



### *Proverbs and Wisdom*

The word of God came to the people of Israel in different ways. We have already dealt with the origin of the *prophetic* and *historical* books: they arose from the prophets' preaching and from the reflection of religious circles on the history of Israel.

However, other believers preferred to meditate on human behavior, the vicissitudes of life, the different fortunes of those who are irresponsible and those who control their desires. In particular, they wanted to understand God's justice in this world.

The wisdom of people of all times has developed around these themes. We hear about Chinese wisdom, Hindu wisdom... Yet, the wisdom of the Middle East may have come first. There had been an abundance of wisdom writings for almost thirty centuries before Christ both in Egypt and Mesopotamia (as we know, Palestine is between the borders of these two countries).

Having come to culture later, the Israelites took part in this "sapiential" literature at the time of king Solomon who had gathered the first "sages." Their first works (such as chapters 10–31 of Proverbs) owed a great deal to their Egyptian predecessors although, for the most part, they merely used the "proverbs" or the "maxims" of popular wisdom. In turn, by their writings, they were to help every effort in developing the instruction and moral sense of future generations. There must have been a Temple school where young people received their formation by learning, meditating and developing the sages' proverbs and instruction.

The Jewish people were profoundly marked by this wisdom which shines through almost all the parables and "sayings" of Jesus who was formed at that school.

This literature, what the religious community has preserved and accepted, is no less the word of God than the prophetic books. Even if, at times, this wisdom seems a bit pedestrian and utilitarian, it does attest to many convictions of the Jewish and the Christian faiths, namely, as human beings, we are responsible for our actions; experience is a teacher of truth and it is the touchstone of what sages have declared; God created the world and he reveals himself in his creation. Finally, our wisdom has its limits and beyond that, we can only put our trust in the justice and the providence of God.

The greater part of the Book of *Proverbs* is very old (chaps. 10–31). The first section (chaps. 1–9), however, is much recent, around the second century before Christ. There we find a meditation on the *Wisdom of God*, from which all human wisdom proceeds. The height of all this contemplation in divine Wisdom is found in the famous eighth chapter.

**1**

- <sup>1</sup>These are proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:
  - <sup>2</sup>for you to obtain wisdom and instruction,
  - to penetrate words of significance,
  - <sup>3</sup>to acquire well-ordered knowledge,
  - and become just with discernment and integrity.
  - <sup>4</sup>Simple people will become clever
  - and the young will acquire understanding and foresight.
  - <sup>5</sup>Let the wise man listen: he will add to his learning,
  - and the man of sound judgment will acquire skill,
  - <sup>6</sup>to understand the proverbs and sayings,
  - the words of the wise and their riddles.
  - <sup>7</sup>The beginning of knowledge is the fear of Yahweh,
  - only fools have contempt for wisdom and discipline.

Ps  
111:10;  
Job  
28:28

**Avoid the company of evildoers**

6:20 <sup>8</sup>Listen, my son, to the teaching of your father, do not ignore your mother's instruction: <sup>9</sup>for they will be your graceful crown, a precious chain around your neck.

Sir 6:24; 6:29 <sup>10</sup>My son, if sinners try to tempt you, do not give in.

<sup>11</sup>They will invite you, "Come with us, let us spill blood, let us ambush the innocent without a second thought. <sup>12</sup>We will engulf them as does the netherworld and snatch them suddenly as does death. <sup>13</sup>We will help ourselves to many riches and fill our houses with booty. <sup>14</sup>Join forces with us; one purse will be shared between us!"

<sup>15</sup>My son, do not go with them, do not set foot along their way. <sup>16</sup>See how they speed on to evil! How they hasten to spill blood!

<sup>17</sup>What bird would fall into a trap if you set it up in its sight? <sup>18</sup>But these people stalk themselves and set a trap for their own lives.

<sup>19</sup>Such is the lot of all who live by plunder: plunder will rob them of their own lives.

**Listen to me today**

• <sup>20</sup>Wisdom shouts aloud in the streets, she raises her voice in the marketplace; <sup>21</sup>at street corners she cries; she delivers her speeches at the city gates:

<sup>22</sup>"You ignorant people, how long will you continue to cling to your foolishness? How long will mockers revel in their mockery, and fools have contempt for knowledge?"

<sup>23</sup>Listen to my warning. I will now pour my spirit upon you and make you know my words.

<sup>24</sup>Indeed if I cry out and you refuse to listen, if I offer my hand and no one cares, <sup>25</sup>if you ignore my advice and reject my warning, <sup>26</sup>I, in turn, will laugh at your disaster, I will sneer when terror grips you; <sup>27</sup>when terror comes down on you like a hurricane, and distress and anxiety befall you.

