EDIFIED EDITION

Proverbs

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

31	915	Old	20
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

Contents

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17
Chapter 18
Chapter 19
Chapter 20
Chapter 21
Chapter 22
Chapter 23
Chapter 24
Chapter 25
Chapter 26
Chapter 27
Chapter 28
Chapter 29
Chapter 30
Chapter 31

Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

© 2026 Edified Edition. Made 8 November 2026.

Chapter 1

> *Proverbs 1 opens the book. These are the proverbs of Solomon, written so that the simple may gain wisdom and the wise may grow wiser, for knowledge begins with the fear of the LORD. A father warns his son not to join sinners who lie in wait to rob and kill, for they ambush their own lives. Then Wisdom cries out in the streets: the simple, the mockers and the fools have refused her call, so she will laugh when disaster comes on them. Whoever listens to her will live in safety.*

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

2 for gaining wisdom and discipline, for grasping
words of insight,
3 for receiving the discipline of good sense, doing
what is right and just and fair;
4 giving the simple shrewdness, and the young
knowledge and discretion.
5 Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and
let the discerning gain guidance,
6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words
of the wise and their riddles.
7 Knowledge starts with the fear of the LORD;
fools despise wisdom and discipline.
8 Listen, my son, to your father's discipline, and do
not abandon your mother's teaching.
9 For they will be a graceful garland on your head
and a chain around your neck.
10 My son, if sinners try to entice you, do not give
in.
11 If they say, "Come with us; let us lie in wait for
blood, let us ambush the innocent for no reason;
12 let us swallow them alive like Sheol, whole, like
those who go down to the pit;[2]
13 we will find all kinds of precious wealth and fill
our houses with plunder;
14 throw in your lot with us; we will all share one
purse,"
15 my son, do not go along with them; keep your
feet from their path.
16 Their feet race towards evil; they are quick to
spill blood.[3]
17 How useless it is to spread a net in full view of
any bird!
18 But these men lie in wait for their own blood;
they ambush their own lives.
19 Such are the ways of all who are greedy for
gain; it takes away the life of those who own it.
20 Wisdom cries aloud in the street; she raises her
voice in the squares.[4]
21 At the head of the noisy streets she calls out; at
the entrances of the city gates she makes her
speech:
22 "Simple ones, how long will you cling to your
simplicity? How long will mockers enjoy their
scorn and fools loathe knowledge?
23 Turn back at my rebuke; see, I will pour out my
spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.
24 Since I called and you would not come, since I
held out my hand and nobody took notice,
25 because you ignored all my advice and would
have none of my rebuke,
26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock
when terror strikes you,
27 when terror strikes you like a storm and disaster
sweeps in like a whirlwind, when distress and
anguish come upon you.
28 Then they will call to me, but I will not answer;
they will search for me but will not find me.
29 Since they loathed knowledge and would not
choose to fear the LORD,
30 they would not accept my advice and spurned all
my rebuke,
31 they will eat what their own way has produced
and have their fill of their own plans.
32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill
them, and the complacency of fools will destroy
them.
33 But whoever listens to me will live in safety and
be at ease, without fear of harm."

1 Chapters 1–9 are an introduction, mostly a father's teaching to his son, with speeches by Wisdom herself. The short sayings begin at 10:1.

2 Sheol is the realm of the dead.

3 Compare Isaiah 59:7, quoted in Romans 3:15.

4 Here and in chapters 8–9 wisdom is pictured as a woman who calls out to all who pass.

Chapter 2

> *Proverbs 2 promises that if the son seeks wisdom like silver and hidden treasure, he will understand the fear of the LORD, for the LORD gives wisdom and guards the way of His faithful ones. Wisdom will protect him from men whose ways are crooked, and from the forbidden woman who has forgotten the covenant of her God, whose house sinks down to death. The upright will live in the land, but the wicked will be cut off from it.*

1 My son, if you take my words to heart and
treasure my commands within you,

2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your
heart to understanding,
3 if you call out for insight and raise your voice for
understanding,
4 if you look for it as for silver and search for it as
for hidden treasure,
5 then the fear of the LORD will become clear to
you, and you will find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth
come knowledge and understanding.
7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is
a shield to those whose walk is blameless,[1]
8 guarding the paths of justice and protecting the
way of His faithful ones.
9 Then you will understand what is right and just
and fair, every good path.
10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and
knowledge will delight your soul.
11 Discretion will watch over you; understanding
will guard you,
12 rescuing you from the way of evil, from those
whose speech is twisted,
13 who abandon the level paths to walk in dark
ways,
14 who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the
perversity of evil,
15 whose paths are crooked and whose ways are
devious.
16 It will save you from the forbidden woman, from
the foreign woman with her smooth words,[2]
17 who has left the companion of her youth and
forgotten the covenant of her God.
18 For her house sinks down to death, and her
paths to the spirits of the dead.
19 None who go to her come back or reach the
paths of life.
20 So you will walk in the way of good people and
keep to the paths of the righteous.
21 For the upright will live in the land, and the
blameless will remain in it;
22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and
the treacherous will be uprooted from it.

1 So the spoken Hebrew; the written text has ‘He has stored up’.
2 Hebrew ‘the strange woman’, that is, a woman who belongs to another man; ‘foreign’ has the same sense. So also in chapters 5–7.

Chapter 3

Proverbs 3 urges the son to keep his father’s teaching, to bind loyal kindness and truth around his neck, and to trust the LORD with his whole heart instead of his own understanding. He is to honour the LORD with his wealth and not despise His discipline, for the LORD disciplines those He loves. Wisdom is worth more than silver, gold or rubies; she is a tree of life, and by her the LORD founded the earth. The son is to do good to his neighbour and not envy the violent, for the LORD curses the house of the wicked but gives grace to the humble.

1 My son, keep my teaching in mind, and let your
heart hold on to my commandments,
2 for they will add length of days, years of life and
peace to you.
3 Do not let loyal kindness and truth leave you; tie
them around your neck; write them on the tablet
of your heart.
4 Then you will find favour and good repute in the
sight of God and people.
5 Rely on the LORD with your whole heart, and do
not lean on what you yourself understand.
6 Acknowledge Him in every path you take, and He
will level your paths.
7 Do not count yourself wise; fear the LORD and
turn your back on evil.
8 It will bring healing to your body and
refreshment to your bones.[1]
9 Honour the LORD with your wealth and with the
firstfruits of all your produce;
10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and
your vats will burst with new wine.
11 My son, do not make light of the LORD’s
discipline, nor lose heart when you are rebuked by
Him.[2]
12 For the LORD disciplines the one He loves, as a
father the son in whom he delights.

13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding,

14 for what she earns you outweighs silver, and what she yields is worth more than gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.

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

17 Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.

18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast are blessed.

19 The LORD laid the earth's foundations by wisdom and set the heavens in place by understanding.

20 By His knowledge the depths burst open, and the clouds drop down dew.

21 My son, do not let them out of your sight; keep sound wisdom and discretion,

22 and they will be life for your soul and grace around your neck.

23 Then you will walk your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble.

24 You will lie down without fear; you will lie down and sleep sweetly.

25 Do not fear sudden terror, or the ruin of the wicked when it comes,

26 for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from the snare.

27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

28 Do not say to your neighbour, "Go, and come back; I will give it tomorrow," when you have it with you.

29 Do not plot harm against your neighbour, who lives trustingly beside you.

30 Do not quarrel with anyone without cause, when he has done you no harm.

31 Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways,

32 for the devious are detestable to the LORD, but He takes the upright into His confidence.

33 The LORD's curse is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the righteous.

34 He mocks the mockers, but gives grace to the humble.[3]

35 The wise will inherit honour, but fools gain only disgrace.

1 Hebrew 'your navel'.

2 Verses 11–12 are quoted in Hebrews 12:5–6, which follows the Greek in verse 12: 'and punishes every son whom He receives'.

3 James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 quote this verse from the Greek: 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'.

Chapter 4

Proverbs 4 passes on a father's teaching from one generation to the next. The speaker recalls how his own father told him to get wisdom above all else, for she will guard and honour him. He urges his son not to set foot on the path of the wicked, who cannot sleep until they have done harm, for the path of the righteous grows brighter like the dawn. The son is to guard his heart above all, for life flows from it, and to keep his eyes and feet on a straight path.

1 Listen, my sons, to a father's discipline; pay attention, so that you may gain understanding.

2 For I give you good instruction; do not abandon my teaching.

3 When I was a son to my father, tender, the only one in my mother's sight,

4 he taught me, saying, "Hold my words fast in your heart; obey my commands, and you will live.

5 Get wisdom; get understanding; do not forget or turn away from the words of my mouth.

6 Do not abandon her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

7 The beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom, and with all you have, get understanding.

8 Prize her, and she will lift you up; embrace her, and she will honour you.

9 She will set a graceful garland on your head and give you a crown of splendour."

10 Listen, my son, and accept my words, and the years of your life will be many.

11 I have shown you the way of wisdom and guided
you along upright tracks.
12 When you walk, your steps will not be
hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.
13 Hold on to discipline; do not let it go; guard it,
for it is your life.
14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk
in the way of evildoers.
15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and
pass on.
16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done
evil; they are robbed of sleep unless they make
someone fall.
17 The food they eat is wickedness, and the wine
they drink is violence.
18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of
dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full
day.
19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what makes them stumble.
20 My son, listen closely to what I say; bend your
ear to my words.
21 Do not let them out of your sight; keep them
within your heart,
22 for they bring life to whoever finds them and
healing to the whole body.
23 Above all that you guard, guard your heart, for
from it flow the springs of life.
24 Put away from you a crooked mouth, and keep
devious lips far from you.
25 Let your eyes look straight ahead and your gaze
be fixed on what is before you.
26 Make level the path for your feet, and all your
ways will be secure.[1]
27 Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your
foot from evil.

