

Sirach 1-20 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Prologue

Many great teachings have been given to us through the Law and the Prophets and the others[a] that followed them, and for these we should praise Israel for instruction and wisdom. Now, those who read the scriptures must not only themselves understand them, but must also as lovers of learning be able through the spoken and written word to help the outsiders. So my grandfather Jesus, who had devoted himself especially to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other books of our ancestors, and had acquired considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom, so that by becoming familiar also with his book[b] those who love learning might make even greater progress in living according to the law.

You are invited therefore to read it with goodwill and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, despite our diligent labor in translating, we may seem to have rendered some phrases imperfectly. For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language. Not only this book, but even the Law itself, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books differ not a little when read in the original.

When I came to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes and stayed for some time, I found opportunity for no little instruction.[c] It seemed highly necessary that I should myself devote some diligence and labor to the translation of this book. During that time I have applied my skill day and night to complete and publish the book for those living abroad who wished to gain learning and are disposed to live according to the law.

EUERGETES ū ūr' jə tez (ευεργέτης, *benefactor*). A title of honor borne by two of the Ptolemaic kings, Ptolemy III (246-221 B.C.) and Ptolemy VII (145-116 B.C.). The author of Ecclesiasticus dates his work with reference to his coming "to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes." Although he is not specific about which of the two men with this title he refers to, it is apparent that he has in mind the second.

Bibliography R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, I (1963), 293.

(ECCLESIASTICUS)

The Wisdom of Ben Sira derives its title from the author, "Yeshua [Jesus], son of Eleazar, son of Sira" (50:27). This seems to be the earliest title of the book. The designation "Liber Ecclesiasticus," meaning "Church Book," appended to some Greek and Latin manuscripts, is perhaps due to the extensive use the church made of this book in presenting moral teaching to catechumens and to the faithful. The title "Sirach" comes from the Greek form of the author's name.

The author, a sage who lived in Jerusalem, was thoroughly imbued with love for the wisdom tradition, and also for the law, priesthood, Temple, and divine worship. As a wise and experienced observer of life he addressed himself to his contemporaries with the motive of helping them to maintain religious faith and integrity through study of the books sacred to the Jewish tradition.

The book contains numerous well-crafted maxims, grouped by affinity, and dealing with a variety of subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relations with one another and with God. It treats of friendship, education, poverty and wealth, laws, religious worship, and many other matters that reflect the religious and social customs of the time.

Written in Hebrew in the early years of the second century B.C., the book was finished by ca. 175. The text was translated into Greek by the author's grandson after 117 B.C. He also wrote a foreword which contains valuable information about the book, its author, and himself as translator. Until the close of the nineteenth century the Wisdom of Ben Sira was known to Christians in translations, of which the Greek rendering was the most important. From it the Latin version was made. Between 1896 and 1900, again in 1931, and several times since 1956, incomplete manuscripts were discovered, so that more than two thirds of the book in Hebrew is available; these Hebrew texts agree substantially with the Greek. One such text, from Masada, is pre-Christian in date. The New American Bible provides a critical translation based on the evidence of all the ancient texts.

Though not included in the Jewish Bible after the first century A.D., nor, therefore, accepted by Protestants, the Wisdom of Ben Sira has been recognized by the Catholic Church as inspired and canonical. The Foreword, though not properly part of the book, is always included with it because of its antiquity and importance.

The contents of the Wisdom of Ben Sira are of a discursive nature, not easily divided into separate parts. Chapters 1–43 deal largely with moral instruction; 44:1–50:24 contain a eulogy of the heroes of Israel. There are two appendixes in which the author expresses his gratitude to God (51:1–12), and invites the unschooled to acquire true wisdom (51:13–30).

In Praise of Wisdom Chapter 1

1 All wisdom is from the Lord, and with him it remains forever. 2 The sand of the sea, the drops of rain, and the days of eternity—who can count them? 3 The height of heaven, the breadth of the earth, the abyss, and wisdom[d]—who can search them out? 4 Wisdom was created before all other things, and prudent understanding from eternity.[e] 6 The root of wisdom—to whom has it been revealed? Her subtleties—who knows them?[f] 8 There is but one who is wise, greatly to be feared, seated upon his throne—the Lord. 9 It is he who created her; he saw her and took her measure; he poured her out upon all his works, 10 upon all the living according to his gift; he lavished her upon those who love him.[g] Fear of the Lord Is True Wisdom 11 The fear of the Lord is glory and exultation, and gladness and a crown of rejoicing. **12 The fear of the Lord delights the heart, and gives gladness and joy and long life.[h]** 13 Those who fear the Lord will have a happy end; on the day of their death they will be blessed. 14 To fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; she is created with the faithful in the womb. 15 She made[i] among human beings an eternal foundation, and among their descendants she will abide faithfully. 16 To fear the Lord is fullness of wisdom; she inebriates mortals with her fruits; 17 she fills their[j] whole house with desirable goods, and their[k] storehouses with her produce. 18 The fear of the Lord is the crown of wisdom, making peace and perfect health to flourish.[l] 19 She rained down knowledge and discerning comprehension, and she heightened the glory of those who held her fast. **20 To fear the Lord is the root of wisdom, and her branches are long life.[m]** 22 Unjust anger cannot be justified, for anger tips the scale to one's ruin. 23 Those who are patient stay calm until the right moment, and then cheerfulness comes back to them. 24 They hold back their words until the right moment; then the lips of many tell of their good sense. 25 In the treasuries of wisdom are wise sayings, but godliness is an abomination to a sinner. 26 If you desire wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will lavish her upon you. **27 For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline, fidelity and humility are his delight. 28 Do not disobey the fear of the Lord; do not approach him with a divided mind. 29 Do not be a hypocrite before others, and keep watch over your lips. 30 Do not exalt yourself, or you may fall and bring dishonor upon yourself. The Lord will reveal your secrets and overthrow you before the whole congregation, because you did not come in the fear of the Lord, and your heart was full of deceit.**

Chapter 2 Duties toward God

2 My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for testing.[n] 2 Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of calamity. 3 Cling to him and do not depart, so that your last

days may be prosperous. 4 Accept whatever befalls you, and in times of humiliation be patient. 5 For gold is tested in the fire, and those found acceptable, in the furnace of humiliation.[o] 6 Trust in him, and he will help you; make your ways straight, and hope in him. 7 You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy; do not stray, or else you may fall. **8 You who fear the Lord, trust in him, and your reward will not be lost. 9 You who fear the Lord, hope for good things, for lasting joy and mercy.[p]** 10 Consider the generations of old and see: has anyone trusted in the Lord and been disappointed? Or has anyone persevered in the fear of the Lord[q] and been forsaken? Or has anyone called upon him and been neglected? 11 For the Lord is compassionate and merciful; he forgives sins and saves in time of distress. 12 Woe to timid hearts and to slack hands, and to the sinner who walks a double path! 13 Woe to the fainthearted who have no trust! Therefore they will have no shelter. 14 Woe to you who have lost your nerve! What will you do when the Lord's reckoning comes? 15 Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his words, and those who love him keep his ways. 16 Those who fear the Lord seek to please him, and those who love him are filled with his law. 17 Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts, and humble themselves before him. 18 Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, but not into the hands of mortals; for equal to his majesty is his mercy, and equal to his name are his works.[r]

CHAPTER 3 Sirach:Duties toward Parents

1 Listen to me your father, O children; act accordingly, that you may be kept in safety. 2 For the Lord honors a father above his children, and he confirms a mother's right over her children. 3 Those who honor their father atone for sins, 4 and those who respect their mother are like those who lay up treasure. 5 Those who honor their father will have joy in their own children, and when they pray they will be heard. 6 Those who respect their father will have long life, and those who honor[s] their mother obey the Lord; 7 they will serve their parents as their masters.[t] 8 Honor your father by word and deed, that his blessing may come upon you. 9 For a father's blessing strengthens the houses of the children, but a mother's curse uproots their foundations. 10 Do not glorify yourself by dishonoring your father, for your father's dishonor is no glory to you. 11 The glory of one's father is one's own glory, and it is a disgrace for children not to respect their mother. 12 My child, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; 13 even if his mind fails, be patient with him; because you have all your faculties do not despise him. **14 For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, and will be credited to you against your sins; 15 in the day of your distress it will be remembered in your favor; like frost in fair weather, your sins will melt away.** 16 Whoever forsakes a father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers a mother is cursed by the Lord. Humility 17 My child, perform your tasks with humility;[u] then you will be loved by those whom God accepts. 18 The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord.[v] 20 For great is the might of the Lord; but by the humble he is glorified. 21 Neither seek what is too difficult for you, nor investigate what is beyond your power. 22 Reflect upon what you have been commanded, for what is hidden is not your concern. **23 Do not meddle in matters that are beyond you, for more than you can understand has been shown you.** 24 For their conceit has led many astray, and wrong opinion has impaired their judgment. 25 Without eyes there is no light; without knowledge there is no wisdom.[w] 26 A stubborn mind will fare badly at the end, and whoever loves danger will perish in it. 27 A stubborn mind will be burdened by troubles, and the sinner adds sin to sins. 28 When calamity befalls the proud, there is no healing, for an evil plant has taken root in him. 29 The mind of the intelligent appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the desire of the wise. Alms for the Poor 30 As water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin. 31 Those who repay favors give thought to the future; when they fall they will find support.

Chapter 4 Sirach: Duties toward the Poor and the Oppressed

1 My child, do not cheat the poor of their living, and do not keep needy eyes waiting. 2 Do not grieve the hungry, or anger one in need. 3 Do not add to the troubles of the desperate, or delay giving to the needy. **4 Do not reject a suppliant in distress, or turn your face away from the poor. 5 Do not avert your eye from the needy, and give no one reason to curse you; 6 for if in bitterness of soul some should curse**

you, their Creator will hear their prayer. 7 Endear yourself to the congregation; bow your head low to the great. 8 Give a hearing to the poor, and return their greeting politely. 9 Rescue the oppressed from the oppressor; and do not be hesitant in giving a verdict. 10 Be a father to orphans, and be like a husband to their mother; you will then be like a son of the Most High, and he will love you more than does your mother.

The Rewards of Wisdom

11 Wisdom teaches[x] her children and gives help to those who seek her. 12 Whoever loves her loves life, and those who seek her from early morning are filled with joy. 13 Whoever holds her fast inherits glory, and the Lord blesses the place she[y] enters. 14 Those who serve her minister to the Holy One; the Lord loves those who love her. 15 Those who obey her will judge the nations, and all who listen to her will live secure. 16 If they remain faithful, they will inherit her; their descendants will also obtain her. **17 For at first she will walk with them on tortuous paths; she will bring fear and dread upon them, and will torment them by her discipline until she trusts them,[z] and she will test them with her ordinances.** 18 **Then she will come straight back to them again and gladden them, and will reveal her secrets to them.** 19 If they go astray she will forsake them, and hand them over to their ruin. 20 Watch for the opportune time, and beware of evil, and do not be ashamed to be yourself. 21 For there is a shame that leads to sin, and there is a shame that is glory and favor. 22 Do not show partiality, to your own harm, or deference, to your downfall. **23 Do not refrain from speaking at the proper moment,[aa] and do not hide your wisdom.[ab]** 24 For wisdom becomes known through speech, and education through the words of the tongue. 25 Never speak against the truth, but be ashamed of your ignorance. 26 Do not be ashamed to confess your sins, and do not try to stop the current of a river. 27 Do not subject yourself to a fool, or show partiality to a ruler. **28 Fight to the death for truth, and the Lord God will fight for you.** 29 Do not be reckless in your speech, or sluggish and remiss in your deeds. 30 Do not be like a lion in your home, or suspicious of your servants. 31 Do not let your hand be stretched out to receive and closed when it is time to give.