<sup>28</sup>Then people will cry to me but I

8:1-10;  
9:3;  
Jn 7:37

Is 65:2;  
65:12;  
66:4;  
Jer 7:13

Jer 11:11;  
Jn 7:34

• **1.1** From the beginning, people are divided into two groups. On one hand, the wise which includes the intelligent, clever and responsible; on the other hand, the foolish, including also those who are stupid, lying and evil.

*The beginning of knowledge is the fear of Yahweh.* This word "fear" does not have for us the meaning it had in the Bible. It is not, in fact, a matter of being afraid of God, but to be conscious of acting in his presence and of being responsible to him. Those who "fear

Yahweh" make fidelity and obedience to his word the basis of their decisions.

• **20.** An invitation to be converted today. Tomorrow will be too late. Jesus will say the same: Matthew 7:21 and 25:1.

*Wisdom shouts aloud in the streets.* Who will be able to say that no one awakened him and showed him the way? Subhuman conditions of life make a people irresponsible, but irresponsible people also make a subhuman

will not respond. They will seek me but will not find me,<sup>29</sup> because they despised knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh; <sup>30</sup>they would not listen to any advice and they rejected all my warnings.

<sup>31</sup>They will harvest the fruit of their evil ways and have their fill of their own designs. <sup>32</sup>For the error of the ignorant leads to death, the idleness of fools brings about their ruin.

<sup>33</sup>But whoever listens to me will feel secure and at ease, without fear of evil.”

**It is good to acquire wisdom**

**2** • <sup>1</sup>My son, if you heed my words and value my commands, <sup>2</sup>with your ear attentive to wisdom and your heart obedient to understanding; <sup>3</sup>if you call for perception and raise your voice for insight; <sup>4</sup>if you seek it as silver and search for it more than any treasure <sup>5</sup>then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and you will find the knowledge of God.

<sup>6</sup>For Yahweh gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and insight. <sup>7</sup>He reserves his help for the upright and is a shield for those who walk in integrity; <sup>8</sup>he guards the ways of the just and protects the steps of his faithful.

<sup>9</sup>Then you will understand justice, discernment and integrity—all that leads you to happiness.

<sup>10</sup>Wisdom will abide in your heart and knowledge will comfort your inner self.

<sup>11</sup>Foresight will guide you and under-

standing will protect you. <sup>12</sup>It will guard you from evil, from people of misleading speech, <sup>13</sup>from those who have abandoned the ways of honesty to walk the roads of darkness; <sup>14</sup>they rejoice in evil-doing, they revel in perversions; <sup>15</sup>their paths are crooked and their ways devious.

<sup>16</sup>Wisdom keeps you from the alien woman, from the stranger with her smooth words, <sup>17</sup>who deserts the partner of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.

<sup>18</sup>For her house inclines towards death, her paths towards the grave. <sup>19</sup>Those who go to her never return, they do not regain the paths of life.

<sup>20</sup>So you will walk along the way of the good, and keep to the paths of the virtuous. <sup>21</sup>For the honest will inherit the land; the people of integrity will live on it.

<sup>22</sup>The evildoers instead will be cut off from the land. The wicked will be rooted out of it.

**3** <sup>1</sup>My son, do not forget my instruction, my commands; keep them in your heart. <sup>2</sup>For they will bring you length of days, years of life and peace.

<sup>3</sup>Let loyalty and kindness never leave you; tie them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, <sup>4</sup>that you may find favor and a good name in the eyes of God and people.

**Put wisdom into practice**

• <sup>5</sup>Trust in Yahweh with all your heart; do not rely on your own insight. <sup>6</sup>Let his presence pervade all your ways and he will protect your foot from the snare.

Is 14:9

Ps 37:9;  
37:29

Mt 5:4

Mt 13:  
44-46;  
Job  
28:28

6:21;  
7:3;  
Dt 6:6-9

Rom 12:  
16-17;  
Lk 2:52

world. All are invited, however, to come out of their passivity.

*They did not choose the fear of Yahweh.* It is easy to excuse oneself: “There is no malice on my part; it is a question of negligence.” Wisdom rejects these excuses. Negligence is a form of contempt for God.

• **2.1** The wisdom of God protects those who love it against evil influences. They are no longer like straw carried off by the wind, or in our world a number lost in the crowd, submissive to the pressure of media and the attractions of the consumer world. They resist the call of drunkards, of frivolous women and of unscrupulous companions.

• **3.5** The first paragraph deals with the attitudes leading to wisdom: humility, being willing to sacrifice what God wants, not becoming discouraged when the Lord corrects us, that is to say, when we are tested (see Heb 12:5 and Rev 3:19).