1 Compare Hebrews 12:13.

Chapter 5

Proverbs 5 warns the son against the forbidden woman, whose lips drip honey but whose end is bitter as wormwood, for her steps lead down to Sheol. If he goes to her, strangers will take his strength and he will groan at the end of his life, regretting that he hated discipline. Instead he is to drink water from his own well and rejoice in the wife of his youth. The LORD sees every path, and the wicked are trapped by their own sins.

1 My son, listen carefully to my wisdom; bend your
ear to what I understand,
2 so that you may keep discretion and your lips
may guard knowledge.
3 For the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil,
4 but her end is as bitter as wormwood, as sharp as
a double-edged sword.
5 Her feet head down towards death; her steps go
straight to Sheol.
6 She gives no thought to the path of life; her ways
wander, and she does not know it.
7 So now, my sons, listen to me, and do not turn
from the words of my mouth.
8 Keep your way far from her, and do not go near
the door of her house,
9 or you will give your vigour to others and your
years to someone cruel,
10 strangers will feast on your strength, and your
labours will go to another man’s house.
11 At the end of your life you will groan, when your
flesh and body are spent,
12 and you will say, “How I hated discipline! How
my heart despised correction!
13 I did not listen to my teachers or turn my ear to
my instructors.
14 I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the
whole assembly.”
15 Drink water from your own cistern, running
water from your own well.[1]
16 Should your springs overflow into the street,
your streams of water in the squares?
17 Let them be yours alone, not shared with
strangers.
18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you
rejoice in the wife of your youth,
19 a loving doe, a graceful deer. May her breasts
satisfy you always; may you be captivated by her
love for ever.
20 Why be captivated, my son, by a forbidden
woman, or embrace the bosom of a foreign

woman?

21 For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD,
and He weighs all his paths.

22 The wicked man’s own wrongs will trap him; he
will be held fast by the cords of his sin.

23 He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by
his great folly.

1 Verses 15–20 picture faithfulness in marriage as drinking from one’s own well.

Chapter 6

Proverbs 6 gives four warnings. A son who has pledged security for another must free himself at once. The lazy person should learn from the ant, or poverty will come on him like a robber. A worthless man who stirs up trouble will be broken suddenly, and six things, indeed seven, are detestable to the LORD. Finally, the father’s teaching is a lamp that will keep the son from another man’s wife: no one can carry fire in his lap without being burned, and the husband’s jealous fury will accept no compensation.

1 My son, if you have put up security for your
neighbour, if you have shaken hands in pledge for
a stranger,[1]

2 you have been trapped by what you said, caught
by the words of your mouth.

3 So do this, my son, and free yourself, for you
have fallen into your neighbour’s hands: go,
humble yourself, and press your neighbour hard.

4 Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no
slumber.

5 Free yourself like a gazelle from the hunter’s
hand, like a bird from the fowler’s hand.

6 Go to the ant, you lazy person; watch her ways
and be wise.

7 She has no commander, no overseer or ruler,

8 yet she stores up her food in summer and gathers
her provisions at harvest.

9 How long will you lie there, you lazy person?
When will you get up from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little dozing, a little folding of
the hands for a rest,

11 and poverty will come on you like a robber, and
need like an armed man.

12 A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about
with a crooked mouth,

13 winking with his eyes, signalling with his feet,
pointing with his fingers,

14 with perversity in his heart; he plots evil at all
times and stirs up quarrels.

15 Therefore disaster will come on him suddenly; in
an instant he will be broken beyond healing.

16 There are six things the LORD hates, seven that
are detestable to Him:

17 proud eyes, a tongue that lies, hands that spill
innocent blood,

18 a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet that rush
to do evil,

19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one
who stirs up quarrels among brothers.

20 My son, keep your father’s commandment, and
do not abandon your mother’s teaching.

21 Bind them on your heart always; tie them
around your neck.

22 When you walk, they will guide you; when you
lie down, they will watch over you; when you
wake, they will talk with you.

23 For the commandment is a lamp and the
teaching a light, and the rebukes of discipline are
the way of life,

24 to keep you from the evil woman, from the
smooth tongue of the foreign woman.

25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do
not let her capture you with her eyelashes.

26 For a prostitute can be had for a loaf of bread,
but another man’s wife hunts for a precious life.

27 Can a man carry fire in his lap without his
clothes being burned?

28 Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet
being scorched?

29 So it is with one who goes in to his neighbour’s
wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.

30 People do not despise a thief if he steals to
satisfy his hunger when he is starving,

31 yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold; he
must give all the wealth of his house.[2]

32 But a man who commits adultery lacks sense;
whoever does it destroys himself.

33 He will get wounds and disgrace, and his shame
will never be wiped away.
34 For jealousy rouses a husband's fury, and he will
show no mercy when he takes revenge.
35 He will accept no compensation; he will refuse a
bribe, however large.

1 That is, promised to pay another person's debt if he fails to.
2 'Sevenfold' may mean 'in full'; the law asked up to fivefold (Exodus 22:1).

Chapter 7

Proverbs 7 tells the son to treasure his father's commandments and call wisdom his sister, so that she may keep him from the forbidden woman. From his window the father watched a young man without sense pass her corner at dusk. She met him dressed like a prostitute, kissed him, and told him her husband was away on a long journey. He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter, not knowing it would cost him his life. Her house is the road to Sheol.

1 My son, hold on to my words and treasure up my
commands.
2 Obey my commands and you will live; protect my
teaching as you would the pupil of your eye.
3 Tie them round your fingers; inscribe them on
your heart's tablet.
4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call
understanding your close friend,
5 so that they may keep you from the forbidden
woman, from the foreign woman with her smooth
words.
6 I was at my window, looking down through the
lattice of my house,
7 and I saw among the simple, I noticed among the
young men, a youth who lacked sense,
8 passing along the street near her corner, taking
the road to her house
9 in the twilight, in the evening, at the dark of
night.
10 And there a woman came to meet him, dressed
like a prostitute, with a cunning heart.
11 She is loud and defiant; her feet never stay at
home;
12 now in the street, now in the squares, she lies in
wait at every corner.
13 She took hold of him and kissed him, and with a
brazen face she said to him,
14 "I had peace offerings to make; today I have
paid my vows.[1]
15 So I came out to meet you, to look for you, and I
have found you.
16 I have spread my bed with coverings, with
coloured linens from Egypt.
17 I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and
cinnamon.
18 Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
let us delight ourselves with love.
19 For my husband is away; he has set off on a
distant journey.
20 He took a bag of money with him and will not
come home until the full moon."
21 With her many persuasive words she led him
astray; with her smooth lips she drew him on.
22 All at once he follows her, like an ox going to the
slaughter, like a fool in fetters to his punishment,[2]
23 until an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird
darting into a snare, not knowing that it will cost
him his life.
24 Now then, my sons, hear me; mark the words I
speak.
25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways; do
not stray into her paths.
26 For many are the victims she has brought down,
and all her slain are a mighty throng.
27 Her house is the road to Sheol, leading down
into the rooms of death.

1 The meat of these offerings was eaten by the worshipper (Leviticus 7:16); she has a feast ready.
2 The meaning of the Hebrew of this line is uncertain.

Chapter 8

Proverbs 8 is Wisdom's own speech. She calls from the heights and the city gates to all people, the simple and the foolish, for her words are true and better than silver or rubies. By her kings reign and rulers decree what is just, and she loves those who love her. The LORD possessed her at the beginning, before the earth, the depths and the mountains. She was beside Him when He set the heavens in place and marked out the earth, delighting in His world and in mankind. Whoever finds her finds life, but all who hate her love death.

1 Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice?

2 On the heights beside the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand;

3 beside the gates at the entrance to the city, at the doorways, she cries aloud:

4 "To you, O people, I call; my voice goes out to all mankind.

5 You simple ones, learn shrewdness; you fools, gain understanding.

6 Listen, for I speak of noble things; what my lips say is right.

7 My mouth speaks truth, and wickedness is detestable to my lips.

8 All the words of my mouth are righteous; none of them is twisted or crooked.

9 To one with understanding they are all straightforward, and to those who have found knowledge, upright.

10 Take my discipline instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold,

11 for wisdom is better than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

12 I, wisdom, live with shrewdness; I find knowledge and discretion.

13 To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate pride and arrogance, the way of evil and a perverse mouth.

14 Counsel and sound wisdom are mine; I am understanding; strength is mine.

15 By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just.

16 By me princes govern, and nobles, all who judge rightly.

17 I love those who love me; those who search hard for me will find me.

18 Riches and honour are with me, lasting wealth and righteousness.

19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield better than choice silver.

20 I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,

21 giving wealth to those who love me and filling their treasuries.

