path'.
 18 The literal translation of 'liars' lips' is 'lips of falsehood'.
 19 It is impossible to avoid sinning in an abundance of words – sooner or later, one is bound to say something wrong.
 20 In place of 'little worth', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'trumpery value'.
 21 In what sense the fool dies is unclear. Fools ruin their lives and the lives of others by their lack of discipline and knowledge. The contrast is between enhancing life and ruining life.

כב בִּרְכַּת יְהוָה הִיא תַעֲשִׂיר
 וְלֹא-יוֹסֵף עֲצָב עִמָּה:
 כג כְּשִׁחּוֹק לְכִסִּיל עֲשׂוֹת זִמָּה
 וְחִכְמָה לְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה:
 כד מִגּוֹרַת רָשָׁע הִיא תְּבוֹאֲנוּ
 וְתֵאוֹת צְדִיקִים יִתֵּן:
 כה כַּעֲבוֹר סוּפָה וְאִין רָשָׁע
 וְצָדִיק יִסּוֹד עוֹלָם:
 כו כַּחֲמֶץ | לִשְׁנַיִם וּכְעָשָׂן לְעֵינַיִם
 בֶּן הָעֵצָל לְשִׁלְחָיו:
 כז יִרְאֵת יְהוָה תוֹסִיף יָמִים
 וּשְׁנוֹת רָשָׁעִים תִּקְצְרֶנָּה:
 כח תוֹחַלַת צְדִיקִים שְׂמֵחָה
 וְתִקְוַת רָשָׁעִים תֵּאבֵד:
 כט מַעֲזוֹ לְתָם דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה

22 The blessing of Yahweh is what brings riches;
 to this, hard toil has nothing to add.
 23 Doing wrong is like sport to a fool
 but the wise take pleasure in cultivating wisdom.
 24 What the wicked fears overtakes him;
 what the upright desires comes to him as a present.
 25 When the storm is over, the wicked is no more,
 but the upright stands firm forever.
 26 As vinegar to the teeth, smoke to the eyes,
 so the sluggard to the one who sends him.
 27 The fear of Yahweh adds length to life;
 the years of the wicked will be short.
 28 The hope of the upright is joy;
 the expectations of the wicked come to nothing.
 29 The way of Yahweh is a rampart for the honest,

22 For the 2nd line, the NRSV reads, “and he adds no sorrow with it.” Wealth comes from Yahweh’s blessing, not from hard toil.

23 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV & MT, the NJB reads, “A fool takes pleasure in doing wrong.”

24 Literally translated, this verse opens, “The dread of the wicked...”

25 The word for ‘storm’ comes from the root סוּף; the noun may then describe the kind of storm that makes an end of things, a whirlwind. It is used in prophetic passages that describe swift judgment and destruction.

26 ‘Sluggard’ here means a dawdling messenger.

27 The literal translation of ‘life’ is ‘days’.

28 This proverb contrasts the hopes of the righteous and the wicked: the righteous will see their hopes fulfilled. The saying is concerned with God’s justice.

29 The ‘way of Yahweh’ is an idiom for God’s providential administration of life; it is what the LORD does.

וּמַחֲתָה לְפַעֲלֵי אֵוָה:
 ל צַדִּיק לְעוֹלָם בְּלִי־מוֹט
 וְרָשָׁעִים לֹא יִשְׁכְּנוּ־אָרֶץ:
 לֹא פִי־צַדִּיק יִגִּבַּח חֲכָמָה
 וּלְשׁוֹן תְּהַפְכּוֹת תִּכְרֹת:
 לֵב שִׁפְתֵי צַדִּיק יִדְעוֹן רָצוֹן
 וּפִי רָשָׁעִים תְּהַפְכּוֹת:

for evildoers nothing but ruin.

- ³⁰ The upright will never have to give way,
 but the land will offer no home for the wicked.
- ³¹ The mouth of the upright utters wisdom;
 the tongue that deceives will be cut off.
- ³² The lips of the upright know about kindness,
 the mouth of the wicked about deceit.

³⁰ This proverb concerns the enjoyment of covenant blessings –dwelling in the land of Israel. It is promised to the righteous for an eternal inheritance, and so the wicked cannot expect to settle there – they will be exiled.

³¹ To have one's tongue '*cut off*' would bring an end to wicked or deceptive speech.

³² The righteous say what is pleasing, acceptable, or delightful; but the wicked say perverse and destructive things.

משלי פרק יא

א מאזני מרמה תועבת יהוה
ואבן שלמה רצונו:
ב בא־זדון ויבא קלון
ואת־צנועים חכמה:
ג תמת ישרים תנחם
וסלף בגדים ושדם ישדם:
ד לא־יועיל הון ביום עברה
וצדקה תציל ממות:
ה צדקת תמים תישר דרכו
וברשעתו יפל רשע:
ו צדקת ישרים תצילם
ובהות בגדים ילכדו:
ז במות אדם רשע תאבד תקוה
ותוחלת אונים אבדה:

PROVERBS 11

- 1 A false balance is abhorrent to Yahweh;
a just weight is pleasing to him.
- 2 Pride comes first, disgrace soon follows;
with the humble is wisdom found.
- 3 The honest have their own honesty for guidance;
the perfidy of the treacherous ruins them.
- 4 In the day of retribution, riches will be useless,
but uprightness delivers from death.
- 5 The uprightness of the good makes their way straight;
the wicked fall by their own wickedness.
- 6 The upright sets the honest free;
the desires of the treacherous imprison them.
- 7 The hope of the wicked perishes with death;
hope placed in riches comes to nothing.

PROVERBS 11

- 1 The literal translations of 'false balance' and 'just weight' are, respectively, 'scales of deception' and 'perfect stone'. Compare Dt 25:13–16.
- 2 This proverb does not state how the disgrace will come but affirms that it will follow pride; the proud will be brought down.
- 3 In place of ושדם, here following the *Kethib*, the *Qere* has ישדם; the latter is used in the translation.
- 4 The literal translation of 'day of retribution' is 'day of wrath'.
- 5 The righteous will enjoy security and serenity throughout life. Righteousness makes the path straight; wickedness destroys the wicked.
- 6 The contrast is between being rescued or delivered (נצל) and being captured (לכד). Righteousness is freeing; evil desires are enslaving.
- 7 The subject of this proverb is the hope of the wicked, showing its consequences – his expectations die with him (Ps 49); any hope for long life and success borne of wickedness will be disappointed.

ח צַדִּיק מִצָּרָה נִחְלָץ
וַיִּבֹּא רָשָׁע תַּחְתָּיו:
ט בָּפֶה חָנָף יִשְׁחַת רֵעֵהוּ
וּבִדְעַת צַדִּיקִים יִחְלָצוּ:
י בְּטוֹב צַדִּיקִים תִּעֲלֶץ קְרִיָּה
וּבִאֲבֹד רָשָׁעִים רִנָּה:
יא בְּבִרְכַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּרְוֶם קֶרֶת
וּבְפִי רָשָׁעִים תִּהְרָס:
יב בִּזְלִירְעָהוּ חֲסֵר־לֵב
וְאִישׁ תְּבוֹנֹת יַחְרִישׁ:
יג הוֹלֵךְ רָכִיל מְגַלֵּה־סֹד
וְנֹאמַן־רוּחַ מִכְסֵּה דָבָר:
יד בָּאֵין תַּחְבִּלוֹת יִפְלֶעַם
וְתִשׁוּעָה בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ:
טו רֶעִי־רוּעַ כִּי־עָרַב זֶר
וְשֹׁנֵא תִקְעִים בּוֹטָח:

8 The upright escapes affliction;
the wicked incurs it instead.
9 Through his mouth, the godless destroys his neighbour,
but by knowledge the upright are safeguarded.
10 When the upright prosper, the city rejoices;
when the wicked are ruined, there is a shout of joy.
11 A city is raised on the blessing of the honest,
and demolished by the mouth of the wicked.
12 Whoever looks down on a neighbour lacks good sense;
the intelligent keeps a check on the tongue.
13 A gossip lets secrets out;
the trustworthy keeps things hidden.
14 For want of leadership, a nation perishes;
safety lies in many advisers.
15 Whoever goes bail for a stranger does himself harm;
anyone who shuns going surety is safe.

-
- 8 This verse is not concerned with the problem of evil and the suffering of the righteous; it is only concerned with the principle of divine justice.
9 The word here translated 'godless' later became used to mean a hypocrite.
10 The verb תִּעֲלֶץ ('rejoice') in the 1st line is paralleled with the noun רִנָּה ('shout of joy') in the 2nd.
11 In place of 'raised', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'exalted'.
12 According to Proverbs, and the Bible as a whole, how one treats a neighbour is an important part of righteousness. One was expected to be a good neighbour, and to protect and safeguard the life and reputation of a neighbour.
13 This is the intent of a person who makes disparaging comments about others — he cannot wait to share secrets that should be kept.
14 Another translation for 'nation' could be 'army'.
15 Compare 6:1–5.

טז אִשְׁת־חַן תִּתְמַדַּךְ כְּבוֹד
 χρόνος δὲ ἀτιμίας γυνή μισοῦσα δίκαια.
 πλούτου ὀκνηροὶ ἐνδεεῖς γίνονται,
 יז גַּמְלֵנִי נַפְשִׁי אִישׁ חֶסֶד
 ועבר שארו אכזרי:
 יח רָשָׁע עֹשֶׂה פְעֻלַּת־שָׁקֶר
 וזרע צדקה שכר אמת:
 יט בֶּן־צִדְקָה לְחַיִּים
 ומרדף רעה למותו:
 כ תוֹעֲבַת יֵהוּהָ עֲקֻשֵׁי־לֵב
 ורצונו תמימי דרך:
 כא יָד לַיָּד לֹא־יִנָּקָה רָע
 וזרע צדיקים נמלט:
 כב גֵּזֶם זָהָב בְּאֶף חֲזִיר
 אִשָּׁה יָפָה וְסֶרֶת טַעַם:

- 16 A gracious woman acquires honour;
 but she who hates virtue is covered with shame.
 Indolent people lack resources;
 violent people acquire wealth.
- 17 Those who are kind reward themselves,
 but the cruel do themselves harm.
- 18 The wicked earn no real gain;
 but whoever sows uprightness reaps a solid reward.
- 19 Whoever establishes uprightness is on the way to life,
 whoever pursues evil, on the way to death.
- 20 Crooked minds are abhorrent to Yahweh;
 dear to him, those whose ways are blameless.
- 21 Be sure of it, the wicked will not go unpunished,
 but the seed of the upright will come to no harm.
- 22 Like a golden ring in the snout of a pig
 is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.

- 16 The 2 lines here presented in green follow the LXX (the translation follows the NJB); it appears that the MT provides only remnants of the original but it is not certain whether or not the LXX version is itself complete.
- 17 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Faithful love brings its own reward; the inflexible injure themselves."
- 18 For the 1st line, here following the NRSB, the NJB reads, "Disappointment crowns the labours of the wicked."
- 19 'Whoever establishes' is a conjectural translation (בֶּן); the MT has 'thus' (כֵּן).
- 20 The word עֲקֻשֵׁי ('crooked') describes the wicked as having twisted minds; their mentality is turned toward evil things.
- 21 The literal translation of 'be sure of it' is 'hand for hand': perhaps an allusion to shaking hands on a bargain. Note the unusual/unexpected dagesh on the *resh* in רָע. In place of 'seed', the NJB has 'race' and the WEBBE has 'offspring'.
- 22 A beautiful ornament and a pig are as incongruous as a beautiful woman who has no taste or ethical judgment.

כג תִּאֲוֹת צְדִיקִים אֶדְ-טוֹב
 תְּקוֹת רְשָׁעִים עֲבָרָה:
 כד יֵשׁ מִפֶּזֶר וְנוֹסֵף עוֹד
 וְחֹשֶׁד מִיֵּשֶׁר אֶדְ-לִמְחִסּוֹר:
 כה גִּפְשׁ-בִּרְכָּה תִּדְשֵׁן
 וְמִרְוֶה גַם-הוּא יוֹרָא:
 כו מִנֶּעַ בֶּר יִקְבְּהוּ לְאוֹם
 וּבִרְכָּה לְרֹאשׁ מִשְׁפִּיר:
 כז שֶׁחֵר טוֹב יִבְקֹשׁ רָצוֹן
 וְדֹרֵשׁ רָעָה תְּבוֹאֲנוּ:
 כח בּוֹטֵחַ בַּעֲשָׂרוֹ הוּא יִפּוֹל
 וְכַעֲלָה צְדִיקִים יִפְרָחוּ:
 כט עֹבֵר בֵּיתוֹ יִנְחַל-רוּחַ
 וְעֹבֵד אוֹיֵל לַחֲכָם-לֵב:
 ל פְּרִי-צְדִיק עֵץ חַיִּים

- 23 The hope of the upright is nothing but good;
 the expectation of the wicked is retribution.
- 24 One scatters money around, yet only adds to his wealth;
 another is excessively mean, but only grows the poorer.
- 25 The soul who blesses will prosper;
 whoever gives water will get water.
- 26 The people's curse is on those who hoard the wheat;
 their blessing is on the head of those who sell it.
- 27 Whoever strives for good obtains favour;
 whoever looks for evil will get an evil return.
- 28 Whoever trusts in riches will have a fall;
 the upright will flourish like the leaves.
- 29 Whoever misgoverns a house inherits the wind,
 and the fool becomes slave to the wise.
- 30 The fruit of the upright is a tree of life;

23 The noun, תִּאֲוֹת, functions as an objective genitive, 'what the upright hope for'.

24 The 1st line is an apparent paradox: Generosity determines prosperity in God's economy.

25 Water was precious in the ancient Middle East. The 2nd line here follows the NRSV; the NJB reads, "whoever satisfies others will also be satisfied."

26 This proverb refers to a merchant who holds back his grain from the free market to raise prices when there is a great need for the produce. Merchants are expected to have a social conscience.

27 The 'favour' is that of Yahweh, who rewards the upright (cf. 12:2).

28 The NRSV has 'wither' in place of 'have a fall'.

29 In place of 'house', here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV has 'households' and NETB has 'family'.

30 The editors of the LXX, possibly embarrassed by an alternative meaning for the 2nd line – 'the wise take life away' – translated it as, 'the wicked will be permanently carried off'; the NRSV has the conjectural, 'but violence takes lives away'.

וְלִקַּח נַפְשׁוֹת חָכָם:
הֵן צַדִּיק בְּאֶרֶץ יִשְׁלָם לא
אֶף כִּי־רָשָׁע וְחוֹטֵא:

the sage captivates souls.

³¹ If here on earth, the upright gets what is due,
how much more the wicked and the sinner.

³¹ For the 1st line, the *LXX* introduces a new idea, reflected in 1P 4:18 – ‘*If the righteous be scarcely saved*’.

משלי פרק יב

- א אֱהָב מוֹסֵר אֶהָב דַּעַת
וְשׂוֹנֵא תוֹכַחַת בַּעַר:
ב טוֹב יִפְּקֵי רִצּוֹן מִיָּהוָה
וְאִישׁ מִזְמוֹת יִרְשִׁיעַ:
ג לֹא-יִכּוֹן אָדָם בְּרָשָׁע
וְשָׂרֵשׁ צְדִיקִים בְּלִימוֹט:
ד אִשְׁת־חַיִּל עֲטַרַת בַּעֲלָהּ
וְכִרְקַב בַּעֲצָמוֹתָיו מִבִּישָׁה:
ה מַחֲשַׁבּוֹת צְדִיקִים מִשְׁפָּט
תַּחְבֻּלוֹת רָשָׁעִים מְרָמָה:
ו דְּבַרֵּי רָשָׁעִים אֲרֻב־דָּם
וּפִי יִשְׂרִים יִצִּילָם:
ז הַפֹּךְ רָשָׁעִים וְאִיִּם
וּבֵית צְדִיקִים יַעֲמֹד:
ח לִפְי־שִׁכְלוֹ יִהְלֹל-אִישׁ

PROVERBS 12

- 1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge;
stupid are those who hate correction.
2 The honest obtains Yahweh's favour;
the schemer incurs his condemnation.
3 No one finds security by wickedness,
but nothing shakes the roots of the upright.
4 A capable wife is her husband's crown;
a shameless wife is rotteness in his bones.
5 The plans of the upright are honest;
the intrigues of the wicked are full of deceit.
6 The words of the wicked are snares to shed blood;
what the honest say keeps them safe.
7 The wicked are overthrown and are no more,
but the house of the righteous will stand.
8 A person is praised for prudence;

PROVERBS 12

- 1 The wise cultivate discipline and listen to criticism (see 13:1).
2 The literal translation of 'schemer' (here following the NJB) is 'a man of wicked plans'.
3 The 'roots' hold a tree firm, just as righteousness keeps the just person.
4 In place of 'rotteness', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'a cancer'.
5 The thoughts of good people are directed toward what is right; advice from the wicked, however, is deceitful and can only lead to trouble.
6 The term, 'blood', is a metonymy of effect, the cause being the person that they will attack and whose blood they will shed.
7 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Once thrown down, the wicked are no more, but the house of the upright stands firm."
8 The point here is that praise is proportionate to wisdom.

וְנִעְוָה לֵב יִהְיֶה לְבוֹז:
 ט טוֹב נִקְלָה וְעַבַּד לֹא
 מִמֶּתְכַפֵּד וְחָסֵר לֶחֶם:
 י יוֹדֵעַ צְדִיק גִּפְשׁ בַּהֲמָתוֹ
 וְרַחֲמֵי רָשָׁעִים אֲכֹזְרִי:
 יא עֶבֶד אֲדָמָתוֹ יִשְׁבַּע לֶחֶם
 וּמִרְדֵּף רִיקִים חָסֵר לֵב:
 יב חֵמֶד רָשָׁע מִצֹּד רָעִים
 וְשֹׁרֵשׁ צְדִיקִים יִתֵּן:
 יג בִּפְשָׁע שִׁפְתָּיִם מוֹקֵשׁ רַע
 וַיֵּצֵא מִצָּרָה צְדִיק:
 יד מִפְּרִי פִי־אִישׁ יִשְׁבַּע טוֹב
 וּגְמוּל יְדִי־אָדָם יִשׁוּב לֹא:
 טו דֶּרֶךְ אֱוִיל יִשָּׁר בְּעֵינָיו
 וְשִׁמְעַת לְעֵצָה חָכָם:

anyone of tortuous heart incurs contempt.
 9 Better a common fellow who has a slave
 than one who gives himself airs and has nothing to eat.
 10 The upright has compassion on his animals,
 but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.
 11 Whoever works his land shall have bread and to spare,
 but anyone who chases fantasies has no sense.
 12 The godless delights in the snare of the wicked,
 but the root of the upright bears fruit.
 13 In the sin of the lips lies a disastrous trap,
 but the upright finds a way out of misfortune.
 14 Abundance of good things is the fruit of the lips;
 labour brings its own return.
 15 Fools think the way they go is right;
 the wise listens to advice.

9 The 'better' saying is a favourite locution of the sages; see also 15:16–17, 16:8, 17:1, *et cetera*.

10 The 2nd line is an oxymoron: what passes for 'mercy' with the 'wicked' is 'cruel'.

11 In the biblical period, agriculture was the most common occupation for the people; so 'working the land' describes a substantial occupation but also represents working in general. Diligent work, not get-rich-quick schemes, is the key to ensuring income.

12 For the 1st line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "The wicked covet the proceeds of wickedness." The line is difficult to properly interpret and the LXX reads, "The desires of the wicked are evil." (ἐπιθυμίας ἀσεβῶν κακαί)

13 The noun, 'trap', follows the NJB & MT (מוֹקֵשׁ); the NRSV, following the LXX (οἱ ἁμαρτίαν χειλέων ἐμπίπτει εἰς παγίδας ἁμαρτωλός), reads that as a passive participle, "The evil are ensnared by the transgression of their lips."

14 In place of יִשׁוּב (Qal imperfect, here following the Kethib), the Qere has יִשָּׁר (Hiphil imperfect).

15 Fools believe that their own plans and ideas are perfect or 'right' (יִשָּׁר); they are satisfied with their own opinions.

טז אִוִּיל בַּיּוֹם יוֹדֵעַ כַּעֲסוֹ
 וְכֹסֶה קִלְוֹן עָרוֹם:
 יז יִפִּיחַ אֱמוּנָה יִגִּיד צֶדֶק
 וְעַד שְׁקָרִים מְרַמֶּה:
 יח יֵשׁ בּוֹטָה כַּמְדַּקְרוֹת חֶרֶב
 וְלִשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים מְרַפֵּא:
 יט שִׁפְת־אֱמֶת תִּכּוֹן לְעַד
 וְעַד־אֲרָגִיעָה לִּשְׁוֹן שֶׁקֶר:
 כ מְרַמֶּה בַּלֵּב־חֲרָשֵׁי רָע
 וְלִיעֲצֵי שְׁלוֹם שִׁמְחָה:
 כא לֹא־יֵאָנֶה לַצַּדִּיק כָּל־אֵוֹן
 וְרָשָׁעִים מְלֵאוּ רָע:
 כב תּוֹעֲבַת יְהוָה שִׁפְת־שֶׁקֶר
 וְעֹשֵׂי אֱמוּנָה רְצוֹנוֹ:
 כג אָדָם עָרוֹם כֹּסֶה דַּעַת
 וְלֵב פְּסִילִים יִקְרָא אִוִּילת:

16 The fool shows anger straight away;
 the discreet conceals dislike.
 17 The faithful witness tells what is right
 but the false witness speaks deceit.
 18 Thoughtless words can pierce like a sword
 but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
 19 Truthful lips endure forever;
 the lying tongue lasts only a moment.
 20 Deceit is in the heart of those who plan evil,
 joy with those who give counsels of peace.
 21 No harm can come to the upright
 but the wicked are filled with trouble.
 22 An abomination to Yahweh are lying lips;
 dear to him are those who make truth their way of life.
 23 The discreet keeps knowledge hidden,
 but the heart of fools proclaims their folly.

16 The fool is impatient and unwise, and so flares up immediately when anything bothers him.

17 For this verse, here following the NRSV/NETB, the NJB reads, "To tell a truth is to further justice; a false witness is nothing but deceitful." The text here preserves the parallelism between the witnesses, although the literal translation of 'faithful witness' (אֱמוּנָה) is 'he pours out faithfully'.

18 What the wise say is faithful and true, gentle and kind, uplifting and encouraging; so, they are healing.

19 The NJB has 'sincere' in place of 'truthful', here following the NRSV.

20 The contrast here is between 'evil' and 'peace'.

21 The expression, מְלֵאוּ רָע, (literally, 'to be full of evil') can mean either that the wicked do much evil or that the wicked experience much calamity.

22 For the 1st line, here following the MT closely, the NJB reads, "Lying lips are abhorrent to Yahweh."

23 The term כֹּסֶה ('keeps ... hidden') does not mean that he never shares his knowledge but that he discerns when it is (not) appropriate to speak.

כד יִדְּחֻרוּצִים תִּמְשֹׁל
 וְרַמְיָה תִּהְיֶה לְמָס:
 כה דָּאֲגָה בִּלְב־אִישׁ יִשְׁחַנָּה
 וּדְבַר טוֹב יִשְׁמַחְנָה:
 כו יִתֵּר מִרְעָהּ צַדִּיק
 וְדֶרֶךְ רָשָׁעִים תִּתְעַם:
 כז לֹא־יִחְרֹךְ רַמְיָה צִידוֹ
 וְהוֹן־אָדָם יִקֵּר חֲרוּץ:
 כח בְּאֶרֶח־צַדִּיקָה חַיִּים
 וְדֶרֶךְ נְתִיבָה אֶל־מוֹת:

24 The hand of the diligent will rule;
 for the slack hand, forced labour.
 25 Worry makes a heart heavy;
 a kindly word makes it glad.
 26 The upright shows the way to a friend;
 the way of the wicked leads them astray.
 27 The idle has no game to roast;
 diligence is anyone's most precious possession.
 28 In the way of uprightness is life;
 the ways of the vengeful lead to death.

24 The term לְמָס refers to a person force into labour from slavery.

25 Anxiety weighs heavily on the heart, causing depression.

26 The exact meaning of 'shows the way' is uncertain (the NRSV has 'gives good advice'). The particular verb form occurs only once, but it is generally thought to be derived from the verb 'to explore'.

27 The idle has nothing to cook, since he has not caught anything.

28 Those who enter the path of righteousness by faith and seek to live righteously are on their way to eternal life.

משלי פרק יג

- א בֶּן חָכָם מוֹסֵר אָב
וְלֹץ לֹא־שֹׁמֵעַ גְּעֵרָה:
ב מִפְּרֵי פִי־אִישׁ יֵאָכֵל טוֹב
וְנַפְשׁ בִּגְדִים חֲמָס:
ג נֹצֵר פִּיּוֹ שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ
פֶּשֶׁק שְׂפָתָיו מִחֲתָה־לּוֹ:
ד מִתְאָוָה וְאִין נַפְשׁוֹ עֲצָל
וְנַפְשׁ חֲרָצִים תִּדְשֹׁן:
ה דְּבַר־שָׁקֶר יִשְׁנָא צַדִּיק
וְרָשָׁע יִבְאִישׁ וַיַּחְפִּיר:
ו צְדָקָה תִּצָּר תִּסְדֹּדֶךָ
וְרָשָׁעָה תִּסְלֹף חֲטָאתָ:
ז יֵשׁ מִתְעַשֵּׂר וְאִין כָּל

PROVERBS 13

- 1 A wise child listens to a father's discipline;
a cynic will not listen to reproof.
2 The fruit of the mouth provides a good meal,
but the desire of the faithless is violence.
3 A guard on the mouth makes life secure;
whoever talks too much is lost.
4 The idler hungers but has no food;
hard workers get their fill.
5 The upright hates a lying word,
but the wicked act shamefully and disgracefully.
6 Uprightness stands guard over one whose way is honest;
sin causes the ruin of the wicked.
7 There are some who, on nothing, pretend to be rich;

PROVERBS 13

- 1 The word 'listens' in the 1st line (the NRSV has 'loves') has been restored to harmonise with the 2nd line; it is not present in the MT; the LXX reads, "A wise son is subject to his father." (νῖος πανοὔτερος ὑπήκουος πατρί)
2 For the 2nd line, here following the MT, the NJB reads, "but the soul of the treacherous feeds on violence."
3 There is a possible play on words: the term translated here as 'life' can also mean 'throat' and 'soul'.
4 The contrast here is between the 'soul of the sluggard' (נַפְשׁוֹ עֲצָל) and the 'soul of the diligent' (נַפְשׁ חֲרָצִים) – what they each desire.
5 The phrase, 'act shamefully and disgracefully', here follows the NRSV (and MT); the LXX reads 'is ashamed and without confidence' (αἰσχύνεται καὶ οὐχ ἔξει παρρησίαν), the Vg has 'confounds and will be confounded' (*confundit, et confundetur*) and the Tg has 'is ashamed and put to the blush'.
6 'The wicked' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'wickedness'.
7 This proverb seems to be a general observation on certain people in life but it is saying more: although there are times when such pretending may not be wrong, the proverb is instructing people to be honest; an empty display or a concealing of wealth can come to no good.

	מְתָרוּשִׁישׁ וְהוֹן רַב:		some, with great wealth, pretend to be poor.
ח	כִּפְּרֵן נַפְשׁ־אִישׁ עֲשֹׂרוֹ	8	The ransom for a life is a person's wealth;
	וְרֹשׁ לֹא־שָׁמַע גְּעִרָה:		but the poor will not hear the reproof.
ט	אֹר־צַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמַח	9	The light of the upright is joyful;
	וְנֵר רְשָׁעִים יִדְעָךְ:		the lamp of the wicked goes out.
י	רַק־בְּזֹדוֹן יִתֵּן מַצָּה	10	By insolence, the heedless make strife;
	וְאֶת־נוֹעֲצִים חֲכָמָה:		wisdom lies with those who take advice.
יא	הוֹן מֵהֶבֶל יִמָּעַט	11	A sudden fortune will dwindle away;
	וְקִבֵּץ עַל־יָד יִרְבֶּה:		accumulation little by little is the way to riches.
יב	תּוֹחֶלֶת מִמְשָׁכָה מַחֲלֵה־לֵב	12	Hope deferred makes the heart sick;
	וְעֵץ חַיִּים תֵּאֱוָה בָּאָה:		desire fulfilled is a tree of life.
יג	בֹּז לַדָּבָר יַחְבֵּל לוֹ	13	Contempt for the word is self-destructive;
	וִירָא מִצְוָה הוּא יִשְׁלָם:		respect for the commandment wins salvation.
יד	תּוֹרַת חָכָם מְקוֹר חַיִּים	14	The teaching of the wise is a life-giving fountain,
	לְסוֹר מִמִּקְשֵׁי מוֹת:		for eluding the snares of death.
טו	שְׂכָל־טוֹב יִתֵּן־חֵן	15	Good sense wins favour,

⁸ As the word 'ransom' (כִּפְּרֵן) indicates, the rich are susceptible to kidnapping and robbery; however, the pauper pays no heed to blackmail – he does not have money to buy off oppressors. So, the rich person is exposed to legal and powerful assaults and must use his wealth as ransom.

⁹ The 'light' is a symbol of life (1K 15:4) and burns brightly (when it 'is joyful').

¹⁰ For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Insolence breeds only strife."

¹¹ 'Sudden' follows the LXX (ἐπισπουδαζομένη, reflecting מֵהֶבֶל); the MT has '(product) of futility' (מִהֶבֶל).