The proverbs insist on the value of advice, discipline, correction: to live as one pleases, according to one’s fantasies causes all sorts of misfortune: this is a saying of Proverbs (see 5:12).

*Then the years of your life will be multiplied (4:10).* The teachings of wisdom assure you of life and well-being. It is even healthy for the body (3:8 and 4:22).

<sup>7</sup>Do not consider yourself wise, fear God, and turn away from evil. <sup>8</sup>This will be a medicine to your body and a relief to your bones.

<sup>9</sup>Honor Yahweh, giving him from what you have, the first fruits of all your produce. <sup>10</sup>Then your barns will be filled to overflowing, your vats will brim over with wine.

<sup>11</sup>My son, do not scorn the discipline of Yahweh; do not ignore his correction.

<sup>12</sup>For Yahweh corrects those he loves, as a father does his beloved son.

<sup>13</sup>Happy the one who finds wisdom and gains insight. <sup>14</sup>For she is of more value than silver and more useful than gold. <sup>15</sup>She is more precious than pearls; nothing you could wish for would compare with her. <sup>16</sup>With her right hand she offers you length of days, with her left, riches and glory. <sup>17</sup>She leads you through delightful ways; all her roads are peace.

<sup>18</sup>She is a tree of life for those who clasp her; those who possess her are happy.

<sup>19</sup>It is by his wisdom that Yahweh founded the earth; by his understanding that he made firm the heavens. <sup>20</sup>By his knowledge the depths were scooped out, and the clouds rained down dew.

<sup>21</sup>My son, hold on to sound judgment and discretion and do not let them out of your sight. <sup>22</sup>They will give life to your inner self, and adorn your neck.

<sup>23</sup>Then you can go your way safely and your foot will not stumble.

<sup>24</sup>You will have no fear when you lie down and your sleep will be peaceful. <sup>25</sup>You will not fear sudden terror or the attack of evildoers. <sup>26</sup>For Yahweh is at your side and he guards your steps from the snare.

<sup>27</sup>Do not hold back from those who ask your help, when it is in your power to do it. <sup>28</sup>Do not say to your neighbor, "Go away! Come another

time; tomorrow I will give it to you!" when you can help him now.

<sup>29</sup>Do not plot evil against your neighbor who lives trustingly beside you, <sup>30</sup>nor fight a man without cause when he has done you no wrong.

<sup>31</sup>Do not envy the man of violence or follow his example.

<sup>32</sup>For Yahweh hates the wicked but guides the honest. <sup>33</sup>He curses the house of the evildoer but blesses the home of the upright. <sup>34</sup>If there are mockers, he mocks them in turn but he shows his favor to the humble. <sup>35</sup>The wise will possess his glory while the foolish will inherit disgrace.

**Keep to the right path**

**4** <sup>1</sup>Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction and pay attention so that you may gain insight. <sup>2</sup>For I have given you good principles; do not discard my teaching!

<sup>3</sup>For when I, too, was a young boy, and my mother fondly looked on me as special, <sup>4</sup>my father taught me and said to me: Treasure my words in your heart; listen to my directions and you will live.

<sup>5</sup>Acquire wisdom and insight and do not forget or reject the words of my mouth. <sup>6</sup>Do not abandon wisdom for she will protect you. Love her and she will be your salvation.

<sup>7</sup>The beginning of wisdom is to work to acquire it. At the cost of all you possess, strive to gain insight. <sup>8</sup>Hold her close, for she will exalt you and bring you honor if you embrace her. <sup>9</sup>She will crown you with grace and put a diadem of splendor on your head.

<sup>10</sup>Listen, my son, and take my words to heart; then the years of your life will be multiplied.

<sup>11</sup>Because I have taught you the way of wisdom and have guided you along honest ways, <sup>12</sup>you will walk with ease and run without falling. <sup>13</sup>Hold firm to discipline; never let her go. Guard her well for she is your salvation.

<sup>14</sup>Do not follow the way of the wicked nor walk with evildoers. <sup>15</sup>Avoid them, turn your back on them and pass on. <sup>16</sup>For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; they cannot rest unless they

Jer 12:6

Jas 4:6;  
1P 5:5;  
Sir 3:18,  
20

7:2;  
8:35

Heb  
12:5-6  
Rev 3:19;  
Dt 8:5

Gen 2:9;  
3:22;  
Jn 6:35

8:22-31

have caused someone's downfall. <sup>17</sup>Wickedness is their bread and violence their wine.

<sup>18</sup>The way of the upright is like the dawn that becomes brighter until the fullness of day. <sup>19</sup>The way of the wicked is total darkness and they do not notice that which will make them fall.