22 The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of long ago.[1]

23 From ages past I was set in place, at the very start, before the earth began.

24 When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs full of water.

25 Before the mountains were sunk in place, before there were hills, I was born,

26 before He had made the earth and its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.

27 I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out a circle on the surface of the deep,

28 when He fixed the clouds overhead, when the fountains of the deep surged up,

29 when He set its limit for the sea, so that the waters would not overstep His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth,

30 then I was beside Him as a master workman, and I was His delight day by day, rejoicing before Him always,[2]

31 rejoicing in His inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.

32 And now, sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep to my ways.

33 Listen to discipline and be wise; do not ignore it.

34 Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting beside my doorposts.

35 For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favour from the LORD.

36 But whoever misses me harms himself; all who hate me love death."

1 Or 'created me'. The Hebrew word can mean 'acquire' or 'make'.

2 Or 'as a little child'; the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.

Chapter 9

Proverbs 9 sets two hostesses side by side. Wisdom has built her house, prepared a feast and sent out her servants to invite the simple to eat her bread and live. Sayings follow on correcting the mocker and the wise, for wisdom starts with the fear of the LORD. Then the woman Folly sits at her door and calls the same passers-by, promising that stolen water is sweet; but her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

1 Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her
seven pillars.
2 She has slaughtered her animals, mixed her
wine, and set her table.
3 She has sent out her young women; she calls
from the highest places in the city:
4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To the
one who lacks sense she says,
5 "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have
mixed.
6 Give up being simple, and live; take the road of
understanding."
7 Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult;
whoever rebukes a wicked man gets hurt.
8 Do not rebuke a mocker, or he will hate you;
rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.
9 Instruct a wise man, and he will become wiser
still; teach a righteous man, and he will add to his
learning.
10 Wisdom starts with the fear of the LORD, and
knowing the Holy One is understanding.[1]
11 For through me your days will be many, and
years will be added to your life.
12 If you are wise, your wisdom is your own gain; if
you mock, you alone will bear it.
13 The woman Folly is loud; she is simple and
knows nothing.[2]
14 She sits in the doorway of her house, on a chair
high up in the town,
15 calling to those who pass by, who are going
straight on their way:
16 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To the
one who lacks sense she says,
17 "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in
secret is pleasant."
18 But he has no idea that the dead are there, that
those she has invited lie deep in Sheol.

1 Compare 1:7.

2 Folly is pictured as a woman, the rival of Wisdom in verses 1–6.

Chapter 10

Proverbs 10 begins the proverbs of Solomon, short sayings that mostly set the righteous and the wicked side by side. The wise son brings joy and the foolish son grief. Diligent hands bring wealth, but lazy hands poverty. The mouth of the righteous is a spring of life, but the wicked hide violence. Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love covers all offences. The one who restrains his lips is wise. The fear of the LORD adds length to life, and the righteous will never be shaken.

1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son brings joy
to his father, but a foolish son is grief to his
mother.[1]
2 Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit,
but righteousness rescues from death.
3 The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry,
but He thwarts the craving of the wicked.
4 Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands
bring riches.
5 A son who gathers in summer acts wisely; a son
who sleeps at harvest brings shame.
6 Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but
violence lies hidden in the mouth of the wicked.
7 The righteous are remembered with blessing, but
the name of the wicked will decay.
8 The wise in heart accept commandments, but a
chattering fool will come to ruin.
9 Whoever walks with integrity walks securely, but
whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.
10 Whoever winks with the eye causes grief, and a
chattering fool will come to ruin.
11 The speech of the righteous is a spring of life,
but the words of the wicked hide violence.

12 Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love covers all offences.[2]

13 Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of one who lacks sense.

14 The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin.

15 The rich man's wealth is his fortified city; the poverty of the poor is their ruin.

16 The wages of the righteous lead to life, the earnings of the wicked to sin.

17 Whoever heeds discipline is on the path to life, but whoever ignores correction goes astray.

18 Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.

19 When words are many, wrongdoing is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is wise.

20 The righteous man's tongue is like fine silver; the wicked man's heart is worth little.

21 The words of the righteous nourish many, but fools die because they lack sense.

22 The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and hard toil adds nothing to it.[3]

23 A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a man of understanding finds pleasure in wisdom.

24 What the wicked dreads will come upon him, but what the righteous desire will be granted.

25 When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm for ever.

26 As vinegar is to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so the lazy person is to those who send him on an errand.

27 The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked will be cut short.

28 The hope of the righteous ends in joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

29 The way of the LORD is a stronghold for the blameless, but ruin for those who do evil.

30 The righteous will stand unmoved for ever, but the wicked will not keep their place in the land.

31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut off.

32 The lips of the righteous know what wins favour, but the mouths of the wicked know only what is twisted.

1 The first collection of Solomon's proverbs runs from 10:1 to 22:16.

2 Compare 1 Peter 4:8, 'love covers a multitude of sins'.

3 Or 'and He adds no sorrow with it'.

Chapter 11

Proverbs 11 continues Solomon's sayings. The LORD hates dishonest scales; pride brings disgrace, but wisdom is with the humble. Riches do not help on the day of wrath, but righteousness rescues from death, and a city rejoices when the righteous prosper. A gossip betrays secrets, while there is safety in many advisers. The generous grow richer and the one who refreshes others is refreshed, but whoever trusts in riches will fall. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.

1 Dishonest scales are detestable to the LORD, but an accurate weight is His delight.

2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.

3 The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.

4 Wealth is no use on the day of wrath, but righteousness rescues from death.

5 The righteousness of the blameless makes their way straight, but the wicked fall by their own wickedness.

6 The righteousness of the upright rescues them, but the treacherous are trapped by their own craving.

7 When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes, and the expectation of the godless comes to nothing.[1]

8 The righteous is rescued from trouble, and the wicked goes into it instead.

9 With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbour, but by knowledge the righteous are rescued.

10 When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.

11 By the blessing of the upright a city is raised up, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down.

12 Whoever belittles his neighbour lacks sense, but a man of understanding keeps quiet.

13 A gossip goes about revealing secrets, but a
trustworthy person keeps a matter hidden.
14 Without guidance a people falls, but there is
safety in many advisers.
15 Whoever puts up security for a stranger will
surely suffer, but whoever refuses to shake hands
on a pledge is safe.
16 A gracious woman gains honour, and ruthless
men gain wealth.
17 A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man
brings trouble on himself.
18 The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but
whoever sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.
19 Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live,
but whoever pursues evil will die.
20 The crooked in heart are detestable to the
LORD, but those whose ways are blameless are
His delight.
21 Be sure of this: the evil man will not go
unpunished, but the descendants of the righteous
will escape.
22 A beautiful woman without good sense is like a
gold ring in a pig's snout.
23 The desire of the righteous ends only in good,
the hope of the wicked only in wrath.
24 One person gives freely and yet grows richer;
another withholds what is right and comes to
poverty.
25 A generous person will prosper; whoever
refreshes others will himself be refreshed.
26 People curse the one who hoards grain, but
blessing is on the head of the one who sells it.
27 Whoever seeks good finds favour, but evil comes
to the one who searches for it.
28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the
righteous will flourish like a green leaf.
29 Whoever brings trouble on his household will
inherit wind, and the fool will be servant to the
wise.
30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and
the one who wins souls is wise.[2]
31 If the righteous are repaid on earth, how much
more the wicked and the sinner![3]

1 Or 'the expectation placed in wealth'.
2 Or 'and the wise man gains lives'. The Greek has 'but the lives of the lawless are cut off'.
3 1 Peter 4:18 quotes this verse from the Greek: 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'

Chapter 12

> *Proverbs 12 contrasts the one who loves discipline with the fool who hates correction. A capable wife is her husband's crown. The righteous care even for their animals, and whoever works his land will have bread. The way of a fool seems right to him, but the wise listen to advice. Rash words wound like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing; lying lips are detestable to the LORD. Anxiety weighs the heart down, but a kind word cheers it. In the path of righteousness there is life.*

1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but
whoever hates correction is stupid.
2 A good man obtains favour from the LORD, but
He condemns a man who schemes.
3 No one is made secure by wickedness, but the
root of the righteous will not be moved.
4 A capable wife is her husband's crown, but a wife
who brings shame is like decay in his bones.
5 What the righteous intend is just; what the
wicked advise is deceit.
6 The words of the wicked are an ambush for
blood, but what the upright say saves them.
7 Once the wicked are overthrown they are gone,
but the house of the righteous stands firm.
8 A man is praised according to his good sense, but
one with a twisted mind is despised.
9 Better to be lowly and have a servant than to put
on airs and lack bread.
10 A righteous man cares for the life of his animal,
but even the mercy of the wicked is cruel.
11 Whoever works his land will have plenty of
bread, but whoever chases worthless things lacks
sense.
12 The wicked man covets the catch of evildoers,
but the root of the righteous bears fruit.
13 An evil man is trapped by the sin of his lips, but
the righteous escapes from trouble.

14 From the fruit of his mouth a man is filled with good, and what his hands have done comes back to him.

15 The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

16 A fool shows his anger at once, but a shrewd man ignores an insult.

17 Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness speaks deceit.

18 Some people's rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

19 Truthful lips endure for ever, but a lying tongue lasts only for a moment.

20 Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but there is joy for those who promote peace.

21 No harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.

22 Lying lips are detestable to the LORD, but those who act faithfully are His delight.

23 A shrewd man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.

24 The hand of the diligent will rule, but laziness ends in forced labour.

25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a kind word cheers him up.