¹² The 'Tree of Life', as in 3:18, was a symbol of divine life and immortality in the ancient world; here, it is a metaphor for life itself.

¹³ 'Word' and 'commandment' here mean the teaching of the sages.

¹⁴ The literal translation of 'life-giving fountain' is 'fountain of life'.

¹⁵ In place of 'hard', the NRSV has the conjectural 'their ruin'.

וְדֶרֶךְ בְּגָדִים אִיתָן:
 טז כָּל־עָרוֹם יַעֲשֶׂה בְדַעַת
 וְכִסִּיל יִפְרֹשׁ אֹולֹת:
 יז מִלֵּאדָּ רָשָׁע יִפֹּל בְּרַע
 וְצִיר אֱמוּנִים מְרַפָּא:
 יח רִישׁ וְקִלּוֹן פּוֹרַע מוֹסֵר
 וְשֹׁמֵר תּוֹכַחַת יִכְבֹּד:
 יט תַּאֲוָה נִהְיָה תַעֲרֹב לְנַפֶּשׁ
 וְתוֹעֲבַת כְּסִילִים סוֹר מֵרַע:
 כ הַלּוֹךְ הוֹלֵךְ אֶת־חֲכָמִים וְחֲכָם יִחְכַּם
 וְרָעָה כְּסִילִים יִרְוַע:
 כא חֲטָאִים תִּרְדֹּף רָעָה
 וְאֶת־צַדִּיקִים יִשְׁלֶם־טוֹב:
 כב טוֹב יִנְחִיל בְּנֵי־בָנִים
 וְצַפּוֹן לְצַדִּיק חֵיל חוֹטָא:
 כג רַב־אֶכֶל נִיר רְאֲשִׁים

but the way of the treacherous is hard.
 16 The shrewd act by the light of knowledge;
 the fool parades his folly.
 17 A bad messenger falls into misfortune;
 a trusty messenger brings healing.
 18 Whoever rejects discipline wins poverty and scorn;
 for anyone who accepts correction there is honour.
 19 Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul;
 fools are loth to turn – from evil.
 20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise;
 whoever mixes with fools will be ruined.
 21 Evil will pursue the sinner,
 but good will reward the upright.
 22 The good bequeaths a heritage to children's children;
 the wealth of the sinner is stored away for the upright.
 23 Though the farms of the poor yield much food,

-
- 16 The 'shrewd' person knows the circumstances, dangers and pitfalls that lie ahead, so he deals with them wisely; this makes him cautious.
 17 A possible amendment to 'falls' would be 'cause to fall', as the 2nd line implies; but the LXX favours the MT: "A headstrong king will come to grief."
 18 Honor and success are contrasted with poverty and shame; the key is discipline and correction.
 19 There is no very obvious connexion between the two parts of this verse; perhaps the text is corrupt or incomplete.
 20 The *Kethib*/*Qere* differences here would benefit from a full explanation.
 21 In place of 'evil', here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV has 'calamity'.
 22 In ancient Israel, the idea of leaving an inheritance was a sign of God's blessing; blessings extended to the righteous and not the sinners.
 23 Here, as in v. 19, the text seems to be corrupt; the LXX reads, "The upright live to enjoy their wealth for many a year; the wicked come to a sudden end." (δίκαιοι ποιήσουσιν ἐν πλούτῳ ἔτη πολλά, ἄδικοι δὲ ἀπολοῦνται συντόμως.)

וַיֵּשׁ נִסְפָּה בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט:
 כֹּד חוֹשֵׁךְ שִׁבְטוֹ שׁוֹנֵא בָנוּ
 וְאַהֲבֹו שִׁחְרוּ מוֹסֵר:
 כֹּה צַדִּיק אָכַל לְשַׁבַּע נַפְשׁוֹ
 וּבֶטֶן רָשָׁעִים תִּחְסָר:

some perish for lack of justice.

- ²⁴ Those who spare the rod hate their children,
 but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.
²⁵ The upright eats to the full;
 the belly of the wicked goes empty.

²⁴ For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “Whoever fails to uses the stick hates his child; whoever is free with correction loves him.”

²⁵ The wicked may go hungry, or lack all they desire, just as the 1st line may mean that what the righteous acquire proves satisfying to them.

משלי פרק יד

- א חִכְמוֹת נָשִׁים בְּנֵתָה בֵּיתָה
וְאֹלֶת בִּידֶיהָ תִּהְרָסָנוּ:
ב הוֹלֵךְ בִּישָׁרוֹ יֵרָא יְהוָה
וְנָלוֹז דְּרָכָיו בּוֹזֵהוּ:
ג בְּפִי־אֵוִיל חֹטֵר גְּאוּנָה
וְשִׁפְתֵי חֲכָמִים תִּשְׁמֹרֵם:
ד בָּאֵין אֲלָפִים אֲבוֹס בָּר
וְרֵב־תְּבוֹאוֹת בְּכַח שׁוֹר:
ה עַד אֲמוּנִים לֹא יִכְזָּב
וְיִפִּיחַ כְּזָבִים עַד שֶׁקֶר:
ו בֶּקֶשׁ־לֵץ חֲכָמָה וְאֵין
וְדַעַת לְנִבּוֹן נִקְלָה:
ז לֵךְ מִגֵּד לְאִישׁ כָּסִיל
וּבִלְי־דַעַת שִׁפְתֵי־דַעַת:

PROVERBS 14

- 1 Wisdom builds herself a house;
with her own hand, Folly pulls it down.
2 Whoever keeps to an honest course fears Yahweh;
whoever deserts his paths shows contempt for him.
3 Pride sprouts in the mouth of the fool;
the lips of the wise keep them safe.
4 With no oxen, there is an empty manger;
with a strong ox, there is much cash.
5 The truthful witness tells no lies;
the false witness lies with every breath.
6 In vain, the mocker looks for wisdom;
knowledge comes easy to the intelligent.
7 Walk away from the fool;
you will not find wise lips there.

PROVERBS 14

- 1 'Wisdom' is conjectural following the NJB; the MT has 'wise ones of women', though the verb is in the singular, and the NRSV has 'the wise woman'.
2 The literal translation of 'fears Yahweh' is 'fear of Yahweh'.
3 The text of the 2nd line is uncertain; the NRSV has, "the lips of the wise preserve them."
4 Strong oxen are indispensable for a good harvest, and for oxen to be strong they must be well-fed; the farmer has to balance grain consumption with the work oxen do.
5 On the false witness, see 6:19, 12:17, 14:25, 19:5,9, 21:28, 24:28, 25:18, possibly also 10:11, 11:9, and see also Ex 20:16, 23:1, Dt 19:15-21.
6 The 'mocker' (לֵץ) is intellectually arrogant; he lacks any serious interest in knowledge or religion and pursues wisdom in a superficial way, so that he can appear wise. The acquisition of wisdom is conditioned by one's attitude toward it.
7 Instead of 'walk' (לֵךְ), the LXX reads 'all', implying the reversal of the two consonants (כָּל).

ח חִכְמַת עֲרוּם הִבִּין דְּרָכּוֹ
וְאוֹלֹת כְּסִילִים מְרָמָה:
ט אוֹלִים יִלִּין אֲשֶׁם
וּבֵין יֹשְׁרִים רְצוֹן:
י לֵב יוֹדֵעַ מֶרֶת נַפְשׁוֹ
וּבְשִׁמְחָתוֹ לֹא־יִתְעַרֵּב זֶר:
יא בֵּית רָשָׁעִים יִשְׁמַד
וְאֹהֶל יֹשְׁרִים יִפְרִיחַ:
יב יֵשׁ דֶּרֶךְ יֹשֵׁר לִפְנֵי־אִישׁ
וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ דְּרָכֵי־מוֹת:
יג גַּם־בְּשִׂחֻק יִכְאֹב־לֵב
וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ שִׂמְחָה תוֹגָה:
יד מִדְּרָכּוֹ יִשְׁפַּע סוּג לֵב
וּמַעֲלִיו אִישׁ טוֹב:
טו פְּתִי יֶאֱמִין לְכָל־דְּבָר

8 It is the wisdom of the clever to understand where they go
but the folly of fools leads them astray.
9 Fools mock at the sacrifice for sin,
but favour resides among the honest.
10 The heart knows its own grief best,
and a stranger cannot share its joy.
11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed;
the tent of the honest will prosper.
12 There is a way that some think straight
but it leads in the end to death.
13 Even in laughter, the heart finds sadness,
and joy makes way for sorrow.
14 The miscreant will reap the reward of his conduct
and the good the reward of his deeds.
15 The simpleton believes any message;

8 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "With people of discretion, wisdom keeps a watch over their conduct."

9 The NRSV has 'guilt offering' in place of 'sacrifice for sin'; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

10 The literal translation of 'its own grief' is 'bitterness of its soul'. Note the unusual/unexpected dagesh on the *resh* in מֶרֶת.

11 The terms 'house' and 'tent' are likely metonyms for the families that occupy them.

12 This verse recalls the ways of the adulterous woman in Chs 1-9; the 1st line does not say that the 'way' that seems right is 'vice' but the 2nd line clarifies that; the proverb warns that any evil activity can take any number of ways (plural) to destruction.

13 No joy is completely free of grief; there is a joy that is superficial and there is underlying pain that will remain after the joy is gone.

14 'Of his deeds' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'above him'.

15 The contrast is between the simpleton and the shrewd: the simpleton is the young person who is untrained morally or intellectually, and therefore gullible; the shrewd one is the prudent person, the one who has the ability to make critical discriminations.

	וְעָרוֹם יִבֵּן לְאֲשָׁרוֹ:		a person of discretion treads a careful path.
טז	חָכָם יִרָא וְסָר מֵרָע וְכָסִיל מִתְעַבֵּר וּבֹטָח:	16	The wise fears evil and avoids it; the fool is insolent and conceited.
יז	קָצָר־אֶפֶס יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹלֹת וְאִישׁ מְזֻמּוֹת יִשָּׂא:	17	A quick-tempered person commits rash acts but a schemer is detestable.
יח	נַחֲלוֹ פְתָאִים אוֹלֹת וְעָרוּמִים יִכְתְּרוּ דַּעַת:	18	Simpletons have folly for their portion; people of discretion knowledge for their crown.
יט	שָׁחוּ רָעִים לִפְנֵי טוֹבִים וְרָשָׁעִים עַל־שַׁעְרֵי צְדִיק:	19	The evil bow down before the good, the wicked, at the gates of the upright.
כ	גַּם־לִרְעָהוּ יִשָּׂא רֶשַׁע וְאֶהְבִּי עֹשֵׂי רַבִּים:	20	The poor is detestable even to a friend but many are they who love someone rich.
כא	בִּזְלִרְעָהוּ חוֹטֵא וּמַחֲוֹן עֲנִיִּים עֲנוּם אֲשָׁרִיו:	21	One who despises the needy is at fault; one who takes pity on the poor is blessed.
כב	הֲלוֹא־יִתְּעוּ חֲרָשֵׁי רָע וְחֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת חֲרָשֵׁי טוֹב:	22	Do not they err who plan evil? Those who plan good find loyalty and faithfulness.
כג	בְּכָל־עֶצֶב יִהְיֶה מוֹתָר	23	Hard toil always yields its profit;

¹⁶ The verb בָּטַח ('is conceited') here denotes self-assurance or overconfidence; fools are not cautious and do not fear the consequences of their actions.

¹⁷ This proverb discusses two character traits that are distasteful to others: the 'quick-tempered person' and the crafty person ('a schemer').

¹⁸ This proverb anticipates what the simple will receive, assuming they remain simpletons.

¹⁹ For this verse, here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB translates the 'characteristic perfect' in the 1st line as a future perfect: 'will bow down'.

²⁰ This verse is a telling observation.

²¹ The Kethib/Qere difference here appears to be a case of a scribe misreading a (possible small/short) vav as a yod.

²² For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Those who plan for good can earn faithful love and constancy."

²³ The term עֶצֶב ('hard toil') is first used in scripture in Gn 3:19.

ודבר־שִׁפְתַיִם אֶדְלֶמְחֶסֶד:
 כד עֲטֶרֶת חֲכָמִים עֲשָׂרָם
 אֹלֶת כְּסִילִים אֹלֶת:
 כה מִצִּיל נַפְשׁוֹת עַד אֱמֶת
 ויִפָּח כְּזָבִים מִרְמָה:
 כו בִּירְאֵת יְהוָה מְבִטָּח־עַז
 וּלְבָנָיו יִהְיֶה מַחֲסֶה:
 כז יִרְאֵת יְהוָה מְקוֹר חַיִּים
 לְסוֹר מִמְּקָשֵׁי מוֹת:
 כח בְּרַב־עַם הַדֶּרֶת־מֶלֶךְ
 וּבֶאֱפֶס לֹאִם מַחֲתֵת רְזוֹן:
 כט אֶרֶךְ אַפִּים רַב־תְּבוּנָה
 וְקֶצֶר־רוּחַ מְרִים אֹלֶת:
 ל חַיִּי בְשָׂרִים לֵב מִרְפָּא
 וְרָקֵב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְאָה:
 לא עֲשֵׂק דָּל חֲרָף עֲשֵׂהוּ

idle talk brings only want.

- 24 The crown of the wise is their riches;
the garland of fools is folly.
- 25 A truthful witness saves lives;
whoever utters lies is a deceiver.
- 26 In the fear of Yahweh is powerful security;
for his children, he is a refuge.
- 27 The fear of Yahweh is a life-giving spring
for eluding the snares of death.
- 28 A large population is a monarch's glory;
a dwindling population is a ruler's ruin.
- 29 Mastery of temper is high proof of intelligence;
a quick temper makes folly worse than ever.
- 30 The life of the body is a tranquil heart,
but envy is a cancer in the bones.
- 31 To oppress the weak insults the Creator;

24 'Garland' is a conjectural translation (וּלֹיִית), following the NRSV; the MT has 'folly' (אֹלֶת), as does the NJB.

25 'A deceiver' is a conjectural translation (מִרְמָה); the MT has 'astuteness' (מִרְמָה).

26 The 2nd line recalls Ex 20:5–6, where children will reap the benefits of the righteous parents.

27 The verse is similar to 13:14, except that 'the fear of Yahweh' has replaced 'the teaching of the wise'.

28 The word 'ruin' here could be a metonymy of effect, the cause being an attack by more numerous people that will bring ruin to the ruler. The proverb is a purely practical and secular saying, unlike some of the faith teachings in salvation history passages.

29 A more literal translation of 'quick temper' is 'hasty spirit'.

30 The term קִנְאָה ('envy') refers to either passionate zeal or jealousy, depending on whether the object is out of bounds or within one's rights.

31 In place of 'the Creator', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'their Maker'.

וּמִכְבֹּדוֹ חָנֵן אֲבִיוֹן:
 לִבִּי בְרַעְתּוֹ יִדְחָה רָשָׁע
 וְחֶסֶד בְּמוֹתוֹ צַדִּיק:
 לִי בִלְבַב נְבוֹן תִּנּוּחַ חֲכָמָה
 לִי וּבִקְרֹב פְּסִילִים תִּוָּדַע:
 לִי צִדְקָה תְרוֹמַם־גֹּי
 וְחֶסֶד לְאֻמִּים חֲטָאת:
 לִי רָצוֹן־מֶלֶךְ לְעַבְדִּי מִשְׁכָּל
 וְעִבְרָתוֹ תִּהְיֶה מִבִּישׁ:

kindness to the needy honours the Creator.
 32 For evildoing, the wicked will be flung headlong,
 but in his integrity, the upright will find refuge.
 33 Wisdom resides in an understanding heart;
 she is not to be found in the hearts of fools.
 34 Uprightness makes a nation great;
 by sin, whole races are disgraced.
 35 A king shows favour to a wise minister
 but anger to one who shames him.

32 'In his integrity' follows the LXX and Peshitta; the MT has 'at his death'.

33 The 2nd line follows the LXX; the MT omits 'not'.

34 For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

35 The wise servant is shown favour, while the shameful servant is shown anger.

משלי פרק טו

- א מַעֲנֶה־רֹדֶף יִשִּׁיב חֶמָּה
וּדְבַר־טָעֵב יַעֲלֶה־אַף:
ב לִשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים תִּיטִיב דַּעַת
וּפִי כְּסִילִים יִבִּיעַ אִוֶּלֶת:
ג בְּכָל־מָקוֹם עֵינֵי יְהוָה
צֹפּוֹת רָעִים וְטוֹבִים:
ד מִרְפָּא לִשׁוֹן עֵץ חַיִּים
וְסִלָּף בֶּה שֹׁבֵר בְּרוּחַ:
ה אִוִּל יִנְאֵץ מוֹסֵר אָבִיו
וְשֹׁמֵר תּוֹכַחַת יְעָרִים:
ו בֵּית צַדִּיק חֶסֶן רַב
וּבֵת בּוֹאֵת רָשָׁע נַעֲכָרֶת:
ז שִׁפְתֵי חֲכָמִים יִזְרוּ דַּעַת

PROVERBS 15

- 1 A mild answer turns away wrath;
sharp words stir up anger.
2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge welcome;
the mouth of a fool spews folly.
3 The eyes of Yahweh are everywhere,
observing the wicked and the good.
4 The tongue that soothes is a tree of life;
the perverse tongue is a breaker of hearts.
5 A fool rejects his father's discipline
but whoever accepts correction is discreet.
6 In the house of the upright, there is no lack of treasure;
the earnings of the wicked are fraught with anxiety.
7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;

PROVERBS 15

- 1 Gideon illustrates this kind of answer that brings peace (Jg 8:1–3). Note the unusual/unexpected dagesh on the *resh* in מַעֲנֶה־רֹדֶף.
2 The literal translation of 'welcome' is 'good'; the NRSV has 'the tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge'.
3 This proverb uses anthropomorphic language to describe God's exacting and evaluating knowledge of all people.
4 The literal translation of the 2nd line is 'perversity in her is breaking of spirit'.
5 For the 1st line, here following NETB, the NJB reads, "Whoever spurns his father's discipline is a fool."
6 The LXX text for this verse has no reference to wealth but talks about amassing righteousness.
7 The verb of the 1st line (יִזְרוּ) is difficult because it does not fit the 2nd very well – a heart does not scatter or spread knowledge; on the basis of the LXX, some suggests a change to יִצְרוּ ('they preserve'); however, the Greek evidence is not strong; for the 2nd line, the LXX has "hearts of fools are not safe," apparently taking לֹא־כֵן as 'unstable' instead of 'not so', so it seems futile to use the Greek version to change the 1st line to make a better parallel, when the Greek has such a different reading in the 2nd line anyway.

וְלֵב כְּסִילִים לֹא־כֵן:
 ח זָבַח רְשָׁעִים תוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה
 וּתְפִלַּת יֹשְׁרִים רְצוֹנוֹ:
 ט תוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ רָשָׁע
 וּמִרְדֶּף צְדָקָה יֶאֱהָב:
 י מוֹסֵר רֵעַ לְעֶזְבֹּב אֶרֶח
 יא שׁוֹנֵא תוֹכַחַת יָמוּת:
 יב שְׂאוֹל וְאַבְדּוֹן נִגְדִּי יְהוָה
 אֵף כִּי־לִבּוֹת בְּנֵי־אָדָם:
 יג לֹא יֶאֱהָב־לֵץ הוֹכֵחַ לוֹ
 אֶל־חֲכָמִים לֹא יִלְךְ:
 יד לֵב שִׂמְחָה יֵטֵב פָּנִים
 וּבְעֵצְבֹת־לֵב רוּחַ נִבְאָה:
 טו לֵב נְבוֹן יִבְקֹשׁ־דַּעַת
 וּפְנֵי וּפִי כְּסִילִים יִרְעָה אִוֶּלֶת:
 טו כָּל־יְמֵי עֲנִי רָעִים

not so the hearts of fools.

- 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is abhorrent to Yahweh;
 dear to him is the prayer of the honest
- 9 The conduct of the wicked is abhorrent to Yahweh,
 but he loves the person who pursues righteousness.
- 10 Severe discipline is for one who leaves the way;
 whoever hates a rebuke will die.
- 11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open to Yahweh:
 how much more the human heart!
- 12 The mocker does not care to be reprimanded,
 and will not go to the wise.
- 13 A glad heart means a happy face;
 where the heart is sad, the spirit is broken.
- 14 The heart of the wise seeks knowledge;
 a fool's mouth feeds on folly.
- 15 For the poor, every day is evil;

8 Sincerity in worship is essential.

9 God hates the way of the wicked: their lifestyle and actions; God loves those who pursue righteousness, the Piel here signifies persistence.

10 The two lines are parallel synonymously, so the 'severe discipline' of the 1st line is parallel to 'will die' of the 2nd.

11 'Sheol' and 'Abaddon' (the NJB has 'Perdition') are the place and state (destruction) of the dead.

12 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "and will not choose the wise as companions." The MT has לֹא־לְ ("to the wise"), suggesting seeking the advice of the wise but the LXX has 'with the wise', suggesting אֶת.

13 This proverb contrasts the health of the happy with that of the sad.

14 The Kethib/Qere difference here (dropping a nun) requires explanation.

15 The parallelism suggests that the afflicted is one afflicted within his spirit, for the proverb is promoting a healthy frame of mind.

וטֹב־לֵב מִשְׁתֵּה תָמִיד:
 טז טֹב־מַעַט בִּירְאֵת יְהוָה
 מאוֹצֵר רָב וּמְהוּמָה בּוֹ:
 יז טֹב אֶרְחַת יֶרֶק וְאַהֲבַת־שֵׁם
 מִשּׁוֹר אֲבוֹס וּשְׂנֵאָה־בּוֹ:
 יח אִישׁ חֲמָה יַגְרֶה מִדּוֹן
 וְאַרְךְ אַפִּים יִשְׁקִיט רִיב:
 יט דֶּרֶךְ עֲצָל כְּמִשְׁכַּת חֶדֶק
 וְאַרְחַ יֹשְׁרִים סְלִלָה:
 כ בֶּן חָכֵם יִשְׂמַח־אָב
 וְכִסִּיל אָדָם בּוֹזָה אִמּוֹ:
 כא אֹולֶת שְׂמֵחָה לַחֲסֵר־לֵב
 וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה יִישַׁר־לֶכֶת:
 כב הַפֶּר מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּאֵין סוֹד
 וּבְרֹב יוֹעֲצִים תִּקּוּם:
 כג שְׂמֵחָה לְאִישׁ בְּמַעֲנֵה־פִיו

for the joyous heart, it is always festival time.
 16 Better is a little and with it fear of Yahweh
 than immense wealth and with it anxiety.
 17 Better a dish of herbs when love is there
 than a fattened ox and hatred to go with it.
 18 The hot-tempered provokes disputes;
 the equable allays contention.
 19 The way of the lazy is like a thorny hedge;
 the path of the honest is a broad highway.
 20 A wise child is a father's joy;
 only a brute despises his mother.
 21 Folly appeals to someone without sense;
 a person of understanding walks straight ahead.
 22 Without deliberation, plans come to nothing;
 plans succeed where counsellors are many.
 23 To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone,

- 16 Not all wealth has associated anxiety; but the proverb focuses on the comparison of two things: fear of God with little and wealth with anxiety.
- 17 Again, the saying concerns troublesome wealth: Loving relationships are better than a feast where there is hatred. The ideal, of course, would be loving family and friends with a great meal, but this proverb is only comparing two things.
- 18 The fact that רִיב is used for 'contention' strongly implies that the setting is the courtroom or legal setting (the gates of the city).
- 19 The contrast to the thorny way is the 'broad highway'; the word, סְלִלָה, signifies a well built-up road.
- 20 The proverb is similar to 10:1, except that 'despises' replaces 'grief'; this adds the idea of the callousness of he who inflicts grief on his mother.
- 21 The phrase, 'straight ahead', translates יִישַׁר־לֶכֶת, which NETB considers a verbal hendiadys and translates as 'an upright course'.
- 22 This proverb says essentially the same thing as 11:14 but differently.
- 23 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Anyone who has a ready answer has joy too: how satisfying is the apt reply."

וְדָבַר בְּעֵתוֹ מֵה־טוֹב:
 כד אֲרַח חַיִּים לַמַּעֲלָה לַמַּשְׁכִּיל
 לַמַּעַן סוֹר מִשְׁאוֹל מָטָה:
 כה בֵּית גָּאִים יִסַּח | יְהוָה
 וַיַּצֵּב גְּבוּל אֶלְמִנָּה:
 כו תוֹעֲבַת יְהוָה מַחֲשָׁבוֹת רָע
 וְטִהָרִים אִמְרֵי־נָעִם:
 כז עֲכָר בֵּיתוֹ בּוֹצֵעַ בָּצַע
 וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתַּנֶּת יַחִיָּה:
 כח לֵב צַדִּיק יִהְיֶה לַעֲנוּת
 וּפִי רָשָׁעִים יִבִּיעַ רָעוֹת:
 כט רָחוֹק יְהוָה מִרָשָׁעִים
 וּתְפִלַּת צַדִּיקִים יִשְׁמַע:
 ל מְאוֹר־עֵינַיִם יִשְׂמַח־לֵב

and a word in season, how good it is!
 24 For the prudent, the path of life leads upwards,
 thus avoiding Sheol below.
 25 Yahweh pulls down the house of the proud
 but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.
 26 Wicked scheming is abhorrent to Yahweh
 but gracious words are pure.
 27 Craving for dishonest gain brings troubles on a house;
 hatred of bribery earns life.
 28 The heart of the upright reflects before answering;
 the mouth of the wicked spews out wickedness.
 29 Yahweh keeps his distance from the wicked,
 but he listens to the prayers of the upright.
 30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart;

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- 24 The words, 'upwards' and 'below', omitted by the LXX, may be glosses. The 'path of life' seems to mean prolongation of earthly life as opposed to descent into Sheol. Later, it was taken as 'the path leading to heavenly blessedness', but such a notion is not of the theology of that period.
 25 The 'proud' have to be understood here in contrast to the 'widow' and their house has to be interpreted in contrast to the widow's territory; the implication may be that the proud make their gain from the needy, so God will set the balance right.
 26 For the 2nd line, here following the MT, the LXX reads, "the sayings of the pure are held in honour" and the Vg has, "pure speech will be confirmed by him as very beautiful."
 27 The participle, עֲכָר ('troubles'), can have the connotation of making things difficult for the family, or completely ruining the family. In Joshua, Achan took the 'banned thing' and was put to death because he troubled Israel.
 28 For the 1st line, the LXX reads, "The hearts of the righteous meditate faithfulness."
 29 To say that God 'keeps his distance' from the wicked is to say that he has made himself unavailable to their appeal – he does not answer them.
 30 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "A kindly glance gives joy to the heart." The LXX opens, "The eye that sees beautiful things."

שְׁמוּעָה טוֹבָה תְּדַשֵּׁן-עַצָּם:
 אֹזֶן שֹׁמְעַת תּוֹכַחַת חַיִּים לֹא
 בְּקֶרֶב חֲכָמִים תִּלְוֶה:
 פּוֹרֵעַ מוֹסֵר מוֹאֵס נַפְשׁוֹ לֵב
 וְשׁוֹמֵעַ תּוֹכַחַת קוֹנֶה לֵב:
 יִרְאַת יְהוָה מוֹסֵר חֲכָמָה לֹג
 וּלְפָנָי כְּבוֹד עֲנוּהָ:

good news lends strength to the bones.

- ³¹ The ear attentive to wholesome correction
finds itself at home in the company of the wise.
- ³² Whoever rejects correction lacks self-respect
but whoever accepts reproof grows in understanding.
- ³³ The fear of Yahweh is a school of wisdom;
before there can be glory, there must be humility.

³¹ Here, the term, 'ear', is a synecdoche of part for the whole (i.e., the person).

³² This proverb is one full sentence; it affirms that a teachable person is among the wise.

³³ Humble submission in faith to the LORD brings wisdom and honour.

משלי פרק טז

- א לֹא־אָדָם מַעֲרִי־לֵב
וְיִמְיָהוּהָ מַעֲנֶה לְשׁוֹן:
ב כָּל־דֶּרֶךְ־אִישׁ זֶךְ בְּעֵינָיו
וְתִכֵּן רוּחֹת יְהוָה:
ג גַּל אֶל־יְהוָה מַעֲשִׂיךָ
וְיִכְנֹוּ מִחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ:
ד כָּל פֶּעַל יְהוָה לְמַעֲנֵהוּ
וְגַם־רָשָׁע לְיוֹם רָעָה:
ה תוֹעֲבַת יְהוָה כָּל־גְּבַה־לֵב
יָד לֵיד לֹא יִנְקָה:
ו בַּחֲסֵד וְאֱמֶת יִכַּפֵּר עֲוֹן
וּבִירְאָת יְהוָה סוּר מֵרָע:
ז בְּרָצוֹת יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ־אִישׁ
גַּם־אֹיְבָיו יִשְׁלַם אֹתוֹ:

PROVERBS 16

- 1 A human heart makes the plans
but Yahweh gives the answer.
2 A person's own acts seem right to the doer
but Yahweh weighs the souls.
3 Commit what you do to Yahweh
and what you plan will be achieved.
4 Yahweh made everything for its own purpose;
yes, even the wicked for the day of disaster.
5 Every arrogant heart is abhorrent to Yahweh:
be sure this will not go unpunished.
6 By faithful love and truth, sin is atoned for;
by fear of Yahweh, one avoids.
7 When the ways of people please Yahweh,
he makes their very enemies into friends.