<sup>20</sup>My son, be attentive and listen carefully to my words. <sup>21</sup>Never let them out of your sight but guard them in the bottom of your heart. <sup>22</sup>For they are life to those who cling to them and healing for the inner spirit.

• <sup>23</sup>Above all else, guard your heart, for therein is the source of life. <sup>24</sup>Keep your mouth from lies and let not deceit come from your lips.

<sup>25</sup>Keep your sight on what is ahead and your eyes directed straight in front of you. <sup>26</sup>Test the ground under your feet and all your ways will be secure. <sup>27</sup>Turn neither to left nor to right and keep your path from evil.

#### **Beware of the adulteress**

**5** <sup>1</sup>My son, pay heed to my wisdom and listen to my insights; <sup>2</sup>remember my counsel and let your lips not depart from this knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>Know that the lips of the adulteress are sweet as honey and her words smoother than oil, <sup>4</sup>but the outcome is bitter as herbs. It is as sharp as a double-edged sword.

<sup>5</sup>Her feet go down to the grave and her steps lead to death. <sup>6</sup>She pays no attention to the path of life and strays without knowing it.

<sup>7</sup>Now then, my son, listen to me and do not forget my words: <sup>8</sup>Stay away from her and never approach the door of her house, <sup>9</sup>lest you surrender your honor to strangers and your best years to cruel men, <sup>10</sup>lest others benefit from your goods, and your earnings go to an alien house.

<sup>11</sup>You will complain in the end, when your body and flesh are already devoured and <sup>12</sup>you will say, "Why did I reject instruction and turn my back on sound advice? <sup>13</sup>Why did I not listen to the voice of my teachers and follow their counsel? <sup>14</sup>For I have come to the depths of disgrace in the midst of the whole community."

• <sup>15</sup>Drink, then, from the water of your own cistern, from that which flows in your own well. <sup>16</sup>Do not let your fountains be wasted elsewhere nor in the public streets. <sup>17</sup>They are for you alone and not for strangers.

<sup>18</sup>May your fountainhead be blessed and may you find joy in the wife of your youth, <sup>19</sup>your beautiful hind and graceful gazelle! May her breasts be your delight at all times: be always in love with her.

<sup>20</sup>My son, why be infatuated with an adulteress and embrace a strange woman? <sup>21</sup>For Yahweh watches the ways of men and he observes all their paths.

<sup>22</sup>The wicked will be caught in his own evil and remain entangled in the nets of his own sin. <sup>23</sup>He will die for

Ecl 9:9

• **4.23** *Above all else, guard your heart, for therein is the source of life.* Let us not forget that in the Bible "heart" signifies all that is interior in humans: their conscience, deepest desires, own criteria. It is a call not to allow oneself to be carried away by activism, nor to shut our eyes to a particular aspect of our conduct, to search among our motives where it is very easy for a good intention to be accompanied by others that are less noble. All are to be put under the light of faith.

• **5.15** *Drink, then, from the water of your own cistern.* Let people be responsible first in their married life. This chapter deals with the

consequences of licentiousness. It invites a man to value the intimacy of his marriage and after many years to be able to continue being the lover of his wife: *be always in love with her.*

It is strange that today it is necessary to be reminded of such things in a society of abundance where infidelity is extolled as if it multiplied the possibilities of enjoyment and of finding oneself. The contempt for fidelity and the family is the first cause of death in a country: children become rare and selfishness is the law. The Bible knows that people only reach maturity by respecting a law and that sexual liberty only brings decline to a disenchanting heart.

want of discipline and will drown in the rising tide of his own evil.

27:13;  
Sir 8:13

**6** • <sup>1</sup>My son, if you have stood bail for your neighbor or guaranteed the word of a stranger; <sup>2</sup>if you have committed yourself with your own lips, know that you have trapped yourself with your own words. <sup>3</sup>Then do this, my son: release yourself. If you have fallen into the hands of your neighbor, go speedily, kneel down and plead with him; <sup>4</sup>do not give sleep to your eyes or rest to your eyelids. <sup>5</sup>Break free, like a gazelle from the trap or a bird from the hand.

**The idlers and the fools**

<sup>6</sup>You idler, go to the ant, watch her ways and be wise. <sup>7</sup>She has no master, no steward or overseer. <sup>8</sup>She secures food in summer and stores up provisions during harvest time.

<sup>9</sup>How long, you idler, are you going to lie around? When do you intend to rise from sleep? <sup>10</sup>A little sleep, a little drowsiness and your laziness creeps upon you and then, like a tramp, <sup>11</sup>poverty comes, bringing misery like a vagabond.