CHAPTER 5 Sirach: Precepts for Everyday Living

5 Do not rely on your wealth, or say, "I have enough." 2 Do not follow your inclination and strength in pursuing the desires of your heart. 3 Do not say, "Who can have power over me?" for the Lord will surely punish you. 4 Do not say, "I sinned, yet what has happened to me?" for the Lord is slow to anger. **5 Do not be so confident of forgiveness[ac] that you add sin to sin.** 6 **Do not say, "His mercy is great, he will forgive[ad] the multitude of my sins," for both mercy and wrath are with him, and his anger will rest on sinners.** 7 Do not delay to turn back to the Lord, and do not postpone it from day to day; for suddenly the wrath of the Lord will come upon you, and at the time of punishment you will perish. 8 Do not depend on dishonest wealth, for it will not benefit you on the day of calamity. 9 Do not winnow in every wind, or follow every path.[ae] 10 Stand firm for what you know, and let your speech be consistent. 11 Be quick to hear, but deliberate in answering. 12 If you know what to say, answer your neighbor; but if not, put your hand over your mouth. **13 Honor and dishonor come from speaking, and the tongue of mortals may be their downfall.** 14 Do not be called double-tongued[af] and do not lay traps with your tongue; for shame comes to the thief, and severe condemnation to the double-tongued. 15 In great and small matters cause no harm,[ag]

Chapter 6 SIRACH

1 And do not become an enemy instead of a friend; for a bad name incurs shame and reproach; so it is with the double-tongued sinner. 2 Do not fall into the grip of passion,[ah] or you may be torn apart as by a bull. [ai] 3 Your leaves will be devoured and your fruit destroyed, and you will be left like a withered tree. 4 Evil passion destroys those who have it, and makes them the laughingstock of their enemies. Friendship, False and True **5 Pleasant speech multiplies friends, and a gracious tongue multiplies courtesies.** 6 Let those

who are friendly with you be many, but let your advisers be one in a thousand. 7 When you gain friends, gain them through testing, and do not trust them hastily. 8 For there are friends who are such when it suits them, but they will not stand by you in time of trouble. 9 And there are friends who change into enemies, and tell of the quarrel to your disgrace. 10 And there are friends who sit at your table, but they will not stand by you in time of trouble. 11 When you are prosperous, they become your second self, and lord it over your servants; 12 but if you are brought low, they turn against you, and hide themselves from you. **13 Keep away from your enemies, and be on guard with your friends.** 14 Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure. 15 Faithful friends are beyond price; no amount can balance their worth. 16 Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; and those who fear the Lord will find them. **17 Those who fear the Lord direct their friendship aright, for as they are, so are their neighbors also.**

Blessings of Wisdom

18 My child, from your youth choose discipline, and when you have gray hair you will still find wisdom. 19 Come to her like one who plows and sows, and wait for her good harvest. For when you cultivate her you will toil but little, and soon you will eat of her produce. 20 She seems very harsh to the undisciplined; fools cannot remain with her. 21 She will be like a heavy stone to test them, and they will not delay in casting her aside. 22 For wisdom is like her name; she is not readily perceived by many. 23 Listen, my child, and accept my judgment; do not reject my counsel. 24 Put your feet into her fetters, and your neck into her collar. 25 Bend your shoulders and carry her, and do not fret under her bonds. 26 Come to her with all your soul, and keep her ways with all your might. 27 Search out and seek, and she will become known to you; and when you get hold of her, do not let her go. 28 For at last you will find the rest she gives, and she will be changed into joy for you. 29 Then her fetters will become for you a strong defense, and her collar a glorious robe. 30 Her yoke[aj] is a golden ornament, and her bonds a purple cord. 31 You will wear her like a glorious robe, and put her on like a splendid crown.[ak] 32 If you are willing, my child, you can be disciplined, and if you apply yourself you will become clever. 33 If you love to listen you will gain knowledge, and if you pay attention you will become wise. **34 Stand in the company of the elders. Who is wise? Attach yourself to such a one. 35 Be ready to listen to every godly discourse, and let no wise proverbs escape you. 36 If you see an intelligent person, rise early to visit him; let your foot wear out his doorstep. 37 Reflect on the statutes of the Lord,** and meditate at all times on his commandments. It is he who will give insight to[al] your mind, and your desire for wisdom will be granted.

Chapter 7 Sirach Miscellaneous Advice

1. Do no evil, and evil will never overtake you. 2 Stay away from wrong, and it will turn away from you. 3 Do[am] not sow in the furrows of injustice, and you will not reap a sevenfold crop. 4 Do not seek from the Lord high office, or the seat of honor from the king. 5 Do not assert your righteousness before the Lord, or display your wisdom before the king. 6 Do not seek to become a judge, or you may be unable to root out injustice; you may be partial to the powerful, and so mar your integrity. 7 Commit no offense against the public, and do not disgrace yourself among the people. 8 Do not commit a sin twice; not even for one will you go unpunished. 9 Do not say, "He will consider the great number of my gifts, and when I make an offering to the Most High God, he will accept it." 10 Do not grow weary when you pray; do not neglect to give alms. 11 Do not ridicule a person who is embittered in spirit, for there is One who humbles and exalts. 12 Do not devise[an] a lie against your brother, or do the same to a friend. 13 Refuse to utter any lie, for it is a habit that results in no good. 14 Do not babble in the assembly of the elders, and do not repeat yourself when you pray. 15 Do not hate hard labor or farm work, which was created by the Most High. 16 Do not enroll in the ranks of sinners; remember that retribution does not delay. **17 Humble yourself to the utmost, for the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms.[ao]**

Relations with Others

18 Do not exchange a friend for money, or a real brother for the gold of Ophir. 19 Do not dismiss[ap] a wise and good wife, for her charm is worth more than gold. 20 Do not abuse slaves who work faithfully, or hired laborers who devote themselves to their task. 21 Let your soul love intelligent slaves;[aq] do not withhold from them their freedom. 22 Do you have cattle? Look after them; if they are profitable to you, keep them. 23 Do you have children? Discipline them, and make them obedient[ar] from their youth. 24 Do you have daughters? Be concerned for their chastity,[as] and do not show yourself too indulgent with them. **25 Give a daughter in marriage, and you complete a great task; but give her to a sensible man.** 26 Do you have a wife who pleases you?[at] Do not divorce her; but do not trust yourself to one whom you detest. 27 With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. 28 Remember that it was of your parents[au] you were born; how can you repay what they have given to you? 29 With all your soul fear the Lord, and revere his priests. 30 With all your might love your Maker, and do not neglect his ministers. 31 Fear the Lord and honor the priest, and give him his portion, as you have been commanded: the first fruits, the guilt offering, the gift of the shoulders, the sacrifice of sanctification, and the first fruits of the holy things. 32 Stretch out your hand to the poor, so that your blessing may be complete. 33 **Give graciously to all the living; do not withhold kindness even from the dead.** 34 **Do not avoid those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn.** 35 **Do not hesitate to visit the sick, because for such deeds you will be loved.** 36 **In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin.**

Chapter 8 Sirach: Prudence and Common Sense

8 Do not contend with the powerful, or you may fall into their hands. 2 Do not quarrel with the rich, in case their resources outweigh yours; for gold has ruined many, and has perverted the minds of kings. 3 Do not argue with the loud of mouth, and do not heap wood on their fire. 4 Do not make fun of one who is ill-bred, or your ancestors may be insulted. 5 Do not reproach one who is turning away from sin; remember that we all deserve punishment. 6 Do not disdain one who is old, for some of us are also growing old. **7 Do not rejoice over anyone's death; remember that we must all die.** 8 Do not slight the discourse of the sages, but busy yourself with their maxims; because from them you will learn discipline and how to serve princes. 9 Do not ignore the discourse of the aged, for they themselves learned from their parents;[av] from them you learn how to understand and to give an answer when the need arises. 10 Do not kindle the coals of sinners, or you may be burned in their flaming fire. 11 Do not let the insolent bring you to your feet, or they may lie in ambush against your words. **12 Do not lend to one who is stronger than you; but if you do lend anything, count it as a loss.** 13 Do not give surety beyond your means; but if you give surety, be prepared to pay. 14 Do not go to law against a judge, for the decision will favor him because of his standing. 15 Do not go traveling with the reckless, or they will be burdensome to you; for they will act as they please, and through their folly you will perish with them. 16 Do not pick a fight with the quick-tempered, and do not journey with them through lonely country, because bloodshed means nothing to them, and where no help is at hand, they will strike you down. **17 Do not consult with fools, for they cannot keep a secret.** **18 In the presence of strangers do nothing that is to be kept secret, for you do not know what they will divulge.** [aw] **19 Do not reveal your thoughts to anyone, or you may drive away your happiness.**[ax]

Chapter 9 Sirach: Advice concerning Women

1 Do not be jealous of the wife of your bosom, or you will teach her an evil lesson to your own hurt. 2 Do not give yourself to a woman and let her trample down your strength. 3 Do not go near a loose woman, or you will fall into her snares. 4 Do not dally with a singing girl, or you will be caught by her tricks. 5 Do not look intently at a virgin, or you may stumble and incur penalties for her. 6 Do not give yourself to prostitutes, or you may lose your inheritance. 7 Do not look around in the streets of a city, or wander about in its deserted sections. 8 Turn away your eyes from a shapely woman, and do not gaze at beauty belonging to another; many have been seduced by a woman's beauty, and by it passion is kindled like a fire. 9 Never dine with

another man's wife, or revel with her at wine; or your heart may turn aside to her, and in blood[ay] you may be plunged into destruction.

Chapter 10 Sirach: Choice of Friends

10 Do not abandon old friends, for new ones cannot equal them. A new friend is like new wine; when it has aged, you can drink it with pleasure. 11 Do not envy the success of sinners, for you do not know what their end will be like. 12 Do not delight in what pleases the ungodly; remember that they will not be held guiltless all their lives. 13 Keep far from those who have power to kill, and you will not be haunted by the fear of death. But if you approach them, make no misstep, or they may rob you of your life. Know that you are stepping among snares, and that you are walking on the city battlements. **14 As much as you can, aim to know your neighbors, and consult with the wise. 15 Let your conversation be with intelligent people, and let all your discussion be about the law of the Most High. 16 Let the righteous be your dinner companions, and let your glory be in the fear of the Lord.**

Concerning Rulers

17 A work is praised for the skill of the artisan; so a people's leader is proved wise by his words. 18 The loud of mouth are feared in their city, and the one who is reckless in speech is hated.