26 The righteous man guides his neighbour, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.[1]

27 The lazy man does not roast his game, but diligence is a person's precious wealth.

28 In the path of righteousness there is life, and along that way there is no death.

1 The meaning of the Hebrew of the first line is uncertain.

Chapter 13

Proverbs 13 sets the wise son who heeds discipline beside the mocker who will not listen. Whoever guards his mouth protects his life. Wealth gained in haste dwindles, but what is gathered little by little grows. Hope put off makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life. Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise. Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but a loving father disciplines him.

1 A wise son heeds his father's discipline, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.

2 From the fruit of his mouth a man enjoys good things, but the treacherous crave violence.

3 Whoever guards his mouth protects his life; whoever opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

4 The lazy person craves and gets nothing, but the diligent are richly satisfied.

5 The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked bring shame and disgrace.

6 Righteousness guards the one whose way is blameless, but wickedness overthrows the sinner.

7 One pretends to be rich yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor yet has great wealth.

8 A man's riches may ransom his life, but the poor man hears no threat.

9 The light of the righteous burns bright, but the lamp of the wicked goes out.

10 Pride leads only to strife, but wisdom is with those who take advice.

11 Wealth gained in haste dwindles, but whoever gathers little by little makes it grow.

12 Hope that is put off makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

13 Whoever despises the word will pay for it, but whoever respects the commandment will be rewarded.

14 What the wise teach is a fountain of life, steering a person away from death's snares.

15 Good sense wins favour, but the way of the treacherous is hard.

16 Every shrewd man acts with knowledge, but a fool displays his folly.

17 A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing.

18 Poverty and disgrace come to whoever ignores discipline, but whoever heeds correction is honoured.

19 Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools hate to turn from evil.

20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will be harmed.

21 Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.

22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren, but the sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

23 The field of the poor may yield much food, but it is swept away by injustice.[1]

24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but whoever loves him is careful to discipline him.

25 The righteous eat until they are satisfied, but the stomach of the wicked goes empty.

1 The meaning of the Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

Chapter 14

Proverbs 14 contrasts the wise woman who builds her house with the foolish one who tears it down. A faithful witness does not lie. A way may look right to someone and still end in death. The simple believe everything, while the shrewd consider their steps. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life and a refuge for His children. Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding. Oppressing the poor insults their Maker, and righteousness exalts a nation.

1 A wise woman builds up her household, but a foolish one pulls hers down with her own hands.

2 Whoever walks uprightly fears the LORD, but whoever is devious in his ways despises Him.

3 A fool's talk is a rod for his pride, but the lips of the wise protect them.

4 Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but an ox's strength brings an abundant harvest.

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

6 A mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.

7 Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on his lips.

8 A shrewd person's wisdom lies in knowing his own way, but fools are deceived by their own folly.

9 Fools mock at making amends for sin, but among the upright there is goodwill.

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

11 The house of the wicked will be wiped out, but the tent of the upright will thrive.

12 A way may look right to someone, yet in the end it is the road to death.[1]

13 Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.

14 The faithless will be paid in full for their ways, and the good man for his deeds.

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

16 A wise man is cautious and turns from evil, but a fool is reckless and overconfident.

17 A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a man who schemes is hated.

18 The simple inherit folly, but the shrewd are crowned with knowledge.

19 Evil people will bow down to the good, and the wicked will stoop at the righteous man's gates.

20 The poor man is disliked even by his neighbour, but the rich have many friends.

21 Whoever despises his neighbour sins, but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy.

22 Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan good find loyal kindness and truth.

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

24 Their wealth is a crown to the wise, but fools' folly yields only folly.

25 A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.

26 Whoever fears the LORD has a secure stronghold, and his children will have a refuge.

27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, steering a person away from death's snares.

28 A large population is a king's glory, but without people a prince is ruined.

29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but a hasty temper exalts folly.

30 A calm heart gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

31 Whoever oppresses the poor insults his Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours Him.

32 The wicked is overthrown by his own evil, but the righteous has a refuge even in his death.

33 Wisdom rests in the heart of the discerning, and
even among fools she makes herself known.
34 Righteousness lifts a nation up, but sin brings
disgrace on any people.
35 A king delights in a wise servant, but his anger
falls on one who acts shamefully.

1 Repeated at 16:25.

Chapter 15

Proverbs 15 opens with the power of words: a gentle reply calms fury, and a healing tongue is a tree of life. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere; He detests the sacrifice of the wicked but delights in the prayer of the upright. A glad heart makes a cheerful face. Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure with turmoil, and better vegetables with love than a fattened ox with hatred. Plans succeed with many advisers, and a word at the right time is good. Humility comes before honour.

1 A gentle reply calms fury, but a harsh word stirs
up anger.
2 The tongue of the wise makes knowledge
attractive, but the mouth of fools pours out folly.
3 The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, watching
the evil and the good.
4 A healing tongue is a tree of life, but a deceitful
one crushes the spirit.
5 A fool despises his father's discipline, but
whoever heeds correction is shrewd.
6 The house of the righteous holds much treasure,
but trouble comes with the earnings of the
wicked.
7 What the wise say scatters knowledge abroad,
but the hearts of fools do not.
8 The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but
He delights in the prayer of the upright.
9 The way of the wicked is detestable to the LORD,
but He loves the one who pursues righteousness.
10 Severe discipline awaits whoever leaves the
path; whoever hates correction will die.
11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD;
how much more the hearts of mankind![1]
12 A mocker does not love the one who corrects
him; he will not go to the wise.
13 A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but
heartache crushes the spirit.
14 The heart of the discerning seeks knowledge,
but the mouth of fools feeds on folly.
15 All the days of the afflicted are hard, but a
cheerful heart has a continual feast.
16 Better a little with the fear of the LORD than
great treasure with turmoil.
17 Better a dish of vegetables where there is love
than a fattened ox with hatred.
18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but one slow
to anger calms a quarrel.
19 The way of the lazy is like a hedge of thorns, but
the path of the upright is a level road.
20 A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish
man despises his mother.
21 Folly is joy to one who lacks sense, but a man of
understanding walks straight.
22 Plans fail without counsel, but with many
advisers they succeed.
23 A man finds joy in giving an apt reply, and how
good is a word at the right time!
24 For the wise the path of life climbs upward, so
that he turns away from Sheol below.
25 The LORD tears down the house of the proud,
but He sets the widow's boundary stone in place.
26 Evil plans are detestable to the LORD, but kind
words are pure.
27 Whoever is greedy for gain troubles his
household, but whoever hates bribes will live.
28 A righteous heart thinks before it answers, but a
wicked mouth gushes evil.
29 The LORD keeps far from the wicked, but He
listens when the righteous pray.
30 Bright eyes gladden the heart, and good news
refreshes the bones.
31 Whoever listens to life-giving correction will
make his home among the wise.
32 Whoever ignores discipline despises himself, but
whoever heeds correction gains understanding.
33 The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom,
and humility comes before honour.

1 Abaddon, ‘destruction’, is another name for the realm of the dead.

Chapter 16

Proverbs 16 sets human plans beside the LORD’s rule. A man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps; the right words, the weighing of the spirit and the outcome of the lot all come from Him. Whoever rolls his work onto the LORD will see his plans stand. A king must rule with righteousness. Wisdom is better than gold. Pride comes before ruin. Pleasant words are like honey, and whoever rules his own spirit is better than one who captures a city.

1 People make their plans in their hearts, but the right words come from the LORD.

2 All a man’s ways seem pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit.

3 Roll your work onto the LORD, and your plans will stand firm.[1]

4 The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of disaster.

5 Everyone proud in heart is detestable to the LORD; be sure of this, he will not go unpunished.

6 By loyal kindness and truth guilt is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.

7 When the LORD is pleased with someone’s ways, He brings even that person’s enemies to make peace.

8 Better a little with righteousness than great income with injustice.

9 A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.

10 An inspired verdict is on the lips of a king; his mouth must not betray justice.[2]

11 Honest scales and balances belong to the LORD; all the weights in the bag are His work.

12 Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.

13 Righteous lips are a king’s delight, and he loves one who speaks what is right.

14 The king’s anger is a herald of death, but the wise will calm it.

15 In the light of a king’s face there is life; his favour is like a cloud bringing spring rain.

16 How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is better than silver.

17 The highway of the upright turns away from evil; whoever guards his way protects his life.

18 Pride comes before ruin, and an arrogant spirit before stumbling.

19 Better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to share plunder with the proud.

20 Whoever pays attention to the word will find good, and blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD.

21 The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious speech increases persuasiveness.

22 Good sense is a fountain of life to those who have it, but folly is the punishment of fools.

23 The heart of the wise makes his speech wise and adds persuasiveness to his lips.

24 Kind words are a honeycomb, sweet to the taste and health to the body.

25 A way may look right to someone, yet in the end it is the road to death.[3]

26 A labourer’s appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on.

27 A worthless man digs up evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire.

28 A twisted person sows quarrels, and a whisperer divides close friends.

29 A violent man entices his neighbour and leads him down a path that is not good.

30 Whoever winks his eyes is plotting perversity; whoever purses his lips has finished his evil.

31 Grey hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by a righteous life.

32 Better to be slow to anger than a mighty warrior, and to rule one’s own spirit than to capture a city.

33 Lots are thrown into the lap, but every outcome comes from the LORD.

1 That is, entrust it to Him; compare Psalm 37:5.

2 Hebrew ‘divination’, here in a good sense.

3 The same as 14:12.

Chapter 17

Proverbs 17 values peace above plenty: better a dry crust with quiet than a house of feasting with strife. The LORD tests hearts as fire tests silver and gold. Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker. Covering an offence seeks love, but repeating it separates friends. A friend’s love never fails, and a brother is born to share hard times. A joyful heart is good medicine. Even a fool who keeps silent is thought wise.