24:33-34;  
Ecl 4:5

<sup>12</sup>The villain, the unjust man, goes about with a sneer on his lips, <sup>13</sup>winking his eye, shuffling his feet and beckoning with his finger. <sup>14</sup>His heart is deceitful; he is forever plotting evil and causing arguments. <sup>15</sup>Therefore, disaster will suddenly and irrevocably overtake him.

<sup>16</sup>There are six things Yahweh hates; seven his inner being detests: <sup>17</sup>the proud look, the lying tongue, hands which spill innocent blood, <sup>18</sup>the depraved heart, feet which speed towards evil, <sup>19</sup>a false and lying witness and the one who sows discord among people.

<sup>20</sup>My son, respect your father's instruction and do not reject your mother's teaching. <sup>21</sup>Hold them forever in your heart and hang them around your neck. <sup>22</sup>These will guard your footsteps, protect you when you sleep and speak to you on waking.

<sup>23</sup>For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light; correction teaches you the way of life.

<sup>24</sup>It will protect you from the evil woman, the smooth talking of the stranger. <sup>25</sup>Do not covet her beauty in your heart or let her captivate you with her looks. <sup>26</sup>For the prostitute deserves a piece of bread but the adulteress hunts after your worthy life.

<sup>27</sup>Can you hold fire in your pocket without setting fire to your clothes or <sup>28</sup>walk on hot coals without burning your feet? <sup>29</sup>So it is for the man who approaches his neighbor's wife: all who touch her will be punished.

<sup>30</sup>One does not condemn the hungry thief who steals to fill his stomach; <sup>31</sup>nevertheless, if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold and give all the goods in his house. <sup>32</sup>How senseless is the adulterer! Whoever commits adultery destroys himself. <sup>33</sup>He will reap blows and contempt and his disgrace will not be erased.

<sup>34</sup>Jealousy inflames the husband's heart and when he can take revenge he will have no mercy. <sup>35</sup>He will accept nothing, neither reparation nor lavish gifts.

**7** <sup>1</sup>My son, keep my words and remain faithful to my commands. <sup>2</sup>Hold fast to my instruction and you will have life; treasure my teachings as the apple of your eye. <sup>3</sup>Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablets of your heart. <sup>4</sup>Let wisdom be your sister and knowledge your friend, <sup>5</sup>so that you will be saved from the adulterous woman, from the stranger with her enticing words.

4:4;  
8:35

2:16

<sup>6</sup>From my window I was looking out through the lattice and <sup>7</sup>I saw among the young men, an inexperienced youth <sup>8</sup>who walked along the road near her corner, towards the path to her house. <sup>9</sup>It was dusk, daylight was fading—the time of darkness and shadow. <sup>10</sup>And look! Out comes this woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute, covered with a veil.

- **6.1** Here we have all kinds of advice.

Verses 1-5. A person who is responsible, however generous and obliging he may be, always thinks before committing himself.

Verses 9-11. Being lazy about getting up: see also 26:14.

Following this passage, there is a long discourse on the consequences of adultery which is accompanied by a life of lies and slavery.

<sup>11</sup>She is brazen and shameless, unable to remain in the house. <sup>12</sup>Now at the corner, now in the square, she is on the lookout. <sup>13</sup>She throws herself at him, kisses him and confidently says, <sup>14</sup>"I have to offer sacrifices and terminate my vows; because of this <sup>15</sup>I came out to meet you. I sought and found you. <sup>16</sup>I have spread on my bed quilts and fine Egyptian sheets and <sup>17</sup>sprinkled it with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. <sup>18</sup>Come, let us abandon ourselves to pleasure and drink our fill of love all night, <sup>19</sup>for my husband is not at home but away on a long journey. <sup>20</sup>He has taken his money-

bags and will not return before the full moon."

<sup>21</sup>She led him astray with such smooth and seductive words.

<sup>22</sup>At once he followed her, as an ox led to slaughter or a deer caught in a snare <sup>23</sup>until its liver is pierced by an arrow; as a bird springs at the snare unaware that its life is at stake.

<sup>24</sup>Now then, my sons, listen and pay attention to my words. <sup>25</sup>Do not be led astray or lose yourself on her paths. <sup>26</sup>For she has brought many to their death and the strongest were all her victims. <sup>27</sup>Her house leads to hell and death.

Ecl 7:26

## Wisdom calls

**8**

• <sup>1</sup>Who calls? Is it not Wisdom?

Who lifts up her voice?

<sup>2</sup>Is it not Knowledge?

She shouts from the hilltops  
and waits by the crossroads;

<sup>3</sup>in the vicinity of the city gates she speaks,

<sup>4</sup>"To you, people, I call,  
for my message is directed to all that live,  
<sup>5</sup>so that the ignorant may learn  
and the thoughtless come to their senses.