10 A wise magistrate educates his people, and the rule of an intelligent person is well ordered. 2 As the people's judge is, so are his officials; as the ruler of the city is, so are all its inhabitants. **3 An undisciplined king ruins his people, but a city becomes fit to live in through the understanding of its rulers. 4 The government of the earth is in the hand of the Lord, and over it he will raise up the right leader for the time. 5 Human success is in the hand of the Lord, and it is he who confers honor upon the lawgiver.[az]**

The Sin of Pride

6 Do not get angry with your neighbor for every injury, and do not resort to acts of insolence. 7 Arrogance is hateful to the Lord and to mortals, and injustice is outrageous to both. 8 Sovereignty passes from nation to nation on account of injustice and insolence and wealth.[ba] 9 How can dust and ashes be proud? Even in life the human body decays.[bb] 10 A long illness baffles the physician;[bc] the king of today will die tomorrow. 11 For when one is dead he inherits maggots and vermin[bd] and worms. **12 The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord; the heart has withdrawn from its Maker. 13 For the beginning of pride is sin, and the one who clings to it pours out abominations. Therefore the Lord brings upon them unheard-of calamities, and destroys them completely. 14 The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers, and enthrones the lowly in their place. 15 The Lord plucks up the roots of the nations,[be] and plants the humble in their place. 16 The Lord lays waste the lands of the nations, and destroys them to the foundations of the earth. 17 He removes some of them and destroys them, and erases the memory of them from the earth. 18 Pride was not created for human beings, or violent anger for those born of women.**

Persons Deserving Honor

19 Whose offspring are worthy of honor? Human offspring. Whose offspring are worthy of honor? Those who fear the Lord. Whose offspring are unworthy of honor? Human offspring. Whose offspring are unworthy of honor? Those who break the commandments. 20 Among family members their leader is worthy of honor, but those who fear the Lord are worthy of honor in his eyes.[bf] 22 The rich, and the eminent, and the poor—their glory is the fear of the Lord. 23 It is not right to despise one who is intelligent but poor, and it is not proper to honor one who is sinful. **24 The prince and the judge and the ruler are honored, but none of them is greater than the one who fears the Lord. 25 Free citizens will serve a wise servant, and an intelligent person will not complain.**

Concerning Humility

26 Do not make a display of your wisdom when you do your work, and do not boast when you are in need. 27 Better is the worker who has goods in plenty than the boaster who lacks bread. 28 My child, honor yourself with humility, and give yourself the esteem you deserve. 29 Who will acquit those who condemn[bg] themselves? And who will honor those who dishonor themselves?[bh] 30 The poor are honored for their knowledge, while the rich are honored for their wealth. 31 One who is honored in poverty, how much more in wealth! And one dishonored in wealth, how much more in poverty!

The Deceptiveness of Appearances

11 The wisdom of the humble lifts their heads high, and seats them among the great. 2 Do not praise individuals for their good looks, or loathe anyone because of appearance alone. 3 The bee is small among flying creatures, but what it produces is the best of sweet things. 4 Do not boast about wearing fine clothes, and do not exalt yourself when you are honored; for the works of the Lord are wonderful, and his works are concealed from humankind. 5 Many kings have had to sit on the ground, but one who was never thought of has worn a crown. 6 Many rulers have been utterly disgraced, and the honored have been handed over to others.

Deliberation and Caution

7 Do not find fault before you investigate; examine first, and then criticize. 8 Do not answer before you listen, and do not interrupt when another is speaking. 9 Do not argue about a matter that does not concern you, and do not sit with sinners when they judge a case. 10 My child, do not busy yourself with many matters; if you multiply activities, you will not be held blameless. If you pursue, you will not overtake, and by fleeing you will not escape. 11 There are those who work and struggle and hurry, but are so much the more in want. 12 There are others who are slow and need help, who lack strength and abound in poverty; but the eyes of the Lord look kindly upon them; he lifts them out of their lowly condition 13 and raises up their heads to the amazement of the many. 14 Good things and bad, life and death, poverty and wealth, come from the Lord.[bi] 17 The Lord's gift remains with the devout, and his favor brings lasting success. 18 One becomes rich through diligence and self-denial, and the reward allotted to him is this: 19 when he says, "I have found rest, and now I shall feast on my goods!" he does not know how long it will be until he leaves them to others and dies.

20 Stand by your agreement and attend to it, and grow old in your work. 21 Do not wonder at the works of a sinner, but trust in the Lord and keep at your job; for it is easy in the sight of the Lord to make the poor rich suddenly, in an instant. 22 The blessing of the Lord is[bj] the reward of the pious, and quickly God causes his blessing to flourish. 23 Do not say, "What do I need, and what further benefit can be mine?" 24 Do not say, "I have enough, and what harm can come to me now?" 25 In the day of prosperity, adversity is forgotten, and in the day of adversity, prosperity is not remembered. 26 For it is easy for the Lord on the day of death to reward individuals according to their conduct. 27 An hour's misery makes one forget past delights, and at the close of one's life one's deeds are revealed. 28 Call no one happy before his death; by how he ends, a person becomes known.[bk]

Care in Choosing Friends

29 Do not invite everyone into your home, for many are the tricks of the crafty. 30 Like a decoy partridge in a cage, so is the mind of the proud, and like spies they observe your weakness;[bl] 31 for they lie in wait, turning good into evil, and to worthy actions they attach blame. 32 From a spark many coals are kindled, and a sinner lies in wait to shed blood. 33 Beware of scoundrels, for they devise evil, and they may ruin your reputation

forever. **34 Receive strangers into your home and they will stir up trouble for you, and will make you a stranger to your own family.**

Chapter 12 Sirach

If you do good, know to whom you do it, and you will be thanked for your good deeds. 2 Do good to the devout, and you will be repaid— if not by them, certainly by the Most High. **3 No good comes to one who persists in evil or to one who does not give alms. 4 Give to the devout, but do not help the sinner. 5 Do good to the humble, but do not give to the ungodly; hold back their bread, and do not give it to them, for by means of it they might subdue you; then you will receive twice as much evil for all the good you have done to them.** 6 For the Most High also hates sinners and will inflict punishment on the ungodly.[bm] 7 Give to the one who is good, but do not help the sinner. 8 A friend is not known[bn] in prosperity, nor is an enemy hidden in adversity. 9 One's enemies are friendly[bo] when one prospers, but in adversity even one's friend disappears. 10 Never trust your enemy, for like corrosion in copper, so is his wickedness. 11 Even if he humbles himself and walks bowed down, take care to be on your guard against him. Be to him like one who polishes a mirror, to be sure it does not become completely tarnished. **12 Do not put him next to you, or he may overthrow you and take your place. Do not let him sit at your right hand, or else he may try to take your own seat, and at last you will realize the truth of my words, and be stung by what I have said.** 13 Who pities a snake charmer when he is bitten, or all those who go near wild animals? 14 So no one pities a person who associates with a sinner and becomes involved in the other's sins. 15 He stands by you for a while, but if you falter, he will not be there. **16 An enemy speaks sweetly with his lips, but in his heart he plans to throw you into a pit; an enemy may have tears in his eyes, but if he finds an opportunity he will never have enough of your blood. 17 If evil comes upon you, you will find him there ahead of you; pretending to help, he will trip you up. 18 Then he will shake his head, and clap his hands, and whisper much, and show his true face.**

Chapter 13 Sirach: Caution Regarding Associates

13 Whoever touches pitch gets dirty, and whoever associates with a proud person becomes like him. 2 Do not lift a weight too heavy for you, or associate with one mightier and richer than you. How can the clay pot associate with the iron kettle? The pot will strike against it and be smashed. 3 A rich person does wrong, and even adds insults; a poor person suffers wrong, and must add apologies. 4 A rich person[bp] will exploit you if you can be of use to him, but if you are in need he will abandon you. 5 If you own something, he will live with you; he will drain your resources without a qualm. 6 When he needs you he will deceive you, and will smile at you and encourage you; he will speak to you kindly and say, "What do you need?" **7 He will embarrass you with his delicacies, until he has drained you two or three times, and finally he will laugh at you. Should he see you afterwards, he will pass you by and shake his head at you. 8 Take care not to be led astray and humiliated when you are enjoying yourself.[bq]** 9 When an influential person invites you, be reserved, and he will invite you more insistently. 10 Do not be forward, or you may be rebuffed; do not stand aloof, or you will be forgotten. 11 Do not try to treat him as an equal, or trust his lengthy conversations; for he will test you by prolonged talk, and while he smiles he will be examining you. 12 Cruel are those who do not keep your secrets; they will not spare you harm or imprisonment. 13 Be on your guard and very careful, for you are walking about with your own downfall.[br] 15 Every creature loves its like, and every person the neighbor. 16 All living beings associate with their own kind, and people stick close to those like themselves. **17 What does a wolf have in common with a lamb? No more has a sinner with the devout. 18 What peace is there between a hyena and a dog? And what peace between the rich and the poor? 19 Wild asses in the wilderness are the prey of lions; likewise the poor are feeding grounds for the rich. 20 Humility is an abomination to the proud; likewise the poor are an abomination to the rich. 21 When the rich person totters, he is supported by friends, but when the humble[bs] falls, he is pushed away even by friends. 22 If the rich person slips, many come to the rescue; he speaks unseemly words, but they justify him. If the humble person slips, they even criticize him; he talks sense, but is not given a hearing. 23 The rich person speaks and**

all are silent; they extol to the clouds what he says. The poor person speaks and they say, "Who is this fellow?" And should he stumble, they even push him down. 24 Riches are good if they are free from sin; poverty is evil only in the opinion of the ungodly. 25 The heart changes the countenance, either for good or for evil.[bt] 26 The sign of a happy heart is a cheerful face, but to devise proverbs requires painful thinking.

Chapter 14 Sirach

Happy are those who do not blunder with their lips, and need not suffer remorse for sin. 2 Happy are those whose hearts do not condemn them, and who have not given up their hope.