PROVERBS 16

- 1 The meaning of the verse is thus: Man proposes – God disposes. Expressed here is a form of biblical determinism (the Bible honours human responsibility or free will but does not try to harmonise it with the all-pervasive divine causality).
2 Ultimately, we are unable to judge our own motives.
3 For 'commit', the MT reads גַּל (from the root גָּלַל, 'to roll'); however, the LXX and Tg have 'reveal', as if the root were גִּלָּה.
4 The wicked have been created to be an object lesson in the working of divine justice.
5 At the end of this verse, some LXX MSS add: "The beginning of a good way is to do justly and it is more acceptable with God than to do sacrifices."
6 The two words translated 'faithful love' and 'truth' are often found together to form a nominal hendiadys.
7 The 1st line uses an infinitive in a temporal clause, followed by its subject in the genitive case: 'in the taking pleasure of Yahweh' or 'when Yahweh is pleased with'; so, the condition set down for the 2nd line is a lifestyle that is pleasing to God.

ח טוֹב־מֶעַט בְּצִדְקָה
מְרַב תְּבוּאוֹת בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט:
ט לֵב אָדָם יַחֲשֹׁב דֶּרֶךְ
וַיְהִי יָכִין צִעְדּוֹ:
י קֶסֶם | עַל־שִׁפְתֵי־מֶלֶךְ
בְּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא יִמַּעַל־פִּיו:
יא פֶּלֶס | וּמֵאזְנֵי מִשְׁפָּט לִיהוָה
מַעֲשָׂהוּ כָל־אֲבָנֵי־כִּיס:
יב תוֹעֵבַת מְלָכִים עֲשׂוֹת רָשָׁע
כִּי בְצִדְקָה יִכּוֹן כִּסֵּא:
יג רָצוֹן מְלָכִים שִׁפְתֵי־צֶדֶק
וְדִבַּר יִשְׂרָאֵל יֶאֱהָב:
יד חֲמַת־מֶלֶךְ מְלֹאכֵי־מוֹת
וְאִישׁ חָכֵם יִכְפָּרְנָה:
טו בְּאוֹר־פָּנֵי־מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים

8 Better have little and with it uprightness
than great revenues with injustice.
9 The human heart may plan a course
but it is Yahweh who makes the steps secure.
10 The lips of the king utter inspired decisions;
he keeps faith when he speaks in judgement.
11 Honest balances and scales belong to Yahweh;
all the weights in the bag are of his making.
12 Evildoing is abhorrent to kings,
since uprightness is a throne's foundation.
13 Upright lips are a delight to a king;
he loves someone of honest words.
14 The king's wrath is the herald of death
but the wise will appease it.
15 When the king's face brightens, it spells life;

-
- 8 This proverb contrasts the modest income with the abundant income; but the real contrast is between righteousness and the lack of justice.
9 Only those plans that are approved by God will succeed.
10 This verse reflects the idea that the king pronounces judgement in the name of God (see 2S 14:18–20, 1K 3:4–28). Vv. 10–15 (except v. 11) are royal proverbs.
11 The Law required that scales and measures be right (Lv 19:36, Dt 25:13).
12 The 'throne' represents the administration, or the decisions made from the throne by the king, and so the word is a metonymy of adjunct.
13 For 'king', the MT has the plural, even though the verb, 'loves', is masculine singular; the LXX, Tg, Peshitta and 2 Hebrew MSS read 'a king'.
14 This proverb introduces the danger of becoming a victim of the king's wrath; a wise person knows how to pacify the unexpected and irrational behaviour of a king.
15 This proverb is the antithesis of the previous one.

וְרָצוֹנוֹ כְּעֵב מִלְּקוֹשׁ:
 טז קִנְיַת־חִכְמָה מִה־טוֹב מִחֲרוֹץ
 וּקְנוֹת בִּינָה נִבְחַר מִכֶּסֶף:
 יז מַסְלַת יֹשְׁרִים סוֹר מֵרַע
 שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ נֹצֵר דֶּרֶכּוֹ:
 יח לִפְנֵי־שֹׁבֵר גָּאוֹן
 וּלְפָנַי כְּשִׁלּוֹן גְּבוּהַ רוּחַ:
 יט טוֹב שְׁפַל־רוּחַ אֶת־עֲנוּיִם עֲנִיִּים
 מִחֲלֹק שָׁלַל אֶת־גִּּאִים:
 כ מְשַׁכֵּיל עַל־דְּבַר יִמְצָא־טוֹב
 וּבֹטֵחַ בִּיהוָה אֲשֶׁרִּיו:
 כא לַחֲכָם־לֵב יִקְרָא נָבוֹן
 וּמִתֵּק שְׁפָתַיִם יִסִּיף לֶקַח:
 כב מְקוֹר חַיִּים שֶׁכֶּל בְּעַלְיוֹ
 וּמוֹסֵר אֲוִלִּים אֲוִלָּת:
 כג לֵב חֲכָם יִשְׁכִּיל פִּיהוּ

his favour is like the rain in spring.
 16 Better gain wisdom than gold;
 understanding is more desirable than silver.
 17 The highway of the upright avoids evil;
 whoever watches the path keeps life safe.
 18 Pride goes before destruction,
 a haughty spirit before a fall.
 19 It is better to be humble with the poor
 than share the booty with the proud.
 20 Whoever listens closely to the word finds happiness;
 whoever trusts Yahweh is blessed.
 21 The wise of heart is acclaimed as intelligent;
 sweetness of speech increases knowledge.
 22 Shrewdness is a fountain of life for its possessor;
 the folly of fools is their own punishment.
 23 The heart of the wise lends shrewdness to speech

16 The word translated 'desirable' is a Niphal participle, masculine singular; if it is modifying 'understanding', it should be a feminine form.

17 The point of righteous living is made with the image of a highway, a raised and well-graded road.

18 The 2 lines of this proverb are synonymous parallelism: 'pride' is paired with 'haughty spirit' and 'destruction' is matched with 'a fall'.

19 The *Kethib*/*Qere* correction here may reflect a scribe's misreading of a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.

20 The *NJB* & *NRSV* have 'happy' in place of 'blessed' (here following *NETB*); the word means much more than 'happy' – it describes the heavenly bliss that comes from knowing one is right with God and following God's precepts.

21 The 1st line means that the wise of heart, those who make wise decisions, will gain a reputation of being the discerning ones.

22 On the phrase, 'folly of fools' cf. 14:8, 14:24.

23 The 1st line asserts that the wise heart ensures what is said is wise and the 2nd adds that such a person increases the reception of what is said.

וְעַל־שִׁפְתָיו יִסִּיף לֶקַח:
 כד צוֹף־דְּבַשׁ אִמְרֵי־נַעַם
 מְתוֹק לַנֶּפֶשׁ וּמְרַפָּא לָעֵצָם:
 כה יֵשׁ דֶּרֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי־אִישׁ
 וְאַחֲרֶיהָ דֶּרֶךְ־מָוֶת:
 כו נֶפֶשׁ עֹמֵל עֹמֵלָה לּוֹ
 כז בִּי־אַכָּךְ עָלָיו פִּיהוּ:
 כח אִישׁ בֹּלִיעַל כָּהָה רָעָה
 וְעַל־שִׁפְתּוֹ שִׁפְתּוֹ כֹּאֵשׁ צָרְבֶת:
 כט אִישׁ תְּהַפְּכוֹת יִשְׁלַח מִדּוֹן
 וְנִרְגָּז מִפָּרִיד אֱלוֹף:
 ל אִישׁ חֲמָס יַפְתֶּה רַעְהוּ
 וְהוֹלִיכוֹ בַּדֶּרֶךְ לֹא־טוֹב:
 ל עֵצָה עֵינָיו לַחֲשֹׁב תְּהַפְּכוֹת
 קֶרֶן שִׁפְתּוֹ כָּלָה רַעָה:

and makes words more persuasive.
 24 Kindly words are a honeycomb:
 sweet to the taste, wholesome to the body.
 25 There is a way that some think straight
 but it leads in the end to death.
 26 A worker's appetite works on his behalf,
 for his hunger urges him on.
 27 A worthless person concocts evil;
 such a one's talk is like a scorching fire.
 28 A perverse person sows strife;
 a slanderer divides friend from friend.
 29 A man of violence lures his neighbour astray
 and leads him by a way that is not good.
 30 Whoever narrows the eyes to think up tricks
 and purses the lips has already done wrong.

-
- 24 The metaphor of honey or the honeycomb is used elsewhere in scripture, notably Ps 19:11. Honey was used in Israel as a symbol of the delightful and healthy products of the land – ‘*a land where milk and honey flow*’.
 25 This proverb is identical to 14:12.
 26 The literal translation of ‘*appetite*’ is ‘*soul*’.
 27 The literal translation of ‘*worthless person*’ is ‘*man of Belial*’, that is to say, ‘*of Nothingness*’ (the scoundrel, see 6:12). However, some consider Belial to denote the devil (see 2Co 6:15). The *Kethib*/ *Qere* difference here (dropping a *yod*) requires explanation.
 28 In place of ‘*perverse person*’, here following the NRSV (and MT), the NJB has ‘*troublemaker*’. Note that the trailing ך in וְנִרְגָּז is presented as a small letter, as it appears in almost all *Hebrew MSS*.
 29 The term חֲמָס (‘*violence*’) often refers to sins against society, social injustices, and crimes.
 30 The conjunction, ‘*and*’, at the beginning of the 2nd line does not occur in the Hebrew text but is implied.

לא עֵטֶרֶת תִּפְאֶרֶת שִׁיבָה
 בְּדֶרֶךְ צְדָקָה תִּמְצָא:
 לב טוֹב אֶרֶךְ אַפִּים מִגִּבּוֹר
 וּמִשָּׁל בְּרוּחוֹ מִלִּבֵּד עִיר:
 לג בְּחִיק יוֹטֵל אֶת־הַגּוֹרֵל
 וּמִיָּהוָה כָּל־מִשְׁפָּטוֹ:

- ³¹ White hairs form a crown of honour;
 they are found in the ways of uprightness.
³² Better an equable person than a hero,
 someone with self-mastery than one who takes a city.
³³ In the fold of the garment, the lot is thrown,
 but from Yahweh comes the decision.

³¹ This verse reflects the idea that the wise and virtuous person lives a long life.

³² This saying would have had greater impact when military prowess was held in high regard: It is harder, and therefore better, to control one's passions than to do some great exploit on the battlefield.

³³ The 1st line alludes to the *ephod* worn on the High Priest's breast (see #Ex 28:6), here identified with the other *ephod*, which held the sacred lots (see #1S 2:28).

משלי פרק יז

- א טוֹב פֶּת חֲרֵבָה וְשְׁלוֹה־בָּה
מִבֵּית מָלֵא זִבְחֵי־רִיב:
ב עֶבֶד־מִשְׁכִּיל יִמְשַׁל בֶּן מִבֵּישׁ
וּבִתּוֹךְ אֲחִים יַחֲלֹק נַחֲלָה:
ג מִצְרָף לְכֶסֶף וְכוּר לְזָהָב
וּבִחֵן לְבָבוֹת יְהוָה:
ד מֵרַע מִקְשִׁיב עַל־שִׁפְת־אָוֶן
שֹׁקֵר מִזִּין עַל־לִשׁוֹן הָזֵת:
ה לַעֲג לְרֵשׁ חֲרָף עֲשֹׂהוּ
שִׁמְח לְאִיד לֹא יִנָּקֶה:
ו עֲטֶרֶת זִקְנִים בְּנֵי בָנִים
וְתַפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם:

PROVERBS 17

- 1 Better a mouthful of dry bread with peace,
than a house filled with quarrelsome sacrifices.
2 A shrewd servant will rule over an unworthy child:
he will share the inheritance with the brothers.
3 A crucible for silver, a furnace for gold,
but Yahweh for the testing of hearts!
4 An evildoer pays heed to malicious talk;
a liar listens to a slanderous tongue.
5 To mock the poor is to insult the Creator;
no one who laughs at distress will go unpunished.
6 The crown of the aged is their children's children;
the children's glory is their father.

PROVERBS 17

- 1 This is probably an allusion to the meat offered in sacrifice and then eaten at a sacred meal.
2 The setting is in the ancient world, where a servant rarely advanced beyond his or her station in life; however, there are notable exceptions (e.g., Gn 15:3, where the possibility is mentioned, 1Ch 2:35, where it changed through marriage, and 2S 16:1–4, 19:24–30, with the story of Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth). This proverb focuses on a servant who is wise and uses all his abilities effectively – a Joseph figure.
3 The term כּוּר describes a ‘furnace’ or smelting pot; it can be used figuratively for the beneficial side of affliction (Is 48:10).
4 Wicked, self-serving people find destructive speech appealing; they should be rebuked and not tolerated (Lv 19:17).
5 Compare Amenemophis: “Do not laugh at a blind man, do not make fun of a dwarf, do not do wrong to the infirm ... man is clay and straw, the god is his architect.”
6 The metaphor signifies that grandchildren are like a crown, that they are the “crowning glory” of life as it were; the saying comes from a culture that places great importance on the family in society and that values its heritage.

ז לא־נֶאֱוָה לִנְבֹל שְׁפַת־יֵתֶר
 אֶף כִּי־לִנְדִיב שְׁפַת־שָׁקֶר:
 ח אֶבְנ־חֶן הַשַּׁחַד בְּעֵינַי בְּעֵלָיו
 אֶל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יִפְנֶה יִשְׁכִּיל:
 ט מִכְסֵּה־פֶשַׁע מִבְקֵשׁ אֲהָבָה
 וְשֹׁנֶה בְּדָבָר מִפְרִיד אֱלֹוֹף:
 י תַּחַת גְּעֵרָה בַּמִּבִּין
 מִהַכּוֹת כָּסִיל מֵאָה:
 יא אֶדְמִי יִבְקֹשׁ־רַע
 וּמִלֵּאדָּ אֶכְזֹרִי יִשְׁלַח־בּוֹ:
 יב פָּגוֹשׁ דָּב שָׁכוֹל בְּאִישׁ
 וְאֶל־כָּסִיל בְּאוֹלְתּוֹ:
 יג מְשִׁיב רָעָה תַּחַת טוֹבָה
 לֹא־תִמּוֹשׁ תִּמְיֹשׁ רָעָה מִבֵּיתוֹ:
 יד פּוֹטֵר מִים רֹאשִׁית מִדּוֹן
 וּלְפָנָי הִתְגַּלַּע הָרִיב נָטוּשׁ:

7 Fine words do not become the foolish;
 false words become a prince still less.
 8 A gift works like a talisman for one who holds it;
 it brings prosperity at every turn.
 9 Whoever covers an offence promotes love;
 whoever again raises the matter divides friends.
 10 A rebuke strikes deeper into a discerning person
 than a hundred strokes on a fool.
 11 The wicked person thinks of nothing but rebellion,
 but a cruel messenger will be sent to such a one.
 12 Rather come on a bear robbed of her cubs
 than on a fool in his folly.
 13 Disaster will never be far from the house
 of one who returns evil for good.
 14 As well unleash a flood as start a dispute;
 desist before the quarrel breaks out.

⁷ In place of 'prince', the NRSV has 'ruler' and offers 'noble person' as an alternative.

⁸ The NRSV has 'bribe' in place of 'gift' (see #23).

⁹ Harping on about the past has destroyed many friendships and marriages.

¹⁰ Possibly, the mention of the 'hundred strokes' has an Egyptian origin: the laws of Israel forbade a punishment in excess of forty strokes (Dt 25:3).

¹¹ The 'cruel messenger' is, perhaps, the exterminating angel (see #Ex 12:23); that is how the LXX understands it: "The Lord will send a pitiless angel against him."

¹² The human, who is supposed to be rational and intelligent, in such folly becomes more dangerous than the beast that acts with good reason.

¹³ The Kethib/Qere difference here may reflect a scribe's misreading of a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.

¹⁴ Literally translated, this verse opens with, "Letting out water."

טו מַצְדִּיק רָשָׁע וּמַרְשִׁיעַ צַדִּיק
 תֹּועֵבֶת יְהוָה גַּם־שִׁנְיָהֶם:
 טז לְמַה־זֶּה מַחִיר בִּיד־כֶּסֶל
 לִקְנוֹת חֲכָמָה וְלִב־אִין:
 יז בְּכָל־עֵת אֹהֵב הָרַע
 וְאֵחַ לְצָרָה יוֹלֵד:
 יח אָדָם חֲסֵר־לֵב תֹּקַע בָּךְ
 עָרֵב עֲרֻבָּה לִפְנֵי רֵעֵהוּ:
 יט אֹהֵב פֶּשַׁע אֹהֵב מַצָּה
 מִגְבִּיָּה פֶתְחוֹ מִבֶּקֶשׁ־שֹׁבֵר:
 כ עֶקֶשׁ־לֵב לֹא יִמְצָא־טוֹב
 וְנִהְפֹךְ בְּלִשׁוֹנוֹ יִפּוֹל בְּרָעָה:
 כא יֵלֵד כֶּסֶל לְתוֹגָה לוֹ
 וְלֹא־יִשְׂמַח אָבִי נָבֵל:

15 To absolve the guilty and condemn the upright,
 both alike are abhorrent to Yahweh.
 16 What good is money in the hand of a fool,
 to buy wisdom with it when the desire is not there?
 17 A friend is a friend at all times;
 it is for adversity that a brother is born.
 18 Whoever offers guarantee lacks sense
 and goes surety for a neighbour.
 19 The double-dealer loves sin;
 one who builds a high door invites broken bones.
 20 The crooked of heart finds no happiness
 and the perverse of tongue falls into misery.
 21 He who fathers a fool does so to his sorrow;
 the father of a fool knows no joy.

15 The 1st line uses two Hiphil participles, מַצְדִּיק ('absolve') and מַרְשִׁיעַ ('condemn').

16 This verse is a rhetorical question stating that money would be wasted on a fool.

17 This proverb uses synonymous parallelism, so 'friend' and 'brother' are equated.

18 Compare 11:5.

19 In place of 'one who builds a high door' (here following the NRSV), the NJB has 'the proud'.

20 This proverb parallels two descriptions of the wicked person: 'crooked of heart' (genitive of specification), and 'perverse of tongue' (deceitful). The first phrase describes twisted intentions; the second, using the Niphal participle ('one turned away') with 'tongue', the metonymy of cause, describes one who has turned away from speaking truth.

21 Here, the terms כֶּסֶל and נָבֵל (both translated 'fool'). The first one, which occurs about fifty times in the book, refers to a dullard, whether it be in spiritual, intellectual, or moral matters; the second word, rare in the book, primarily focuses on religious folly – it refers to the practical atheist, the one who lives as if there is no God.

כב לב שמח ייטיב גֵּהָה
 וְרוּחַ נִכְאָה תִּיבֶשׁ-גָּרֶם:
 כג שֶׁחַד מִחֶק רָשָׁע יִקַּח
 לְהַטּוֹת אֲרָחוֹת מִשְׁפָּט:
 כד אֶת-פָּנָיו מִבֵּין חֲכָמָה
 וְעֵינָיו כְּסִיל בִּקְצֵה-אָרֶץ:
 כה כַּעַס לְאָבִיו בֶּן כְּסִיל
 וְמָמַר לִיּוֹלְדָתוֹ:
 כו גַּם עֲנוּשׁ לַצַּדִּיק לֹא-טוֹב
 לְהַכּוֹת נְדִיבִים עַל-יֹשֶׁר:
 כז חוֹשֵׁד אֲמָרָיו יוֹדֵעַ דָּעַת
 וְקָר יִקְרֶהוּ אִישׁ תְּבוּנָה:
 כח גַּם אוֹיֵל מִחֲרִישׁ חֲכָם יַחֲשַׁב
 אֲטָם שֹׁפְתָיו נָבוֹן:

22 A cheerful heart is excellent medicine;
 a depressed spirit wastes the bones away.
 23 Under cover of his cloak, a bad man takes a gift
 to pervert the course of justice.
 24 The intelligent has wisdom there before him,
 but the eyes of a fool range to the ends of the earth.
 25 A foolish child is a father's sorrow
 and the grief of her who bore him.
 26 To fine the upright is indeed a crime;
 to strike the noble is an injustice.
 27 Whoever can control the tongue knows what knowledge is;
 someone of understanding keeps a cool temper.
 28 Even fools who keep silent are considered wise;
 when they close their lips, they are deemed intelligent.

22 The literal translation of 'cheerful heart' is 'heart of rejoicing'.

23 This verse concerns bribes taken by judges and false witnesses. Cf. 17:8, 18:16 and 21:14, where the 'gift' has a more general sense.

24 The 2nd line can be understood thus: 'the fool pries everywhere and interferes in everything'.

25 This proverb is similar to v. 21, 10:1, and 15:20.

26 The term, עֲנוּשׁ, here translated as 'fine' (following the NJB) can also mean to 'punish' in a more general sense.

27 The Kethib/Qere difference here appears to be a case of vav/yod confusion.

28 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "If the fool holds his tongue, he may pass for wise; if he seals his lips, he may pass for intelligent."

משלי פרק יח

- א לתאוה יבקש נפרד
בכל־תושיה יתגלע:
ב לא־יחפץ בסיל בתבונה
כי אם־בהתגלות לבו:
ג בבוא־רשע בא גס־בוז
ועס־קלון חרפה:
ד מים עמקים דברי פי־איש
נחל נבע מקור חכמה:
ה שאת פני־רשע לא־טוב
להטות צדיק במשפט:
ו שפתי בסיל יבאו בריב
ופיו למהלמות יקרא:
ז פי־כסיל מחתה־לו
ושפתי מוקש נפשו:

PROVERBS 18

- 1 Whoever lives alone follows private whims
and is angered by advice of any kind.
2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding
but only in airing an opinion.
3 When wickedness comes, indignity comes too;
and, with contempt, a reproach.
4 Deep waters, such are human words:
a gushing stream, the utterance of wisdom.
5 It is not good to show partiality for the wicked,
or to subvert the innocent in judgment.
6 The lips of the fool bring strife,
with a mouth that pleads for a beating.
7 The mouth of a fool works its owner's ruin;
the lips of a fool are a snare for their owner's life.

PROVERBS 18

- 1 The meaning of the Hebrew text is uncertain: is solitude commended or condemned? For the 2nd line, the NRSV reads: "showing contempt for all who have sound judgement."
2 For the 2nd line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "but only in expressing a personal opinion."
3 The 'reproach' (following NETB) refers to the critical rebukes and taunts of the community against a wicked person.
4 'Deep waters' is obscure (it can mean either profound or murky) and it is not clear if the 2 lines of this verse are antithetical or synonymous.
5 For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "and so to deprive the upright when giving judgement."
6 In place of 'bring strife', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'go to the law-courts'.
7 What a fool says can ruin him! Calamity and misfortune can come to a person who makes known his lack of wisdom by what he says; it may be that his words incite anger, or merely reveal stupidity – in either case, he is in trouble.

ח דְּבַרֵּי גִרְזֹן כְּמַתְּלֵהִים
 וְהֵם יֵרְדוּ חֲדָרֵי־בֶטֶן:
 ט גַּם מִתְרַפֶּה בְּמִלֵּאכָתּוֹ
 אַח הוּא לְבַעַל מִשְׁחִית:
 י מִגְדֹּל־עֹז שֵׁם יְהוָה
 בּוֹ־יֵרוּץ צַדִּיק וְנִשְׁגָּב:
 יא הוֹן עֲשִׂיר קִרְיַת עֹז
 וּכְחוּמָה נִשְׁגָּבָה בְּמִשְׁכָּתּוֹ:
 יב לִפְנֵי־שֹׁבֵר יִגְבֶּה לְב־אִישׁ
 וּלִפְנֵי כְבוֹד עֲנוּה:
 יג מִשִּׁיב דֶּבֶר בְּטָרֵם יִשְׁמַע
 אֹלֶת הִיא־לּוֹ וּכְלָמָה:
 יד רוּח־אִישׁ יְכַלְכֵּל מַחְלָהוּ
 וְרוּחַ נִכְאָה מִי יִשְׁאַנָּה:
 טו לֵב נְבוֹן יִקְנֶה־דַעַת

- 8 The words of a slanderer are tasty morsels
that go right down into the belly.
- 9 Whoever is idle at work
is blood brother to the destroyer.
- 10 The name of Yahweh is a strong tower;
the upright runs to it and is secure.
- 11 The wealth of the rich forms a stronghold,
a high wall, as the rich supposes.
- 12 The human heart is haughty until destruction comes;
before there can be glory, there must be humility.
- 13 To retort without first listening
is both foolish and embarrassing.
- 14 The human spirit will endure sickness;
but, when the spirit is broken, who can bear this?
- 15 The heart of the intelligent acquires learning;

8 Slander listened to is not soon forgotten.

9 The literal translation of 'destroyer' is 'possessor of destruction'.

10 The 'name' of God here refers to his attributes and/or actions.

11 This proverb forms a contrast with the previous: the rich, unlike the righteous, trust in wealth and not in God.

12 The way to honour is through humility (e.g., 11:2, 15:33, 16:18); the exaltation of Jesus provides the classic example (Phil 2:1–10).

13 Poor listening and premature answering indicate that the person has a low regard for what the other is saying, or that he is too absorbed in his own ideas.

14 This is a rhetorical question, asserting that very few can cope with depression.

15 The 2nd line features a mixed metaphor: the ear is pictured seeking. The 'ears of the wise' actually means the wise person's capacity to hear, so the wise are seeking as they hear.

וְאִזֵּן חֲכָמִים תִּבְקֹשְׁדַּעַת:
 טז מִתֵּן אָדָם יִרְחִיב לוֹ
 וּלְפָנָי גְּדֹלִים יִנְחֲנוּ:
 יז צֶדִיק הָרִאשׁוֹן בְּרִיבוֹ
 יבֹא וּבֹא-רֵעֵהוּ וַחֲקֹרוּ:
 יח מְדִינִים יִשְׁבִּית הַגּוֹרֵל
 וּבֵין עֲצוּמִים יִפְרִיד:
 יט אֶחָ נִפְשָׁע מִקְרִית-עֹז
 וּמְדוֹנִים וּמְדִינִים כְּבָרִיחַ אֶרְמוֹן:
 כ מִפְרֵי פִי-אִישׁ תִּשְׂבַּע בִּטְנוֹ
 תְּבוֹאֶת שִׁפְתָיו יִשְׂבַּע:
 כא מוֹת וְחַיִּים בִּיד-לָשׁוֹן
 וְאֹהֲבִיהָ יֹאכֵל פְּרִיהָ:
 כב מִצָּא אִשָּׁה מִצָּא טוֹב
 וַיִּפֹּק רָצוֹן מִיהוָה:

the ears of the wise seek knowledge.
 16 A gift will open all doors
 and win access to the great.
 17 The first to plead seems right,
 until the next comes and cross-examines him.
 18 The lot puts an end to disputes
 and decides between men of power.
 19 A brother offended is worse than a fortified city,
 and quarrels are the locks of a keep.
 20 From the fruit of the mouth is the stomach filled;
 the yield of the lips gives contentment.
 21 Death and life are in the gift of the tongue;
 those who indulge it must eat the fruit it yields.
 22 He who finds a wife finds happiness,
 receiving a mark of favour from Yahweh.

¹⁶ The term translated 'gift' is a more general term than 'bribe', used in 17:8, 23.

¹⁷ Both sides of a question must be heard. The *Kethib/Qere* difference here may be due to a scribe misreading a (possibly small or short) *vav* as a *yod*.

¹⁸ This is probably not a pessimistic view of justice but a reference to the 'judgement of God', cf. 16:33.

¹⁹ The text is uncertain; the *LXX* is very different: "A brother helped by his brother is a high and fortified city; he is as strong as a royal rampart." The 'locks of a keep' prevent reconciliation. The *Kethib/Qere* difference here may be due to a scribe misreading a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.

²⁰ Two images are used in this proverb: the fruit of the mouth and the harvest of the lips; they are synonymous: the first is applied to the orchard and the second to the field.

²¹ What people say can lead to life or death.

²² The parallelism is formal; the 2nd line of the verse continues the 1st but explains it further: finding a mate is the sign of favour from God.

כג תַּחֲנוּנִים יְדַבֵּר־רֶשׁ
וְעֲשִׂיר יַעֲנֶה עֲזוֹת:
כד אִישׁ רָעִים לְהַתְרַעֵץ
וְיִשׁ אֹהֵב דָּבַק מֵאָח:

²³ The language of the poor is entreaty;
the answer of the rich is harshness.

²⁴ There are friends who point the way to ruin;
others are closer than a brother is.

²³ The rich person responds harshly to the request: he has hardened himself against such appeals because of relentless demands. The proverb is an observation saying; it simply describes the way the world generally works, rather than setting this out as the ideal.

²⁴ 'There are' is a conjectural translation (יִישׁ); the MT has 'a man' (אִישׁ).