1 Better a dry crust with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.

2 A wise servant will rule over a son who brings shame and will share the inheritance among the brothers.

3 The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts.

4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips; a liar pays attention to a destructive tongue.

5 Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.

6 Grandchildren are the crown of the old, and fathers are the pride of their children.

7 Fine speech does not suit a fool; still less do lying lips suit a prince.

8 A bribe seems like a magic stone to the one who gives it; wherever he turns, he succeeds.[1]

9 Whoever covers an offence seeks love, but whoever repeats a matter separates close friends.

10 A rebuke goes deeper into a discerning man than a hundred blows into a fool.

11 A rebel looks only for trouble, and a merciless messenger will be sent against him.

12 Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool in his folly.

13 If anyone repays evil for good, evil will never leave his house.

14 Starting a quarrel is like letting out water, so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

15 Acquitting the guilty and condemning the righteous are both detestable to the LORD.

16 Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom, when he has no sense?

17 A friend’s love never fails, and a brother is born to share hard times.

18 A man who lacks sense shakes hands in pledge and puts up security for his neighbour.

19 Whoever loves wrongdoing loves strife; whoever builds a high gate invites destruction.

20 A man with a crooked heart finds no good, and one with a deceitful tongue falls into trouble.

21 Whoever fathers a fool brings himself grief; the father of a fool has no joy.

22 A cheerful heart heals like medicine, but a broken spirit withers the bones.

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

24 The discerning keep wisdom in view, but a fool’s eyes wander to the ends of the earth.

25 A foolish son is grief to his father and bitterness to the mother who bore him.

26 To punish the righteous is not good, nor to flog noblemen for their honesty.

27 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and one who keeps a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

28 Even a fool who keeps silent is thought wise; when he closes his lips, he seems discerning.

1 The proverb describes how bribery seems to work; 17:23 condemns it.

Chapter 18

Proverbs 18 is much concerned with words. A fool delights only in airing his opinions, and his mouth is his ruin; the words of a gossip are like tasty morsels. The name of the LORD is a strong tower where the righteous are safe, while the rich man trusts his wealth as a high wall. Answering before listening is folly. The tongue holds the power of death and life. Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and there is a friend who holds closer than a brother.

1 Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire;
he rages against all sound judgement.

2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in airing his own opinions.

3 When wickedness comes, contempt comes too,
and with dishonour comes scorn.

4 What a person says can be deep water; wisdom's
spring is a rushing brook.

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

6 A fool's lips bring him into strife,
and his mouth invites a beating.

7 A fool's mouth brings him ruin,
and his lips set a trap for his own life.

8 The words of a gossip are like tasty morsels;
they go down into the inmost being.

9 Whoever is slack in his work
is brother to one who destroys.

10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe.

11 The rich man's wealth is his fortified city;
in his imagination it is like a high wall.

12 Before destruction a man's heart is proud,
but humility comes before honour.

13 Whoever answers before he listens,
it is his folly and his shame.

14 A man's spirit can endure sickness,
but who can bear a crushed spirit?

15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks it out.

16 A man's gift opens the way for him
and brings him before the great.

17 The first to state his case seems right,
until another comes and questions him.

18 Casting the lot ends quarrels
and settles disputes between the powerful.

19 An offended brother is harder to win than a strong city,
and quarrels are like the bars of a fortress.

20 From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled;
he is satisfied by the harvest of his lips.

21 The tongue holds the power of death and life,
and those who love to use it will eat what it produces.

22 Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing
and obtains favour from the LORD.

23 The poor man pleads for mercy,
but the rich man answers harshly.

24 One with many companions may be broken by them,
but there is a friend who holds closer than a brother.[1]

1 The meaning of the Hebrew of the first line is uncertain.

Chapter 19

Proverbs 19 prefers a poor man with integrity to a fool with crooked lips. Wealth brings many friends, but the poor are deserted. A false witness will not go unpunished. A man's good sense makes him slow to anger. House and wealth come from fathers, but a sensible wife is from the LORD. Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD. Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the LORD's purpose will stand. The fear of the LORD leads to life.

1 Better a poor man who walks in integrity
than a fool whose lips are crooked.

2 Zeal without knowledge is not good,
and whoever hurries his footsteps misses the way.

3 A man's folly ruins his way,
yet his heart rages against the LORD.

4 Wealth brings many friends,
but the poor man is deserted by his friend.

5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and one who breathes out lies will not escape.

6 Many court the favour of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to one who gives gifts.

7 All the brothers of a poor man hate him; how much more do his friends keep away from him! He pursues them with words, but they are gone.[1]

8 Whoever gains sense loves his own life; whoever keeps understanding will prosper.

9 A false witness will not go unpunished, and one who breathes out lies will perish.

10 Luxury does not suit a fool; still less does it suit a slave to rule over princes.

11 A man's good sense makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offence.

12 A king's rage is like the roar of a lion, but his favour is like dew on the grass.

13 A foolish son is his father's ruin, and a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping.

14 House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a sensible wife is from the LORD.

15 Laziness casts one into deep sleep, and an idle person will go hungry.

16 Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; whoever is careless of his ways will die.

17 Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his deed.

18 Discipline your son while there is hope; do not set your heart on his death.[2]

19 A man of great anger must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.

20 Listen to advice and accept discipline, so that you may be wise in the end.

21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that will stand.

22 What is desired in a man is loyal kindness, and a poor man is better than a liar.

23 The fear of the LORD leads to life; one who has it rests content, untouched by harm.

24 The lazy person buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

25 Strike a mocker, and the simple will learn shrewdness; rebuke the discerning, and he will gain knowledge.

26 Whoever robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace.

27 My son, if you stop listening to correction, you will wander from the words of knowledge.

28 A corrupt witness scoffs at justice, and the wicked swallow wrongdoing whole.

29 Punishments stand ready for mockers, and blows for the backs of fools.

1 The meaning of the Hebrew of the last line is uncertain.

2 That is, do not let him go his way to ruin.

Chapter 20

Proverbs 20 warns that wine is a mocker and strong drink a brawler. It is honourable to keep out of a quarrel. The purposes of the heart are deep waters, but the wise can draw them out. No one can claim a pure heart. Unequal weights are detestable to the LORD. Do not repay evil, but wait for the LORD to save you. The human spirit is the LORD's lamp, searching the inmost being, and loyal kindness upholds a king's throne.

1 Wine is a mocker and strong drink a brawler; whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

2 The terror of a king is like the roar of a lion; whoever provokes him forfeits his life.

3 It is to a man's honour to keep out of a quarrel, but every fool is quick to bicker.

4 The lazy person does not plough in autumn; at harvest he looks for a crop and finds nothing.

5 The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.

6 Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a faithful man?

7 The righteous lives a life of integrity; his children after him are blessed.

8 A king who sits on the throne of judgement winnows out all evil with his eyes.

9 Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean from my sin"?

10 Unequal weights and unequal measures are both detestable to the LORD.

11 Even a child makes himself known by his actions, whether his conduct is pure and right.

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

13 Do not love sleep, or you will grow poor; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.

14 "Bad, bad," says the buyer, but when he has gone his way, he boasts of his bargain.

15 There is gold and a wealth of rubies, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.

16 Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger; hold it in pledge if he does it for a foreign woman.[1]

17 Bread gained by deceit tastes sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth will be full of gravel.

18 Plans are established by counsel; wage war with sound guidance.

19 A gossip reveals secrets, so do not associate with one who talks too much.

20 Whoever curses his father or mother, his lamp will go out in deep darkness.

21 An inheritance gained hastily at first will not be blessed in the end.

22 Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and He will save you.

23 Unequal weights are detestable to the LORD, and dishonest scales are not good.

24 A man's steps are directed by the LORD; how then can anyone understand his own way?

25 It is a trap to say rashly, "This is holy," and only afterwards to reflect on one's vows.

26 A wise king scatters the wicked like chaff and drives the cartwheel over them.

27 The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inmost being.

28 Loyal kindness and truth preserve a king, and by loyal kindness his throne is upheld.

29 The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendour of the old is their grey hair.

30 Blows that wound scour away evil, and beatings cleanse the inmost being.

1 So the spoken Hebrew; the written text has 'for foreigners'. Compare 27:13.

Chapter 21

Proverbs 21 begins with the LORD's rule over the king's heart, which He turns like streams of water. Doing what is right and just pleases the LORD more than sacrifice. The plans of the diligent lead to profit, but haste to poverty. Better to live in a corner of the roof than with a quarrelsome wife. Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will not be answered. Whoever guards his mouth keeps himself out of trouble. No wisdom can stand against the LORD, and victory belongs to Him.