<sup>6</sup>Listen to me for I speak of vital things  
and everything I say is true.

<sup>7</sup>Truthful words come from my mouth  
and my lips do not lend themselves to evil.

<sup>8</sup>All my words are right,  
none are twisted or deceitful.

<sup>9</sup>The intelligent will verify their truth,  
the wise perceive their sincerity.

<sup>10</sup>Prefer my teaching to silver  
and seek wisdom rather than gold,

<sup>11</sup>because wisdom has more value than any jewel  
and all that you may desire cannot equal it.

1:20-33

• **8.1** Wisdom speaks again in this poem. We understand that this Wisdom is the wisdom found in the books of the Bible. Biblical words are the Word of God and because of that even when they seem naive, or "old hat" at times, they are always bearers of life (Jesus will say that the word of God is a seed).

All the benefits that will be reaped by the frequent reading of the Bible are listed: to begin with, the fear of God, that is to say, appreciating God above all things. Then culture that

enables us to be leaders and to undertake responsible tasks. Finally success in life.

Many youths and adults who are not well educated think they will always be inferior: they do not believe they are capable of performing well either in ministry or in community development. They must realize that the regular study of the Bible will not only strengthen their faith, but be a starting point for human wisdom and enabling them to guide others.

<sup>12</sup>I, Wisdom, dwell with discretion  
and count prudence among my friends.

<sup>13</sup>The fear of Yahweh is rejection of evil.

I hate all pride, arrogance, wicked ways and lies,

<sup>14</sup>but I love counsel, discretion, prudence and strength.

<sup>15</sup>Kings reign by my power,  
their ministers issue just laws;

<sup>16</sup>by me princes govern,  
and the great and noble of the earth as well.

<sup>17</sup>I love those who love me  
and go to meet those who seek me.

<sup>18</sup>Riches and honor are with me,  
true well-being and upright living.

<sup>19</sup>More precious than silver and gold  
are my fruit and my yield.

<sup>20</sup>I proceed on the path of righteousness  
and make use of the ways of justice,

<sup>21</sup>giving riches to those who love me,  
and filling their cellars.

### Yahweh formed me at the beginning

• <sup>22</sup>Yahweh created me first,  
at the beginning of his works.

<sup>23</sup>He formed me from of old,  
from eternity, even before the earth.

<sup>24</sup>The abyss did not exist when I was born,  
the springs of the sea had not gushed forth,

<sup>25</sup>the mountains were still not set in their place

Sir 1:4, 9;  
24:9;  
Gen 1:1  
Jn 1:1

• 22. *Yahweh created me first, at the beginning of his works.* Note the poetic way of presenting wisdom as if it were someone, as if it were a daughter of God: *I was his daily delight, forever playing in his presence; playing throughout the world.* Such figures of speech contain a religious discovery of the last centuries before Christ.

For a very long time the Bible insisted on the fact that there is only one God and that he has nothing to do with the countless gods of the pagans. Now believers sense that there is something missing in their knowledge of Yahweh. How can God be a source of life and love if he is locked up in his solitude? Thanks to the Bible, believers know that besides being the Almighty and Holy God, the Lord becomes present to his people, in the Temple and the Cloud, and that he reveals himself to the prophets to whom he sends his Spirit.

Thus, in the last books of the Old Testament, the authors speak of the *Spirit*, the *Wis-*

*dom*, the *Power*, the *Providence* of God as if they were both something of God and something different from him, like characters sharing God's mysterious life and through whom he is involved in human affairs.

This is a way of preparing for the great revelation which will happen with the coming of Jesus. God is one in three persons and from the beginning his eternal Son "through whom all things were made" and who came to live among us was with the Father (see Jn 1:1-4; Col 1:15 and Heb 1:2-3).

Thus Wisdom is a figure of Christ. Christians came to see it as an image of their mother, Mary. In fact, more than any other creature, she was present in God's plans from the beginning and deserves to be called "Throne of Wisdom" since she was so intimately united with the Son, the Wisdom of God.

*Happy are those who listen to me (v. 34).* Thus the Wisdom of God speaks to the beginner taking his first steps in search of wisdom.

nor the hills, when I was born  
<sup>26</sup>before he made the earth or countryside,  
 or the first grains of the world's dust.  
<sup>27</sup>I was there when he made the skies  
 and drew the earth's compass on the abyss,  
<sup>28</sup>when he formed the clouds above  
 and when the springs of the ocean emerged;  
<sup>29</sup>when he made the sea with its limits,  
 that it might not overflow.