משלי פרק יט

א טוֹב־רֶשׁ הוֹלֵךְ בְּתָמוֹ
מֵעֵקֶשׁ שְׁפָתָיו וְהוּא כָסִיל:
ב גַּם בְּלֹא־דַעַת נֶפֶשׁ לֹא־טוֹב
וְאֵץ בְּרַגְלִים חוֹטָא:
ג אִוֵּלֶת אָדָם תִּסְלַף דַּרְכּוֹ
וְעַל־יְהוָה יִזְעַף לְבוֹ:
ד הוֹן יִסִּיף רַעִים רַבִּים
וְדָל מֵרַעְהוּ יִפְרֹד:
ה עַד שִׁקְרִים לֹא יִנָּקָה
וְיִפִּיחַ כְּזָבִים לֹא יִמְלֹט:
ו רַבִּים יַחֲלוּ פְנֵי־נָדִיב
וְכָל־הָרֹעַ לְאִישׁ מִתָּן:
ז כָּל־אֲחֵי־רֵשׁ | שִׂנְאָהוּ

PROVERBS 19

- 1 Better the poor living an honest life
than the adept at double-talk who is a fool.
- 2 Where knowledge is wanting, zeal is not good;
whoever goes too quickly stumbles.
- 3 One's own folly leads to ruin,
yet the heart rages against Yahweh.
- 4 Wealth multiplies friends
but the one friend that the poor has is taken away.
- 5 The false witness will not go unpunished;
no one who utters lies will go free.
- 6 The nobleman has many to court his favour;
to a giver of gifts, everyone is a friend.
- 7 All the poor man's brothers hate him:

PROVERBS 19

- 1 In the 2nd line, the *Peshitta* and *Tg* read 'rich' in place of 'a fool'; this makes a tighter antithetical parallelism than in the *MT*. However, the *MT* makes sense as it stands – it is an example of metonymical parallelism (the *MT* reading is also supported by the *LXX*).
- 2 The literal translation of 'goes too quickly' is 'is hasty with his feet'.
- 3 For this verse, here following the *NRSV*, the *NJB* reads, "Folly leads conduct astray, yet it is against Yahweh that the heart rages."
- 4 This proverb simply makes an observation on life: People run after wealthy folk, but the poor are deserted even by friends, perhaps hoping that they can gain something from the rich and fearing that the poor will try to gain something from them.
- 5 This proverb is a general statement because, on occasion, there are false witnesses who go unpunished in this life (e.g., 6:19, 14:5, 25, 19:9).
- 6 This proverb acknowledges a fact of life; but it also reminds people of the value of gifts in life, especially in business or in politics.
- 7 The last line is a fragmentary proverb, probably lacking an opening first line; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here requires explanation. The 1st *Maqaf* in כָּל־אֲחֵי־רֵשׁ is not present in the *MSS* but is here presented following the *MAM* text.

אֶף כִּי מֵרַעְהוּ רָחֵקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ
מֵרֹדֵף אֲמָרִים לֹא לֹו־הֶמָּה:
ח קִנְהַלֵּב אֲהֵב נַפְשׁוֹ
שֹׁמֵר תְּבוּנָה לְמַצָּא־טוֹב:
ט עַד שִׁקְרִים לֹא יִנָּקֶה
וְיִפְיֵחַ כְּזָבִים יֵאָבֵד:
י לֹא־נֹאווֶה לְכִסִּיל תַּעֲנוּג
אֶף כִּי־לַעֲבֹד | מִשָּׁל בְּשָׂרִים:
יא שֹׁכֵל אָדָם הָאָרֶץ אִפּוֹ
וְתִפְאָרְתּוֹ עֹבֵר עַל־פֶּשַׁע:
יב נָהֵם בְּכִפּוּר זַעַף מֶלֶךְ
וְכִטֵּל עַל־עֵשֶׂב רְצוֹנוֹ:
יג הֵזֶת לֵאבִיו בֶּן כִּסִּיל
וְדִלֵּף טֹרֵד מְדִינִי אִשָּׁה:
יד בֵּית וְהוֹן נַחֲלַת אֲבוֹת

how much the more do his friends desert him!
He goes in search of words but they are not there.

- 8 To get wisdom is to love oneself;
to keep understanding is to prosper.
- 9 The false witness will not go unpunished;
whoever utters lies will perish.
- 10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury,
still less for a slave to govern princes.
- 11 Those with good sense are slow to anger,
and it is their glory to overlook an offense.
- 12 Like the roaring of a lion is the anger of a king
but like the dew in the grass his favour.
- 13 A foolish child is a disaster for the father;
the bickering of a wife is like constant dripping.
- 14 From fathers comes inheritance of house and wealth,

- 8 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “Whoever acquires sense wins profit from it; whoever treasures understanding finds happiness.”
- 9 This verse is the same as v. 5, except that the last word changes to the verb, ‘will perish’.
- 10 This proverb is simply observing two things that are misfits; it is not concerned with a fool who changes and can handle wealth, or a servant who changes to become a nobleman – it is focused on things that are incongruous.
- 11 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “Good sense makes for self-control, and for pride in overlooking an offence.”
- 12 This proverb contrasts the ‘anger’ of the king with his ‘favour’ by using two similes: The 1st presents the king at his most dangerous – his anger (e.g., 20:2, Am 3:4); the 2nd presents his favour as beneficial for life (e.g., 16:14–15, 28:15).
- 13 The 2nd line pictures water dripping (through a roof: the NJB as ‘a constant dripping gutter’) continuously: it annoys and irritates (27:15–16).
- 14 This verse describes a wife who has a skilful use of knowledge and discretion that proves successful; it contrasts with the v. 13. The proverb is not concerned about unhappy marriages or bad wives; it simply affirms that, when it works out well, one should credit it as a gift from God.

וּמִיָּהוָה אִשָּׁה מְשַׁכֶּלֶת:
 טו עֲצֵלָה תִפִּיל תִרְדָּמָה
 וּנֶפֶשׁ רַמְיָה תִרְעַב:
 טז שֹׁמֵר מִצְוָה שֹׁמֵר נַפְשׁוֹ
 בּוֹזֵה דְרָכָיו יוֹמֵת יָמוֹת:
 יז מַלְוֶה יֵהוּה חֲזֹנֵן דָּל
 וְגָמְלוֹ יִשְׁלֶם-לוֹ:
 יח יֹסֵר בֶּנֶךְ כִּי-יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה
 וְאַל-הִמִּיתוּ אֶל-תִּשְׁאָא נִפְשֶׁךָ:
 יט גֵּרֵל גְּדַל-חֲמָה נִשְׂא עָנֵשׁ
 כִּי אִם-תִּצִּיל וְעוֹד תּוֹסֶף:
 כ שִׁמְעַע עֲצָה וְקִבֵּל מוֹסֵר
 לְמַעַן תַּחֲכֶם בְּאַחֲרִיתָךְ:
 כא רַבּוֹת מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלִב־אִישׁ
 וְעֲצַת יְהוָה הִיא תִקּוּם:

from Yahweh, a wife who is discreet.
 15 Laziness brings on deep sleep
 and the idle soul will go hungry.
 16 Keeping the commandment is self-preservation,
 but whoever despises these ways will die.
 17 Whoever is kind to the poor is lending to Yahweh,
 who will repay him the kindness done.
 18 While there is hope for him, chastise your child,
 but do not get so angry as to kill him.
 19 The violent lays himself open to a penalty;
 spare him and you aggravate his crime.
 20 Listen to advice and accept correction,
 to be wiser in the time to come.
 21 Many are the plans in the human heart,
 but the purpose of Yahweh – that stands firm.

15 The two lines are related in a metonymical sense: 'deep sleep' is the cause of going 'hungry' and going hungry is the effect of deep sleep.

16 The 2nd line refers either to whoever does not watch over his own conduct, or whoever does not walk the way indicated by 'the commandment'. In place of the *Kethib* reading of *יוֹמֵת* ('will be put to death'), the *Qere* has *יָמוֹת* ('will die'); the *Qere* is generally regarded as the preferred reading.

17 The deeds referred to in the 1st line are the kind favours shown to poor people for no particular reason and with no hope of repayment; they are acts of grace.

18 This proverb either shows a tempering of the legal code (see Dt 21:18–21) or is merely warning against over-hasty punishment.

19 The text of this verse is very uncertain and the *Qere* reads *גְּדַל־* in place of the *גֵּרֵל־* of the *Kethib* (*resh/dalet* confusion). The idea seems to be that by neglecting to punish the violent, you only make their condition worse.

20 This proverb is one continuous thought but the 2nd line provides the purpose for the imperatives of the 1st line.

21 Only those of the many human plans that God approves will succeed.

כב תִּאֲוֹת אָדָם חֶסֶדּוֹ
וְטוֹב־רֶשׁ מְאִיֵּשׁ כֹּזֵב:
כג יִרְאֵת יְהוָה לְחַיִּים
וְשִׁבְעַת יָלִין בְּלִי־פֶקֶד רָע:
כד טֶמֶן עֲצָל יָדוֹ בְּצִלְחַת
גַּם־אֶל־פִּיהוּ לֹא יִשְׁיבֶנָּה:
כה לֶץ תִּכָּה וּפְתֵי יַעֲרֵם
וְהוֹכִיחַ לְנִבּוֹן יִבִּין דַּעַת:
כו מְשַׁדְּד־אָב יִבְרִיחַ אָם
בֶּן מִבִּישׁ וּמַחְפִּיר:
כז חֲדַל־בְּנֵי לִשְׁמַע מוֹסֵר
לְשִׁגְוֹת מֵאֲמַר־דַּעַת:
כח עַד בְּלִיעַל יִלִּין מִשְׁפָּט
וּפִי רָשָׁעִים יִבְלַע־אוֹן:

22 Faithful love is what people look for in a person;
they prefer the poor to a liar.
23 The fear of Yahweh leads to life;
it brings food and shelter, without fear of evil.
24 Into the dish, the idler dips his hand,
but he cannot bring it back to his mouth.
25 Strike a cynic and the simple will learn prudence;
reprove the intelligent and he will gain knowledge.
26 He who ill-treats his father and drives out his mother
is a child both worthless and depraved.
27 Give up listening to instruction, my child,
if you mean to stray from words of knowledge.
28 A perjured witness holds the law in scorn;
the mouth of the wicked feasts on evildoing.

-
- 22 The 2nd half of the verse presents the logical inference: the liar would be without 'faithful love' entirely, so poverty would be better than this. A poor person who wishes to do better is better than a person who makes promises and does not keep them.
- 23 For the 2nd line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "filled with it one rests secure and suffers no harm."
- 24 This humorous portrayal is an exaggeration but the point is that laziness can overcome hunger; it would have a wider application for anyone who would start a project and then lack the interest or energy to finish it.
- 25 In place of 'gain knowledge', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'understand your meaning'.
- 26 In place of 'ill-treats', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'do(es) violence to' and NETB has 'robs'.
- 27 The meaning of this verse is uncertain. The LXX reads: "A son who stops paying attention to what his father teaches him will soon be thinking of bad words."
- 28 The description of crooked or corrupt witnesses in Hebrew is עַד בְּלִיעַל (literally, 'a witness who is worthless and wicked'); such are witnesses who wilfully distort the facts and make a mockery of the whole legal process.

כט נִכּוֹנֵנוּ לַלְצִים שְׁפָטִים
וּמַהֲלֵמוֹת לִגְוֵן בְּסִילִים:

²⁹ Judgements were made for mockers,
and beating for the backs of fools.

²⁹ Some suggest emending 'judgements' (שְׁפָטִים) to 'rods' (שִׁבְטִים); however, this is not necessary if the term in the *MT* is interpreted figuratively.

משלי פרק ב

- א לֹץ הֵיזֵן הִמָּה שֵׁכָר
וְכָל־שֹׁגָה בּוֹ לֹא יִחְכֹּם:
ב נָהָם בְּכַפִּיר אֵימַת מֶלֶךְ
מִתְעַבְּרוֹ חוֹטֵא נַפְשׁוֹ:
ג כְּבוֹד לְאִישׁ שֶׁבֶת מְרִיב
וְכָל־אֲוִיל יִתְגַּלֵּעַ:
ד מִחֶרֶף עָצַל לֹא־יִחְרֹשׁ
יִשְׁאֵל וְשֹׂאֵל בִּקְצִיר וְאִין:
ה מִיָּם עֲמֻקִּים עֲצָה בְּלִב־אִישׁ
וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה יִדְלֹנָה:
ו רַב־אָדָם יִקְרָא אִישׁ חֲסִידוֹ
וְאִישׁ אֱמוּנִים מִי יִמָּצֵא:
ז מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתָמוּ צַדִּיק

PROVERBS 20

- 1 Wine is reckless, beer is rowdy;
unwise is anyone whom it seduces.
2 The fury of the king is like the roaring of a lion;
whoever provokes him sins against himself.
3 It is praiseworthy to stop short of a lawsuit;
only a fool flies into a rage.
4 In autumn, the idler does not plough;
at harvest time he looks – nothing there!
5 The resources of the human heart are like deep waters;
an understanding person has only to draw on them.
6 Many describe themselves as people of faithful love,
but who can find someone really to be trusted?
7 The righteous who walks in integrity –

PROVERBS 20

- 1 This proverb does not prohibit the use of wine or beer; in fact, strong drink was used at festivals and celebrations. However, intoxication was considered out of bounds for a member of the covenant community (e.g., 23:20–21, 29–35, 31:4–7); to be led astray by their use is not wise.
2 Some take ‘sins against himself’ to mean ‘endangers his life’; that may be the implication of getting oneself in trouble with an angry king.
3 The literal translation of the 2nd line is ‘but every fool breaks out’.
4 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here may be correction a scribe’s misreading of a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.
5 The motives or plans of a person are difficult to fathom – it takes someone with understanding to ‘draw on them’ (the verb in the 2nd line continuing the figure with the sense of bringing them to the surface and sorting them out).
6 The point of the rhetorical question is that a truly faithful friend is difficult to find.
7 Two terms describe the subject of this proverb: ‘righteous’ and ‘integrity’; the first describes him as a member of the covenant community who strives to live according to God’s standards; the second emphasises that his lifestyle is blameless.

אֲשֶׁר־בָּנָיו אַחֲרָיו:
 ח מֶלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא־דִין
 מְזַרֵּה בְּעֵינָיו כָּל־רָע:
 ט מִי־יֹאמַר זָכִיתִי לִבִּי
 טהֲרִיתִי מַחֲטָאתִי:
 י אֶבֶן וְאֶבֶן אֵיפָה וְאֵיפָה
 יא תוֹעֲבֹת יְהוָה גַּם־שְׁנֵיהֶם:
 גַּם בַּמַּעֲלָלִיו יתְנַכֵּר־נַעַר
 יב אִם־זָךְ וְאִם־יָשָׁר פִּעְלֹו:
 אֹזֶן שֹׁמֵעַת וְעֵין רֹאֶה
 יג יְהוָה עָשָׂה גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם:
 אֶל־תֵּאָהֱב שְׁנָה פֶן־תִּוְרַשׁ
 יד פֶּקַח עֵינָיִךְ שִׁבְע־לֶחֶם:
 רַע רַע יֹאמַר הַקּוֹנֶה
 וְאַזָּל לוֹ אִזּוֹ יתְהַלֵּל:

blessed the children who come after!
 8 A king enthrones on the judgement seat
 with one look, scatters all that is evil.
 9 Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart,
 I am purified of my sin?"
 10 Diverse weights and diverse measures;
 both alike are abhorrent to Yahweh.
 11 A young man's character appears in what he does,
 if his behaviour is pure and straight.
 12 Ear that hears, eye that sees –
 Yahweh made both of these.
 13 Do not love sleep or you will know poverty;
 keep your eyes open and have your fill of food.
 14 "No good, no good!" says the buyer,
 but he goes off congratulating himself.

⁸ An alternative translation for 'scatters' is 'winnows' or 'sifts' (by distinguishing between just and unjust suits); cf. 20:26.

⁹ This verse is a rhetorical question; it is affirming that no one can say this because no one is pure and free of sin.

¹⁰ For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "One weight here, another there; here one measure, there another." The literal translation is, "a stone and a stone, and ephah and an ephah."

¹¹ Character is demonstrated by actions at any age but the emphasis of Proverbs would also be that if the young child begins to show such actions, then the parents must try to cultivate them; if not, they must try to develop them through teaching and discipline.

¹² This verse not only credits God with making the 'ear' and the 'eye' but also emphasises their spiritual use in God's service.

¹³ The verse teaches that diligence leads to prosperity; it contrasts loving sleep with opening the eyes, and poverty with satisfaction.

¹⁴ This proverb reflects normal procedure in the business world: the buyer complains how bad the deal is for him, or how worthless the prospective purchase but then later brags about the deal he got. The proverb will alert the inexperienced as to how things are done.

טו יש זהב ורֶב־פָּנִינִים
 וְכָלִי יִקָּר שְׁפִת־דַּעַת:
 טז לִקְח־בְּגָדוֹ כִּי־עָרַב זֶר
 וּבַעַד נִכְרִים נִכְרִיָּה חֲבָלָהּ:
 יז עָרַב לְאִישׁ לֶחֶם שֶׁקֶר
 וְאַחֵר יִמְלֵא־פִיהוּ חֶצֶץ:
 יח מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בַּעֲצָה תִּכּוֹן
 וּבַתְּחִבְלוֹת עֲשֵׂה מִלְחָמָה:
 יט גִּזְלַת־סוֹד הוֹלֵךְ רַכִּיל
 וּלְפִתָּהּ שֹׁפְתִיו לֹא תִתְעָרַב:
 כ מִקְלָל אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ
 יִדְעֶךָ נֵרוֹ בְּאִישׁוֹן חֹשֶׁךְ:
 כא נִחְלָה מִבְּחֹלֶת מִבְּהִלַּת בְּרָאשׁוֹנָה
 וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ לֹא תִבְרָךְ:
 כב אַל־תֹּאמַר אֲשַׁלְּמָה־רָע

15 There is gold and abundance of rubies,
 but the lips of knowledge are a rare jewel.
 16 Take the man's clothes who has gone surety for a stranger;
 seize the pledge given as security for a foreigner.
 17 Bread is sweet when it is got by fraud
 but later the mouth is full of grit.
 18 Plans are matured by consultation;
 take wise advice when waging war.
 19 The gossip lets out secrets;
 do not mingle with chatterers.
 20 If you curse father or mother,
 your lamp will go out in the deepest darkness.
 21 Property quickly acquired at first
 will not be blessed in the end.
 22 Do not say, "I shall repay evil;"

15 In place of 'rare jewel', here following the WEBBE, the NJB has 'priceless ornament'.

16 The Kethib/Qere difference here requires explanation.

17 The NRSV has 'gravel' in place of 'grit', here following the NJB.

18 There have been attempts by some commentators to take 'war' figuratively to mean life's struggles, litigation, or evil inclinations; but there is no need and little justification for this – it simply describes the necessity of counsel before going to war.

19 The word translated as 'gossip' describes a slanderer or an informer.

20 'Lamp will go out' is a metaphor for misfortune or death (see also 13:9). The Kethib/Qere difference here requires explanation.

21 The Kethib/Qere difference here (het/he confusion) would benefit from further explanation.

22 This proverb is directly instructive: it begins with the negated jussive in the 1st line and follows with the imperative in the 2nd. It warns that the righteous should not take vengeance on the wicked, for only God can do that.

קִנְיָה לַיהוָה וַיִּשַׁע לָךְ:
 כג תִּזְעַבְתָּ יְהוָה אֲבֹן וְאֲבֹן
 וּמֵאֲזִנֵּי מִרְמָה לֹא־טוֹב:
 כד מִיְהוָה מִצַּעֲדֵי־גִבֹּר
 וְאָדָם מִה־יָבִין דְּרָכָו:
 כה מוֹקֵשׁ אָדָם יֵלַע קֹדֶשׁ
 וְאַחֲרֵי נְדָרִים לְבַקֵּר:
 כו מִזְרָה רָשָׁעִים מֶלֶךְ חָכִים
 וַיֵּשֶׁב עֲלֵיהֶם אוֹפֵן:
 כז נֶר יְהוָה נִשְׁמַת אָדָם
 חֹפֵשׁ כָּל־חֲדָרֵי־בֶטֶן:
 כח חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת יִצְרוּ־מֶלֶךְ
 וְסֵעֵד בַּחֶסֶד בְּסֵאוֹ:
 כט תִּפְאָרֶת בַּחּוּרִים כְּתֹם
 וְהַדָּר זִקְנִים שִׁיבָה:
 ל חֲבָרוֹת פִּצַּע תִּמְרִיק תִּמְרוֹק בָּרַע
 וּמַכּוֹת חֲדָרֵי־בֶטֶן:

put your hope in Yahweh and he will keep you safe.
 23 Differing weights are abhorrent to Yahweh;
 false scales are not good.
 24 Yahweh guides human steps:
 how could anyone discern the way to go?
 25 It is a snare for one to say rashly, "Dedicated,"
 and begins to reflect only after the vow.
 26 A wise king winnows the wicked
 and makes the wheel pass over them.
 27 The human spirit is the lamp of Yahweh –
 searching the deepest self.
 28 Faithful love and loyalty mount guard over the king;
 his throne is founded on saving justice.
 29 The pride of the young is their strength;
 and the ornament of the old is grey hair.
 30 Wounding strokes are good medicine for evil;
 blows have an effect on the inmost self.

²³ The phrase, 'not good', is a deliberate understatement.

²⁴ See 19:21 and Jr 10:23.

²⁵ See Qo 5:1–6.

²⁶ The 'wheel' is a reference to threshing grain, for which a sort of sledge, sometimes on wheels, was and is still used (see Is 28:28).

²⁷ The 'spirit' is the life principle that God breathes into a human being after forming the body (see Gn 2:7).

²⁸ An alternative reading of the second line (following the NRSV) is, "and his throne is upheld by loyalty."

²⁹ The noun, הַדָּר, translated 'ornament' (as NJB) can also mean 'beauty' (as NRSV), 'splendour' or 'honour'.

³⁰ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here may be due to a scribe misreading a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.

משלי פרק כא

- א פִּלְגֵי־מַיִם לִב־מֶלֶךְ בְּיַד־יְהוָה
עַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַחֲפֹץ יִטְנֶנּוּ:
ב כָּל־דֶּרֶךְ־אִישׁ יֵשֶׁר בְּעֵינָיו
וְתִכֵּן לִבּוֹת יְהוָה:
ג עֲשֵׂה צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט
נִבְחָר לַיהוָה מִזֶּבֶחַ:
ד רוּם־עֵינַיִם וְרֹחַב־לֵב
נֵר רָשָׁעִים חֲטָאת:
ה מַחֲשָׁבוֹת חָרוֹץ אֶדְלִמּוֹתָר
וְכָל־אֶץ אֶדְלִמְחִסּוֹר:
ו פֶּעַל אֲצֻרוֹת בִּלְשׁוֹן שָׁקֶר
הֵבֵל נִדְף מִבִּקְשֵׁי־מוֹת:
ז שׂוֹד־רָשָׁעִים יִגְוֶרם
כִּי מֵאֲנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט:

PROVERBS 21

- 1 Like flowing water is a king's heart in Yahweh's hand:
he directs it wherever he pleases.
2 All actions are straight in the doer's own eyes
but it is Yahweh who weighs hearts.
3 To do what is upright and just
is more pleasing to Yahweh than sacrifice.
4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart –
the lamp of the wicked – are nothing but sin.
5 The hardworking is thoughtful, and all is gain;
too much haste, and all that comes of it is want.
6 To make a fortune with the help of a lying tongue:
such is the idle fantasy of those who look for death.
7 The violence of the wicked proves their ruin,
for they refuse to do what is right.

PROVERBS 21

- 1 The farmer channels irrigation ditches where he wants them, where they will do the most good; so does God with kings.
2 Even though people think they know themselves, God evaluates motives as well (cf. 16:2).
3 This insistence of sincerity as a necessary for ritual observance recurs throughout the OT (Is 1:11, Jr 7:21–23, Ho 6:6, Am 5:22ff, 1S 15:22).
4 'Lamp' is a conjectural translation (נֵר); the MT has 'labour' (גֵּר).
5 Diligence is here compared to hastiness.
6 For the 2nd line, the NRSV has 'is a fleeting vapour and a snare of death'.
7 The 2nd line of the verse is the causal clause, explaining why they are dragged away: they are not passive victims of their circumstances or their crimes; they choose to persist in their violence, so it destroys them.

ח הפִּכְפֹּךְ דֶּרֶךְ אִישׁ וְזֹרֶם
 וְזֹדֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל פֶּעֱלֹז:
 ט טוֹב לִשְׁבֹּת עַל־פִּנְת־גֹּג
 מֵאִשֶּׁת מְדִינִים וּבֵית חֶבֶר:
 י נֶפֶשׁ רָשָׁע אֹתָהּ־רָע
 לֹא־יִחַן בְּעֵינָיו רֵעֵהוּ:
 יא בְּעֵנֶשׁ־לֶץ יִחְכַּם־פִּתִּי
 וּבִהֲשִׁיל לְחֹכֶם יִקְח־דַּעַת:
 יב מִשְׁכִּיל צָדִיק לְבֵית רָשָׁע
 מְסַלֵּף רָשָׁעִים לָרַע:
 יג אִטֶּם אֲזַנּוֹ מִזַּעֲקַת־דָּל
 גַּם־הוּא יִקְרָא וְלֹא יִעֲנֶה:
 יד מִתֵּן בְּסֹתֵר יִכְפֹּה־אָף
 וְשָׂחַד בַּחֶק חֲמָה עֲזָה:
 טו שְׂמִיחָה לְצָדִיק עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט
 וּמִחֲתָה לְפֹעֲלֵי אֹן:

8 The way of the guilty is devious;
 the conduct of the innocent is straight.
 9 It is better to live on the corner of a roof
 than a house shared with a quarrelsome woman.
 10 The soul of the wicked covets evil;
 to such a person, no neighbour can ever do right.
 11 When a scoffer is punished, simpletons grow wiser
 but the wise acquire knowledge by instruction.
 12 The Upright One watches the house of the wicked;
 he hurls the wicked to destruction.
 13 Whoever refuses to listen to the cry of the weak
 will in turn plead and not be heard.
 14 A covert gift mollifies anger,
 raging fury by a bribe under cover of the cloak.
 15 Doing what is right fills the upright with joy
 but evildoers with terror.

8 The NJB has 'felon' in place of 'guilty', here following the NRSV.

9 The 1st line refers to a small room built on the flat housetop (e.g., 1K 17:19, 2K 4:10); it would be cramped and lonely but peaceful.

10 The word translated 'covets' is used in the Ten Commandments in the prohibition against coveting a neighbour's house (Dt 5:18).

11 Cf. 19:25.

12 The 'Upright One' means Yahweh if the text is not corrupt.

13 This proverb teaches that those who show mercy will receive mercy; it uses the principle of the *Lex Talionis*: those who refuse the needs of others will themselves be refused when they need help (so Lk 16:19–31).

14 The synonymous parallelism joins the more neutral word 'gift' with the more specific 'bribe'.

15 Whenever justice prevails, whether in the courts or simply in society, the people who practice iniquity may be shaken into reality by fear.

טז אָדָם תּוֹעָה מִדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂכָל
 בְּקֶהֱל רַפָּאִים יָנוּחַ:
 יז אִישׁ מַחֲסוֹר אֶהֱב שְׂמִיחָה
 אֶהֱב יִזְוֶשְׁמֵן לֹא יַעֲשִׂיר:
 יח כֹּפֵר לַצַּדִּיק רָשָׁע
 וְתַחַת יִשְׂרָיִם בּוֹגֵד:
 יט טוֹב שְׁבֵת בְּאַרְץ־מִדְבָּר
 מֵאִשֶּׁת מְדוֹנִים מְדִינִים וְכַעַס:
 כ אוֹצֵר | נֶחֱמַד וְשֶׁמֶן בְּנוֹה חֶכֶם
 וְכַסִּיל אָדָם יִבְלַעֲנוּ:
 כא רֹדֵף צְדָקָה וְחֶסֶד
 יִמְצָא חַיִּים צְדָקָה וְכְבוֹד:
 כב עֵיר גְּבֻרִים עָלָה חֶכֶם
 וַיִּרֶד עָז מִבֶּטְחָהּ:
 כג שֹׁמֵר פִּי וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ
 שֹׁמֵר מִצָּרוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ:

16 Whoever strays far from the way of prudence
 will rest in the assembly of shadows.
 17 Pleasure-lovers stay poor;
 no one will grow rich who loves wine and oil.
 18 The wicked is a ransom for the upright
 and the law-breaker for the honest.
 19 Better to live in a desert land
 than with a quarrelsome and irritable woman.
 20 The wise has valuables and oil at home,
 but a fool soon runs through both.
 21 Whoever pursues uprightness and faithful love
 will find life, uprightness, and honour.
 22 A sage can scale a garrisoned city
 and shatter the rampart on which it relied.
 23 Watch kept over mouth and tongue
 keeps the watcher safe from disaster.

16 In place of 'shadows', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'the dead'; the word translates רַפָּאִים – *the Rephaim*.

17 In place of 'oil', the NJB has 'good living'.

18 This proverb assumes there is a quota of misery in this world, from which God shields the upright, and to which he condemns the wicked.

19 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here may reflect a scribe's misreading of a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.

20 The NRSV has 'precious treasure' in place of 'valuables and oil'.

21 The NRSV omits 'uprightness'.

22 In a war, the victory is credited not so much to the infantry as to the tactician who plans the attack; brilliant strategy wins wars, even over apparently insuperable odds (cf. 24:5–6, Qo 9:13–16, 2Co 10:4).

23 'Mouth' and 'tongue' are metonyms of cause, signifying what one says.