1 The king's heart is like streams of water in the LORD's hand; He turns it wherever He wishes.

2 Every way of a man seems right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.

3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.[1]

5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to profit, but everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.

6 Treasure gained by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour for those who seek death.

7 The wicked are dragged off by their own violence, because they will not do what is just.

8 The guilty man's road is twisted, but the pure man's conduct is straight.

9 Better to live in a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

10 The wicked man's appetite is set on evil; he shows his neighbour no pity.

11 When a mocker is punished, the simple become wise; when the wise is instructed, he gains knowledge.

12 The Righteous One takes note of the wicked man's house and overturns the wicked to their ruin.[2]

13 Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.

14 A gift in secret calms anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak, fierce wrath.

15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.

16 A man who strays from the way of good sense
will rest in the assembly of the dead.
17 Whoever loves pleasure will become poor;
whoever loves wine and oil will not grow rich.
18 The wicked serve as a ransom for the righteous,
the faithless in place of the upright.
19 Better to live in a desert land than with a
quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.
20 Precious treasure and oil are in the home of the
wise, but a foolish man devours them.
21 Whoever pursues righteousness and loyal
kindness will find life, righteousness and honour.
22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty and
brings down the stronghold in which they trust.
23 Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps
himself out of trouble.
24 The proud and arrogant man, “Mocker” is his
name; he acts with overweening pride.
25 The craving of the lazy person kills him, for his
hands refuse to work.
26 All day long he craves and craves, but the
righteous give without holding back.
27 The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable; how
much more when he brings it with evil intent!
28 A false witness will perish, but one who listens
will speak for ever.
29 A wicked man puts on a bold face, but the
upright makes his way firm.[3]
30 No wisdom, no understanding and no counsel
can stand against the LORD.
31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
but victory belongs to the LORD.

1 Or ‘the ploughing of the wicked’.
2 Or ‘The righteous man’.
3 So the written Hebrew; the spoken text has ‘gives thought to his way’.

Chapter 22

Proverbs 22 completes the first collection of Solomon’s proverbs. A good name is worth more than great wealth; the LORD made both rich and poor. A child started on the right road will not leave it, and the borrower becomes the lender’s slave. From verse 17 begin the sayings of the wise, thirty sayings of counsel. Do not rob the poor, for the LORD will plead their case; do not befriend the hot-tempered or put up security for debts; do not move the ancient boundary stone. A man skilled in his work will stand before kings.

1 A good name is worth more than great wealth,
and to be well thought of is better than silver or
gold.
2 The rich and the poor have this in common: the
LORD made them all.
3 A shrewd man sees danger and hides himself, but
the simple go on and pay for it.
4 The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD
is riches, honour and life.
5 Thorns and snares lie in the way of the crooked;
whoever guards his life will keep far from them.
6 Start a child on the road he should take, and
even in old age he will not leave it.[1]
7 The rich lord it over the poor, and whoever
borrows becomes the lender’s slave.
8 Whoever sows injustice will reap trouble, and the
rod of his fury will fail.
9 Whoever has a generous eye will be blessed, for
he shares his bread with the poor.
10 Drive out the mocker, and strife will leave;
quarrels and insults will cease.
11 Whoever loves a pure heart and whose speech is
gracious will have the king for his friend.
12 The eyes of the LORD watch over knowledge,
but He overthrows the words of the treacherous.
13 The lazy person says, “There is a lion outside! I
shall be killed in the streets!”
14 The mouth of a forbidden woman is a deep pit;
the one under the LORD’s wrath will fall into it.
15 Folly is tied fast to a child’s heart, but the rod of
correction will drive it out of him.
16 Whoever oppresses the poor to enrich himself,
or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.
17 Bend your ear and hear what the wise say, and
set your mind on what I teach.[2]
18 It is good to keep these sayings inside you and
have them all ready on your lips.
19 So that your trust may be in the LORD, I have
made them known to you today, even to you.

20 Have I not written for you thirty sayings of
counsel and knowledge,[3]
21 to show you what is right and true, so that you
may give a true answer to those who sent you?
22 Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush
the afflicted at the gate,
23 for the LORD will plead their case and will take
the life of those who rob them.
24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man,
and do not go about with one who is easily
angered,
25 or you may learn his ways and set a snare for
yourself.
26 Do not be one of those who shake hands in
pledge or put up security for debts.
27 If you have nothing to pay with, why should your
bed be taken from under you?
28 Do not move the ancient boundary stone that
your fathers set up.
29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will
stand before kings; he will not stand before
obscure men.

1 Hebrew ‘according to his way’.

2 The sayings of the wise run from 22:17 to 24:22. Several of them are close to an Egyptian book of wisdom, the Instruction of Amenemope.

3 So a probable reading; the written Hebrew has ‘formerly’, and the spoken text ‘excellent things’.

Chapter 23

Proverbs 23 continues the sayings of the wise. At a ruler’s table, restrain your appetite; do not wear yourself out to get rich, for wealth sprouts wings and flies away. Do not move the boundary stones of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong. Discipline a child, and you will save him from Sheol. Do not envy sinners, but keep to the fear of the LORD. A father rejoices in a wise son. The chapter ends with a vivid warning against wine, which goes down smoothly but bites like a snake.

1 When you take your seat at a ruler’s table, think
hard about who is in front of you,
2 and put a knife to your throat if you are a man of
great appetite.
3 Do not crave his delicacies, for they are
deceptive food.
4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the
sense to stop.
5 When you set your eyes on it, it is gone, for it will
surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an
eagle.
6 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, and do not
crave his delicacies,
7 for he is the kind of man who is always counting
the cost. “Eat and drink,” he says to you, but his
heart is not with you.[1]
8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten and
waste your pleasant words.
9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will
despise the good sense of your words.
10 Do not move an ancient boundary stone or
encroach on the fields of the fatherless,
11 for their Redeemer is mighty; He will take up
their cause against you.[2]
12 Give your heart to correction and your ears to
the words of knowledge.
13 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you
strike him with a rod, he will not die.
14 Strike him with the rod, and you will save his
soul from Sheol.
15 My son, if your heart grows wise, then my heart
too will rejoice;
16 my inmost being will rejoice when your lips
speak what is right.
17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but continue
in the fear of the LORD all day long.
18 There is surely a tomorrow for you, and your
hope will not be cut short.
19 Hear me, my son, and grow wise; set your heart
on the right road.
20 Do not join those who drink too much wine or
gorge themselves on meat,
21 for the drunkard and the glutton will come to
poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them in rags.
22 Pay heed to the father who gave you life, and do
not scorn your mother in her old age.
23 Buy truth and do not sell it; get wisdom,
discipline and understanding.

24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice;
whoever fathers a wise son will be glad in him.
25 May your father and mother be glad;
may she who bore you rejoice.
26 My son, hand your heart over to me,
and let your eyes keep to my ways.
27 For a prostitute is a deep pit,
and a foreign woman a narrow well.
28 Like a bandit she waits in ambush,
and she adds to the number of unfaithful men.
29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has quarrels? Who has complaints?
Who has wounds for no reason?
Who has bloodshot eyes?
30 Those who linger over wine,
who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.
31 Do not look at wine when it is red,
when it sparkles in the cup
and goes down smoothly.
32 In the end its bite is like a serpent's,
and its sting like a viper's.
33 Your eyes will see strange things,
and your heart will utter perverse things.
34 You will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea,
like one who lies on top of a mast.
35 "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt;
they beat me, but I did not feel it.
When shall I wake up?
I will look for another drink."

1 The meaning of the Hebrew of the first line is uncertain.
2 The redeemer was the near relative who defended a family's land and rights; here it is the LORD Himself.

Chapter 24

Proverbs 24 completes the sayings of the wise. Do not envy evil men, for a house is built by wisdom. Rescue those being led to death; the One who weighs hearts knows. Wisdom is sweet like honey. The righteous may fall seven times and rise again. Do not gloat when your enemy falls. Fear the LORD and the king. A short collection follows: do not show partiality, answer honestly, and do not repay evil. The field of the lazy man, overgrown with thorns, teaches its own lesson.

1 Do not envy evil men or desire to be with them,
2 for their hearts plot violence,
and their lips talk of trouble.
3 A house is built through wisdom
and made secure through understanding;
4 by knowledge its rooms are filled
with all kinds of precious and pleasant riches.
5 A wise man is strong,
and a man of knowledge increases his strength,
6 for with guidance you wage your war,
and there is victory in many advisers.
7 Wisdom is too high for a fool;
in the gate he does not open his mouth.
8 Whoever plans to do evil
will be called a schemer.
9 The scheming of folly is sin,
and people detest a mocker.
10 If you falter in a time of trouble,
how small is your strength!
11 Rescue those being taken away to death;
hold back those staggering towards slaughter.
12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this,"
does not He who weighs hearts perceive it?
Does not He who guards your life know it?
Will He not repay each person according to his deeds?
13 Eat honey, my son, for it is good,
and honey from the comb is sweet to your taste.
14 Know that wisdom is like this for your soul;
if you find it, there is a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.
15 Do not lie in wait like a wicked man against the home of the righteous;
do not raid his dwelling,
16 for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again,
but the wicked stumble into disaster.
17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,
and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles,
18 or the LORD will see it and be displeased,
and turn His anger away from him.
19 Do not fret because of evildoers
or envy the wicked,
20 for the evil man has no future;
the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.
21 My son, fear the LORD and the king,
and do not associate with those given to change,
22 for disaster will come on them suddenly,
and who knows the ruin that both of them can bring?
23 These too are sayings of the wise:
Favouritism in judgement is wrong.[1]

24 Whoever says to the guilty, “You are innocent,”
will be cursed by peoples and denounced by
nations,
25 but things will go well for those who rebuke the
guilty, and good blessing will come upon them.
26 Giving an honest reply is like a kiss on the lips.
27 Finish your outdoor work and get your fields
ready; after that, build your house.
28 Do not testify against your neighbour without
cause, or deceive with your lips.
29 Do not say, “I will do to him as he has done to
me; I will pay the man back for what he did.”
30 I passed by the field of a lazy man, by the
vineyard of a man lacking sense,
31 and there it was, all overgrown with thorns; the
ground was covered with weeds, and its stone wall
was broken down.
32 I looked and took it to heart; I saw and learned a
lesson:
33 a little sleep, a little dozing, a little folding of the
hands for a rest,[2]
34 and poverty will come on you like a robber, and
need like an armed man.