Responsible Use of Wealth

3 Riches are inappropriate for a small-minded person; and of what use is wealth to a miser? 4 What he denies himself he collects for others; and others will live in luxury on his goods. 5 If one is mean to himself, to whom will he be generous? He will not enjoy his own riches. 6 No one is worse than one who is grudging to himself; this is the punishment for his meanness. 7 If ever he does good, it is by mistake; and in the end he reveals his meanness. 8 The miser is an evil person; he turns away and disregards people. 9 The eye of the greedy person is not satisfied with his share; greedy injustice withers the soul. 10 A miser begrudges bread, and it is lacking at his table. **11 My child, treat yourself well, according to your means, and present worthy offerings to the Lord.** 12 Remember that death does not tarry, and the decree[bu] of Hades has not been shown to you. 13 Do good to friends before you die, and reach out and give to them as much as you can. 14 Do not deprive yourself of a day's enjoyment; do not let your share of desired good pass by you. 15 Will you not leave the fruit of your labors to another, and what you acquired by toil to be divided by lot? 16 Give, and take, and indulge yourself, because in Hades one cannot look for luxury. 17 All living beings become old like a garment, for the decree[bv] from of old is, "You must die!" 18 Like abundant leaves on a spreading tree that sheds some and puts forth others, so are the generations of flesh and blood: one dies and another is born. 19 Every work decays and ceases to exist, and the one who made it will pass away with it. The Happiness of Seeking Wisdom **20 Happy is the person who meditates on[bw] wisdom and reasons intelligently, 21 who[bx] reflects in his heart on her ways and ponders her secrets, 22 pursuing her like a hunter, and lying in wait on her paths; 23 who peers through her windows and listens at her doors; 24 who camps near her house and fastens his tent peg to her walls; 25 who pitches his tent near her, and so occupies an excellent lodging place; 26 who places his children under her shelter, and lodges under her boughs; 27 who is sheltered by her from the heat, and dwells in the midst of her glory.**

Chapter 15

Whoever fears the Lord will do this, and **whoever holds to the law will obtain wisdom.[by]** 2 She will come to meet him like a mother, and like a young bride she will welcome him. 3 She will feed him with the bread of learning, and give him the water of wisdom to drink. 4 He will lean on her and not fall, and he will rely on her and not be put to shame. 5 She will exalt him above his neighbors, and will open his mouth in the midst of the assembly. 6 He will find gladness and a crown of rejoicing, and will inherit an everlasting name. 7 The foolish will not obtain her, and sinners will not see her. 8 She is far from arrogance, and liars will never think of her. 9 Praise is unseemly on the lips of a sinner, for it has not been sent from the Lord. 10 For in wisdom must praise be uttered, and the Lord will make it prosper. Freedom of Choice 11 Do not say, "It was the Lord's doing that I fell away"; for he does not do[bz] what he hates. 12 Do not say, "It was he who led me astray"; for he has no need of the sinful. 13 The Lord hates all abominations; such things are not loved by those who fear him. 14 It was he who created humankind in the beginning, and he left them in the power of their own free choice. 15 If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. **16 He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you choose. 17 Before each person are life and death, and whichever one chooses will be given.** 18 For great is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power and sees everything; 19 his eyes are on

those who fear him, and he knows every human action. 20 He has not commanded anyone to be wicked, and he has not given anyone permission to sin.

Chapter 16 Sirach: God's Punishment of Sinners

16 Do not desire a multitude of worthless[ca] children, and do not rejoice in ungodly offspring. 2 If they multiply, do not rejoice in them, unless the fear of the Lord is in them. 3 Do not trust in their survival, or rely on their numbers;[cb] for one can be better than a thousand, and to die childless is better than to have ungodly children. 4 For through one intelligent person a city can be filled with people, but through a clan of outlaws it becomes desolate. 5 Many such things my eye has seen, and my ear has heard things more striking than these. 6 In an assembly of sinners a fire is kindled, and in a disobedient nation wrath blazes up. 7 He did not forgive the ancient giants who revolted in their might. **8 He did not spare the neighbors of Lot, whom he loathed on account of their arrogance.** 9 He showed no pity on the doomed nation, on those dispossessed because of their sins;[cc] **10 or on the six hundred thousand foot soldiers who assembled in their stubbornness.[cd] 11 Even if there were only one stiff-necked person, it would be a wonder if he remained unpunished. For mercy and wrath are with the Lord;[ce] he is mighty to forgive—but he also pours out wrath.** 12 Great as is his mercy, so also is his chastisement; he judges a person according to his or her deeds. 13 The sinner will not escape with plunder, and the patience of the godly will not be frustrated. 14 He makes room for every act of mercy; everyone receives in accordance with his or her deeds.[cf] 17 Do not say, “I am hidden from the Lord, and who from on high has me in mind? Among so many people I am unknown, for what am I in a boundless creation? 18 Lo, heaven and the highest heaven, the abyss and the earth, tremble at his visitation! [cg] **19 The very mountains and the foundations of the earth quiver and quake when he looks upon them. 20 But no human mind can grasp this, and who can comprehend his ways? 21 Like a tempest that no one can see, so most of his works are concealed.[ch] 22 Who is to announce his acts of justice?** Or who can await them? For his decree[ci] is far off.”[cj] 23 Such are the thoughts of one devoid of understanding; a senseless and misguided person thinks foolishly.

God's Wisdom Seen in Creation

24 Listen to me, my child, and acquire knowledge, and pay close attention to my words. 25 I will impart discipline precisely[ck] and declare knowledge accurately. 26 When the Lord created[cl] his works from the beginning, and, in making them, determined their boundaries, 27 he arranged his works in an eternal order, and their dominion[cm] for all generations. They neither hunger nor grow weary, and they do not abandon their tasks. 28 They do not crowd one another, and they never disobey his word. **29 Then the Lord looked upon the earth, and filled it with his good things. 30 With all kinds of living beings he covered its surface, and into it they must return.**

Chapter 17 Sirach

1 The Lord created human beings out of earth, and makes them return to it again. 2 He gave them a fixed number of days, but granted them authority over everything on the earth.[cn] 3 He endowed them with strength like his own,[co] and made them in his own image. 4 He put the fear of them[cp] in all living beings, and gave them dominion over beasts and birds.[cq] 6 Discretion and tongue and eyes, ears and a mind for thinking he gave them. 7 He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil. 8 He put the fear of him into[cr] their hearts to show them the majesty of his works.[cs] 10 And they will praise his holy name, 9 to proclaim the grandeur of his works. 11 He bestowed knowledge upon them, and allotted to them the law of life.[ct] 12 He established with them an eternal covenant, and revealed to them his decrees. 13 Their eyes saw his glorious majesty, and their ears heard the glory of his voice. 14 He said to them, “Beware of all evil.” And he gave commandment to each of them concerning the neighbor. **15 Their ways are always known to him; they will not be hid from his eyes.[cu] 17 He appointed a ruler for**

every nation, but Israel is the Lord's own portion.[cv] 19 All their works are as clear as the sun before him, and his eyes are ever upon their ways. 20 Their iniquities are not hidden from him, and all their sins are before the Lord.[cw] 22 One's almsgiving is like a signet ring with the Lord,[cx] and he will keep a person's kindness like the apple of his eye.[cy] 23 Afterward he will rise up and repay them, and he will bring their recompense on their heads. 24 Yet to those who repent he grants a return, and he encourages those who are losing hope. **A Call to Repentance** 25 Turn back to the Lord and forsake your sins; pray in his presence and lessen your offense. 26 Return to the Most High and turn away from iniquity,[cz] and hate intensely what he abhors. 27 Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades in place of the living who give thanks? 28 From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased; those who are alive and well sing the Lord's praises. **29 How great is the mercy of the Lord, and his forgiveness for those who return to him!** 30 For not everything is within human capability, since human beings are not immortal. 31 What is brighter than the sun? Yet it can be eclipsed. So flesh and blood devise evil. **32 He marshals the host of the height of heaven; but all human beings are dust and ashes.**

Chapter 18 Sirach: The Majesty of God

18 He who lives forever created the whole universe; 2 the Lord alone is just.[da] **4 To none has he given power to proclaim his works; and who can search out his mighty deeds?** 5 Who can measure his majestic power? And who can fully recount his mercies? 6 It is not possible to diminish or increase them, nor is it possible to fathom the wonders of the Lord. 7 When human beings have finished, they are just beginning, and when they stop, they are still perplexed. **8 What are human beings, and of what use are they? What is good in them, and what is evil?** 9 The number of days in their life is great if they reach one hundred years.[db] 10 Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand, so are a few years among the days of eternity. 11 That is why the Lord is patient with them and pours out his mercy upon them. 12 He sees and recognizes that their end is miserable; therefore he grants them forgiveness all the more. 13 The compassion of human beings is for their neighbors, but the compassion of the Lord is for every living thing. He rebukes and trains and teaches them, and turns them back, as a shepherd his flock. 14 He has compassion on those who accept his discipline and who are eager for his precepts.

The Right Spirit in Giving Alms

15 My child, do not mix reproach with your good deeds, or spoil your gift by harsh words. 16 Does not the dew give relief from the scorching heat? So a word is better than a gift. 17 Indeed, does not a word surpass a good gift? Both are to be found in a gracious person. **18 A fool is ungracious and abusive, and the gift of a grudging giver makes the eyes dim.**

The Need of Reflection and Self-control

19 Before you speak, learn; and before you fall ill, take care of your health. 20 Before judgment comes, examine yourself; and at the time of scrutiny you will find forgiveness. 21 Before falling ill, humble yourself; and when you have sinned, repent. 22 Let nothing hinder you from paying a vow promptly, and do not wait until death to be released from it. 23 Before making a vow, prepare yourself; do not be like one who puts the Lord to the test. 24 Think of his wrath on the day of death, and of the moment of vengeance when he turns away his face. 25 In the time of plenty think of the time of hunger; in days of wealth think of poverty and need. 26 From morning to evening conditions change; all things move swiftly before the Lord. **27 One who is wise is cautious in everything; when sin is all around, one guards against wrongdoing.** 28 Every intelligent person knows wisdom, and praises the one who finds her. 29 Those who are skilled in words become wise themselves, and pour forth apt proverbs.[dc]

Self-Control

30 Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites. 31 If you allow your soul to take pleasure in base desire, it will make you the laughingstock of your enemies. 32 Do not revel in great luxury, or you may become impoverished by its expense. 33 Do not become a beggar by feasting with borrowed money, when you have nothing in your purse.[de]

Chapter 19 Sirach

The one who does this[df] will not become rich; one who despises small things will fail little by little. 2 Wine and women lead intelligent men astray, and the man who consorts with **prostitutes is reckless**. 3 Decay and worms will take possession of him, **and the reckless person will be snatched away**.

Against Loose Talk

4 One who trusts others too quickly has a shallow mind, and one who sins does wrong to himself. 5 One who rejoices in wickedness[dg] will be condemned,[dh] 6 but one who hates gossip has less evil. 7 Never repeat a conversation, and you will lose nothing at all. 8 With friend or foe do not report it, and unless it would be a sin for you, do not reveal it; 9 for someone may have heard you and watched you, and in time will hate you. 10 Have you heard something? Let it die with you. Be brave, it will not make you burst! 11 Having heard something, the fool suffers birth pangs like a woman in labor with a child. 12 Like an arrow stuck in a person's thigh, so is gossip inside a fool. 13 Question a friend; perhaps he did not do it; or if he did, so that he may not do it again. 14 Question a neighbor; perhaps he did not say it; or if he said it, so that he may not repeat it. 15 Question a friend, for often it is slander; so do not believe everything you hear. 16 A person may make a slip without intending it. Who has not sinned with his tongue? 17 Question your neighbor before you threaten him; and let the law of the Most High take its course.[di]

True and False Wisdom

20 The whole of wisdom is fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom there is the fulfillment of the law.[dj] 22 The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom, nor is there prudence in the counsel of sinners. 23 There is a cleverness that is detestable, and there is a fool who merely lacks wisdom. 24 Better are the God-fearing who lack understanding than the highly intelligent who transgress the law. 25 There is a cleverness that is exact but unjust, and there are people who abuse favors to gain a verdict. 26 There is the villain bowed down in mourning, but inwardly he is full of deceit. 27 He hides his face and pretends not to hear, but when no one notices, he will take advantage of you. 28 Even if lack of strength keeps him from sinning, he will nevertheless do evil when he finds the opportunity. 29 A person is known by his appearance, and a sensible person is known when first met, face to face. 30 A person's attire and hearty laughter, and the way he walks, show what he is.