כד זֶד יִהְיֶה לֶץ שְׁמוֹ
עוֹשֶׂה בַעֲבַרְת זָדוֹן:
כה תֵּאֲוֹת עֲצָל תִּמְיָתָנוּ
כִּי־מֵאֲנוּ יָדָיו לַעֲשׂוֹת:
כו כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַתֵּאֲוֶה תֵּאֲוֶה
וְצַדִּיק יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִחְשֹׁד:
כז זֶבַח רְשָׁעִים תוֹעֵבָה
אֲף כִּי־בִזְמָה יִבְיָאָנוּ:
כח יַעֲד־כְּזָבִים יֶאֱבֹד
וְאִישׁ שׁוֹמֵעַ לִנְצַח יִדְבֹּר:
כט הֵעִז אִישׁ רָשָׁע בַּפִּנּוּי
וְיֹשֶׁר הוּא | יֵכֵן דַּרְכּוֹ [יִבִּין דַּרְכּוֹ]:
ל אֵין חִכְמָה וְאֵין תְּבוּנָה
וְאֵין עֲצָה לִנְגִיד יְהוָה:
לא סוֹס מוֹכֵן לַיּוֹם מִלְחָמָה
וְלִיהוָה הַתְּשׁוּעָה:

- 24 Insolent, haughty – the name is ‘Scoffer’;
overbearing pride marks such behaviour.
25 The idler’s desires are the death of him,
since his hands will do no work.
26 All day long, the Godless is racked by desire;
the upright gives without ever refusing.
27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abhorrent,
above all, if it is offered for bad motives.
28 The false witness will perish
but the good listener will testify successfully.
29 The wicked man’s strength shows on his face,
but the honest give though to their ways.
30 No wisdom, no understanding,
no advice is worth anything before Yahweh.
31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle
but the victory is Yahweh’s.

24 The NJB has ‘Cynic’ in place of ‘Scoffer’, here following the NRSV & NETB.

25 Here, the word, ‘hands’, is figurative for the whole person.

26 ‘The godless is racked by desire’ follows the LXX (and NJB); the MT (and NRSV) has ‘he covets covetousness’.

27 The LXX appends ‘to Yahweh’ to the 1st line, as in 15:8.

28 In place of ‘the good listener’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘one who knows how to listen’.

29 The Kethib/Qere difference here (bet/kaf confusion) would benefit from further explanation.

30 Sayings such as this indicate that the sages recognised the limitations of human wisdom, in view of Yahweh’s own mysterious wisdom.

31 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “Fit out the cavalry for the day of battle.”

משלי פרק כב

- א נבחר שם מעשר רב
מכסף ומזהב חן טוב:
ב עשיר ורש נפגשו
עשה כלם יהוה:
ג ערום | ראה רעה ויסתר ונסתר
ופתאים עברו ונענשו:
ד עקב ענוה יראת יהוה
עשר וכבוד וחיים:
ה צנים פחים בדרך עקש
שומר נפשו ירחק מהם:
ו חנף לנער על־פי דרכו
גם בִּי־זקין לא־יסור ממנה:
ז עשיר ברשים ימשול
ועבד לזה לאיש מלוה:

PROVERBS 22

- 1 A good name is preferable to great wealth,
favour, to silver and gold.
2 Rich and poor rub shoulders;
Yahweh has made them both.
3 The discreet sees danger and takes shelter;
simpletons go ahead and pay the penalty.
4 The reward of humility and the fear of Yahweh,
are riches, honour, and life.
5 Thorns and snares line the path of the wilful;
those who value life will stay at a distance.
6 Give a lad training suitable to his character
and, even when he is old, he will not go back on it.
7 The rich rule over the poor;
the borrower is the lender's slave.

PROVERBS 22

- 1 The NJB has 'fame' in place of 'a good name', here following the NRSV; the MT has simply 'name' but 'good' is implied.
2 Compare 29:13. The attitude to the poor in Proverbs is complex.
3 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from full explanation.
4 The NJB reads this slightly differently: "The reward of humility is the fear of Yahweh and riches, honour, and life."
5 Because the MT reading צנים ('thorns') does not make a very good match with 'snares', (the word is obscure but is supported by the LXX: 'prickly plants' and a cognate in Nb 33:55 & Jos 23:13), some suggest changing it to צמים ('traps' – just changing a *nun* to a *mem*).
6 The literal translation of 'suitable to his character' is 'on the mouth (the entrance) to his way'. Some interpret as 'from his earliest steps' and the NRSV has 'in the right way'. The LXX omits the whole verse.
7 The synonymous parallelism here matches 'rule over' with 'slave' to show how poverty makes people dependent on others.

ח זֹרַע עוֹלָה יִקְצוֹר יִקְצֹר־אֶוֹן
וְשִׁבְט עֲבָרְתּוֹ יִכָּלֶה:
ט טוֹב־עֵין הוּא יִבְרָךְ
כִּי־נָתַן מִלֶּחֶם לְדָל:
י גֵּרֶשׁ לֶץ וַיֵּצֵא מִדּוֹן
וַיִּשְׁבֹּת דִּין וְקָלוֹן:
יא אֱהָב טָהוֹר טְהַר־לֵב
חֵן שִׁפְתָיו רַעְהוּ מֶלֶךְ:
יב עֵינֵי יְהוָה נֹצְרוּ דַעַת
וַיִּסְלֹף דְּבָרֵי בָגָד:
יג אֱמַר עֲצֹל אֲרִי בַחוּץ
בְּתוֹךְ רְחֹבוֹת אֶרֶץ:
יד שׁוֹחָה עֲמָקָה פִּי זָרוֹת
זָעוּם יְהוָה יפול יפֹל־שָׁם:
טו אוֹלֶת קְשׁוּרָה בִּלְב־נֶעַר
שִׁבְט מוֹסֵר יֶרְחִיקָנָה מִמֶּנּוּ:

8 Whoever sows injustice reaps disaster,
and the rod of such anger will disappear.
9 A kindly eye will earn a blessing;
such a person shares out food with the poor.
10 Expel the mocker and strife goes too;
lawsuits and dislike die down.
11 Whoever loves the pure of heart
and is gracious of speech has the king for a friend.
12 Yahweh's eyes protect knowledge
but he confounds deceitful speeches.
13 "There is a lion outside," says the idler,
"I shall be killed on the street!"
14 The mouth of an adulterous woman is a deep pit;
into it falls the man whom Yahweh rebukes.
15 Folly is anchored in the heart of a child;
the whip of instruction will rid him of it.

8 The LXX has 'and he will pay the penalty of his deeds'. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from full explanation.

9 The NRSV translates 'kindly eye' (here following the MT & NJB) more figuratively as 'those who are generous'.

10 The 'mockers' (לֶץ) is the one Proverbs says cannot be changed with discipline or correction but despises and disrupts anything that is morally or socially constructive.

11 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation.

12 The phrase, 'Yahweh's eyes', is an anthropomorphic expression; the omniscience of God is intended.

13 This proverb humorously describes the sluggard as making ridiculous excuses for not working – he might be eaten by a lion (cf. 26:13).

14 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation.

15 The 'heart of a child' (לֵב־נֶעַר) refers to the natural inclination of a child to foolishness.

טז עֲשֶׂק דָּל לְהַרְבּוֹת לוֹ
 נָתַן לְעֶשִׂיר אֶדְ-לִמְחִסּוֹר:
 הֵט אֲזִנְךָ
 וְשָׁמַע דְּבַרֵּי חֲכָמִים
 וְלִבְךָ תִּשִׁית לְדַעְתִּי:
 יח כִּי־נָעִים כִּי־תִשְׁמְרֵם בְּבִטְנְךָ
 יִכְנוּ יַחְדָּו עַל־שִׁפְתֶיךָ:
 יט לִהְיוֹת בִּיהוָה מְבִטָּח
 הוֹדַעְתִּיךָ הַיּוֹם אֶף־אַתָּה:
 כ הֲלֹא כָתַבְתִּי לָךְ שְׁלוֹשׁ שְׁלִישִׁים
 בְּמַעֲצוֹת וּדְעָת:
 כא לְהוֹדִיעֲךָ קֶשֶׁט אֲמָרֵי אֱמֶת
 לְהַשִּׁיב אֲמָרִים אֱמֶת לְשִׁלְחֶיךָ:
 כב אַל־תִּגְזַל־דָּל כִּי דַל־הוּא

16 Harsh treatment enriches the poor,
 but a gift impoverishes the rich.

17 The sayings of the wise.

Give ear, listen to the words of the wise
 and apply your heart to what I know;

18 for, it will be a delight to keep them deep within you,
 to have all of them ready on your lips.

19 So that your trust may be in Yahweh,
 I wish to instruct you today.

20 Have I not written for you thirty chapters
 of advice and knowledge,

21 to show you what is right and true,
 so you may give a true answer to those who sent you?

22 Do not despoil the weak, for he is weak,

16 This proverb expresses either a natural law, by which hardship alone stimulates effort and procures success, or a religious faith in the justice of Yahweh who will reverse the situations of rich and poor.

17 In 22:17–24:22, there is a change in form from the discrete sayings characterising Chs 10–21; the topics are now characteristic of (international) wisdom literature (see #20): attitude to the poor, offering collateral, discipline of children, table manners, abstemiousness, adultery, etc.

18 If the teachings are preserved in the heart/mind of the disciple, then that individual will always be ready to speak what was retained.

19 The term, ‘today’, indicates that the verbs of the 2nd line should have the instantaneous nuance, so an English present tense.

20 The reference to ‘thirty chapters’ comes from the “Wisdom of Amenemophis,” on which this passage is modelled: “Consider these thirty chapters, they give pleasure, they instruct.” The translation follows the Qere, which has שְׁלִישִׁים (‘thirty’) in place of the שְׁלוֹשׁ (‘heretofore’) of the Kethib.

21 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “to make you know the certainty of true sayings, so that you can return with sound answers to those who sent you?”

22 Justice was administered and business transacted at the ‘city gate’ (see 24:7).

וְאַל־תִּדְכָּא עֲנִי בַשַּׁעַר:
 כג כִּי־יִהְיֶה יָרִיב רִיבם
 וְקִבַּע אֶת־קִבְעֵיהֶם נֶפֶשׁ:
 כד אַל־תִּתְּרַע אֶת־בַּעַל אָף
 וְאֶת־אִישׁ חֲמוּזֹת לֹא תִבּוֹא:
 כה פֶּן־תֵּאָלֶף אַרְחָתּוֹ
 וְלִקְחָתָּ מוֹקֶשׁ לְנַפְשְׁךָ:
 כו אַל־תִּהְיֶה בְּתִקְעֵי־כָף
 בְּעֶרְבִים מַשְׁאוֹת:
 כז אִם־אֵין־לְךָ לְשֹׁלֵם
 לָמָּה יִקַּח מִשְׁכָּבְךָ מִתַּחְתֶּיךָ:
 כח אַל־תִּסַּג גְּבוּל עוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ:
 כט חֲזִיתָ אִישׁ | מְהִיר בְּמַלְאכָתּוֹ
 לִפְנֵי־מְלָכִים יִתְיַצֵּב
 בְּלִי־יִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי חֲשָׁכִים:

and do not oppress the poor at the gate.
 23 For Yahweh takes up their cause
 and despoils the life of those who despoil them.
 24 Do not make friends with one who gives way to anger;
 make no one quick tempered a companion of yours,
 25 for fear you learn such behaviour
 and in it find a snare for yourself.
 26 Do not be one of those who give pledges,
 who become surety for debts.
 27 If you have no means of paying,
 your bed will be taken from under you.
 28 Do not displace the ancient boundary stone
 set by your ancestors.
 29 You see someone alert at his business?
 His aim will be to serve kings;
 he will not serve common people.

23 The two uses of קִבַּע ('to despoil', 'to rob', or 'to plunder') here reflects the *Lex Talionis*: What they did to the poor will be turned back on them.

24 For the 2nd line, here following the NJB, the NRSV has, "and do not associate with hotheads."

25 The warning is to avoid associating with a hothead because his influence could be fatal.

26 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Do not be one of those who go guarantor."

27 'Will be taken' follows the LXX; the MT has 'why should he take'.

28 Moving a 'boundary stone' was, and still is, a major problem.

29 This fifth saying affirms that true skill earns recognition and advancement.

משלי פרק כג

- א כִּי־תֵשֵׁב לֶלְחֹם אֶת־מוֹשֶׁל
בֵּין תָּבִין אֶת־אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֶיךָ:
ב וְשִׁמַּת שִׁבִּין בַּלֶּעַךְ
אִם־בָּעַל נֶפֶשׁ אֶתָּה:
ג אֲל־תִּתְּאוּ לְמִטְעַמֹּתָיו
וְהוּא לֶחֶם כְּזָבִים:
ד אֲל־תִּיגַע לְהַעֲשִׁיר
מִבִּינְתָךְ חֶדְלִי:
ה הַתְּעוֹף הַתְּעִיף עֵינֶיךָ בּוֹ וְאִינֶנּוּ
כִּי עֲשֵׂה יַעֲשֶׂה־לּוֹ כְּנָפַיִם
כְּנֹשָׁר וְעִיף יַעֲוֶף הַשָּׁמַיִם:
ו אֲל־תֵּלֶחֶם אֶת־לֶחֶם רַע עֵין
וְאֲל־תִּתְּאוּ לְמִטְעַמֹּתָיו:

PROVERBS 23

- 1 When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
take careful note of what you have before you.
2 If you have a big appetite,
put a knife to your throat.
3 Do not hanker for his delicacies,
for they are deceptive food.
4 Do not wear yourself out in quest of wealth;
stop applying your mind to this.
5 Fix your gaze on it and it is there no longer,
for it is able to sprout wings
like an eagle that flies off to the sky.
6 Do not eat the food of one whose eye is jealous;
do not hanker for his delicacies.

PROVERBS 23

- 1 An alternative translation of 'what' is 'who'.
2 The meaning of the 2nd line is presumably 'set bounds to your gluttony'; others interpret 'to be a glutton is to put a knife to your throat' (i.e. to endanger your life).
3 Two very similar texts, one by Ptah-Hotep and the other by Amenemophis, show that this was a common theme of Egyptian etiquette (see also Gn 43:44). The NRSV has 'the ruler's' in place of 'his'.
4 Literally translated, the 2nd line reads, "from your understanding cease."
5 The Kethib/Qere differences here would benefit from a proper explanation.
6 The literal translation of 'one whose eye is jealous' is 'an evil eye'.

ז כִּי | כִּמּוֹ שֶׁעַר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ כֵּן־הוּא
 אֲכֹל וְשָׂתָה יֹאמֶר לְךָ
 וְלִבּוֹ בַּל־עֲמִיד:
 ח פֶּתַךְ־אֲכַלְתָּ תִּקְיֶאנָה
 וְשַׁחַת דְּבָרֶיךָ הִנְעִימִים:
 ט בְּאֶזְנִי כֶּסֶל אֶל־תִּדְבֹּר
 כִּי־יָבוֹז לְשֹׁכֵל מִלִּיד:
 י אֶל־תִּסַּג גְּבוּל עוֹלָם
 וּבִשְׂדֵי יְתוּמִים אֶל־תִּבְּא:
 יא כִּי־גֹאֲלָם חֹזֵק
 הוּא־יִרִיב אֶת־רִיבֵם אֲתָד:
 יב הִבִּיֵּאָה לְמוֹסֵר לִבְךָ
 וְאֶזְנְךָ לְאִמְרֵי־דַעַת:
 יג אֶל־תִּמְנַע מִנַּעַר מוֹסֵר
 כִּי־תִכְנֹן בְּשִׁבְטֵ לֹא יָמוּת:
 יד אֲתָהּ בְּשִׁבְטֵ תִכְנֹן
 וְנִפְשׁוֹ מִשְׁאוֹל תַּצִּיל:

7 For what he is really thinking about is himself:
 "Eat and drink," he tells you
 but his heart is not with you.
 8 You will vomit up what you have eaten
 and find your compliments wasted.
 9 Do not waste words on a fool,
 who will not appreciate the wisdom of your words.
 10 Do not displace the ancient boundary stone,
 or encroach on orphans' lands.
 11 For they have a powerful avenger;
 and he will take up their cause against you.
 12 Apply your heart to discipline
 and your ears to instructive sayings.
 13 Do not withhold discipline from your child:
 a stroke of the cane is not likely to be fatal.
 14 Give him a stroke of the cane
 and you will save his soul from Sheol.

7 The 1st line is obscure (the NRSV has 'for like a hair in the throat, so are they') – the literal translation is 'as he thinks in his soul, so he is'.

8 Eating and drinking with a selfish miser would be irritating and disgusting; the 1st line is hyperbolic: the whole experience turns the stomach.

9 In place of 'wisdom of your words', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'shrewdness of your remarks'.

10 'The ancient boundary stone' should perhaps be corrected to 'the boundary stone of the widow', see 15:25.

11 The 'avenger' (go-el, see #Nb 35:19) is in this case Yahweh.

12 The literal translation of 'apply' is 'bring'.

13 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Do not be chary of correcting a child."

14 It is possible that שְׁאוֹל ('Sheol') here means actual death, rather than the realm of the departed.

טו בְּנִי אִם־חָכָם לִבְךָ
 יִשְׂמַח לִבִּי גַם־אֲנִי:
 טז וְתַעֲלֶזְנָה כָּלִיּוֹתַי
 בְּדַבֵּר שְׁפָתֶיךָ מִיִּשְׁרָיִם:
 יז אַל־יִקְנָא לִבְךָ בַּחֲטָאִים
 כִּי אִם־בִּירְאַת־יְהוָה כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
 יח כִּי אִם־יֵשׁ אַחֲרַיִת
 וְתִקְוֹתֶךָ לֹא תִפְרֹת:
 יט שְׁמַע־אֶתְהָ בְנִי וְחָכָם
 וְאֲשֶׁר בְּדַרְךְ לִבְךָ:
 כ אַל־תִּהְיֶה בְּסַבְּאֵי־יַיִן
 בְּזֹלֶלִי בֶשֶׂר לְמוֹ:
 כא כִּי־סַבָּא וְזֹלֶל יוֹרֵשׁ
 וְקִרְעִים תִּלְבִּישׁ נֹמָה:
 כב שְׁמַע לְאֲבִיךָ זֶה יִלְדֶּךָ
 וְאַל־תִּבְזֹּז כִּי־זָקְנָה אִמֶּךָ:

15 My child, if your heart is wise,
 then my own heart is glad.
 16 My soul will rejoice
 when from your lips come honest words.
 17 Do not let your heart envy sinners
 but always remain steady in the fear of Yahweh.
 18 For there is a future,
 and the hope will not come to nothing.
 19 Listen, my child, and be wise,
 and guide your heart in the way.
 20 Do not be among those who forever tipple wine
 nor those who gorge themselves with meat.
 21 For the drunkard and glutton impoverish themselves,
 and sleepiness is clothed in rags.
 22 Listen to your father from whom you are sprung;
 do not despise your mother in her old age.

15 Literally translated, this verse opens with, "My son."

16 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB reads, "My inmost self rejoices."

17 The verb translated 'envy' is אַל־יִקְנָא, a Piel jussive negated: it means 'to be jealous' if the object is illegitimate; if it is correct, it is 'to be zealous'.

18 The literal translation of 'a future' is 'an end'.

19 The 'way' here is, by implication, the *correct* way, or following the Law.

20 The verb זֹלֶל ('gorge') literally means 'to make light of' but this came to mean 'to be lavish with' or 'to squander', especially with food; so, it describes gluttons primarily but there is also room for the person who wastes a lot of food.

21 This is the fourteenth saying, warning about poor associations; drunkenness and gluttony represent the epitome of the lack of discipline.

22 In place of 'from whom you are sprung', here following the NJB, the NRSV & NETB have the more traditional 'who begot you'.

כג אַמֶּת קִנָּה וְאַל-תִּמְכַּר
 חֲכָמָה וּמוֹסֵר וּבִינָה:
 כד גּוֹל גָּיִל יִגִּיל אָבִי צַדִּיק
 יוֹלֵד וְיוֹלֵד חָכִים וְשִׂמְחָה יִשְׂמַח-בּוֹ:
 כה יִשְׂמַח-אָבִיךָ וְאִמֶּךָ
 וְתִגַּל יוֹלְדֶתְךָ:
 כו תִּנְהַבְנִי לִבְךָ לִי
 וְעֵינֶיךָ דְּרָכֵי תִרְצֶנָּה תִּצְרֶנָּה:
 כז כִּי-שׁוֹחָה עֲמָקָה זֹנָה
 וּבְאֵר צָרָה נִכְרִיָּה:
 כח אִף-הִיא כַּחַתָּף תֵּאָלֵב
 וּבּוֹגְדִים בְּאָדָם תּוֹסֵף:
 כט לְמִי אֹי לְמִי אֲבֹי
 לְמִי מְדוֹנִים מְדִינִים | לְמִי שִׁיחַ
 לְמִי פְצָעִים חֲנָם
 לְמִי חֲכָלָלוֹת עֵינָיִם:

23 Purchase truth – never sell it –
 wisdom, discipline, and discernment.
 24 The father of the upright will rejoice indeed;
 he who fathers a wise child will have joy of it.
 25 Let your father and mother be happy
 and let she who bore you rejoice.
 26 My child, pay attention to me,
 let your eyes take pleasure in my way.
 27 A prostitute is a deep pit;
 a narrow well, the adulteress.
 28 Yes, like a brigand she lies in wait,
 increasing the number of the faithless.
 29 For whom is pity, for whom contempt,
 for whom is strife, for whom complaint?
 For whom are blows struck at random,
 for whom the clouded eye?

23 The sixteenth saying is an instruction to buy/acquire the kind of life that pleases God and brings joy to parents.

24 The *Kethib*/*Qere* differences here would benefit from full explanation.

25 The form תִּגַּל ('let ... rejoice') is a short form and, thus, a jussive; if this 2nd verb is a jussive, then the parallel יִשְׂמַח ('be happy') is also a jussive.

26 The NRSV has 'observe' in place of 'take pleasure in'. The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here (transposition of 2 letters) would benefit from a proper explanation.

27 The NJB has 'woman who belongs to another' in place of 'adulteress', here following the NRSV.

28 In place of 'the faithless', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'law breakers'.

29 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here requires explanation.

ל לְמֵאַחֲרֵים עַל־הַיַּיִן
 לְבָאִים לַחֲקֹר מִמָּסָךְ:
 לֹא אֶל־תִּרְא יֵינֹ כִּי יִתְאַדָּם
 כִּי־יִתֵּן בְּכִס בֶּכּוֹס עֵינָיו
 יִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּמִישָׁרִים:
 לִב אַחֲרִיתוֹ כְּנָחֵשׁ יִשָּׁךְ
 וְכַצַּפְעָנִי יִפְרֹשׁ:
 לֵג עֵינֶיךָ יֵרְאוּ זָרוֹת
 וְלִבְךָ יִדְבֹּר תַּהֲפֻכּוֹת:
 לֹד וְהֵייתָ כְּשׁוֹכֵב בְּלִב־יָם
 וְכְשׁוֹכֵב בְּרֹאשׁ חִבְלִי:
 לֹה הַכּוֹנֵי בַל־חֲלִיתִי
 הַלְמוֹנִי בַל־יִדְעֵתִי
 מָתִי אֶקִּיץ
 אֲוֹסִיף אֲבַקֶּשְׁנוּ עוֹד:

30 For those who linger over wine too long,
 ever on the lookout for blended liquors.
 31 Do not gaze at wine, how red it is,
 how it sparkles in the cup
 and goes down smoothly!
 32 At the last it bites like a serpent,
 and stings like a viper.
 33 Your eyes will see peculiar things;
 you will talk nonsense from your heart.
 34 You will be like someone sleeping in mid-ocean,
 like one asleep at the masthead.
 35 "Struck me, have they," you will say, "but I am not hurt.
 Beaten me? I don't feel anything.
 When shall I wake up?
 I'll ask for more of it!"

30 The answer to the question posed in v. 29 is obviously one who drinks too much.

31 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here may reflect a scribe misreading a (possibly small/short) *vav* as a *yod*.

32 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "In the end, its bite is like a serpent's, its sting as sharp as an adder's."

33 The feminine plural of זָר ("peculiar things") refers to the trouble one has in seeing and speaking when drunk.

34 The exact meaning of the term here translated as 'masthead' is uncertain.

35 'You will say' follows the LXX, *Peshitta* and *Tg*; it is not present in the MT (or NJB).

משלי פרק כד

- א אל־תִּקְנָא בְּאַנְשֵׁי רָעָה
וְאַל־תִּתְּאוּ לִהְיוֹת אִתָּם:
ב כִּי־שָׂד יִהְיֶה לִבָּם
וְעִמָּל שְׁפָתֵיהֶם תִּדְבַּרְנָה:
ג בַּחֲכָמָה יִבְנֶה בַּיִת
וּבִתְבוּנָה יִתְכַּוֵּן:
ד וּבִדְעַת חֲדָרִים יִמְלֵאוּ
כָּל־הוֹן יִקָּר וְנָעִים:
ה גְּבַר־חֹכֶם בְּעוֹז
וְאִישׁ־דָּעַת מֵאִמְצֵכָה:
ו כִּי בַתְּחִבּוּלוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־לָּךְ מִלְחָמָה
וְתִשׁוּעָה בְּרַב יוֹעֵץ:
ז רִאמוֹת לְאוֹיֵל חֲכָמוֹת
בְּשַׁעַר לֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּיהוּ:

PROVERBS 24

- 1 Do not be envious of the wicked
or desire their company.
2 For their hearts are scheming violence,
their lips talking of mischief.
3 By wisdom, a house is built,
by understanding it is made strong.
4 By knowledge, its storerooms are filled
with riches of every kind, rare and desirable.
5 Anyone wise is mighty in force;
knowledge confirms someone's strength.
6 For it is by strategy that you wage war
and victory depends on having many counsellors.
7 For a fool, wisdom is an inaccessible fortress;
at the city gate, he does not open his mouth.

PROVERBS 24

- 1 The Hitpael jussive translated as '*desire*' means coveting something intensely.
2 This nineteenth saying warns against evil associations: evil people are obsessed with destruction and trouble (cf. 1:10–19, 3:31 & 23:17).
3 The preposition, ב, in the 1st line indicates means.
4 Vv. 3–4, the twentieth saying, concern the use of wisdom for domestic enterprises; in 9:1, Wisdom was personified as a woman who builds a house; but here the emphasis is primarily on the building itself.
5 For the 1st line, here following the NJB & MT, the NRSV, following the LXX, reads, "*Wise warriors are mightier than strong ones.*"
6 The point here is that wise counsel is necessary in war; for victory, strategy, and counsel are more important than mere military strength.
7 '*An inaccessible fortress*' translates a difficult expression; others translate the MT (רִאמוֹת) more literally: '*of coral*' (cf. Job 28:18, Ezk 27:16), a rare and delicate commodity that a fool would not appreciate.

ח מַחֲשֵׁב לְהַרֵּעַ
 לוֹ בְּעַל-מַזְמוֹת יִקְרָאוּ:
 ט זִמַּת אוֹלֶת חֲטָאֵת
 וְתוֹעֵבַת לֶאֱדָם לֵץ:
 י הַתְּרַפִּית בְּיוֹם צָרָה
 צָר כְּחֻכָּה:
 יא הַצֵּל לְקַחִים לְמוֹת
 וּמָטִים לְהָרֵג אֶם-תַּחֲשׂוּד:
 יב כִּי-תֹאמַר הֵן לֹא-יִדְעֵנוּ זֶה
 הֲלֹא-תִכֵּן לְבוֹת | הוּא-יִבִּין
 וְנֹצֵר נַפְשֶׁךָ הוּא יִדַּע
 וְהָשִׁיב לְאָדָם כְּפַעְלוֹ:
 יג אֲכַל-בְּנֵי דָבֶשׁ כִּי-טוֹב
 וְנִפְתַּת מִתּוֹק עַל-חֶכְךָ:
 יד בֵּן | דַּעַה חֲכָמָה לְנַפְשֶׁךָ

- 8 Whoever is intent on evildoing
 is known as a master of cunning.
- 9 The devising of folly is sin,
 and the scoffer is an abomination to all.
- 10 If you lose heart when things go wrong,
 your strength is not worth much.
- 11 Save those being dragged towards death,
 but can you rescue those on their way to execution?
- 12 If you say, "Look, we did not know,"
 will he who weighs the heart pay no attention?
 Will not the Guardian of your soul be aware
 and repay you as your deeds deserve?
- 13 Eat honey, my child, since it is good;
 honey that drips from the comb is sweet to the taste.
- 14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul;

8 The picture of the wicked person is graphic: He devises plans to do evil and is known as a schemer.

9 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Folly dreams of nothing but sin; the mocker is abhorrent."

10 The literal translation of 'not worth much' is 'narrow' (צָר), punning on 'wrong' (צָרָה).

11 This verse is variously interpreted, perhaps a reference to the innocent man unjustly condemned to death. Alternatively, the meaning could be that a good person should intervene on behalf of victims of violence.

12 This verse completes the saying by affirming that people will be judged responsible for helping those in mortal danger; it uses a series of rhetorical questions to affirm that God knows our hearts and we cannot plead ignorance.

13 The twenty-sixth saying teaches that one should develop wisdom because it has a profitable future; the saying draws on the image of honey; its health-giving properties make a good analogy to wisdom.