Job 38:8

When he laid the foundations of the earth,  
<sup>30</sup>I was close beside him,  
 the designer of his works,  
 and I was his daily delight,  
 forever playing in his presence,  
<sup>31</sup>playing throughout the world  
 and delighting to be with humans.  
<sup>32</sup>Now then, my sons, listen to me:  
 happy are those who follow my ways.  
<sup>33</sup>Listen to my teaching and gain wisdom;  
 do not ignore it.  
<sup>34</sup>Happy are those who listen to me  
 and wait at my gates every day,  
 watching, close to my threshold.  
<sup>35</sup>Those who find me find life:  
 theirs is Yahweh's blessing.  
<sup>36</sup>Those who offend me will undergo affliction;  
 they hate me for they love death.

Bar 3:37;  
Jn 1:14

## Wisdom invites to her table

**9**

- <sup>1</sup>Wisdom has built her house  
 set upon seven pillars;

Mt 22:1-4

Who is this beginner? Perhaps the one who enrolled in a reading course because she wanted to better her situation; or one who dedicates his days off to taking a course in unions in order to serve better his fellow workers; or the one who studies at night after work; or the one who does not go to bed without having read a biblical passage with his wife, etc. The wisdom you will gain comes from God himself, the source of all truth, who calls men and women to share in his wisdom.

This student may not reach a highly-prized knowledge, nor will he graduate with honors in this world! It does not matter. Because he decided to live more responsibly and to develop his human potential, God will see him as one of his children and one day, will give him the true wisdom which is in God.

We find two similar texts in Wisdom 7:21 and Sirach 24:5.

- **9.1** We will easily discover the image of Christ in these few verses. Wisdom is the image of the Son of God.

We find the invitation to the banquet in Matthew 22:4. Rich and poor, sensible and foolish people, all are called to change their lives.

The bread and the wine which Wisdom gives will one day be the body and blood of Christ (see Jn 6).

God is always present in our lives; he gives himself and nourishes us. We are invited to open our hands to take what he offers. Each day, he gives us what we need to solve the problems of humanity now.

<sup>2</sup>she has slaughtered her beasts,  
prepared her wine and laid her table.

<sup>3</sup>Next, she sent her servants to call  
from the central square of the city,

<sup>4</sup>“Pass by here, you who are fools.”

To the senseless she says,

<sup>5</sup>“Come, eat and drink

of the bread and wine I have prepared.

<sup>6</sup>Give up your foolishness and you will live;  
take the straight path of discernment.”

Is 55:1-3;  
Jn 6:35

<sup>7</sup>He who corrects a mocker gains insults; and he who reprimands an evildoer receives abuse. <sup>8</sup>Do not rebuke the mocker lest he hate you, but counsel the wise who will be grateful. <sup>9</sup>Give to the wise man and he will become wiser each day; teach an upright man and he will increase his wisdom.

<sup>10</sup>Fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom and to know the Holy One brings discernment. <sup>11</sup>Then I will multiply your days and increase your years of life. <sup>12</sup>If you are wise your wisdom will work to

your advantage, but if you mock you alone will be harmed.

<sup>13</sup>Lady Foolishness is impetuous, a simpleton who knows nothing. <sup>14</sup>She sits at the door of her house, on a throne in the central square of the city, <sup>15</sup>to invite all passersby, “Come here, whoever is ignorant.” <sup>16</sup>To the foolish she says, <sup>17</sup>“Stolen waters are sweet and pilfered bread is the tastiest.”

<sup>18</sup>But he does not see the Shadow world lying there; nor realize that its guests are heading towards the abyss of death.

## SECOND PART: THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

15:20;  
17:25;  
19:13

**10** • <sup>1</sup>A wise son is his father’s joy, a foolish one his mother’s heart-break.

<sup>2</sup>Treasures wrongfully acquired are of no value but upright living saves from death.

<sup>3</sup>Yahweh does not let the righteous go hungry but he denies satisfaction to the evildoers.

<sup>4</sup>The lazy hand brings poverty; the diligent hand brings wealth.

<sup>5</sup>The prudent man reaps in summer; the one who sleeps at harvest time deserves scorn.

<sup>6</sup>Blessings on the head of the upright man! Violence silences the cry of the wicked.

<sup>7</sup>The righteous will be remembered with blessings, the name of the wicked will rot away.

<sup>8</sup>The wise of heart is open to instruction, the chattering fool speeds towards ruin.

• **10.1** Here is the oldest part of the Book of Proverbs. It is a collection of proverbs and sayings attributed to king Solomon (chaps. 11–22). Then will follow proverbs from other sources. See 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; 30:1 and 31:1.