Silence and Speech Chapter 20

There is a rebuke that is untimely, and there is the person who is wise enough to keep silent. 2 How much better it is to rebuke than to fume! 3 And the one who admits his fault will be kept from failure. 4 Like a eunuch lusting to violate a girl is the person who does right under compulsion. 5 Some people keep silent and are thought to be wise, while others are detested for being talkative. **6 Some people keep silent because they have nothing to say, while others keep silent because they know when to speak. 7 The wise remain silent until the right moment, but a boasting fool misses the right moment.** 8 Whoever talks too much is detested, and whoever pretends to authority is hated.[a] Paradoxes 9 There may be good fortune for a person in adversity, and a windfall may result in a loss. 10 There is the gift that profits you nothing, and the gift to be paid back double. 11 There are losses for the sake of glory, and there are some who have raised their heads from humble circumstances. **12 Some buy much for little, but pay for it seven times**

over. 13 The wise make themselves beloved by only few words,[b] but the courtesies of fools are wasted. 14 A fool's gift will profit you nothing,[c] for he looks for recompense sevenfold.[d] 15 He gives little and upbraids much; he opens his mouth like a town crier. Today he lends and tomorrow he asks it back; such a one is hateful to God and humans.[e] 16 The fool says, "I have no friends, and I get no thanks for my good deeds. Those who eat my bread are evil-tongued." 17 How many will ridicule him, and how often![f]

Inappropriate Speech

18 A slip on the pavement (?) is better than a slip of the tongue; the downfall of the wicked will occur just as speedily. 19. A coarse person is like an inappropriate story, continually on the lips of the ignorant. 20 A proverb from a fool's lips will be rejected, for he does not tell it at the proper time. 21 One may be prevented from sinning by poverty; so when he rests he feels no remorse. 22 One may lose his life through shame or lose it because of human respect.[g] 23 Another out of shame makes promises to a friend, and so makes an enemy for nothing.

Lying

24 A lie is an ugly blot on a person; it is continually on the lips of the ignorant. 25 A thief is preferable to a habitual liar, but the lot of both is ruin. 26 A liar's way leads to disgrace, and his shame is ever with him.

Proverbial Sayings[h]

27 The wise person advances himself by his words, and one who is sensible pleases the great. 28 Those who cultivate the soil heap up their harvest, and those who please the great atone for injustice. 29 Favors and gifts blind the eyes of the wise; like a muzzle on the mouth they stop reproofs. 30 Hidden wisdom and unseen treasure, of what value is either? 31 Better are those who hide their folly than those who hide their wisdom.[i]

Various Sins

21 Have you sinned, my child? Do so no more, but ask forgiveness for your past sins. 2 Flee from sin as from a snake; for if you approach sin, it will bite you. Its teeth are lion's teeth, and can destroy human lives. 3 All lawlessness is like a two-edged sword; there is no healing for the wound it inflicts. 4 Panic and insolence will waste away riches; thus **the house of the proud will be laid waste.**[j] 5 The prayer of the poor goes from their lips to the ears of God,[k] and his judgment comes speedily. 6 **Those who hate reproof walk in the sinner's steps, but those who fear the Lord repent in their heart.** 7 The mighty in speech are widely known; when they slip, the sensible person knows it. 8 Whoever builds his house with other people's money is like one who gathers stones for his burial mound.[l] 9 An assembly of the wicked is like a bundle of tow, their end is a blazing fire. 10 The way of sinners is paved with smooth stones, but at its end is the pit of Hades.

Wisdom and Foolishness

11 Whoever keeps the law controls his thoughts, and the fulfillment of the fear of the Lord is wisdom. 12 The one who is not clever cannot be taught, but there is a cleverness that increases bitterness. 13 The knowledge of the wise will increase like a flood, and their counsel like a life-giving spring. **14 The mind[m] of a fool is like a broken jar; it can hold no knowledge.** 15 When an intelligent person hears a wise saying, he praises it and adds to it; when a fool[n] hears it, he laughs at[o] it and throws it behind his back. 16 A fool's chatter is like a burden on a journey, but delight is found in the speech of the intelligent. 17 The utterance of a sensible person is sought in the assembly, and they ponder his words in their minds. 18 Like a house in ruins is wisdom to a fool, and to the ignorant, knowledge is talk that has no meaning. 19 To a senseless person education is fetters on his feet, and like manacles on his right hand. **20 A fool raises his voice when he laughs, but the wise[p] smile**

quietly. 21 To the sensible person education is like a golden ornament, and like a bracelet on the right arm. 22 The foot of a fool rushes into a house, but an experienced person waits respectfully outside. 23 A boor peers into the house from the door, but a cultivated person remains outside. 24 It is ill-mannered for a person to listen at a door; the discreet would be grieved by the disgrace. 25 The lips of babblers speak of what is not their concern, [q] but the words of the prudent are weighed in the balance. **26 The mind of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of the wise is in[r] their mind.** 27 When an ungodly person curses an adversary,[s] he curses himself. 28 A whisperer degrades himself and is hated in his neighborhood.

The Idler

22 The idler is like a filthy stone, and every one hisses at his disgrace. 2 The idler is like the filth of dunghills; anyone that picks it up will shake it off his hand.

Degenerate Children

3 It is a disgrace to be the father of an undisciplined son, and the birth of a daughter is a loss. 4 A sensible daughter obtains a husband of her own, but one who acts shamefully is a grief to her father. 5 An impudent daughter disgraces father and husband, and is despised by both. 6 Like music in time of mourning is ill-timed conversation, but a thrashing and discipline are at all times wisdom.[t]

Wisdom and Folly

9 Whoever teaches a fool is like one who glues potsherds together, or who rouses a sleeper from deep slumber. 10 Whoever tells a story to a fool tells it to a drowsy man; and at the end he will say, “What is it?” 11 Weep for the dead, for he has left the light behind; and weep for the fool, for he has left intelligence behind. Weep less bitterly for the dead, for he is at rest; but the life of the fool is worse than death. 12 Mourning for the dead lasts seven days, but for the foolish or the ungodly it lasts all the days of their lives. 13 Do not talk much with a senseless person or visit an unintelligent person.[u] Stay clear of him, or you may have trouble, and be spattered when he shakes himself off. Avoid him and you will find rest, and you will never be wearied by his lack of sense. 14 What is heavier than lead? And what is its name except “Fool”? 15 Sand, salt, and a piece of iron are easier to bear than a stupid person.

16 A wooden beam firmly bonded into a building is not loosened by an earthquake; so the mind firmly resolved after due reflection will not be afraid in a crisis. 17 A mind settled on an intelligent thought is like stucco decoration that makes a wall smooth. 18 Fences[v] set on a high place will not stand firm against the wind; so a timid mind with a fool’s resolve will not stand firm against any fear.

The Preservation of Friendship

19 One who pricks the eye brings tears, and one who pricks the heart makes clear its feelings. 20 One who throws a stone at birds scares them away, and one who reviles a friend destroys a friendship. 21 Even if you draw your sword against a friend, do not despair, for there is a way back. 22 If you open your mouth against your friend, do not worry, for reconciliation is possible. But as for reviling, arrogance, disclosure of secrets, or a treacherous blow—in these cases any friend will take to flight. 23 Gain the trust of your neighbor in his poverty, so that you may rejoice with him in his prosperity. Stand by him in time of distress, so that you may share with him in his inheritance.[w] 24 The vapor and smoke of the furnace precede the fire; so insults precede bloodshed. 25 I am not ashamed to shelter a friend, and I will not hide from him. 26 But if harm should come to me because of him, whoever hears of it will beware of him.

A Prayer for Help against Sinning

27 Who will set a guard over my mouth, and an effective seal upon my lips, so that I may not fall because of them, and my tongue may not destroy me? 23 O Lord, Father and Master of my life, do not abandon me to their designs, and do not let me fall because of them! 2 Who will set whips over my thoughts, and the discipline of wisdom over my mind, so as not to spare me in my errors, and not overlook my[x] sins? 3 Otherwise my mistakes may be multiplied, and my sins may abound, and I may fall before my adversaries, and my enemy may rejoice over me.[y] 4 O Lord, Father and God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes, 5 and remove evil desire from me. 6 Let neither gluttony nor lust overcome me, and do not give me over to shameless passion.

Discipline of the Tongue[z]

7 Listen, my children, to instruction concerning the mouth; the one who observes it will never be caught. 8 Sinners are overtaken through their lips; by them the reviler and the arrogant are tripped up. 9 Do not accustom your mouth to oaths, nor habitually utter the name of the Holy One; 10 for as a servant who is constantly under scrutiny will not lack bruises, so also the person who always swears and utters the Name will never be cleansed[aa] from sin. 11 The one who swears many oaths is full of iniquity, and the scourge will not leave his house. If he swears in error, his sin remains on him, and if he disregards it, he sins doubly; if he swears a false oath, he will not be justified, for his house will be filled with calamities.