14 The literal translation of 'you will have a future' is 'there will be an end'.

	אִם־מִצָּאתָ וְיֵשׁ אַחֲרֶיךָ וְתִקְוָתְךָ לֹא תִכָּרֵת: אֶל־תֵּאָרֵב רָשָׁע לְנוֹה צְדִיק אֶל־תִּשְׁדֹּד רֵבִצוֹ: כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּל צְדִיק וְקָם וְרָשָׁעִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ בְרָעָה: בְּנִפֹל אוֹיְבֶיךָ אוֹיְבֶךָ אֶל־תִּשְׂמַח וּבְכָשְׁלוֹ אֶל־יִגַּל לִבְךָ: פֶּן־יֵרָאֶה יְהוָה וְרַע בְּעֵינָיו וְהִשִּׁיב מַעַלְיוֹ אָפוֹ: אֶל־תִּתְחַר בַּמְרָעִים אֶל־תִּקְנֵא בְרָשָׁעִים: כִּי לֹא־תִהְיֶה אַחֲרֶיךָ לְרַע נֵר רָשָׁעִים יִדְעֶךָ: יִרְאֵ־אֶת־יְהוָה בְּנִי וּמֶלֶךְ עִם־שׂוֹנִים אֶל־תִּתְעָרֵב:	
	find it, and you will have a future and your hope will not be cut short.	
15	Do not lurk, wicked man, by the upright man's home; do not despoil his house.	טו
16	For, though he falls seven times, he gets up again; the wicked are the ones who stumble in adversity.	טז
17	Should your enemy fall, do not rejoice; when he stumbles, do not let your heart exult,	יז
18	lest Yahweh will be displeased at the sight and turn his anger away from him.	יח
19	Do not fret about the wicked; do not be envious of the evil.	יט
20	For there is no future for the evil; the lamp of the wicked will go out.	כ
21	Fear Yahweh, my child, and fear the king; do not ally yourself with innovators.	כא

-
- 15 In the 1st line, instead of qualifying the 'wicked man' (here following the NJB), the NRSV ('like an outlaw') & NETB ('like the wicked') compare the addressee to the wicked.
- 16 The NJB replaces the 1st instance of 'he' with the referent ('the upright').
- 17 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from a proper explanation.
- 18 The judgement of God should strike a note of fear in the heart of people (cf. Lv 19:17–18); it is not to be taken lightly or as a personal victory.
- 19 The NJB has 'be indignant' in place of 'fret', here following the NRSV & NETB.
- 20 This saying warns against envying the wicked; v. 19 provides the instruction and v. 20 the motivation.
- 21 For the 2nd line, the NRSV, following the LXX, reads: "and do not disobey either of them."

כב כִּי־פֶתְאֵם יָקוּם אִידָם

וּפִיד שְׁנֵיהֶם מִי יוֹדֵעַ:

^{22a} λόγον φυλασσόμενος υἱὸς ἀπωλείας ἐκτὸς ἔσται,
δεχόμενος δὲ ἐδέξατο αὐτόν.

²³ μηδὲν ψεῦδος ἀπὸ γλώσσης βασιλεῖ λεγέσθω,
καὶ οὐδὲν ψεῦδος ἀπὸ γλώσσης αὐτοῦ οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ.

²⁴ μάχαιρα γλῶσσα βασιλέως καὶ οὐ σαρκίνη,
ὅς δ' ἂν παραδοθῇ, συντριβήσεται·

²⁵ ἐὰν γὰρ ὀξυνθῇ ὁ θυμὸς αὐτοῦ,
σὺν νεύροις ἀνθρώπους ἀναλίσκει

²⁶ καὶ ὅστ' ἀνθρώπων κατατρώγει
καὶ συγκαίει ὥσπερ φλόξ ὥστε ἄβρωτα
εἶναι νεοσσοῖς ἀετῶν. — —

כג גַּם־אֵלֶּה לְחֻכִּים

הַכֹּר־פָּנִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט בַּל־טוֹב:

כד אָמַר | לְרָשָׁע צְדִיק אַתָּה

יִקְבְּהוּ עַמִּים יִזְעֻמוּהוּ לְאַמִּים:

²² For suddenly disaster will loom for them;

who knows what ruin may come from them both?

^{22a} A son who obeys the word will escape destruction,
having accepted it with good will.

^{22b} Let nothing untruthful be said to the king,
and nothing untruthful will issue from his mouth.

^{22c} The tongue of the king is a sword,
not an organ of flesh.

^{22d} For, once his wrath is aroused,
he destroys people, sinews and all.

^{22e} He devours people's very bones
and, like a flame, burns them up
so that even eagles' young could not eat them.

²³ These are also Sayings of the Wise:

To show partiality in judgement is not good.

²⁴ Whoever tells the wicked, "You are upright,"

will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations;

²² For the 2nd line, here (loosely) following the WEBBE, the NJB reads, "and who knows what ruin will seize them and their friends?"

^{22a} Vv. 22a–22e are from the LXX; the numbers in the Greek text follow Rahlfs but the English text and numbers follow the NJB.

^{22b} In his 1851 translation, Lancelot Brenton has 'tongue' in place of 'mouth' (twice in this verse).

^{22c} For the 2nd line, Brenton has 'and not one of flesh'.

^{22d} Brenton has 'bones' in place of 'sinews'.

^{22e} After these additions, the LXX inserts the content of 30:1–14 but most MSS lack the remainder of this chapter.

²³ This verse begins another short collection (24:23–34) attributed to 'the Wise'. The Law forbids the judge to be a respecter of persons (Lv 19:15, Dt 1:17, 16:19). The prophets similarly insist, though in different terms, on this same duty (Is 10:2, Jr 5:28 Ezk 22:12, Am 2:6, 5:7,10, Mi 3:9–11).

²⁴ The word translated 'upright' (as NJB) can also mean 'innocent' (as NRSV/NETB).

כה וְלִמְוֹכִיחִים יֵנֵעַם
 וְעֲלֵיהֶם תָּבוֹא בְּרַכַּת־טוֹב:
 כו שְׁפֹתַיִם יִשָּׁק
 מִשֵּׁיב דְּבָרִים נֹכָחִים:
 כז הֵבֵן בַּחוּץ | מִלֵּאכָתֶךָ
 וְעֲתֵדָה בַּשָּׂדֶה לָךְ
 אַחֵר וּבְנִית בֵּיתְךָ:
 כח אַל־תְּהִי עֹדֵחֲנָם בִּרְעֶךָ
 וְהִפְתִּית בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ:
 כט אַל־תֹּאמֶר
 כִּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה־לִּי בֶן אֶעֱשֶׂה־לּוֹ
 אֲשִׁיב לְאִישׁ כִּפְעָלוֹ:
 ל עַל־שָׂדֶה אִישׁ־עֵצֶל עִבְרָתִי
 וְעַל־כָּרֶם אָדָם חֲסֵר־לֵב:
 לא וְהִנֵּה עָלָה כָּלוֹ | קִמְשָׁנִים

25 but those who correct him come out of it well;
 on them will come a happy blessing.
 26 Whoever returns an honest answer
 plants a kiss on the lips.
 27 Plan what you want on the open ground;
 make your preparation in the field,
 then go and build your house.
 28 Do not bear witness lightly against your neighbour,
 nor deceive with your lips.
 29 Do not say,
 “I will treat him as he treated me;
 I will repay everyone what each has earned.”
 30 By the idler’s field I was passing,
 by the vineyard of a man who had no sense.
 31 There it all lay, deep in thorns, overgrown with weeds

- 25 In the term translated ‘happy blessing’ (בְּרַכַּת־טוֹב – literally, ‘blessing of good’), the genitive, ‘good’, has to be attributive, modifying ‘blessings’; the word is general enough to mean any number of things – happy, rich, healthy, pleasing, *et cetera*.
- 26 The ‘kiss’ would signify love, devotion, sincerity, and commitment – an outward expression of what is in the heart.
- 27 If the term, ‘house’, is understood literally, the proverb would mean that one should be financially secure before building a house; if ‘house’ is figurative for household (metonymy of subject: children or family), the proverb would mean that one should have financial security and provision before starting a family.
- 28 The LXX interprets the 1st line, “Do not be a lying witness against your fellow countryman.”
- 29 The NJB has ‘my neighbour’ (twice) in place of ‘him’ and ‘he’ in the 1st line.
- 30 The literal translation of ‘sense’ is ‘heart’.
- 31 The term וְהִנֵּה (“there”) is a deictic particle that calls attention to what comes next.

כִּסּוּ פָנָיו חֲרָלִים וְגִדָּר אֲבָנָיו נִהְרָסָה:

וְאַחֲזָה אֲנֹכִי אִשִּׁית לִבִּי לֵב

רָאִיתִי לִקְחָתִי מוֹסֵר:

מַעַט שְׁנוֹת מַעַט תְּנוּמוֹת לֵג

מַעַט | חֲבֹק יָדַיִם לְשָׁכֵב:

וּבֹא־מִתְהַלֵּךְ רִישׁ לֵד

וּמַחֲסֹרֵיךְ כְּאִישׁ מִגָּן:

and its stone wall broken down.

³² As I gazed, I pondered,

I drew this lesson from the sight:

³³ “A little sleep, a little drowsiness,

a little folding of the arms to rest

³⁴ and poverty comes like a vagrant

and need like a beggar.”

³² The literal translation of ‘I pondered’ is ‘I put my heart’.

³³ The NJB has ‘lie back’ in place of ‘rest’, here following the NRSV.

³⁴ The NRSV has ‘robber’ in place of ‘vagrant’ and ‘armed warrior’ in place of the conjectural ‘beggar’ (cf. 6:11).

משלי פרק כה

גַּם־אֵלֶּה מְשָׁלֵי שְׁלֹמֹה אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱתִיקוּ אַנְשֵׁי־
חִזְקִיָּה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה:

ב כָּבֹד אֱלֹהִים הַסֵּתֵר דָּבָר
וּכְבֹּד מְלָכִים חֻקֵּי דָבָר:
ג שָׁמַיִם לְרוֹם וָאָרֶץ לְעֹמֶק
וְלֵב מְלָכִים אֵין חֻקֵּי:
ד הִגּוּ סִיגִים מִכֶּסֶף
וַיֵּצֵא לַצֹּרֶף כֶּלִי:
ה הִגּוּ רֹשַׁע לִפְנֵי־מֶלֶךְ
וַיִּכּוֹן בַּצֶּדֶק בְּסֵאוֹ:
ו אֶל־תִּתְּהַדָּר לִפְנֵי־מֶלֶךְ
וּבִמְקוֹם גְּדֹלִים אֶל־תִּעַמֵּד:
ז כִּי טוֹב אֲמַר־לְךָ עַל־הַנָּה
מִהַשְׁפִּילְךָ לִפְנֵי נָדִיב

PROVERBS 25

¹ Here are some more of Solomon's proverbs, transcribed at the court of Hezekiah king of Judah:

- ² To conceal a matter, this is the glory of God;
to sift through it thoroughly is the glory of kings.
- ³ The heavens for height and the earth for depth
are unfathomable, as are the hearts of kings.
- ⁴ From silver, remove the dross
and it emerges wholly purified.
- ⁵ From the king's presence, remove the wicked
and on uprightness, his throne is founded.
- ⁶ In the presence of the king, do not give yourself airs;
do not take a place among the great.
- ⁷ Better to be invited, "Come up here,"
than to be humiliated in the presence of the prince.

PROVERBS 25

- ¹ Chapters 25–29 comprise another collection of 'Proverbs of Solomon' (see #10:1), copied by Hezekiah's sages (ca. 715–687 BCE).
- ² This proverb provides a contrast between God and the king and therein is the clue to the range of application involved; the interest of the king is ruling or administering his government, so the subject matter is a contrast to the way God rules his kingdom.
- ³ This verse is affirming a simple fact: the king's plans and decisions are beyond the comprehension of the people.
- ⁴ 'Wholly purified' follows the LXX (καθαρόν ἅπαν, reading כָּלִיל); the MT (כֶּלִי) has 'a vessel for the smith' (as does the NRSV).
- ⁵ VV. 4–5 present first an illustration and then the point (so it is emblematic parallelism).
- ⁶ For the 1st line, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence." The NRSV translation is more literal but that of the NJB make the point more clearly.
- ⁷ The NJB includes the 3rd line as part of v. 8; here, we follow the MT, NRSV & NETB. 'What' follows the LXX and Peshitta; the MT has 'which'.

אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ:
 ח אֶל־תַּצֵּא לְרֹב מְהֵרָה
 פֶּן מֵה־תַּעֲשֶׂה בְאַחֲרִיתָהּ
 בְּהַכְלִים אֶתְךָ רֵעֶךָ:
 ט רִיבֶךָ רִיב אֶת־רֵעֶךָ
 וְסוֹד אַחֵר אֶל־תִּגְלֶה:
 י פֶּן־יַחֲסֹדֶךָ שְׁמֶעַ
 וְדַבַּתְךָ לֹא תִשׁוּב:
 יא תְּפוּחֵי זָהָב בַּמְשָׁכִיּוֹת כֶּסֶף
 דִּבְרַר דְּבַר עַל־אֲפָנָיו:
 יב גֶּזֶם זָהָב וַחֲלִי־כֶתֶם
 מוֹכִיחַ חָכֶם עַל־אָזֶן שֹׁמֵעַת:
 יג כְּצֹנֶת־שֶׁלֶג | בְּיוֹם קָצִיר
 צִיר נֶאֱמָן לְשַׁלְּחֵו
 וְנֶפֶשׁ אֲדֹנָיו יִשִּׁיב:
 יד נְשִׂאִים וְרוּחַ וְגֶשֶׁם אֵין

What your eyes have witnessed,
 8 do not produce too quickly at the trial,
 for what are you to do at the end
 should your neighbour confute you?
 9 Have the quarrel out with your neighbour
 but do not disclose another's secret,
 10 for fear your listener put you to shame,
 and the loss of repute be irremediable.
 11 Like apples of gold inlaid with silver
 is a word that is aptly spoken.
 12 A golden ring, an ornament of finest gold,
 is a wise rebuke to an attentive ear.
 13 The coolness of snow in harvest time,
 so is a faithful messenger to those who send him:
 he revives the soul of his master.
 14 Clouds and wind, but no rain:

⁸ 'Do not produce it' is conjectural (an emendation of vowels from 'do not come out' to 'do not make it come out').

⁹ The concern is that, in arguing with one person, a secret about another might be divulged, perhaps deliberately in an attempt to clear oneself. The point then is about damaging a friendship by involving the friend in another quarrel.

¹⁰ This is a difficult verse – 'loss of repute' could mean either what you have done to your neighbour, or what your enemy has done to you.

¹¹ This verse uses emblematic parallelism, stating the simile in the 1st line and the point in the 2nd.

¹² Another emblematic parallelism: the 1st line is the simile and the 2nd line makes the point: A wise rebuke properly received is of lasting value.

¹³ Snow at the harvest was rare, so some have trouble explaining this proverb; but the point is clear enough: a faithful servant is refreshing.

¹⁴ For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "such is anyone whose promises are princely but never kept."

אִישׁ מְתַהַלֵּל בְּמַתַּת־שֹׁקֶר:
טו בְּאַרְךָ אַפִּים יִפְתָּה קֶצֶץ
וְלִשׁוֹן רַפָּה תִשְׁבֶּר־גָּרֶם:
טז דְּבַשׁ מִצֹּאת אֲכַל דִּידֶךָ
פֶּן־תִּשְׁבַּעְנֶנּוּ וְהִקְאֵתוּ:
יז הִקֵּר רַגְלְךָ מִבֵּית רֵעֶךָ
פֶּן־יִשְׁבַּעְיָךְ וְשִׁנְאֶיךָ:
יח מִפִּיֶךָ וְחָרֵב וְחָץ שָׁנוֹן
אִישׁ עֲנָה בְרֵעֵהוּ עַד שֹׁקֶר:
יט שֵׁן רָעָה וְרֵגֶל מוֹעֵדֶת
מִבֶּטֶחַ בּוֹזֵג בְּיוֹם צָרָה:
כ מַעֲדָה־בִּגְדוֹ בְּיוֹם קָרָה
חֲמֵץ עַל־נֶתֶר
וְשֵׁר בְּשָׂרִים עַל לִב־רַע:

such is one who boasts of a gift never given.
15 With patience, a judge may be cajoled:
a soft tongue breaks bones.
16 Eat to your satisfaction what honey you may find
but not to excess or you will bring it up again.
17 Set foot seldom in your neighbour's house,
or the neighbour will tire of you and hate you.
18 Like a mace, a sword, a piercing arrow,
is one who bears false witness against a neighbour.
19 Like a decaying tooth or lame foot
is the fickle when trusted in time of trouble.
20 Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day,
or like vinegar poured in soda,
so is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.

¹⁵ The idea of breaking bones uses the hardest and most firm part of the body in contrast to the 'soft tongue'; both are figurative, forming a comparison: gentle speech can break down any stiff opposition.

¹⁶ This proverb warns that anything overindulged in can become sickening.

¹⁷ The literal translation of 'set your foot seldom' is 'make your foot rare'.

¹⁸ The NJB has 'companion' in place of 'neighbour', here following the NRSV.

¹⁹ The similes in this emblematic parallelism focus on things that are incapable of performing: they are too painful and/or ineffective.

²⁰ For this verse, here following the MT & NJB, the NRSV reads as below, following the LXX, Peshitta and Tg:

²⁰ ὥσπερ ὄξος ἔλκει ἀσύμφορον,
οὕτως προσπесὸν πάθος ἐν σώματι καρδίαν λυπεῖ.

^{20a} ὥσπερ σῆς ἱματίῳ καὶ σκώληξ ξύλῳ,
οὕτως λύπη ἀνδρὸς βλάπτει καρδίαν.

דְּשָׁקֶל מִרְטוּטָא מִן חֲבֵרִיָּה בְּיוֹם דְּקִרְתָּא הֵיךְ
הוּא דְרָמִי חִילָא עַל נִתְרָא וּמִצָּרָף לְלִבָּא כִּיכָא
הֵיךְ סָסָא לְמָנָא וְאֵיךְ מִלְטִיתָא בְּקִיתָא הֵיכְנָא
בְּרִיּוֹתָא מַחֲדָא לְבִיָּה דְּגִבְרָא:

²⁰ You are pouring vinegar on a wound
when you sing songs to a sorrowing heart.
Like a moth in clothing or a worm in wood,
sorrow gnaws at the human heart.

כא אִם־רָעֵב שֶׁנֶאֱדָהּ הָאֹכְלֶהּ לֶחֶם
 וְאִם־צָמָא הַשֹּׁקֵהּ מַיִם:
 כב כִּי גִחְלִים אֶתָּה חֲתָה עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ
 וַיְהִי־יְשֻׁלִּם־לָךְ:
 כג רוּחַ צָפוֹן תַּחֲלֹל גֶּשֶׁם
 וּפָנִים נֹזְעָמִים לְשׁוֹן סֹתֵר:
 כד טוֹב שֹׁבֵת עַל־פִּנֹּת־גַּג
 מֵאֵשֶׁת מְדוֹנִים מְדִינִים וּבֵית חֶבֶר:
 כה מֵיִם קָרִים עַל־נֶפֶשׁ עֵיפָה
 וְשִׁמוּעָה טוֹבָה מֵאֶרֶץ מְרַחֵק:
 כו מַעֵין נִרְפָּשׁ וּמִקּוֹר מְשַׁחַת
 צִדִּיק מֵט לַפְּגִי־רָשָׁע:
 כז אֲכַל דְּבַשׁ הִרְבּוֹת לֹא־טוֹב
 וַחֲקֹר כְּבוֹדִם כְּבוֹד:
 כח עִיר פְּרוּצָה אֵין חוֹמָה
 אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אֵין מַעְצָר לְרוּחוֹ:

- 21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
 if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
 22 By this, you will be heaping red-hot coals on his head,
 and Yahweh will reward you.
 23 The north wind produces rain
 and a sly tongue brings forth an angry look.
 24 It is better to live on the corner of a roof
 than a house shared with a quarrelsome woman.
 25 Cold water to a thirsty throat,
 such is good news from a distant land.
 26 Like a churned-up spring, a polluted fountain,
 is the righteous trembling before the wicked.
 27 It is not good to eat too much honey,
 or to seek for glory on top of glory.
 28 An open town and without defences,
 such is anyone who lacks self-control.

21 In place of 'bread' and 'water', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'something' (in both cases).

22 'Red-hot coals' are interpreted as (increased) punishment, or as the remorse – and hence conversion – of the enemy. Cf. Rm 12:20.

23 A problem here is that it is the *west* wind that brings rain to Israel (1K 18:41–44); some suggest that the proverb may have Egyptian origins.

24 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrant explanation. This verse is almost identical to 21:9, except for the **שֹׁבֵת** in place of **לְשֹׁבֵת** in the 1st line (and the *Kethib*/*Qere* difference in the 2nd).

25 The difficulty of getting news from a distant land made its reception all the more delightful (cf. 15:30, Gn 45:27).

26 The NJB has 'fouled' in place of 'polluted', here following the NRSV.

27 'Glory on top of glory' is conjectural; the MT has 'their glory is glory'.

28 One who lacks restraint, given to outbursts of passion, or who lacks self-control has no natural defences but reveals his true nature all the time.

משלי פרק כו

- א כִּשְׁלֵג | בִּקְיִץ וְכַמָּטֵר בִּקְצִיר
בֵּן לֹא־נֹאווֶה לְכִסִּיל כְּבוֹד:
ב כַּצִּפּוֹר לָנוּד בְּדֶרֶזֶר לָעוֹף
בֵּן קָלִילֶת חֲנֹם לֹא לוֹ תְּבֹא:
ג שׁוֹט לְסוֹס מִתֵּג לַחֲמֹר
וְשִׁבֵּט לָגוֹ כְּסִילִים:
ד אֶל־תֵּעַן בְּסִיל בְּאוֹלָתוֹ
פֶּן־תִּשְׁוֶה־לוֹ גַּם־אַתָּה:
ה עֲנֵה בְּסִיל בְּאוֹלָתוֹ
פֶּן־יִהְיֶה חָכֵם בְּעֵינָיו:
ו מִקְצֵה רַגְלִים חֲמֵס שְׂתֵה
שִׁלַּח דְּבָרִים בְּיַד־כִּסִּיל:
ז דִּלּוֹ שְׁקִים מִפֶּסֶח

PROVERBS 26

- 1 Like snow in summer or rain in harvest,
so honour is not fitting for a fool.
2 As the sparrow escapes, and the swallow flies away,
so the undeserved cause will never hit its mark.
3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,
and a rod for the backs of fools.
4 Do not answer a fool in the terms of his folly,
for fear you grow like him yourself.
5 Answer a fool in the terms of his folly
for fear he imagine himself wise.
6 Like cutting off the feet and drinking violence,
is sending a message by a fool.
7 Unreliable as the legs of the lame,

PROVERBS 26

- 1 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Snow no more befits the summer, not rain the harvest-time, than honours befit a fool."
2 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here would benefit from an explanation.
3 A fool must be disciplined by force like a dumb animal – there is no reasoning.
4 If one were to descend to the level of a fool to argue with him, he would only look like a fool as well.
5 The contradiction between this and the preceding proverb is deliberate and plays on the two meanings of the phrase 'in the terms of his folly': either 'in a fool's words' (v. 4) or 'as a fool deserves' (v. 7).
6 For this verse, here following the NRSV/NETB, the NJB reads, "He wounds himself; he takes violence for his drink, who sends a message by a fool." Sending a messenger on a mission is like having another pair of feet; however, if a fool is the messenger, the proverb says, not only does the sender not have an extra pair of feet, but he cuts off the pair he has.
7 'Unreliable' (literally 'feeble') is a conjectural translation (דִּלּוֹ); the MT has 'draw (as of water)' (דָּלּוֹ).

וּמִשָּׁל בְּפִי כְסִילִים:		so is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
ח כְּצִרּוֹר אֲבֵן בְּמִרְגָּמָה	ח	8 As well tie the stone to the sling
כְּנֻתָן לְכִסִּיל כְּבוֹד:		as pay honour to a fool.
ט חוֹחַ עֲלֵה בִיד־שָׂכֹר	ט	9 A thorn branch in a drunkard's hand,
וּמִשָּׁל בְּפִי כְסִילִים:		such is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
י רַב מְחַלְלֵ-כָּל	י	10 An archer wounding everyone,
וְשָׂכָר כְּסִיל וְשָׂכָר עֲבָרִים:		such is he who hires the passing fool and drunkard.
יא כִּכְלָב שָׁב עַל-קֹאֵו	יא	11 As a dog returns to its vomit,
כְּסִיל שׁוֹנֶה בְּאוֹלָתוֹ:		so a fool reverts to his folly.
יב רְאִיתָ אִישׁ חָכָם בְּעֵינָיו	יב	12 You see someone who thinks himself wise?
תִּקְוָה לְכִסִּיל מִמֶּנּוּ:		More to be hoped from a fool than from him!
יג אָמַר עֲצֹל שָׁחַל בַּדֶּרֶךְ	יג	13 "A wild beast on the road," says the idler,
אֲרִי בֵין הָרְחִבּוֹת:		"a lion in the streets!"
יד הִדְלֹת תִּסּוֹב עַל-צִירָה	יד	14 The door turns on its hinges,
וְעֲצֹל עַל-מִטָּתוֹ:		the idler on his bed.

8 If the stone is fixed too securely in the sling, it is likely to recoil on the thrower.

9 The 'thorn branch' metaphor is vague; it may indicate uselessness (see vv. 7–8) or the use of a proverb in a hurtful way.

10 The text of this verse is corrupt. The literal translation would read, "An archer wounding everyone, and he who hires a fool, and he who hires passers-by." The NJB (followed here) emends the second 'and he who hires' (וְשָׂכָר) to 'and the drunkard' (שָׂכֹר) and restores 'such is'.

11 The simile is graphic and debasing (cf. 2P 2:22).

12 The subject matter of this proverb is the person who is wise in his own opinion (literally, 'in his own eyes'). Self-conceit is actually part of the folly that the book decries; for, those who think they are wise are impossible to help.

13 This proverb makes the same point as 22:13, namely, that the idler uses absurd excuses to get out of work.

14 The humour of this verse is based on an analogy with a door: it moves back and forth but goes nowhere; like the door, the idler is hinged to the bed (cf. 6:9–10, 24:33).

טו טֶמֶן עֶצֶל יָדוֹ בַּצֶּלַחַת
נִלְאָה לְהַשִּׁיבָה אֶל-פִּיו:
טז חֵכֶם עֶצֶל בְּעֵינָיו
מְשַׁבֵּעַ מְשִׁיבֵי טַעַם:
יז מַחְזִיק בְּאָזְנֵי-כֶלֶב
עֹבֵר מִתְעַבֵּר עַל-רֵיב לֹא-לוֹ:
יח כְּמַתְלֵה־לֵּה הִירָה זָקִים
חֲצִים וּמוֹת:
יט כִּן-אִישׁ רָמָה אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ
וְאָמַר הֲלֹא-מִשְׁחַק אָנִי:
כ בְּאַפֶּס עֲצִים תִּכְבֶּה-אֵשׁ
וּבִאֵין נִרְגָּן יִשְׁתַּק מְדוֹן:
כא פָּחַם לַגַּחְלִים וְעֲצִים לֵאֵשׁ
וְאִישׁ מְדוֹנִים מְדִינִים לְחִרְחֹרֶיב:
כב דְּבַרִי נִרְגָּן כְּמַתְלֵה־מִים
וְהֵם יִרְדּוּ חֲדָרֵי-בֶטֶן:

15 Into the dish, the idler dips his hand
but it is too tired to bring it back to his mouth.
16 The idler is wiser in his own eyes
than seven people who answer with discretion.
17 He takes a stray dog by the ears,
who meddles in someone else's quarrel.
18 Like a madman hurling firebrands,
arrows and death,
19 so is anyone who lies to a companion
and then says, "Was I not joking?"
20 No wood, and the fire goes out;
no slanderer, and quarrelling dies down.
21 As charcoal is to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is the quarrelsome for kindling strife.
22 The words of a slanderer are tasty morsels
that go right down into the belly.

15 This proverb makes essentially the same point as 19:24.

16 More literal translations for 'discretion' would be 'taste' or 'judgement'.

17 Someone who treated a dog like this ran a serious risk of injury or harm: dogs were not domestic pets in the ancient Middle East but were scavengers that ran in packs like jackals.

18 The phrase, 'arrows and death' may be a nominal hendiadys, meaning 'deadly arrows'.

19 The subject of this proverb is not simply a deceiver but one who does it out of jest – or, at least, who claims he was joking afterward.

20 In place of 'slanderer', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'whisperer' and NETB has 'gossip'.

21 The Kethib/Qere difference here appears to be a case of vav/yod confusion.

22 This proverb is the same as 18:8, observing how appealing gossip can be.

כג כֶּסֶף סִיגִים מְצֻפֶּה עַל־חֶרֶשׁ
שִׁפְתֵּים דֹּלְקִים וְלִב־רַע:
כד בִּשְׁפָתוֹ יִנְכָּר שׁוֹנֵא
וּבִקְרָבוֹ יִשִּׁית מִרְמָה:
כה כִּי־יִחְנֹן קוֹלוֹ אֶל־תֶּאֱמֹן־בּוֹ
כִּי שֶׁבַע תּוֹעֲבוֹת בְּלִבּוֹ:
כו תִּכְסֶּה שׁוֹנֵא בַּמִּשְׁאֹן
תִּגְלֶה רָעָתוֹ בַּקֹּהֶל:
כז כָּרָה־שַׁחַת בָּהּ יִפּוֹל
וְגוֹלֵל אֶבֶן אֵלָיו תָּשׁוּב:
כח לִשׁוֹן־שָׁקֶר יִשְׁנֵא דָבָר
וּפֶה חָלָק יַעֲשֶׂה מִדָּחָה:

23 Like silver-plate on top of clay:
such are fervent lips and a wicked heart.
24 An enemy dissembles in speaking
while harbouring deceit within.
25 If he speaks you fair, do not trust him,
since in his heart lurk seven abominations.
26 Hatred may disguise itself with guile,
to reveal its wickedness later in the assembly.
27 Whoever digs a pit falls into it;
the stone comes back on him that rolls it.
28 The lying tongue hates its victims;
the flattering mouth causes ruin.