1 A short further collection, 24:23–34.
2 Verses 33–34 repeat 6:10–11.

Chapter 25

Proverbs 25 begins a second collection of Solomon’s proverbs, copied by King Hezekiah’s men. It is God’s glory to conceal a matter and the king’s to search it out. Do not put yourself forward before the king. A word spoken at the right time is like apples of gold in silver. A faithful messenger refreshes like snow at harvest, and good news from far away like cold water to the weary. If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and the LORD will reward you. A man without self-control is like a city without walls.

1 These also are proverbs of Solomon, copied by
the men of Hezekiah king of Judah.[1]
2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, and the
glory of kings to search it out.
3 As the heavens are high and the earth is deep, so
the hearts of kings are unsearchable.
4 Remove the dross from the silver, and a vessel
comes out for the silversmith;
5 take the wicked away from the king, and his
throne will stand firm in righteousness.
6 Do not put yourself forward in the king’s
presence or stand in the place of the great,
7 for it is better to be told, “Come up here,” than to
be humbled before a noble whom your eyes have
seen.[2]
8 Do not be quick to take a dispute to court, for
what will you do in the end, when your neighbour
puts you to shame?
9 Argue your case with your neighbour himself,
and do not reveal another’s secret,
10 or the one who hears will shame you, and the
bad name you get will never go away.
11 A word spoken at the right time is like apples of
gold in settings of silver.
12 Like a gold earring or an ornament of fine gold
is a wise man’s rebuke to a listening ear.
13 Like the cold of snow on a harvest day is a
faithful messenger to those who send him; he
refreshes the soul of his masters.
14 Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who
boasts of a gift he does not give.
15 With patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a
gentle tongue can break a bone.
16 If you find honey, eat just enough, or you will
have too much and vomit it.
17 Seldom set foot in your neighbour’s house, or he
will have too much of you and hate you.
18 Like a war club, a sword or a sharpened arrow is
the man who bears false witness against his
neighbour.
19 Trusting a faithless man in a time of trouble is
like a broken tooth or a lame foot.
20 Like taking off a garment on a cold day, or
vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to
a heavy heart.
21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food; if he is
thirsty, give him something to drink.[3]
22 By doing this you will heap burning coals on his
head, and the LORD will reward you.

23 The north wind brings rain, and a secret tongue
brings angry looks.
24 Better to live in a corner of the roof than share a
house with a quarrelsome wife.
25 Like cold water to a weary soul is good news
from a distant land.
26 A righteous man who yields to the wicked is like
a trampled spring or a fouled fountain.
27 It is not good to eat honey to excess, and
searching out one's own honour is no honour.
28 Like a city broken into and left without walls is a
man who has no control over his spirit.

1 The second collection of Solomon's proverbs runs from 25:1 to 29:27.
2 Compare Luke 14:8–10.
3 Verses 21–22 are quoted in Romans 12:20.

Chapter 26

Proverbs 26 gathers sayings on three kinds of people. Honour does not fit a fool, who repeats his folly as a dog returns to its vomit, though one wise in his own eyes is worse. The lazy person says there is a lion in the road and turns on his bed like a door on its hinges. The gossip and the quarrelsome feed strife as wood feeds fire, and the deceiver hides hatred behind gracious words. Dig a pit, and you will fall into it.

1 Like snow in summer or rain at harvest, honour
is not fitting for a fool.
2 Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an
undeserved curse does not come to rest.
3 The horse needs a whip, the donkey a bridle, and
the backs of fools a rod.
4 Do not answer a fool as his folly deserves, or you
will become like him yourself.
5 Answer a fool as his folly deserves, or he will
think himself wise.[1]
6 Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool
cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.
7 A proverb in a fool's mouth is like the useless
legs of the lame.
8 Like tying a stone in a sling is giving honour to a
fool.
9 A proverb in a fool's mouth is like a thorn bush
waved by a drunkard.
10 Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who
hires a fool or hires passers-by.[2]
11 As a dog returns to its own vomit, so a fool
repeats his folly.[3]
12 Have you seen someone who thinks he is wise?
A fool has more hope than he does.
13 The lazy person says, "There is a lion in the
road, a lion in the streets!"
14 As a door turns on its hinges, so the lazy person
turns on his bed.
15 The lazy person buries his hand in the dish; it
wears him out to bring it back to his mouth.
16 The lazy person is wiser in his own eyes than
seven people who answer sensibly.
17 Like one who grabs a passing dog by the ears is
one who meddles in a quarrel not his own.
18 Like a madman who shoots firebrands, arrows
and death
19 is the man who deceives his neighbour and says,
"I was only joking!"
20 Without wood a fire goes out, and without a
gossip a quarrel dies down.
21 As charcoal to embers and wood to fire, so is a
quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
22 The words of a gossip are like tasty morsels;
they go down into the inmost being.
23 Like glaze coating an earthen pot are fervent
lips with an evil heart.
24 Whoever hates disguises it with his lips, but
stores up deceit within him.
25 When he speaks graciously, do not believe him,
for seven abominations are in his heart.
26 His hatred may be hidden by deceit, but his
wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
27 Dig a pit, and you will fall into it; roll a stone,
and it will roll back onto you.
28 A lying tongue hates the people it wounds, and
smooth talk brings ruin.

1 Verses 4 and 5 are set side by side on purpose: each applies in its own case.

2 The meaning of the Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

3 Quoted in 2 Peter 2:22.

Chapter 27

> *Proverbs 27 warns against boasting about tomorrow and praising oneself. An open rebuke is better than hidden love, and the wounds of a friend are faithful. A neighbour nearby is better than a brother far away. Iron is honed by iron, and one person hones another. As water reflects a face, the heart reflects the person. Neither Sheol nor human eyes are ever satisfied. The chapter ends by urging care for flocks and herds, for riches do not last for ever.*

1 Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.[1]

2 Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

3 A stone is heavy and sand a burden, but the provocation of a fool is heavier than both.

4 Anger is cruel and fury a flood, but who can stand before jealousy?

5 Better an open rebuke than hidden love.

6 The wounds of a friend are faithful, but the kisses of an enemy are many.

7 One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet.

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

9 Oil and incense make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from heartfelt counsel.

10 Do not abandon your friend or your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your disaster; better a neighbour nearby than a brother far away.

11 Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad, so that I may answer anyone who taunts me.

12 A shrewd man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and pay for it.

13 Take the garment of one who puts up security for a stranger; hold it in pledge if he does it for a foreign woman.

14 Whoever blesses his neighbour with a loud voice early in the morning, it will be counted as a curse to him.

15 A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day;

16 restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the right hand.

17 Iron is honed by iron, and one person hones another.[2]

18 Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and whoever looks after his master will be honoured.

19 As water reflects the face, so the heart reflects the person.

20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and neither are human eyes.

21 The crucible is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man is tested by the praise he receives.

22 Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with grain, his folly will not leave him.

23 Make sure you know how your flocks are faring, and keep your mind on your herds,

24 for riches do not last for ever, nor does a crown endure to all generations.

25 When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in,

26 the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field.

27 There will be enough goats' milk to feed you and your household and to nourish your servant girls.

1 Compare James 4:13–14.

2 Hebrew 'sharpens the face of his friend'.

Chapter 28

Proverbs 28 contrasts the wicked, who run though no one chases them, with the righteous, who are as confident as a lion. Those who keep the law are discerning. Better a poor man with integrity than a crooked rich man. Whoever conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy. A wicked ruler is like a growling lion over a poor people. Whoever hurries to get rich will not go unpunished, but whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing.