Foul Language

12 There is a manner of speaking comparable to death;[ab] may it never be found in the inheritance of Jacob! Such conduct will be far from the godly, and they will not wallow in sins. 13 Do not accustom your mouth to coarse, foul language, for it involves sinful speech. 14 Remember your father and mother when you sit among the great, or you may forget yourself in their presence, and behave like a fool through bad habit; then you will wish that you had never been born, and you will curse the day of your birth. **15 Those who are accustomed to using abusive language will never become disciplined as long as they live.**

Concerning Sexual Sins

16 Two kinds of individuals multiply sins, and a third incurs wrath. Hot passion that blazes like a fire will not be quenched until it burns itself out; one who commits fornication with his near of kin will never cease until the fire burns him up. 17 To a fornicator all bread is sweet; he will never weary until he dies. 18 The one who sins against his marriage bed says to himself, “Who can see me? Darkness surrounds me, the walls hide me, and no one sees me. Why should I worry? The Most High will not remember sins.” 19 His fear is confined to human eyes and he does not realize that the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun; they look upon every aspect of human behavior and see into hidden corners. 20 Before the universe was created, it was known to him, and so it is since its completion. 21 This man will be punished in the streets of the city, and where he least suspects it, he will be seized. 22 So it is with a woman who leaves her husband and presents him with an heir by another man. 23 For first of all, she has disobeyed the law of the Most High; second, she has committed an offense against her husband; and third, through her fornication she has committed adultery and brought forth children by another man. 24 She herself will be brought before the assembly, and her punishment will extend to her children. 25 Her children will not take root, and her branches will not bear fruit. 26 She will leave behind an accursed memory and her disgrace will never be blotted out. 27 Those who survive her will recognize that nothing is better than the fear of the Lord, and nothing sweeter than to heed the commandments of the Lord.[ac]

The Praise of Wisdom[ad]

24 Wisdom praises herself, and tells of her glory in the midst of her people. 2 In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth, and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory: 3 “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist. 4 I dwelt in the highest heavens, and my throne was in a pillar

of cloud. 5 Alone I compassed the vault of heaven and traversed the depths of the abyss. 6 Over waves of the sea, over all the earth, and over every people and nation I have held sway.[ae] 7 Among all these I sought a resting place; in whose territory should I abide? 8 **“Then the Creator of all things gave me a command, and my Creator chose the place for my tent. He said, ‘Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.’** 9 **Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me, and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.** 10 **In the holy tent I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion.** 11 Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my domain. 12 I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, his heritage. 13 “I grew tall like a cedar in Lebanon, and like a cypress on the heights of Hermon. 14 I grew tall like a palm tree in En-gedi,[af] and like rosebushes in Jericho; like a fair olive tree in the field, and like a plane tree beside water[ag] I grew tall. 15 Like cassia and camel’s thorn I gave forth perfume, and like choice myrrh I spread my fragrance, like galbanum, onycha, and stacte, and like the odor of incense in the tent. 16 Like a terebinth I spread out my branches, and my branches are glorious and graceful. 17 Like the vine I bud forth delights, and my blossoms become glorious and abundant fruit.[ah] 19 “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits. 20 **For the memory of me is sweeter than honey, and the possession of me sweeter than the honeycomb.** 21 **Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more.** 22 **Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame, and those who work with me will not sin.”**

Wisdom and the Law

23 All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.[ai] 25 It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom, and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits. 26 It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding, and like the Jordan at harvest time. 27 It pours forth instruction like the Nile,[aj] like the Gihon at the time of vintage. 28 The first man did not know wisdom[ak] fully, nor will the last one fathom her. 29 For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea, and her counsel deeper than the great abyss. 30 As for me, I was like a canal from a river, like a water channel into a garden. 31 I said, “I will water my garden and drench my flower-beds.” And lo, my canal became a river, and my river a sea. 32 I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn, and I will make it clear from far away. 33 I will again pour out teaching like prophecy, and leave it to all future generations. 34 **Observe that I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek wisdom.[al]**

Those Who Are Worthy of Praise

25 **I take pleasure in three things, and they are beautiful in the sight of God and of mortals:[am] agreement among brothers and sisters, friendship among neighbors, and a wife and a husband who live in harmony.** 2 **I hate three kinds of people, and I loathe their manner of life: a pauper who boasts, a rich person who lies, and an old fool who commits adultery.** 3 If you gathered nothing in your youth, how can you find anything in your old age? 4 How attractive is sound judgment in the gray-haired, and for the aged to possess good counsel! 5 How attractive is wisdom in the aged, and understanding and counsel in the venerable! 6 Rich experience is the crown of the aged, and their boast is the fear of the Lord. 7 I can think of nine whom I would call blessed, and a tenth my tongue proclaims: a man who can rejoice in his children; a man who lives to see the downfall of his foes. 8 Happy the man who lives with a sensible wife, and the one who does not plow with ox and ass together.[an] Happy is the one who does not sin with the tongue, and the one who has not served an inferior. 9 Happy is the one who finds a friend,[ao] and the one who speaks to attentive listeners. 10 **How great is the one who finds wisdom! But none is superior to the one who fears the Lord.** 11 **Fear of the Lord surpasses everything; to whom can we compare the one who has it?[ap]**

Some Extreme Forms of Evil

13 Any wound, but not a wound of the heart! Any wickedness, but not the wickedness of a woman! 14 Any suffering, but not suffering from those who hate! And any vengeance, but not the vengeance of enemies! 15 There is no venom[aq] worse than a snake’s venom,[ar] and no anger worse than a woman’s[as] wrath.

The Evil of a Wicked Woman

16 I would rather live with a lion and a dragon than live with an evil woman. 17 A woman's wickedness changes her appearance, and darkens her face like that of a bear. 18 Her husband sits[at] among the neighbors, and he cannot help sighing[au] bitterly. 19 Any iniquity is small compared to a woman's iniquity; may a sinner's lot befall her! 20 A sandy ascent for the feet of the aged—such is a garrulous wife to a quiet husband. 21 Do not be ensnared by a woman's beauty, and do not desire a woman for her possessions.[av] 22 There is wrath and impudence and great disgrace when a wife supports her husband. 23 Dejected mind, gloomy face, and wounded heart come from an evil wife. Drooping hands and weak knees come from the wife who does not make her husband happy. 24 From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die. 25 Allow no outlet to water, and no boldness of speech to an evil wife. 26 If she does not go as you direct, separate her from yourself.

The Joy of a Good Wife

26 Happy is the husband of a good wife; the number of his days will be doubled. **2 A loyal wife brings joy to her husband, and he will complete his years in peace. 3 A good wife is a great blessing; she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord. 4 Whether rich or poor, his heart is content, and at all times his face is cheerful.**

The Worst of Evils: A Wicked Wife

5 Of three things my heart is frightened, and of a fourth I am in great fear:[aw] **Slander in the city, the gathering of a mob, and false accusation—all these are worse than death.** 6 But it is heartache and sorrow when a wife is jealous of a rival, and a tongue-lashing makes it known to all. 7 A bad wife is a chafing yoke; taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion. 8 A drunken wife arouses great anger; she cannot hide her shame. 9 The haughty stare betrays an unchaste wife; her eyelids give her away. 10 Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter, or else, when she finds liberty, she will make use of it. 11 Be on guard against her impudent eye, and do not be surprised if she sins against you. 12 As a thirsty traveler opens his mouth and drinks from any water near him, so she will sit in front of every tent peg and open her quiver to the arrow.

The Blessing of a Good Wife

13 A wife's charm delights her husband, and her skill puts flesh on his bones. 14 A silent wife is a gift from the Lord, and nothing is so precious as her self-discipline. 15 A modest wife adds charm to charm, and no scales can weigh the value of her chastity. 16 Like the sun rising in the heights of the Lord, so is the beauty of a good wife in her well-ordered home. 17 Like the shining lamp on the holy lampstand, so is a beautiful face on a stately figure. 18 Like golden pillars on silver bases, so are shapely legs and steadfast feet.

Other ancient authorities add verses 19–27:

19 My child, keep sound the bloom of your youth, and do not give your strength to strangers. 20 Seek a fertile field within the whole plain, and sow it with your own seed, trusting in your fine stock. 21 So your offspring will prosper, and, having confidence in their good descent, will grow great. 22 A prostitute is regarded as spittle, and a married woman as a tower of death to her lovers. **23 A godless wife is given as a portion to a lawless man, but a pious wife is given to the man who fears the Lord.** 24 A shameless woman constantly acts disgracefully, but a modest daughter will even be embarrassed before her husband. 25 A headstrong wife is regarded as a dog, but one who has a sense of shame will fear the Lord. **26 A wife honoring her husband will seem wise to all, but if she dishonors him in her pride she will be known to all as ungodly. Happy is the husband of a good wife; or the number of his years will be doubled.** 27 A loud-voiced and garrulous wife is like a trumpet sounding the charge, and every person like this lives in the anarchy of war.

Chapter 28 Sirach: Three Depressing Things

28 At two things my heart is grieved, and because of a third anger comes over me: a warrior in want through poverty, intelligent men who are treated contemptuously, and a man who turns back from righteousness to sin—the Lord will prepare him for the sword!

Chapter 29 Sirach: The Temptations of Commerce

29 A merchant can hardly keep from wrongdoing, nor is a tradesman innocent of sin.

Chapter 27 Sirach

27 Many have committed sin for gain,[ax] and those who seek to get rich will avert their eyes. 2 As a stake is driven firmly into a fissure between stones, so sin is wedged in between selling and buying. **3 If a person is not steadfast in the fear of the Lord, his house will be quickly overthrown.**

Tests in Life

4 When a sieve is shaken, the refuse appears; so do a person's faults when he speaks. 5 The kiln tests the potter's vessels; so the test of a person is in his conversation. 6 Its fruit discloses the cultivation of a tree; so a person's speech discloses the cultivation of his mind. 7 Do not praise anyone before he speaks, for this is the way people are tested.

Reward and Retribution

8 If you pursue justice, you will attain it and wear it like a glorious robe. 9 Birds roost with their own kind, so honesty comes home to those who practice it. 10 A lion lies in wait for prey; so does sin for evildoers.

Varieties of Speech

11 The conversation of the godly is always wise, but the fool changes like the moon. 12 Among stupid people limit your time, but among thoughtful people linger on. 13 The talk of fools is offensive, and their laughter is wantonly sinful. 14 Their cursing and swearing make one's hair stand on end, and their quarrels make others stop their ears. 15 The strife of the proud leads to bloodshed, and their abuse is grievous to hear.

Betraying Secrets

16 Whoever betrays secrets destroys confidence, and will never find a congenial friend. 17 Love your friend and keep faith with him; but if you betray his secrets, do not follow after him. 18 For as a person destroys his enemy, so you have destroyed the friendship of your neighbor. 19 And as you allow a bird to escape from your hand, so you have let your neighbor go, and will not catch him again. 20 Do not go after him, for he is too far off, and has escaped like a gazelle from a snare. **21 For a wound may be bandaged, and there is reconciliation after abuse, but whoever has betrayed secrets is without hope.**

Hypocrisy and Retribution

22 Whoever winks the eye plots mischief, and those who know him will keep their distance. 23 In your presence his mouth is all sweetness, and he admires your words; but later he will twist his speech and with your own words he will trip you up. 24 I have hated many things, but him above all; even the Lord hates him. 25 Whoever throws a stone straight up throws it on his own head, and a treacherous blow opens up many wounds. 26 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever sets a snare will be caught in it. 27 If a person does evil, it will roll back upon him, and he will not know where it came from. 28 Mockery and abuse issue from the proud, but vengeance lies in wait for them like a lion. **29 Those who rejoice in the fall of the godly will be caught in a snare, and pain will consume them before their death.**

Anger and Vengeance

30 Anger and wrath, these also are abominations, yet a sinner holds on to them.

Chapter 28

1 The vengeful will face the Lord's vengeance, for he keeps a strict account of[ay] their sins. **2 Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. 3 Does anyone harbor anger against another, and expect healing from the Lord?** 4 If one has no mercy toward another like himself, can he then seek pardon for his own sins? 5 If a mere mortal harbors wrath, who will make an atoning sacrifice for his sins? 6 Remember the end of your life, and set enmity aside; remember corruption and death, and be true to the commandments. 7 Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbor; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook faults. 8 Refrain from strife, and your sins will be fewer; for the hot-tempered kindle strife, 9 and the sinner disrupts friendships and sows discord among those who are at peace. 10 In proportion to the fuel, so will the fire burn, and in proportion to the obstinacy, so will strife increase;[az] in proportion to a person's strength will be his anger, and in proportion to his wealth he will increase his wrath. **11 A hasty quarrel kindles a fire, and a hasty dispute sheds blood.**