23 The NRSV has 'glaze' in place of 'silver-plate' and 'smooth' instead of 'fervent'.

24 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "Whoever hates may hide it in his speech but deep within him lies treachery." This proverb makes an observation: one who in reality despises other people will often disguise that with what he says.

25 The number 'seven' is used in scripture as the 'complete' number; here, it is not intended to be literally seven; rather, it means that there is complete or total abomination in his heart.

26 For this verse, here following the NJB, the NRSV reads, "Though hatred is covered with guile, the enemy's wickedness will be exposed in the assembly."

27 This proverb teaches the *Lex Talionis* ('an eye for an eye', etc.).

28 This proverb makes it clear that only pain and ruin can come from deception. The expression that it hates those it hurts suggests that the sentiments of hatred help the deceiver justify what he says about people. The ruin that he brings is probably on other people, but it could also be taken to include his own ruin.

משלי פרק כז

א אֶל־תִּתְהַלֵּל בְּיוֹם מָחָר
כִּי לֹא־תֵדַע מַה־יָּלֵד יוֹם:
ב יִהְיֶה זֶר וְלֹא־פִיךָ
נִכְרִי וְאֶל־שִׁפְתֶיךָ:
ג כָּבֶד־אֲבֹן וְנֹטֶל הַחֹזֶל
וְכַעַס אִוִּיל כָּבֶד מִשְׁנִיָּהִם:
ד אֲכֹזְרִיּוֹת חֲמָה וְשֹׁטֵף אֶף
וּמִי יַעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי קִנְאָה:
ה טוֹבָה תּוֹכַחַת מִגִּלָּה
מֵאֲהָבָה מִסִּתְרָת:
ו נְאֻמִּים פָּצְעֵי אוֹהֵב
וְנִעְתָּרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׂוֹנֵא:
ז נֶפֶשׁ שִׁבְעָה תָּבוֹס נֶפֶת
וְנֶפֶשׁ רָעָבָה כָּל־מֶר מִתּוֹק:

PROVERBS 27

- 1 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring.
- 2 Let another praise you but not your own mouth,
a stranger, but not your own lips.
- 3 Heavy is the stone, weighty is the sand;
heavier than both is vexation by a fool.
- 4 Cruel is wrath, overwhelming is anger;
but jealousy – who can withstand that?
- 5 Better is open reproof
than hidden love.
- 6 Trustworthy are blows from a friend;
deceitful are kisses from a foe.
- 7 The sated appetite revolts at honey;
the hungry throat finds all bitterness sweet.

PROVERBS 27

- ¹ In place of 'boast about', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'congratulate yourself on'.
- ² Here, 'mouth' and 'lips' are metonyms of cause; they mean what is said.
- ³ The contrast is made between dealing with the vexation of a fool and physical labour; the vexation of a fool is worse, as the mental and emotional effort it takes to deal with it is more draining than physical labour.
- ⁴ The rhetorical question is intended to say that no one can survive a jealous rage.
- ⁵ The NJB has 'feigned' in place of 'hidden', here following the NRSV & NETB.
- ⁶ The translation of the 2nd line is uncertain: the word here rendered 'deceitful' is often translated 'abundant'; some emend to read 'displeasing' or 'bad'. The notion of falseness is supported by the antithetic parallelism.
- ⁷ The NJB has 'gorged throat' in place of 'sated appetite', here following the NRSV.

ח כַּצְפוֹר נוֹדַדְתָּ מִן־קִנָּה
בֶּן־אִישׁ נוֹדַד מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:
ט שֶׁמֶן וְקִטְרֶת יִשְׂמַח־לֵב
וּמִתֵּק רָעָהוּ מַעֲצַת־נַפֶּשׁ:
י רַעֲךָ וְרַעְיָה וְרַע אָבִיךָ אֶל־תַּעֲזֹב
וּבֵית אָחִיךָ אֶל־תָּבוֹא בְיוֹם אִידֶךָ
טוֹב שָׁכֵן קָרוֹב מֵאָח רָחוֹק:
יא חֲכָם בְּנֵי וְשִׂמְח לִבִּי
וְאֲשִׁיבָה חֲרָפִי דְבָר:
יב עָרוֹם | רֹאֵה רַעְיָה נִסְתָּר
פְּתָאִים עֲבְרוּ נִעְנְשׁוּ:
יג קַח־בְּגָדוֹ כִּי־עָרַב זֶר
וּבַעֲד נִכְרִיָּה חֲבָלָהּ:
יד מְבָרֵךְ רַעְיָה | בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל בִּבְקָר הַשָּׂכִים
קָלָלָהּ תַּחֲשֹׁב לֹו:
טו דֹּלֶף טוֹרַד בְּיוֹם סִגְרִיר

- 8 Like a bird that strays from its nest,
so is anyone who strays from his native land.
- 9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart;
so does earnest counsel from a man's friend.
- 10 Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend.
Do not go to your brother in the day of your ruin.
A neighbour who is near is better than a distant brother.
- 11 Be wise, my child, and gladden my heart,
that I may answer anyone who insults me.
- 12 The discreet sees danger and takes shelter;
simpletons go ahead and pay the penalty.
- 13 Take the man's clothes! He has gone surety for a stranger.
Take a pledge from him, for persons unknown.
- 14 Whoever at dawn loudly blesses his neighbour –
it will be reckoned to him as a curse.
- 15 The dripping of a gutter on a rainy day

8 The reason for the wandering from the nest/place is not given, but it could be because of exile, eviction, business, or irresponsible actions.

9 For the 2nd line, the NRSV, following the LXX, reads, "but the soul is torn by trouble."

10 The Kethib/Qere difference here warrants explanation.

11 The expression, 'anyone who insults me', refers to those who would reproach or treat with contempt the sage, condemning him as a poor teacher.

12 The naïve person, oblivious to impending danger, meets it head on.

13 'Persons unknown' is a conjectural translation (נִכְרִיָּה, cf. 20:16); the MT has 'a foreign woman' (נִכְרִיָּה) and the NRSV has 'foreigners', following the Vg.

14 The Talmud forbids greetings before Morning Prayer.

15 The Kethib/Qere difference here may be a simple case of vav/yod confusion.

וְאִשֶּׁת מְדוּנִים מְדִינִים נִשְׁתּוּה:

טז צִפְנִיָּה צִפְנֵ-רוּחַ

וְשִׁמְן יְמִינוֹ יִקְרָא:

יז בְּרֹזֶל בְּבִרְזֵל יַחַד

וְאִישׁ יַחַד פְּנִי-רַעְהוּ:

יח נֹצֵר תְּאֵנָה יֹאכֵל פְּרִיָּה

וְשֹׁמֵר אֲדָנָיו יִכְבָּד:

יט כַּמִּים הַפָּנִים לַפָּנִים

כ בֶּן לֵב-הָאָדָם לָאָדָם:

כ שאוֹל וְאַבְדֹּן לֹא תִשְׂבַּעְנָה

וְעֵינֵי הָאָדָם לֹא תִשְׂבַּעְנָה:

כא מִצֶּרֶף לַכֶּסֶף וְכוּר לְזָהָב

וְאִישׁ לְפִי מֵהִלּוֹ:

כב אִם תִּכְתּוֹשׂ-אֶת-הָאֹיִל | בַּמִּכְתֵּשׁ

בְּתוֹךְ הָרִיפּוֹת בַּעֲלִי

לֹא-תִסּוּר מֵעֲלִיו אֹלְתּוֹ:

and a quarrelsome woman are alike.

16 Whoever hides her can hide the wind

and take a firm hold on grease.

17 Iron sharpens iron;

one person sharpens the wits of another.

18 Whoever tends the fig tree eats its figs;

whoever looks after his master will be honoured.

19 As water reflects face back to face,

so one human heart reflects another.

20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied;

insatiable, too, are human eyes.

21 A furnace for silver, a foundry for gold:

a person is worth what his reputation is worth.

22 If you pound a fool in a mortar

among the grain with a pestle,

his folly will not leave him.

16 The pronoun, 'her', in the 1st line refers to the quarrelsome woman on v. 15.

17 The literal translation of 'wits' is 'face'.

18 Tending fig trees requires closer attention than other plants; so, the point here would be diligent care.

19 The interpretation of this verse is uncertain. It apparently means that someone sees his own feelings in others, just as a face sees its own reflection; but the LXX understands it in a contrary sense: "As no face is like another, so no two human hearts are the same."

20 See #15:11. 'Sheol' is here personified as a dynamic power that devours individuals (see 30:16). The eyes are the seat of envy.

21 For the 2nd line, the NRSV reads, "so a person is tested by being praised."

22 For this verse, LXX reads, "If you scourge a fool in the assembly, dishonouring him, you will not remove his folly." This removes the imagery.

כג יָדַע תִּדַּע פְּנֵי צֹאֲנֶךָ
 נְשִׁית לִבְךָ לְעִדְרִים:
 כד כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶן
 וְאִם־נִזְר לְדוֹר דּוֹר וְדוֹר:
 כה גָּלָה חֲצִיר וְנִרְאָה־דֶשֶׁא
 וְנֶאֱסְפוּ עֲשֻׁבוֹת הָרִים:
 כו כְּבָשִׂים לְלִבּוֹשֶׁךָ
 וּמִחִיר שָׂדֶה עֲתוּדִים:
 כז וְדִי | חֶלֶב עֲזִים
 לִלְחָמְךָ לִלְחֵם בֵּיתְךָ
 וְחַיִּים לְנַעֲרוֹתֶיךָ:

23 Know your flocks' condition well;
 take good care of your herds.
 24 For riches do not last forever;
 crowns do not last from age to age.
 25 When the grass is gone, and new growth appears,
 and the hay is gathered from the mountains,
 26 the lambs will provide your clothing,
 and the goats the price of a field.
 27 There will be plenty of goats' milk for your food,
 for your family's food,
 and for the nourishment of your servant girls.

²³ Care of the flock/herd becomes the main focus of the will, for it is the livelihood; this forms the main instruction of this proverb (vv. 23–27).

²⁴ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation.

²⁵ For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “*The grass once gone, the after-growth appearing.*”

²⁶ For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “*you should have the lambs to clothe you, goats to buy you a field.*”

²⁷ The NJB splits the lines a bit differently, starting the 2nd with ‘*to feed your household*’.

משלי פרק כח

- א נִסּוּ וְאִי־רָדֹף רָשָׁע
וְצַדִּיקִים כְּכַפִּיר יִבְטַח:
ב בַּפֶּשַׁע אֶרֶץ רַבִּים שָׂרִיהָ
וּבְאָדָם מִבֵּין יָדַע בֶּן יֶאֱרִיד:
ג גְּבַר־רָשָׁע וְעֹשֶׂק דָּלִים
מִטֶּר סֹחֵף וְאֵין לֶחֶם:
ד עֲזָבִי תוֹרָה יִהְלֹלוּ רָשָׁע
וְשֹׁמְרֵי תוֹרָה יִתְגָּרוּ בָם:
ה אֲנָשֵׁי־רָע לֹא־יָבִינוּ מִשְׁפָּט
וּמִבִּקְשֵׁי יְהוָה יָבִינוּ כָּל:
ו טוֹב־רָשׁ הוֹלֵךְ בְּתִמּוֹ
מִעֲקֹשׁ דֶּרֶכִּים וְהוּא עֹשִׂיר:
ז נֹצֵר תוֹרָה בֶּן מִבֵּין

PROVERBS 28

- 1 The wicked flees when no one is pursuing;
the upright is bold as a lion.
2 A country in revolt throws up many leaders;
but a man wise and experienced, maintains order.
3 The wicked oppress the weak:
here is devastating rain – and farewell, bread!
4 Those who forsake the Law praise the wicked;
those who keep the Law struggle against them.
5 The wicked do not know what justice means;
those who seek Yahweh understand everything.
6 Better someone poor living an honest life
than someone of devious ways, however rich.
7 An intelligent child is one who keeps the Law;

PROVERBS 28

- 1 The wicked flees because he has a guilty conscience, or because he is suspicious of those around him, or because of fear of judgement; however, the righteous has a clear conscience and does not need to look over his shoulder for avengers or law-enforcers.
2 The LXX interprets this verse differently: "When the violent revolt, disputes arise; intelligent people know how to extinguish them."
3 'Wicked' follows the LXX (reading רָשָׁע); the MT has 'poor' (רָשִׁי) and the NRSV has 'ruler'.
4 Some commentators do not think that this proverb refers to the Mosaic Law but to instruction or teaching in general; however, the expression, 'keep the Law', indicates that it is binding, which would not be true of general teaching.
5 The term translated 'justice' (מִשְׁפָּט) refers to the legal rights of people, decisions that are equitable in the community.
6 This chapter gives a lot of attention to the contrast between the poor and the rich, assuming an integrity for the poor that is not there with the rich (vv. 6, 8, 11, 20, 22, 25 & 27).
7 In place of 'a companion of gluttons', here following the NRSV/NETB, the NJB has 'an associate of profligates'.

וְרָעָה זֹלָלִים יַכְלִים אָבִיו:
 ח מְרַבֵּה הוֹנוֹ בְּנִשְׁדָּ וּבִתְרַבִּית וּתְרַבִּית
 לְחֹנֶן דָּלִים יִקְבְּצֵנּוּ:
 ט מִסִּיר אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמַע תּוֹרָה
 גַּם תִּפְלֹתוֹ תוֹעֵבָה:
 י מִשְׁגָּה יִשְׁרִים | בְּדֶרֶךְ רָע
 בְּשַׁחוּתוֹ הוֹאֵיפֹל
 וְתַמִּימִים יִנְחֲלוּ-טוֹב:
 יא חָכָם בְּעֵינָיו אִישׁ עָשִׂיר
 וְדָל מִבֵּין יַחְקֲרֵנּוּ:
 יב בַּעֲלֵץ צַדִּיקִים רַבָּה תִּפְאַרֶת
 וּבִקְוֹם רָשָׁעִים יִחַפֵּשׂ אָדָם:
 יג מִכְסֶּה פִשְׁעָיו לֹא יִצְלִיחַ
 וּמוֹדֶה וְעֹזֵב יִרְחָם:
 יד אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם מִפֶּחַד תָּמִיד
 וּמִקְנָשָׁה לָּבוֹ יִפֹּל בְּרָעָה:

a companion of gluttons brings shame on his father.

8 He who increases his wealth by excessive interest
gathers it for one who has pity on the poor.

9 Whoever refuses to listen to the Law,
such a one's very prayer is an abomination.

10 Whoever seduces the honest to evil ways
will fall into his own pit.

The blameless are the heirs to happiness.

11 The rich may be wise in self-esteem
but the intelligent poor will unmask him.

12 When the righteous triumph, there is great glory;
but when the wicked rise, men hide themselves.

13 He who conceals his sins doesn't prosper;
he who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

14 Blessed the person who is never without fear;
whoever hardens his heart will fall into distress.

8 The *Kethib/Qere* difference here warrants full explanation.

9 It is hard to imagine how someone who wilfully refuses to obey the Law would pray according to the will of the LORD; he is more apt to pray for some physical thing or make demands on God. Of course, a prayer of repentance would not be an abomination to the LORD.

10 This proverb is teaching that those who corrupt others will be destroyed by their own devices, but the righteous will be rewarded.

11 The literal translation of 'in self-esteem' is 'in his own eyes'.

12 The word, 'glory' (here following the NRSV & NETB – the NJB has 'exultation') may have the sense of elation and praise.

13 The 2nd line is an allusion to the confession of sins, cf. Lv 5:5, Nb 5:7, Ps 32:5, Is 1:16–18, Ho 14:2–4.

14 Many commentators assume that the participle מִפֶּחַד ('fears') means 'fears the LORD', even though 'the LORD' is not present in the text; the assumption would be more convincing if the word יִרְאֵת had been used.

טו אֲרִי־נָהֵם וְדָב שׁוֹקֵק
 מוֹשֵׁל רָשָׁע עַל עַם־דָּל:
 טז נָגִיד חֶסֶר תְּבוּנוֹת וְרַב מַעֲשָׂקוֹת
 שְׁנֵאֵי שָׂנֵא בָצַע יֶאֱרִיד יָמָיו:
 יז אָדָם עֹשֶׂק בְּדָם־נַפֶּשׁ
 עַד־בּוֹר יָנוּס אֶל־יִתְמָכוֹבוֹ:
 יח הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים יוֹשֵׁעַ
 וְנִעְקֹשׁ דְּרָכִים יִפֹּל בְּאֶחָת:
 יט עֶבֶד אֲדָמָתוֹ יִשְׁבַּע־לָחֶם
 וּמִרְדֶּף רִיקִים יִשְׁבַּע־רִישׁ:
 כ אִישׁ אֱמוּנוֹת רַב־בְּרָכוֹת
 וְאֶן לְהַעֲשִׁיר לֹא יִנְקָה:
 כא הַכֹּרֶפְנִים לֹא־טוֹב

- 15 Like a roaring lion or a springing bear
 is a wicked ruler of a powerless people.
 16 An unenlightened ruler is rich in rapacity;
 one who hates greed will lengthen his days.
 17 A guilty murderer will flee until he reaches his tomb;
 let no one halt him!
 18 Whoever lives an honest life will be safe;
 whoever wavers between two ways falls into the Pit.
 19 Whoever works his land shall have bread and to spare;
 whoever chases fantasies has no sense.
 20 The faithful will abound with blessings
 but one in a hurry to be rich will not go unpunished.
 21 It is not good to show partiality,

¹⁵ The comparison uses animals that are powerful, terrifying, insensitive, and in search of prey; because political tyrants are like this, animal imagery of this sort is used in Dn 7:1–8 for the series of ruthless world powers.

¹⁶ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here needs explanation.

¹⁷ The NRSV has ‘until death’ in place of ‘until he reaches his tomb’, here following the NJB. Note that the ד in אָדָם is a small letter.

¹⁸ ‘Into the Pit’ follows the *Peshitta*; the MT has ‘all at once’.

¹⁹ An alternative translation for ‘fantasies’ could be ‘futile things’ which, for the author of these proverbs, perhaps means commercial activities. Many proverbs retained their association with the agricultural ideal of antiquity.

²⁰ For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, “A trustworthy person will be overwhelmed with blessings but no one who tries to get rich quickly will go unpunished.”

²¹ The meaning and connection of the 2nd line is not readily clear; it could be taken in one of two ways: first, a person can steal even a small piece of bread if hungry, so the court should show some compassion, or it should show no partiality even in such a pathetic case; second, a man could be bribed for a very small price (a small piece of bread being the figure representing this). The latter view harmonises best with the law.

וְעַל־פֶּת־לֶחֶם יַפְשַׁע־גֹּבֵר:
 כב גִּבֹּהֶל לַהֲזֹן אִישׁ רָע עֵין
 וְלֹא־יָדַע כִּי־חֶסֶד יִבְאֵנוּ:
 כג מוֹכִיחַ אָדָם אַחֲרֵי חֵן יִמְצָא
 מִמַּחֲלִיק לְשׁוֹן:
 כד גּוֹזֵל אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ
 וְאָמַר אֵין־פֶּשַׁע
 חֵבֶר הוּא לְאִישׁ מִשְׁחִית:
 כה רֶחֶב־נֶפֶשׁ יִגְרֶה מִדּוֹן
 וּבִטָּח עַל־יְהוָה יִדְשֵׁן:
 כו בּוֹטָח בְּלִבּוֹ הוּא כָסִיל
 וְהוֹלֵךְ בַּחֲכָמָה הוּא יִמָּלֵט:
 כז נֹתֵן לָרֶשׁ אֵין מַחְסוֹר
 וּמַעֲלִים עֵינָיו רַב־מְאֲרוֹת:
 כח בְּקוֹם רָשָׁעִים יִסְתָּר אָדָם
 וּבְאֲבָדָם יִרְבוּ צְדִיקִים:

but people will do wrong for a mouthful of bread.
 22 The miser chases after wealth,
 not knowing that want will be the result.
 23 Anyone who reproves another will enjoy more favour
 than the one who flatters with the tongue.
 24 Whoever robs father or mother saying,
 "No wrong in that,"
 is a comrade for a brigand.
 25 The covetous provoke disputes;
 whoever trusts in Yahweh will prosper.
 26 Whoever trusts in his own wit is a fool;
 anyone whose ways are wise will be safe.
 27 No one who gives to the poor will ever go short
 but whoever closes his eyes will have curses in plenty.
 28 When the wicked prevail, people take cover,
 but when they perish, the upright multiply.

22 In place of 'miser', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'person of greedy eye'.

23 The NJB places 'will enjoy more favour' in the 2nd line; here we (attempt to) follow the MT.

24 The NRSV has 'partner to a thug' in place of 'comrade for a brigand', here following the NJB.

25 The literal translation of 'covetous' is 'wide of soul'.

26 The literal translation of 'wit' is 'heart'.

27 The generous individual will be rewarded; he will not lack nor miss what he has given away. In the 2nd line, the text does not specify the nature or the source of the curses; the natural thought is that they would be given by the poor who are being mistreated and ignored. Far from being praised for their contributions to society, they will be reviled for their heartless indifference.

28 In place of 'prevail', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'are in the ascendant'.

משלי פרק כט

א אִישׁ תּוֹכָחוֹת מִקְּשָׁה-עֶרְף
פֶּתַע יִשָּׁבֵר וְאִין מִרְפָּא:
ב בְּרַבּוֹת צַדִּיקִים יִשְׂמַח הָעָם
וּבִמְשָׁל רָשָׁע יֵאָנָה עָם:
ג אִישׁ-אֱהָב חֲכָמָה יִשְׂמַח אָבִיו
וְרַעָה זֹנוֹת יִאֲבֹד-הוֹן:
ד מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט יַעֲמִיד אֶרֶץ
וְאִישׁ תְּרוֹמֹת יִהְרָסָנָה:
ה גִּבּוֹר מַחֲלִיק עַל-רֵעֵהוּ
רֶשֶׁת פּוֹרֵשׁ עַל-פְּעָמָיו:
ו בַּפֶּשַׁע אִישׁ רַע מוֹקֵשׁ
וְצַדִּיק יֵרוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה:
ז יָדַע צַדִּיק דִּין דָּלִים

PROVERBS 29

- 1 Whoever is stiff-necked under reproof
will be suddenly and irremediably broken.
- 2 When the upright become numerous, the people rejoice;
when the wicked rule, the people groan.
- 3 The lover of Wisdom makes his father glad,
but the patron of prostitutes fritters his wealth away.
- 4 A king gives the land stability by justice;
an extortionist brings it to ruin.
- 5 Whoever flatters his neighbour
spreads a net for his feet.
- 6 In the transgression of the wicked lies a snare,
but the upright exults and rejoices.
- 7 The upright understands the cause of the weak;

PROVERBS 29

- 1 The stubborn person refuses to listen; he will suddenly be destroyed when the calamity strikes (cf. 6:15, 13:18, 15:10).
- 2 In place of 'become numerous', here following NETB (the NJB has 'are on the increase'), the NRSV has 'are in authority'.
- 3 Wealth was seen as a sign of success and of God's blessings, pretty much as it always has been. To be seen as honourable in the community meant one should have acquired some substance and kept his reputation; it would be a disgrace to the family to have a son who squandered his money on prostitutes (cf. 5:10, 6:31).
- 4 The literal translation of 'an extortionist' (here following the NJB) is 'a man of offerings'; the NRSV has 'one who makes heavy exactions' and NETB has 'one who exacts tribute'.
- 5 The 2nd line refers to the neighbour's feet, not the flatterer's.
- 6 The NJB has 'sin' in place of 'transgression', here following the NRSV & NETB.
- 7 The literal translation of the 2nd line is 'the wicked does not understand knowledge'.

רָשָׁע לֹא־יָבִין דַּעַת:
 ח אֲנָשִׁי לְצוֹן יִפְּחוּ קָרִיָּה
 וְחֲכָמִים יִשִּׁיבוּ אָף:
 ט אִישׁ־חֶכֶם נִשְׁפָּט אֶת־אִישׁ אֱוִיל
 וְרָגַז וְשָׂחַק וְאֵין נַחַת:
 י אֲנָשִׁי דָמִים יִשְׁנְאוּ־תָם
 וְיִשְׁרִים יִבְקְשׁוּ נַפְשׁוֹ:
 יא כָּל־רוּחוֹ יוֹצִיא כָסִיל
 וְחֶכֶם בְּאַחֹר יִשְׁבַּחֲנָה:
 יב מֶשֶׁל מְקַשִּׁיב עַל־דְּבַר־שָׁקֶר
 כָּל־מִשְׁרָתוֹ רָשָׁעִים:
 יג רָשׁ וְאִישׁ תְּכַכִּים נִפְגָּשׁוּ
 מֵאִיר עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם יְהוָה:
 יד מֶלֶךְ שׁוֹפֵט בְּאֵמֶת דָּלִים

the wicked has not the wit to understand it.
 8 Scoffers set a city on ferment,
 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 honest
 but the upright seek them out.
 11 A fool gives full vent to anger,
 but the wise quietly holds it back.
 12 When a ruler listens to lies,
 all his ministers will be scoundrels.
 13 Poor and oppressor have this in common:
 Yahweh gives light to the eyes of both.
 14 The king who judges the poor in truth

8 In place of 'turn away wrath', here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB has 'moderate anger'.

9 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV (& NETB), the NJB reads, "If someone wise argues with a fool."

10 The NRSV interprets the 2nd line (here following the NJB) rather differently, reading, "and they seek the life of the upright."

11 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "The fool blurts out every angry feeling but the wise subdues and restrains them." The 2nd line is difficult: the MT has בְּאַחֹר יִשְׁבַּחֲנָה, which literally means 'steals it back'; the verb, שָׁבַח, means 'to soothe' or 'to still', as with a storm, or here with the tempers but, because אַחֹר does not fit very well with this verb, many commentators offer some suggested change.

12 The literal translation of 'lies' (here following NETB) is 'word of falsehood'; the NJB has 'false reports'.

13 In place of 'have this in common', here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB has 'are found together'.

14 The qualification of the enduring administration is its moral character: the king must judge 'in truth' (בְּאֵמֶת). Some have interpreted this to mean 'faithfully' but that is a little unclear; the idea is that the poor must be treated fairly and justly (truth is that which corresponds to the standard of the Law revealed by God). There must be no miscarriage of justice because they are poor.

כְּסֹאֵוֹ לְעַד יִכּוֹן:
טו שֶׁבֶט וְתוֹכַחַת יִתֵּן חֲכָמָה
וְנֶעַר מְשֻׁלָּח מְבִישׁ אִמּוֹ:
טז בְּרִבּוֹת רָשָׁעִים יִרְבֶּה פֶשַׁע
וְצַדִּיקִים בְּמַפְלֹתָם יֵרָאוּ:
יז יִסֵּר בֶּנְךָ וְיִנְיַחַךְ
וְיִתֵּן מַעֲדָנִים לְנַפְשְׁךָ:
יח בְּאֵין חָזוֹן יִפְרַע עַם
וְשֹׁמֵר תּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁרֵהוּ:
יט בְּדַבָּרִים לֹא־יוֹסֵר עֶבֶד
כ כִּי־יָבִין וְאֵין מַעֲנֶה:
חֲזִיתָ אִישׁ אֵץ בְּדַבְּרָיו
כ תקוּה לְכֶסֶל מִמֶּנּוּ:
כא מִפְּנֶק מְנַעַר עֲבָדוֹ

sees his throne set firm forever.
15 The rod and the reprimand bestow wisdom;
a child left unrestrained brings shame on his mother.
16 When the wicked increase, sin multiplies
but the upright will witness their downfall.
17 Correct your child and he will give you peace;
he will delight your soul.
18 Where there is no vision, the people get out of hand;
happy are they who keep the Law.
19 Not by words is a slave corrected;
even if he understands, he will take no notice.
20 Do you see someone hasty with words?
There is more hope from a fool!
21 If a slave is pampered from childhood,

-
- 15 The focus on the 'mother' is probably a rhetorical variation for the parent (17:21, 23:24–25) and not meant to assume that she will do the training and endure the shame for a case like this (cf. 13:24, 23:13).
16 In place of 'increase', here following the MT (and NJB), the NRSV has 'are in authority'.
17 The parallelism of this verse is synthetic: the 2nd line adds the idea of 'delight' to that of 'rest'; so, a disciplined child will both relieve anxiety and give enjoyment to the parents.
18 The 'vision' seems to be an allusion to the activities of the prophets. The word translated 'Law' (תּוֹרָה) can also mean 'teaching' (here, of the prophets); it is the same word used as the name of the Pentateuch in the Jewish canon.
19 Slaves could not be corrected by mere words: they had to be treated like children for they were frequently unresponsive; this, of course, would apply to certain kinds of slaves. The LXX translates the term as 'a stubborn servant'.
20 In place of 'hasty with words', here following NETB, the NJB has 'too ready of speech'.
21 The translation of the word 'ungrateful' is uncertain; the word occurs only here; the NRSV has 'will come to a bad end'.