1 The wicked run away though no one chases
them, but the righteous are as confident as a lion.
2 When a land rebels, it has many rulers, but with
a man of understanding and knowledge order is
maintained.
3 A poor man who crushes the poor is like a
beating rain that leaves no bread.
4 People who abandon the law praise the wicked,
but those who keep it fight against them.
5 Evil men do not understand justice, but those
who seek the LORD understand it fully.
6 Better a poor man who walks in integrity than a
rich man whose ways are crooked.
7 A son who keeps the law shows discernment, but
one who keeps company with gluttons disgraces
his father.
8 Whoever increases his wealth by interest and
profit gathers it for one who is kind to the poor.
9 If anyone turns his ear away from hearing the
law, even his prayer is detestable.
10 Whoever leads the upright astray into an evil
way will fall into his own pit, but the blameless
will inherit good.
11 A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor
man with understanding sees through him.
12 When the righteous rejoice, there is great
splendour, but when the wicked come to power,
people go into hiding.
13 Whoever conceals his sins will not prosper, but
whoever confesses and forsakes them will find
mercy.
14 Blessed is the one who always fears, but
whoever hardens his heart will fall into trouble.[1]
15 A wicked man ruling a poor people is like a
growling lion or a prowling bear.
16 A ruler who lacks understanding is a great
oppressor, but one who hates unjust gain will
prolong his days.
17 A man burdened with another's blood will be a
fugitive until death; let no one help him.
18 Whoever walks blamelessly will be kept safe, but
whoever is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall.
19 Whoever works his land will have plenty of
bread, but whoever chases worthless things will
have plenty of poverty.
20 A faithful man will be richly blessed, but
whoever hurries to get rich will not go
unpunished.
21 To show partiality is not good, yet for a piece of
bread a man will do wrong.
22 A stingy man hurries after wealth and does not
know that poverty awaits him.
23 Whoever rebukes a man will in the end find
more favour than one who flatters with his tongue.
24 Whoever robs his father or mother and says, "It
is no offence," is a companion of the destroyer.
25 A greedy man stirs up strife, but whoever trusts
in the LORD will prosper.
26 Whoever trusts in his own heart is a fool, but
whoever walks in wisdom will be kept safe.
27 Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing, but
whoever closes his eyes to them will receive many
curses.
28 When the wicked come to power, people take
cover, but when they are destroyed, the righteous
multiply.

1 That is, fears the LORD.

Chapter 29

Proverbs 29 closes the second collection of Solomon's proverbs. When the righteous increase the people rejoice, but under the wicked they groan. A king who rules with justice gives stability to the land. A fool vents all his anger, but the wise hold it back. Without prophetic vision the people run wild. Pride brings a man low, but the humble gain honour. The fear of man is a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.

1 A man who stays stiff-necked after many rebukes
will suddenly be broken beyond healing.
2 When the righteous grow in number, the people
are glad, but when a wicked man rules, the people
sigh.
3 Whoever loves wisdom makes his father glad, but
one who keeps company with prostitutes wastes
his wealth.
4 By justice a king gives stability to the land, but
one who demands gifts tears it down.
5 Whoever flatters his neighbour is laying a net for
his steps.
6 An evil man is snared by his own transgression,
but the righteous sing and rejoice.
7 The righteous care about justice for the poor, but
the wicked have no such concern.
8 Mockers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away
anger.
9 If a wise man goes to court with a fool, the fool
rages and laughs, and there is no peace.
10 Bloodthirsty men hate the blameless and seek
the life of the upright.
11 A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise
man quietly holds it back.
12 If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials will be
wicked.
13 Poor man and oppressor meet on common
ground: the LORD gives light to the eyes of both.
14 If a king judges the poor with fairness, his
throne will be established for ever.
15 Rod and correction bring wisdom, but a child
left to himself disgraces his mother.
16 As the wicked multiply, so does wrongdoing, but
the righteous will watch them fall.
17 Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he
will bring delight to your soul.
18 Without prophetic vision the people run wild,
but blessed is the one who keeps the law.[1]
19 Words alone will not correct a servant; he may
understand yet not obey.
20 Have you seen someone who speaks too quickly?
A fool has more hope than he does.
21 A servant pampered from youth will in the end
be ungrateful.[2]
22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered
man commits many sins.
23 A man's pride will bring him low, but the humble
in spirit will gain honour.
24 Whoever shares with a thief hates his own life;
he hears the curse but does not testify.[3]
25 The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts
in the LORD is kept safe.
26 Many seek the ruler's favour, but justice for a
man comes from the LORD.
27 The unjust are detestable to the righteous, and
the upright are detestable to the wicked.

1 Hebrew 'vision', that is, revelation from God through the prophets.
2 The meaning of the last Hebrew word is uncertain.
3 A witness who kept silent after the public curse was guilty; see Leviticus 5:1.

Chapter 30

> *Proverbs 30 gives the words of Agur, who confesses that he has not learned wisdom and asks who has gone up to heaven and come down. Every word of God is proven true. He prays to be given neither poverty nor riches, only the bread he needs. Then come sayings in numbered groups: four things never satisfied, four too wonderful to understand, four that make the earth tremble, four small but wise creatures, and four that move with stately bearing. Stirring up anger produces strife.*

1 The words of Agur son of Jakeh, an oracle. This
man speaks to Ithiel, to Ithiel and to Ucal:[1]
2 Surely I am more stupid than any man; I do not
have a man's understanding.
3 Wisdom I have never learned, and I have no
knowledge of the Holy One.
4 Who has climbed up to heaven and come back
down? Who has caught the wind in the hollow of
his hands? Who has bundled the waters in a
cloak? Who has set in place all the ends of the
earth? What is his name, and his son's name? You
must surely know![2]
5 Every promise of God has been tested in the fire;
He shields all who shelter in Him.
6 Do not add to His words, or He will rebuke you,
and you will be found a liar.

7 Two things I ask of You; do not refuse me before I die:

8 Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with the bread I need,

9 or I may be full and deny You and say, “Who is the LORD?” or I may become poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.

10 Do not slander a servant to his master, or he will curse you, and you will be held guilty.

11 There is a generation that curses its father and does not bless its mother,

12 a generation that is pure in its own eyes yet is not washed of its filth,

13 a generation whose eyes are so haughty, whose eyelids are lifted high,

14 a generation whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are knives, to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among mankind.

15 The leech has two daughters, “Give!” and “Give!” Three things are never satisfied, four never say, “Enough!”:

16 Sheol, the barren womb, land that is never satisfied with water, and fire that never says, “Enough!”

17 The eye that mocks a father and scorns obedience to a mother will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the young vultures.

18 There are three things too wonderful for me, four that I do not understand:

19 the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a young woman.

20 This is how an adulteress behaves: she eats, 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 who becomes king, a godless fool who has his fill of food,

23 an unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress.

24 Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise:

25 the ants are a people without strength, yet they store up their food in summer;

26 the rock badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the cliffs;

27 the locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks;

28 the lizard can be caught with the hand, yet it lives in kings’ palaces.

29 There are three things that are stately in their stride, four that move with stately bearing:

30 the lion, mightiest among beasts, which retreats before nothing;

31 the strutting rooster, the male goat, and a king with his army around him.[3]

32 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been plotting evil, put your hand over your mouth.

33 For as churning milk produces butter and twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.

1 Agur, like Lemuel in 31:1, is otherwise unknown. ‘The oracle’ may instead be ‘of Massa’, a people of Arabia. The second line may also be read ‘I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out’.

2 Compare John 3:13.

3 The meaning of the Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

Chapter 31

Proverbs 31 closes the book. King Lemuel’s mother warns him not to give his strength to women or to drink wine, so that he may not forget the law, and tells him to speak up for those who cannot speak and to defend the poor. Then comes an alphabetic poem in praise of the capable wife, worth far more than rubies. She works with willing hands, trades and buys a field, rises before dawn, cares for the poor and clothes her household, and speaks with wisdom and loyal kindness. Her children and husband praise her, for a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

1 The words of Lemuel, king of Massa, which his mother taught him:[1]

2 Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb! Listen, son of my vows!

3 Do not give your strength to women, or your
ways to those who destroy kings.
4 It is not for kings, Lemuel, it is not for kings to
drink wine, or for rulers to crave strong drink,
5 or they will drink and forget what is decreed and
deprive all the afflicted of their rights.
6 Give strong drink to one who is perishing, and
wine to those who are bitter in soul.
7 Let them drink and forget their poverty and
remember their misery no more.
8 Open your mouth for those who cannot speak, for
the rights of all who are destitute.
9 Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend
the rights of the poor and needy.
10 Who can find a capable wife? She is worth far
more than rubies.[2]
11 Her husband trusts her completely, and he will
not lack gain.
12 All the days of her life she brings him good and
never harm.
13 She looks for wool and flax and works with
willing hands.
14 She is like the merchant ships; she brings her
food from far away.
15 She rises while it is still night and provides food
for her household and portions for her servant
girls.
16 She considers a field and buys it; from her
earnings she plants a vineyard.
17 She wraps strength around her waist and makes
her arms strong.
18 She sees that her trading is profitable; her lamp
does not go out at night.
19 She puts her hands to the distaff, and her
fingers hold the spindle.
20 She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out
her hands to the needy.
21 She does not fear the snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
22 She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is
fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is known at the gates, where he
sits among the elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and
supplies the merchants with sashes.
25 She is clothed in strength and dignity, and she
smiles at the days ahead.
26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the
teaching of loyal kindness is on her tongue.
27 She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her children stand and call her blessed, and her
husband praises her too:
29 “Many women have done capably, but you
surpass them all.”
30 Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a
woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
31 Give her a share of what her hands have earned,
and let her deeds bring her praise in the city
gates.

1 Or ‘The words of King Lemuel, an oracle his mother taught him’. Compare the note at 30:1.

2 Verses 10–31 are an acrostic: each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. ‘Capable wife’ is the phrase used in 12:4; it can also mean ‘woman of strength’ or ‘woman of noble character’.