The Evil Tongue

12 If you blow on a spark, it will glow; if you spit on it, it will be put out; yet both come out of your mouth. 13 Curse the gossips and the double-tongued, for they destroy the peace of many. 14 Slander[ba] has shaken many, and scattered them from nation to nation; it has destroyed strong cities, and overturned the houses of the great. 15 Slander[bb] has driven virtuous women from their homes, and deprived them of the fruit of their toil. 16 Those who pay heed to slander[bc] will not find rest, nor will they settle down in peace. **17 The blow of a whip raises a welt, but a blow of the tongue crushes the bones.** 18 Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as have fallen because of the tongue. 19 Happy is the one who is protected from it, who has not been exposed to its anger, who has not borne its yoke, and has not been bound with its fetters. 20 For its yoke is a yoke of iron, and its fetters are fetters of bronze; 21 its death is an evil death, and Hades is preferable to it. 22 It has no power over the godly; they will not be burned in its flame. **23 Those who forsake the Lord will fall into its power; it will burn among them and will not be put out. It will be sent out against them like a lion; like a leopard it will mangle them.** 24a As you fence in your property with thorns, 25b so make a door and a bolt for your mouth. 24b As you lock up your silver and gold, 25a so make balances and scales for your words. 26 Take care not to err with your tongue,[bd] and fall victim to one lying in wait.

Chapter 29 Sirach: On Lending and Borrowing

29 The merciful lend to their neighbors; by holding out a helping hand they keep the commandments. 2 Lend to your neighbor in his time of need; repay your neighbor when a loan falls due. 3 Keep your promise and be honest with him, and on every occasion you will find what you need. 4 Many regard a loan as a windfall, and cause trouble to those who help them. 5 One kisses another's hands until he gets a loan, and is deferential in speaking of his neighbor's money; but at the time for repayment he delays, and pays back with empty promises, and finds fault with the time. 6 If he can pay, his creditor[be] will hardly get back half, and will regard that as a windfall. If he cannot pay, the borrower[bf] has robbed the other of his money, and he has needlessly made him an enemy; he will repay him with curses and reproaches, and instead of glory will repay him with dishonor. 7 Many refuse to lend, not because of meanness, but from fear[bg] of being defrauded needlessly. 8 Nevertheless, be patient with someone in humble circumstances, and do not keep him waiting for your alms. 9 Help the poor for the commandment's sake, and in their need do not send them away empty-handed. 10 Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost. **11 Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold.** 12 Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from every disaster; 13 better than a stout shield and a sturdy spear, it will fight for you against the enemy.

On Guaranteeing Debts

14 A good person will be surety for his neighbor, but the one who has lost all sense of shame will fail him. **15 Do not forget the kindness of your guarantor, for he has given his life for you.** 16 A sinner wastes the property of his guarantor, 17 and the ungrateful person abandons his rescuer. 18 Being surety has ruined many who were prosperous, and has tossed them about like waves of the sea; it has driven the influential into exile, and they have wandered among foreign nations. 19 The sinner comes to grief through surety; his pursuit of gain involves him in lawsuits. 20 Assist your neighbor to the best of your ability, but be careful not to fall yourself.

Home and Hospitality

21 The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothing, and also a house to assure privacy. 22 Better is the life of the poor under their own crude roof than sumptuous food in the house of others. 23 Be content with little or much, and you will hear no reproach for being a guest.[bh] 24 It is a miserable life to go from house to house; as a guest you should not open your mouth; 25 you will play the host and provide drink without being thanked, and besides this you will hear rude words like these: 26 “Come here, stranger, prepare the table; let me eat what you have there.” 27 **“Be off, stranger, for an honored guest is here; my brother has come for a visit, and I need the guest-room.”** 28 **It is hard for a sensible person to bear scolding about lodging[bi] and the insults of the moneylender.**

Chapter 30: Concerning Children

He who loves his son will whip him often, so that he may rejoice at the way he turns out. 2 He who disciplines his son will profit by him, and will boast of him among acquaintances. 3 He who teaches his son will make his enemies envious, and will glory in him among his friends. 4 When the father dies he will not seem to be dead, for he has left behind him one like himself, 5 whom in his life he looked upon with joy and at death, without grief. 6 He has left behind him an avenger against his enemies, and one to repay the kindness of his friends. **7 Whoever spoils his son will bind up his wounds, and will suffer heartache at every cry.** 8 An unbroken horse turns out stubborn, and an unchecked son turns out headstrong. 9 Pamper a child, and he will terrorize you; play with him, and he will grieve you. 10 Do not laugh with him, or you will have sorrow with him, and in the end you will gnash your teeth. 11 Give him no freedom in his youth, and do not ignore his errors. 12 Bow down his neck in his youth,[bk] and beat his sides while he is young, or else he will become stubborn and disobey you, and you will have sorrow of soul from him.[bl] 13 Discipline your son and make his yoke heavy,[bm] so that you may not be offended by his shamelessness. 14 Better off poor, healthy, and fit than rich and afflicted in body. 15 Health and fitness are better than any gold, and a robust body than countless riches. 16 There is no wealth better than health of body, and no gladness above joy of heart. 17 Death is better than a life of misery, and eternal sleep[bn] than chronic sickness.

Concerning Foods[bo]

18 Good things poured out upon a mouth that is closed are like offerings of food placed upon a grave. 19 Of what use to an idol is a sacrifice? For it can neither eat nor smell. So is the one punished by the Lord; 20 he sees with his eyes and groans as a eunuch groans when embracing a girl.[bp] 21 Do not give yourself over to sorrow, and do not distress yourself deliberately. **22 A joyful heart is life itself, and rejoicing lengthens one's life span.** 23 **Indulge yourself[bq] and take comfort, and remove sorrow far from you, for sorrow has destroyed many, and no advantage ever comes from it.** 24 **Jealousy and anger shorten life, and anxiety brings on premature old age.** 25 **Those who are cheerful and merry at table will benefit from their food.**

Chapter 31 Sirach: Right Attitude toward Riches

1 Wakefulness over wealth wastes away one's flesh, and anxiety about it drives away sleep. 2 Wakeful anxiety prevents slumber, and a severe illness carries off sleep.[br] 3 The rich person toils to amass a fortune, and when

he rests he fills himself with his dainties. 4 The poor person toils to make a meager living, and if ever he rests he becomes needy. 5 One who loves gold will not be justified; one who pursues money will be led astray[bs] by it. 6 Many have come to ruin because of gold, and their destruction has met them face to face. 7 It is a stumbling block to those who are avid for it, and every fool will be taken captive by it. 8 Blessed is the rich person who is found blameless, and who does not go after gold. 9 Who is he, that we may praise him? For he has done wonders among his people. **10 Who has been tested by it and been found perfect? Let it be for him a ground for boasting. Who has had the power to transgress and did not transgress, and to do evil and did not do it?** 11 His prosperity will be established,[bt] and the assembly will proclaim his acts of charity.

Table Etiquette

12 Are you seated at the table of the great?[bu] Do not be greedy at it, and do not say, "How much food there is here!" 13 Remember that a greedy eye is a bad thing. What has been created more greedy than the eye? Therefore it sheds tears for any reason. **14 Do not reach out your hand for everything you see, and do not crowd your neighbor[bv] at the dish. 15 Judge your neighbor's feelings by your own, and in every matter be thoughtful.** 16 Eat what is set before you like a well brought-up person,[bw] and do not chew greedily, or you will give offense. 17 Be the first to stop, as befits good manners, and do not be insatiable, or you will give offense. 18 If you are seated among many persons, do not help yourself[bx] before they do. **19 How ample a little is for a well-disciplined person! He does not breathe heavily when in bed. 20 Healthy sleep depends on moderate eating; he rises early, and feels fit. The distress of sleeplessness and of nausea and colic are with the glutton.** 21 If you are overstuffed with food, get up to vomit, and you will have relief. 22 Listen to me, my child, and do not disregard me, and in the end you will appreciate my words. In everything you do be moderate,[by] and no sickness will overtake you. 23 People bless the one who is liberal with food, and their testimony to his generosity is trustworthy. 24 The city complains of the one who is stingy with food, and their testimony to his stinginess is accurate.

Temperance in Drinking Wine

25 Do not try to prove your strength by wine-drinking, for wine has destroyed many. 26 As the furnace tests the work of the smith,[bz] so wine tests hearts when the insolent quarrel. 27 Wine is very life to human beings if taken in moderation. What is life to one who is without wine? It has been created to make people happy. **28 Wine drunk at the proper time and in moderation is rejoicing of heart and gladness of soul. 29 Wine drunk to excess leads to bitterness of spirit, to quarrels and stumbling. 30 Drunkenness increases the anger of a fool to his own hurt, reducing his strength and adding wounds.** 31 Do not reprove your neighbor at a banquet of wine, and do not despise him in his merrymaking; speak no word of reproach to him, and do not distress him by making demands of him.

Chapter 32 Sirach: Etiquette at a Banquet

32 If they make you master of the feast, do not exalt yourself; be among them as one of their number. Take care of them first and then sit down; 2 when you have fulfilled all your duties, take your place, so that you may be merry along with them and receive a wreath for your excellent leadership. 3 Speak, you who are older, for it is your right, but with accurate knowledge, and do not interrupt the music. 4 Where there is entertainment, do not pour out talk; do not display your cleverness at the wrong time. 5 A ruby seal in a setting of gold is a concert of music at a banquet of wine. 6 A seal of emerald in a rich setting of gold is the melody of music with good wine. 7 Speak, you who are young, if you are obliged to, but no more than twice, and only if asked. **8 Be brief; say much in few words; be as one who knows and can still hold his tongue. 9 Among the great do not act as their equal; and when another is speaking, do not babble.** 10 Lightning travels ahead of the thunder, and approval goes before one who is modest. 11 Leave in good time and do not be the last; go home quickly and do not linger. 12 Amuse yourself there to your heart's content, but do not sin through proud speech. 13 But above all bless your Maker, who fills you with his good gifts.