וְאַחֲרֵיתוֹ יִהְיֶה מָנוֹן:
 כב אִישׁ־אֶף יַגְרֶה מָדוֹן
 וּבַעַל חֵמָה רַב־פֶּשַׁע:
 כג גָּאוֹת אָדָם תִּשְׁפִּילֵנוּ
 וְשַׁפְּל־רוּחַ יִתְמַךְ כְּבוֹד:
 כד חוֹלֵק עִם־גָּנֹב שׂוֹנֵא נַפְשׁוֹ
 אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁמַע וְלֹא יַגִּיד:
 כה חֲרַדַּת אָדָם יִתֵּן מוֹקֵשׁ
 וּבּוֹטָח בַּיהוָה יִשְׁגָּב:
 כו רַבִּים מִבִּקְשִׁים פְּנִי־מוֹשֵׁל
 וּמִיהוָה מִשְׁפָּט־אִישׁ:
 כז תּוֹעֲבַת צְדִיקִים אִישׁ עוֹל
 וְתּוֹעֲבַת רָשָׁע יִשְׂרָד־דָּרֶךְ:

he will prove ungrateful in the end.
 22 A hothead provokes disputes;
 someone in a rage commits all sorts of sins.
 23 A person's pride will bring him low;
 whoever has a lowly spirit will win honour.
 24 To be a partner of a thief is to hate one's own life;
 one hears the victim's curse but discloses nothing.
 25 The fear of people becomes a snare
 but whoever trusts in Yahweh is secure.
 26 Many people seek a ruler's favour,
 but the rights of each come from Yahweh.
 27 Abhorrent to the upright is the sinful;
 abhorrent to the wicked is one whose way is straight.

22 The literal translation of 'hothead' is 'man of anger'.

23 There is a wordplay here due to the repetition of the root, שָׁפַל: in the 1st line, the verb, תִּשְׁפִּילֵנוּ, is the Hiphil imperfect of the root, rendered 'will bring him low'; in the 2nd line, the word is used in the description of the 'lowly [of] spirit' (שַׁפְּל־רוּחַ). The contrast works well: the proud will be brought low but the one who is lowly will be honoured.

24 The NJB transposes the first and second lines. The 'curse' is that pronounced on the unidentified criminal or on witnesses who refuse to come forward (cf. Lv 5:1, Jg 17:2).

25 For the 1st line, here following NETB, the NJB reads, "To be afraid of human beings is a snare."

26 The literal translation of 'favour' is 'face'. This proverb notes how many people assume that true justice depends on the disposition of some earthly ruler.

27 This proverb makes a simple observation on life: The righteous detest the wicked and the wicked detest the lifestyle of the righteous; each is troublesome to the beliefs and the activities of the other.

משלי פרק ל

PROVERBS 30

- א דְּבָרֵי | אֲגוּר בֶּן-יָקֵה הַמָּשָׂא נֶאֱמַר הַגִּבֹּר לְאִיתִיאל
לְאִיתִיאל וְאֶכֶל:
ב כִּי בֶעַר אָנֹכִי מֵאִישׁ
וְלֹא-בִינַת אָדָם לִי:
ג וְלֹא-לִמְדַתִּי חֲכָמָה
וְדַעַת קְדוֹשִׁים אֲדַע:
ד מִי עָלָה-שָׁמַיִם | וַיֵּרֵד
מִי אָסַף-רוּחַ | בְּחַפְזוֹ
מִי צָרַר-מַיִם | בַּשְּׁמָלָה
מִי הִקִּים כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אָרֶץ
מִה-שְׁמוֹ וּמִה-שְׁם-בָנוֹ
כִּי תִדַּע:
ה כָּל-אִמְרַת אֱלֹהִים צְרוּפָה
- 1 The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh, of Massa. Prophecy of this man for Ithiel, for Ithiel and for Ucal.
2 I am myself the most brutish of people, bereft of human intelligence.
3 I have not learnt wisdom and I lack the knowledge of the Holy Ones.
4 Who has mounted to the heavens, then come down again? Who has gathered the wind in the clasp of his hand? Who has wrapped the waters in his cloak? Who has set all the ends of the earth firm? What is his name? What is his child's name? Do you know?
5 Every word of God is unalloyed,

PROVERBS 30

- 1 Vv. 1-14 comprise the 'Sayings of Agur'; in the LXX, these appear between 24:22 and 24:23, and 30:15-31:9 follow 24:34. 'Of Massa' is a conjectural translation (הַמָּשָׂא); the MT has 'the prophecy' (הַנְּבִיאָה); on Massa, see #31:1. The 2nd sentence (here following the NJB) is a doubtful translation of a probably corrupt text. Others (including the NRSV), by emending the vowels, read 'I am weary, O God, I am weary and exhausted'. The versions show the same indecision: the Vg has 'Vision told by the man with whom God is and who, God being with him, has been consoled' and the LXX has 'This is what the man says to those who trust in God and I cease'.
- 2 This verse is using hyperbole: the author feels as if he has no intelligence at all, that he is more brutish than any other human; of course, this is not true, or he would not be able to speculate on the God of the universe at all.
- 3 The 'Holy Ones' could either mean the sages or, with the plural of majesty, God.
- 4 The questions suggest that this verse is a riddle, to which the answer would be 'God'.
- 5 This proverb compares the perfection of every word from God with some precious metal that has been refined and purified (cf. Ps 12:6).

מָגֵן הוּא לַחֲסִים בּוֹ:
ו אֶל־תּוֹסֵף עַל־דְּבָרָיו
פֶּן־יֹכִיחַ בְּךָ וְנִכְזַבְתָּ:
ז שְׁתֵּים שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאַתָּה
ח אֶל־תִּמְנַע מִמֶּנִּי בְטֶרֶם אָמוּת:
שׁוּא | וְדַבֵּר־כָּזָב הִרְחַק מִמֶּנִּי
רֹאשׁ וְעֵשֶׂר אֶל־תִּתֶּן־לִי
הִטְרִיפֵנִי לֶחֶם חֶקִּי:
ט פֶּן אֶשְׁבַּע | וְכַחֲשֵׁתִי
וְאִמַּרְתִּי מִי יְהוָה
וּפֶן־אֹרֶשׁ וְגִנַּבְתִּי
וְתִפְשֵׁתִי שֵׁם אֱלֹהִי:
י אֶל־תִּלְשֵׁן עֶבֶד אֶל־אֲדֹנָי
פֶּן־יִקְלַלְךָ וְאַשְׁמַתָּ:
יא דֹּר אָבִיו יִקְלַל
וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ לֹא יְבָרֶךְ:

a shield to those who take refuge in him.
6 Do not add to his words,
lest he reprove you and account you a liar.
7 Two things I beg of you;
do not grudge me them before I die.
8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
grant me only my share of food,
9 for fear that, surrounded by plenty, I should fall away
and say, "Who is Yahweh?"
or else, in destitution, take to stealing
and profane the name of my God.
10 Do not slander a slave to his master,
lest he curse you, and you suffer for it.
11 There is a generation that curses his father
and does not bless his mother.

6 For the 1st line, here following the NRSV & NETB, the NJB reads, "To his words, make no addition."

7 Wisdom literature often groups things in twos and fours, or in other numerical arrangements (e.g., Am 1:3–2:6, Job 5:19, Pr 6:16–19).

8 The word, חֶק ('share'), literally means 'statute'; it is also used of a definite assignment in labour (Ex 5:14, Pr 31:15), or of a set portion of food (Gn 47:22). Here, it refers to food that is the proper proportion for him.

9 The NJB adds (repeats) the Divine Name at the beginning of the quoted question; here, we follow the MT.

10 In place of 'slander a slave', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'blacken a slave's name'.

11 The next 4 verses all start with the expression translated 'there is a generation'; this is a series of denunciations of things that are dangerous in society without mentioning punishments or proscriptions.

יב דֹּר טָהוֹר בְּעֵינָיו
 וּמִצְאָתוֹ לֹא רָחַץ:
 יג דֹּר מִה־רָמוֹ עֵינָיו
 וְעַפְעָפִיו יִנְשָׂאוּ:
 יד דֹּר | חֲרָבוֹת שְׁנָיו
 וּמִאֲכָלוֹת מִתְּלַעְתֵּיו
 לֶאֱכֹל עֲנִיִּים מֵאֶרֶץ
 וְאֲבִיוֹנִים מֵאָדָם:
 טו לַעֲלוּקָה | שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת הֵב | הֵב
 שְׁלוֹשׁ הֵנָּה לֹא תִשְׂבַּעֲנָה
 אַרְבַּע לֹא־אָמְרוּ הֵן:
 טז שְׂאוֹל וְעֶצֶר רַחֵם
 אֶרֶץ לֹא־שִׁבְעָה מַיִם
 וְאֵשׁ לֹא־אָמְרָה הֵן:
 יז עֵין | תִּלְעַג לְאָב
 וְתִבֹּז לִיקָה־תֶּאֱם

- 12 There is a generation that, laying claim to purity,
 has not yet been cleansed of its filth.
 13 There is a generation haughty of eye,
 with disdain in every glance.
 14 There is a generation with swords for its teeth
 and knives for its jaws,
 devouring the oppressed from the earth
 and the needy from the land.
 15 The leech has two daughters: "Give! Give!"
 There are three insatiable things,
 four, indeed that never say, "Enough!"
 16 Sheol, the barren womb,
 earth that can never have its fill of water,
 fire, which never says, "Enough!"
 17 The eye that mocks a father
 and scorns to obey a mother

12 The word 'generation' in this passage means a class or group of people.

13 The NJB has 'breed' in place of 'generation', as also in vv. 11, 12 & 14.

14 It is not clear whether this description should be applied to a specific category, nation, or social class.

15 Vv. 15–33 are 'Numerical Proverbs'; each of these has in it an element of maxim, of riddle, or of comparison. This literary device is already found earlier in an undeveloped form in Hebrew prophetic literature, Is 17:6, Am 1:3,6,9,11,13. Mi 5:4, cf. Ps 62:11ff, and recurs throughout the Wisdom books, Ps 6:16ff, Pr 30:15–33, Job 5:19, 40:5, Qo 4:12, 11:2, Si 23:16ff, 25:7, 26:5–7,28, 50:25, cf. 25:1–2. Note that the ה in the first הֵב is presented as a small letter, just as it appears in almost all *Hebrew MSS*.

16 The meaning of the Hebrew text of this verse is uncertain.

17 For the first two lines, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "The eye that looks jeeringly on a father and scorns the obedience due to a mother."

יִקְרוּהָ עֲרֵבֵי-נַחַל
 וַיֹּאכְלוּהָ בְנֵי-נֶשֶׁר:
 יח שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה נִפְלְאוּ מִמֶּנִּי
 וָאַרְבַּע וְאֶרְבַּעָה לֹא יָדַעְתִּים:
 יט דֶּרֶךְ הַנֶּשֶׁר | בַּשָּׁמַיִם
 דֶּרֶךְ נָחָשׁ עַל-צֹר
 דֶּרֶךְ-אֲנִיָּה בַלְבָּיִם
 וְדֶרֶךְ גִּבּוֹר בַּעֲלָמָה:
 כ כֵּן | דֶּרֶךְ אִשָּׁה מְנַאֲפֶת
 אֹכֶלָה וּמַחֲתָה פִּיהָ
 וְאָמְרָה לֹא-פָעַלְתִּי אָוֶן:
 כא תַּחַת שְׁלוֹשׁ רָגְזָה אֶרֶץ
 וְתַחַת אַרְבַּע לֹא-תוּכֵל שָׂאת:
 כב תַּחַת-עֶבֶד כִּי יִמְלֹךְ
 וְנָבֵל כִּי יִשְׁבַּע-לֶחֶם:
 כג תַּחַת שְׂנוּאָה כִּי תִבְעַל

will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley
 and eaten by the vultures.

- 18 There are three things too wonderful for me,
 four, indeed that I do not understand:
 19 the way of an eagle through the skies,
 the way of a snake over the rock,
 the way of a ship in mid-ocean,
 the way of a man with a girl.
 20 This is how an adulteress behaves:
 she eats, then wipes her mouth and says,
 "I have done nothing wrong!"
 21 Under three things the earth trembles;
 under four it cannot bear up:
 22 a slave become king,
 a brute gorged with food,
 23 a hated woman wed at last,

18 The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation.

19 The last line does not refer to the manoeuvres to win her, but the mystery of marriage and procreation.

20 This verse seems to be an inappropriate gloss on the two foregoing verses.

21 For this verse, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "There are three things at which the earth trembles, four, indeed, which it cannot endure."

22 A servant coming to power could become a tyrant if he is unaccustomed to the use of such power, or he might retain the attitude of a servant and be useless as a leader.

23 The text does not say why the woman is 'hated' (the NJB has 'hateful'); some have speculated that she might be odious or unattractive but perhaps she is married to someone incapable of showing love (e.g., Gn 29:31–33, Dt 21:15, Isa 60:5); or perhaps the strange situation of Jacob was in the mind of the sage, for Leah was 'hated'.

וְשִׁפְחָה כִּי־תִרְשׁ גִּבְרָתָהּ:
 כד אַרְבַּעַה הֵם קְטַנֵּי־אָרֶץ
 וְהֵמָּה חֲכָמִים מְחַכְמִים:
 כה הַנְּמָלִים עִם לֹא־עֹז
 וַיִּכְנֹנוּ בְקִיץ לַחֲמָם:
 כו שְׁפָנִים עִם לֹא־עֲצוּם
 וַיַּשִּׁימוּ בַסֶּלַע בֵּיתָם:
 כז מַלְךְ אֵין לְאַרְבֶּה
 וַיֵּצֵא חֲצֹץ כָּלֹז:
 כח שְׂמָמִית בִּידָיִם תִּתְפֹּשׂ
 וְהִיא בְּהִיכְלֵי מַלְךְ:
 כט שְׁלֹשָׁה הֵמָּה מִיטִיבֵי צֶעֶד
 וְאַרְבַּעַה מִיטְבֵי לָכֶת:
 ל לִישׁ גִּבּוֹר בְּבִהְמָה
 וְלֹא־יָשׁוּב מִפְּנֵי־כָל:

a servant girl inheriting from her mistress.
 24 There are four creatures little on the earth,
 though they are exceedingly wise:
 25 ants, a race with no strength,
 yet in the summer they make sure of their food;
 26 the coneys, a race without defences,
 yet they make their home in the rocks;
 27 locusts, which have no king,
 yet they all march in rank;
 28 lizards, which you can catch in your hand,
 yet they frequent the palaces of kings.
 29 There are three things of stately tread,
 four, indeed, of stately walk:
 30 the lion, mightiest of beasts,
 he will draw back from nothing;

²⁴ In place of 'exceedingly wise', here following the MT (the construction uses the Pual participle with the plural adjective as an intensive) & NRSV, the NJB, following the LXX & Peshitta, has 'wisest of the wise'.

²⁵ The wisdom of the ants is found in their diligent preparation of food supplies in the summer for times when food is scarce.

²⁶ The 'coneys' (the NRSV has 'badgers') here refers to small mammals, like the marmot, which live in rocks and makes themselves very inaccessible (see Lv 11:5, Ps 104:18).

²⁷ The literal translation of 'in rank' is 'divided'.

²⁸ An alternative reading for 'lizards' is 'spiders'.

²⁹ In place of 'stately', here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'magnificent'.

³⁰ The NJB has 'bravest' in place of 'mightiest', here following the NRSV & NETB.

לֹא זֶרְזִיר מִתְנַיִם אוֹתִישׁ
 וּמֶלֶךְ אֶלְקוֹם עִמּוֹ:
 לֵב אֶסְנַבֵּלֶת בְּהִתְנַשֵּׂא
 וְאֶסְזַמּוֹת יָד לִפֶּה:
 לֵג כִּי מִיץ חֶלֶב יוֹצִיא חֲמָאָה
 וּמִיץ־אֶף יוֹצִיא דָם
 וּמִיץ אֶפִּים יוֹצִיא רִיב:

³¹ a vigorous cock, a he-goat,
 and the king when he harangues his people.

³² If you have been foolish, exalting yourself,
 and have second thoughts, lay your hand on your lips.

³³ For, by churning milk, you produce butter;
 by wringing the nose, you produce blood,
 and by whipping up anger, you produce strife.

³¹ The last line follows the LXX; the MT reads, “and a king (having) his army with him.” The beginning of the verse is equally uncertain; instead of ‘cock’ (following the Arabic, and the LXX, Peshitta and Tg), other suggestions are ‘cricket’ (from Accadian) or even ‘horse’, ‘zebra’ or ‘greyhound’.

³² In place of ‘exalting yourself’, here following the NRSV, the NJB has ‘enough to fly into a passion’.

³³ There is a subtle wordplay here with the word for ‘anger’: it is related to the word for ‘nose’ in the preceding line.

משלי פרק לא

PROVERBS 31

א דְּבָרֵי לְמוֹאֵל מֶלֶךְ מַשָּׂא אֲשֶׁר־יִסְרְתּוּ אָמוֹ:

ב מִה־בְּרִי וּמִה־בֶּרֶךְ בִּטְנִי

וּמִה־בֶּרֶךְ נִדְרֵי:

ג אֶל־תִּתֵּן לְנָשִׁים חֵילֶךְ

וְדַרְכֶיךָ לְמַחֲוֹת מְלָכִין:

ד אֶל לְמַלְכִּים לְמוֹאֵל

אֶל לְמַלְכִּים שְׁתוּיִין

וְלְרוֹזְנִים אוֹ אֵי שֹׁכֵר:

ה פֶּן־יִשְׁתָּה וְיִשְׁכַּח מִחֻקֶּךָ

וְיִשְׁנֶה דִין כָּל־בְּנֵי־עָנִי:

ו תִּנוּ־שֹׁכֵר לְאֹבֵד

וְיִין לְמָרִי נַפֶּשׁ:

1 The sayings of Lemuel king of Massa, taught him by his mother:

2 What, my son! What, son of my womb!

What, son of my vows!

3 Do not expend your energy on women,
nor your wealth on those who ruin kings.

4 Not for kings, O Lemuel,
not for kings the drinking of wine,
not for princes the love of liquor,

5 or they will drink and forget what has been decreed,
and will pervert the rights of all the poor.

6 Procure strong drink for someone about to die,
wine for him whose heart is heavy.

PROVERBS 31

¹ 'King of Massa' (#30:1) comes from linking the Hebrew words for 'king' and 'prophecy'. Massa is the name of an Ishmaelite tribe from northern Arabia (Gn 25:14). The wisdom of the 'Sons of the East' (see #Nb 24:21) was renowned (see 1K 5:10, #Job 2:11, Jr 49:7).

² In all three occurrences in this verse, the word 'son' has the Aramaic spelling, בֶּר, rather than the Hebrew, בֶּן; the repetition of the word shows the seriousness of the warning; and the expressions, 'son of my womb' and 'son of my vows', are endearing epithets to show the great investment she has made in his religious place in God's program.

³ 'Those who ruin' is conjectural (מַחֲוֹת); the MT has 'to ruin' in place of 'your wealth'; a slight correction would allow reading 'your loins' and the NRSV has 'your ways'.

⁴ Insistence on the dangers of wine is a characteristic of 'desert' morality (cf. the Rechabites, Jr 35, and the modern Arabs). The Kethib/Qere difference here may be a case of simple *vav/yod* confusion.

⁵ For the 1st line, here following the NRSV, the NJB has, "for fear that, in liquor, they forget what they have decreed."

⁶ Wine and beer should be given to those distressed and dying in order to ease their suffering and help them forget.

ז	יִשְׁתֶּה ויִשְׁכַּח רִישׁוֹ וְעִמְלֹ לֹא יִזְכֹּר-עוֹד:	7	Let him drink and forget his misfortune, and remember his misery no more.
ח	פֶּתַח-פִּיךָ לְאֵלִים אֶל-דִּין כָּל-בְּנֵי חַלּוּף:	8	Make your views heard, on behalf of the dumb, on behalf of all the unwanted.
ט	פֶּתַח-פִּיךָ שְׁפֹט-צֶדֶק וְדִין עָנִי וְאֲבִיּוֹן:	9	Make your views heard, pronounce an upright verdict, defend the cause of the poor and wretched.
ALEF			
י	אִשֶּׁת-חַיִּל מִי יִמָּצָא וְרַחֵק מִפְּנֵינִים מְכָרָה:	10	The truly capable woman – who can find her? She is far beyond the price of pearls.
BET			
יא	בֶּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ וְשִׁלָּל לֹא יִחְסֹר:	11	Her husband's heart has confidence in her; from her, he will derive no little profit.
GIMEL			
יב	גָּמְלָתָהּ טוֹב וְלֹא-רָע כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ:	12	She brings him good and not evil, all the days of her life.

⁷ It is not the king who should 'drink and forget' but those who are suffering.

⁸ 'Unwanted' (the NRSV has 'destitute') translates literally as 'all the children of passing away'.

⁹ In the 2nd line, דִּין could be translated 'judge' but that often has a connotation of condemn; here, advocacy is in view, so 'defend' is better.

¹⁰ Vv. 10–31, is an acrostic poem (cf. Ps 9–10, 25, 34, 37, 111–112, 119, 145, Lm 1–4, Si 51:13–29, Na 1:2–8): each verse (in other examples, each strophe) begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. On the interpretation of this poem, see the footnotes to v. 30 and 5:15. Cf. 11:16, 12:4, 18:22, 19:14 and Si 7:19. 'Truly capable', translated literally (as in the LXX) would be 'strong', implying both efficiency and virtue: in a word, the perfect mistress of the house.

¹¹ The word used here for 'profit' (שִׁלָּל) is unusual; it means 'plunder' or 'spoil of war', primarily.

¹² For the 1st line, here following NETB, the NJB has, "Advantage, and not hurt, she brings him." The joining of the two words, 'good' and 'evil', is frequent in the Bible; they contrast the prosperity and well-being of her contribution with what would be devastating and painful. The way of wisdom is always characterised by 'good'; the way of folly is associated with 'evil'.

יג	דְּרֹשָׁה צֹמֶר וּפְשָׁתִים וְתַעַשׂ בַּחֶפֶץ כַּפִּיהַ:	DALET	13 She selects wool and flax; she does her work with eager hands.
יד	הִיְתָה כְּאֵנוֹת סוֹחֵר מִמֶּרְחָק תָּבִיא לַחֲמָה:	HE	14 She is like those merchant vessels, bringing her food from far away.
טו	וְתִקֶּם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וְתִתֵּן טָרֵף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֹק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ:	VAV	15 She gets up while it is still dark, giving her household their food, giving orders to her serving girls.
טז	וְזָמְמָה שָׂדֶה וְתִקְחָהּ מִפְּרֵי כַּפִּיהַ נָטַע נִטְעָה כָּרֶם:	ZAYIN	16 She considers a field and buys it. With the fruit of her hands, she plants a vineyard.
יז	חֲגָרָה בַּעֲזוֹ מִתְּנִיָּה וְתַאֲמֵץ זְרוּעֶתֶיהָ:	HET	17 She puts her back into her work and makes her arms strong.
יח	טַעֲמָה כִּי־טוֹב סַחְרָהּ לֹא־יִכְבֶּה בַּלַּיִל בְּלִילָה נֶרָה:	TET	18 She knows that her affairs are going well; her lamp does not go out at night.

¹³ The literal translation of 'she selects' (דְּרֹשָׁה) is 'she seeks'.

¹⁴ The point of the simile is that she goes wherever she needs to go, near and far, to gather in all the food for the needs and the likes of the family.

¹⁵ The 3rd line is probably a gloss: it interrupts the rhythm.

¹⁶ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation.

¹⁷ The expression that she 'makes her arms strong' parallels the 1st line and indicates that she gets down to her work with vigour and strength. There may be some indication here of 'rolling up the sleeves' to ready the arms for the task but that is not very clear.

¹⁸ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation.

יט יְדִיהָ שְׁלַחַה בַּפִּישׁוֹר
וְכַפֶּיהָ תִּמְכּוּ פֶלֶךְ:

כ כַּפָּה פִּרְשָׁה לַעֲנִי
וְיְדִיהָ שְׁלַחַה לְאַבְיוֹן:

כא לֹא־תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשֶּׁלֶג
כִּי כָל־בֵּיתָהּ לִבְשׁ שָׁנִים:

כב מִרְבָּדִים עָשְׂתָה־לָּהּ
שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁה:

כג נֹדַע בְּשַׁעְרִים בַּעֲלָהּ
בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עַם־זִקְנֵי־אֶרֶץ:

YOD

19 She sets her hands to the distaff;
her fingers grasp the spindle.

KAF

20 She holds out her hands to the poor;
she opens her arms to the needy.

LAMED

21 Snow may come; she has no fears for her household,
for all her household are clothed in crimson.

MEM

22 She makes her own coverings;
she is dressed in fine linen and purple.

NUN

23 Her husband is respected at the city gates,
taking his seat among the elders of the land.

-
- ¹⁹ The words for 'hands' and 'fingers' are often paired in poetry; the first (יָד) means the hand and the forearm and usually indicates strength; the second (כַּף) literally means the palm of the hand and usually indicates the more intricate activity.
- ²⁰ This verse uses the two words discussed in #19 but in the other order; the parallel expressions are used here to emphasise her diligence in caring for the needy.
- ²¹ For the 2nd line, here following the NRSV, the NJB reads, "with all her servants warmly clothed." In place of 'crimson', here following the MT, the LXX and the Vg have 'two' or 'double'; the difference is essentially the vocalization of a plural as opposed to a dual.
- ²² The word rendered 'coverings' (following the NRSV; the NJB has 'quilts' and NETB has 'coverlets') appears also in 7:16, where it has the idea of 'covered'. Some suggests 'pillows' or 'mattresses' here and the LXX has 'lined overcoats' or 'garments' but brings over the last word of the previous verse to form this line and parallel the second half, which has clothing in view. Purple garments indicated wealth and high rank (Sg 3:5); the rich man in Lk 16:19 was also clothed in fine linen and purple – the difference is that the wise woman is charitable but he is not.
- ²³ The 'city gates' was where the assembly of the elders, who had judicial responsibilities, took place.

כד סִדֵּין עֲשֶׂתָּהּ וּתְמַכֵּר
 וְחֲגֹזֵר נָתַנָּה לְכַנְעָנִי:

כה עֲזֹהֶדֶר לְבוּשָׁהּ
 וְתִשְׁחַק לַיּוֹם אַחֲרוֹן:

כו פִּיהָ פֶּתַחַּהּ בְּחִכְמָהּ
 וְתוֹרַת חֶסֶד עַל־לְשׁוֹנָהּ:

כז צוּפִיָּהּ הִלְכוֹת הַלִּיכוֹת בֵּיתָהּ
 וְלֶחֶם עֲצָלוֹת לֹא תֹאכֵל:

כח קָמוּ בָנֶיהָ וַיֵּאשְׁרוּהָ
 בְּעֵלָהּ וַיְהַלְלֶהָ:

כט רַבּוֹת בָּנוּת עָשׂוּ חֵיל
 וְאַתְּ עֹלִית עַל־כָּלֵנָה:

SAMEKH

24 She weaves materials and sells them;
 she supplies the merchant with sashes.

AYIN

25 She is clothed in strength and dignity;
 she can laugh at the day to come.

PE

26 When she opens her mouth, she does so wisely;
 on her tongue is kindly instruction.

TSADI

27 She keeps good watch on the conduct of her household;
 no bread of idleness for her.

QOF

28 Her children stand up and pronounce her blessed;
 her husband, too, sings her praises:

RESH

29 "Many women have done admirable things,
 but you surpass them all!"

²⁴ The poet did not think it strange or unworthy for a woman of this stature to be a business woman engaged in an honest trade.

²⁵ The meaning of the 2nd line is that she looks confidently to the future, whether to the bright fortunes of her family or to the reward God will one day give her for her diligence.

²⁶ The words 'mouth' and 'tongue' here are also metonymies of cause, referring to her speaking.

²⁷ The *Kethib*/*Qere* difference here warrants explanation. The expression of the 2nd line refers to food that is gained through idleness, perhaps given or provided for her.

²⁸ The 2nd line uses an independent nominative absolute to draw attention to her husband; her husband speaks in glowing terms of his wife.

²⁹ An alternative reading for 'women' in the 1st line is 'daughters'.

ל שֶׁקֶר הַחַן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי
אִשָּׁה יִרְאַת־יְהוָה הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל:

לא תִּנּוּ-לָהּ מִפְּרֵי יָדֶיהָ
וְיִהְלֶלֶהּ בַּשְּׁעָרִים מַעֲשֶׂיהָ:

{ש}

SHIN

³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who fears Yahweh is the one to praise.

TAV

³¹ Give her a share in what her hands have worked for,
and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

³⁰ This eulogy of the perfect wife may have been understood as an allegorical description of personified Wisdom (see #8:22) as an amplification of the LXX seems to suggest: “A wise woman will be praised – the fear of Yahweh, this is what must be extolled.” This would explain why this poem, a very fine one in any case, finds its place as the conclusion to this book.

³¹ Psalm 111 begins with the imperative, הַלְלוּ יְהוָה, (‘praise the LORD’) and this poem ends with the jussive, וְיִהְלֶלֶהּ (‘and let her works ... praises’); Psalm 111:2 speaks of God’s works, and this verse of the woman’s (or Wisdom’s) works that deserve praise.