The Providence of God

14 The one who seeks God[ca] will accept his discipline, and those who rise early to seek him[cb] will find favor. 15 The one who seeks the law will be filled with it, but the hypocrite will stumble at it. 16 Those who fear the Lord will form true judgments, and they will kindle righteous deeds like a light. 17 The sinner will shun reproof, and will find a decision according to his liking. 18 A sensible person will not overlook a thoughtful suggestion; an insolent[cc] and proud person will not be deterred by fear.[cd] 19 Do nothing without deliberation, but when you have acted, do not regret it. 20 Do not go on a path full of hazards, and do not stumble at an obstacle twice.[ce] 21 Do not be overconfident on a smooth[cf] road, 22 and give good heed to your paths.[cg] 23 Guard[ch] yourself in every act, for this is the keeping of the commandments. **24 The one who keeps the law preserves himself,[ci] and the one who trusts the Lord will not suffer loss.**

Chapter 33

No evil will befall the one who fears the Lord, but in trials such a one will be rescued again and again. 2 The wise will not hate the law, but the one who is hypocritical about it is like a boat in a storm. 3 The sensible person will trust in the law; or such a one the law is as dependable as a divine oracle. **4 Prepare what to say, and then you will be listened to; draw upon your training, and give your answer.** 5 The heart of a fool is like a cart wheel, and his thoughts like a turning axle. 6 A mocking friend is like a stallion that neighs no matter who the rider is.

Differences in Nature and in Humankind

7 Why is one day more important than another, when all the daylight in the year is from the sun? 8 By the Lord's wisdom they were distinguished, and he appointed the different seasons and festivals. 9 Some days he exalted and hallowed, and some he made ordinary days. 10 All human beings come from the ground, and humankind[cj] was created out of the dust. **11 In the fullness of his knowledge the Lord distinguished them and appointed their different ways. 12 Some he blessed and exalted, and some he made holy and brought near to himself; but some he cursed and brought low, and turned them out of their place.** 13 Like clay in the hand of the potter, to be molded as he pleases, so all are in the hand of their Maker, to be given whatever he decides. **14 Good is the opposite of evil, and life the opposite of death; so the sinner is the opposite of the godly.** 15 Look at all the works of the Most High; they come in pairs, one the opposite of the other. 16 Now I was the last to keep vigil; I was like a gleaner following the grape-pickers; 17 by the blessing of the Lord I arrived first, and like a grape-picker I filled my wine press. **18 Consider that I have not labored for myself alone, but for all who seek instruction. 19 Hear me, you who are great among the people, and you leaders of the congregation, pay heed!**

The Advantage of Independence

20 To son or wife, to brother or friend, do not give power over yourself, as long as you live; and do not give your property to another, in case you change your mind and must ask for it. **21 While you are still alive and have breath in you, do not let anyone take your place.** 22 For it is better that your children should ask from you than that you should look to the hand of your children. 23 Excel in all that you do; bring no stain upon your honor. 24 At the time when you end the days of your life, in the hour of death, distribute your inheritance.

The Treatment of Slaves

25 Fodder and a stick and burdens for a donkey; bread and discipline and work for a slave. 26 Set your slave to work, and you will find rest; leave his hands idle, and he will seek liberty. **27 Yoke and thong will bow the neck, and for a wicked slave there are racks and tortures. (that doesn't sound right to me maybe a**

mistranslation?) 28 Put him to work, in order that he may not be idle, 29 for idleness teaches much evil. 30 Set him to work, as is fitting for him, and if he does not obey, make his fetters heavy. Do not be overbearing toward anyone, and do nothing unjust. 31 If you have but one slave, treat him like yourself, because you have bought him with blood. If you have but one slave, treat him like a brother, for you will need him as you need your life. 32 If you ill-treat him, and he leaves you and runs away, 33 which way will you go to seek him?

Chapter 34 Sirach: Dreams Mean Nothing

34 The senseless have vain and false hopes, and dreams give wings to fools. 2 As one who catches at a shadow and pursues the wind, so is anyone who believes in[ck] dreams. 3 What is seen in dreams is but a reflection, the likeness of a face looking at itself. **4 From an unclean thing what can be clean? And from something false what can be true? 5 Divinations and omens and dreams are unreal, and like a woman in labor, the mind has fantasies.** 6 Unless they are sent by intervention from the Most Hi pay no attention to them. **7 For dreams have deceived many, and those who put their hope in them have perished.** 8 Without such deceptions the law will be fulfilled, and wisdom is complete in the mouth of the faithful.

Experience as a Teacher

9 An educated[cl] person knows many things, and one with much experience knows what he is talking about. 10 An inexperienced person knows few things, 11 but he that has traveled acquires much cleverness. 12 I have seen many things in my travels, and I understand more than I can express. 13 I have often been in danger of death, but have escaped because of these experiences.

Fear the Lord

14 The spirit of those who fear the Lord will live, 15 for their hope is in him who saves them. 16 Those who fear the Lord will not be timid, or play the coward, for he is their hope. 17 Happy is the soul that fears the Lord! 18 To whom does he look? And who is his support? 19 The eyes of the Lord are on those who love him, a mighty shield and strong support, a shelter from scorching wind and a shade from noonday sun, a guard against stumbling and a help against falling. 20 He lifts up the soul and makes the eyes sparkle; he gives health and life and blessing.

Offering Sacrifices

21 If one sacrifices ill-gotten goods, the offering is blemished;[cm] 22 the gifts[cn] of the lawless are not acceptable. **23 The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the ungodly, nor for a multitude of sacrifices does he forgive sins.** 24 Like one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the person who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor. 25 The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a murderer. 26 To take away a neighbor's living is to commit murder; 27 to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood. 28 When one builds and another tears down, what do they gain but hard work? 29 When one prays and another curses, to whose voice will the Lord listen? 30 If one washes after touching a corpse, and touches it again, what has been gained by washing? **31 So if one fasts for his sins, and goes again and does the same things, who will listen to his prayer? And what has he gained by humbling himself?**

Chapter 35 Sirach: The Law and Sacrifices

35 The one who keeps the law makes many offerings; 2 one who heeds the commandments makes an offering of well-being. 3 The one who returns a kindness offers choice flour, 4 and one who gives alms sacrifices a thank offering. 5 To keep from wickedness is pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake unrighteousness is an atonement. 6 **Do not appear before the Lord empty-handed, 7 for all that you offer is in fulfillment of the commandment.** 8 **The offering of the righteous enriches the altar, and its pleasing odor rises before the**

Most High. 9 The sacrifice of the righteous is acceptable, and it will never be forgotten. 10 Be generous when you worship the Lord, and do not stint the first fruits of your hands. 11 With every gift show a cheerful face, and dedicate your tithe with gladness. **12 Give to the Most High as he has given to you, and as generously as you can afford.** 13 **For the Lord is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold.**

Divine Justice

14 Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; 15 and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him there is no partiality. 16 He will not show partiality to the poor; but he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. 17 He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint. 18 Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek 19 as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall? 20 The one whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. **21 The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and it will not rest until it reaches its goal; it will not desist until the Most High responds 22 and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment. Indeed, the Lord will not delay, and like a warrior[co] will not be patient until he crushes the loins of the unmerciful 23 and repays vengeance on the nations; until he destroys the multitude of the insolent, and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous; 24 until he repays mortals according to their deeds, and the works of all according to their thoughts; 25 until he judges the case of his people and makes them rejoice in his mercy. 26 His mercy is as welcome in time of distress as clouds of rain in time of drought.**

Chapter 36 Sirach: A Prayer for God's People 36

Have mercy upon us, O God[cp] of all, 2 and put all the nations in fear of you. 3 Lift up your hand against foreign nations and let them see your might. 4 As you have used us to show your holiness to them, so use them to show your glory to us. 5 Then they will know,[cq] as we have known, that there is no God but you, O Lord. 6 Give new signs, and work other wonders; 7 make your hand and right arm glorious. 8 Rouse your anger and pour out your wrath; 9 destroy the adversary and wipe out the enemy. 10 Hasten the day, and remember the appointed time,[cr] and let people recount your mighty deeds. 11 Let survivors be consumed in the fiery wrath, and may those who harm your people meet destruction. 12 Crush the heads of hostile rulers who say, "There is no one but ourselves." 13 Gather all the tribes of Jacob,[cs] 16 and give them their inheritance, as at the beginning. 17 Have mercy, O Lord, on the people called by your name, on Israel, whom you have named[ct] your firstborn, 18 Have pity on the city of your sanctuary,[cu] Jerusalem, the place of your dwelling.[cv] 19 Fill Zion with your majesty,[cw] and your temple[cx] with your glory. 20 Bear witness to those whom you created in the beginning, and fulfill the prophecies spoken in your name. 21 Reward those who wait for you and let your prophets be found trustworthy. 22 Hear, O Lord, the prayer of your servants, according to your goodwill toward[cy] your people, and all who are on the earth will know that you are the Lord, the God of the ages.

Concerning Discrimination

23 The stomach will take any food, yet one food is better than another. 24 As the palate tastes the kinds of game, so an intelligent mind detects false words. 25 A perverse mind will cause grief, but a person with experience will pay him back. 26 A woman will accept any man as a husband, but one girl is preferable to another. 27 A woman's beauty lights up a man's face, and there is nothing he desires more. **28 If kindness and humility mark her speech, her husband is more fortunate than other men. 29 He who acquires a wife gets his best possession,[cz] a helper fit for him and a pillar of support.[da]** 30 Where there is no fence, the property will be plundered; and where there is no wife, a man will become a fugitive and a wanderer.[db] 31 For who will trust a nimble robber that skips from city to city? So who will trust a man that has no nest, but lodges wherever night overtakes him?

Chapter 37 Sirach: False Friends

37 Every friend says, "I too am a friend"; but some friends are friends only in name. 2 Is it not a sorrow like that for death itself when a dear friend turns into an enemy? 3 O inclination to evil, why were you formed to cover the land with deceit? 4 Some companions rejoice in the happiness of a friend, but in time of trouble they are against him. 5 Some companions help a friend for their stomachs' sake, yet in battle they will carry his shield. 6 Do not forget a friend during the battle,[dc] and do not be unmindful of him when you distribute your spoils[dd]

Caution in Taking Advice

7 All counselors praise the counsel they give, but some give counsel in their own interest. 8 Be wary of a counselor, and learn first what is his interest, for he will take thought for himself. He may cast the lot against you 9 and tell you, "Your way is good," and then stand aside to see what happens to you. **10 Do not consult the one who regards you with suspicion; hide your intentions from those who are jealous of you.** 11 Do not consult with a woman about her rival or with a coward about war, with a merchant about business or with a buyer about selling, with a miser about generosity[de] or with the merciless about kindness, with an idler about any work or with a seasonal laborer about completing his work, with a lazy servant about a big task—pay no attention to any advice they give. **12 But associate with a godly person whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments, who is like-minded with yourself, and who will grieve with you if you fail.** **13 And heed[df] the counsel of your own heart, for no one is more faithful to you than it is.** 14 For our own mind sometimes keeps us better informed than seven sentinels sitting high on a watchtower. **15 But above all pray to the Most High that he may direct your way in truth.**

True and False Wisdom

16 Discussion is the beginning of every work, and counsel precedes every undertaking. **17 The mind is the root of all conduct; 18 it sprouts four branches,[dg] good and evil, life and death; and it is the tongue that continually rules them.** 19 Some people may be clever enough to teach many, and yet be useless to themselves. 20 A skillful speaker may be hated; he will be destitute of all food, 21 for the Lord has withheld the gift of charm, since he is lacking in all wisdom.