Here, more than elsewhere, it is fitting to recall that the words of the Bible are at one and the same time the word of God and human words. As word of God, they contain a teaching that always has value. There are also human words, words of wisdom gathered by an ancient people through experience in a culture different from our own. We cannot expect

Christian intuition that comes much later in the plan of God. He is a good educator and it has taken him centuries to give his people wisdom.

These proverbs point to qualities suitable for responsible persons:

- farsighted, self-assured, capable of persevering in their behavior and not lazy;
- being prudent and not trusting anyone (see 12:23; 14:6; 14:15; 25:17);
- being just and able to forgive (28:2; 31:8; 21:26; 25:21);
- being in control of one’s tongue (13:3);
- being able to correct one’s children (13:1).

<sup>9</sup>Whoever behaves honorably will walk safely, but the follower of crooked ways will be punished.

<sup>10</sup>The wink of an eye brings trouble; but a rebuke wins peace.

<sup>11</sup>The mouth of the righteous is a source of life, but violence is concealed in the mouths of evildoers.

<sup>12</sup>Hatred enkindles disputes, love covers over all offenses.

<sup>13</sup>Wisdom is to be found on the lips of the discerning man; the stick is for the fool's back.

<sup>14</sup>The wise store up learning but the mouth of the fool makes way for ruin.

<sup>15</sup>The rich man's fortune is his fortress, the poverty of the poor is their undoing.

<sup>16</sup>The virtuous man's toil brings him life, while the sins of the evil man destroy him.

<sup>17</sup>Respect for discipline is the path of life; he who ignores correction is doomed.

<sup>18</sup>Hypocritical is he who tolerates hatred; he who slanders is a fool.

<sup>19</sup>Sin will not be lacking where too many words are spoken; the prudent man controls his tongue.

<sup>20</sup>The upright man's tongue is pure silver, but the hearts of evildoers have little value.

<sup>21</sup>The lips of one righteous feed many people while fools die for lack of sense.

<sup>22</sup>The blessing of Yahweh brings riches, no effort can replace it.

<sup>23</sup>The fool delights in doing evil and the wise man in acquiring wisdom.

<sup>24</sup>The evildoer will encounter the evil he dreaded whereas the upright man will receive what he looked forward to.

<sup>25</sup>After the storm the wicked man is seen no more, but the upright man remains forever.

<sup>26</sup>The lazy man is like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes of his master.

<sup>27</sup>Fear of Yahweh lengthens one's life, but the years of the wicked will be cut short.

<sup>28</sup>The hope of the upright ends in happiness but the expectations of the wicked come to nothing.

<sup>29</sup>The ways of Yahweh are a fortress for the upright but for evildoers only ruin.

<sup>30</sup>The righteous will never be disturbed but evildoers will not survive on the land.

<sup>31</sup>Wisdom springs forth from the mouth of the virtuous but the corrupt tongue will be torn out. <sup>32</sup>Goodness dwells on the lips of the upright, corruption in the mouth of the wicked.

**11** <sup>1</sup>Yahweh detests a false scale but a just weight pleases him.

<sup>2</sup>Disgrace always accompanies pride; wisdom resides with the humble.

<sup>3</sup>Honesty illumines the path of the upright; but the corrupt are confounded by their own evil.

<sup>4</sup>On the day of vengeance riches will prove useless but honest living will save from death.

<sup>5</sup>The virtuous man's integrity smooths his way, while the wicked man falls by his own evil.

<sup>6</sup>Upright living saves the virtuous while evildoers are caught in their own greed.

<sup>7</sup>The hope of the wicked is buried with them and their trust in riches is of no avail.

<sup>8</sup>The upright will escape from distress; a wicked man will take his place.

<sup>9</sup>The godless man uses his mouth to destroy his neighbor but the virtuous use their wisdom to save themselves.

<sup>10</sup>The city rejoices in the good fortune of the upright and delights in the ruin of the wicked.

<sup>11</sup>A city is raised on the blessing of the upright and destroyed by the mouth of the wicked.

<sup>12</sup>Whoever mocks his neighbor is a fool; an intelligent person chooses silence.

<sup>13</sup>The gossip reveals secrets, but the trustworthy man keeps a secret.

<sup>14</sup>Lack of guidance leads to a nation's decline whereas numerous counselors bring success.

<sup>15</sup>He who stands bail for a stranger harms himself; he who avoids going bail will be safe.

<sup>16</sup>A gracious woman wins renown, and bold men acquire riches.

<sup>17</sup>The generous man does himself a favor while a cruel man wounds his own flesh.

<sup>18</sup>The pay of the wicked is an illusion; while the upright man reaps a sure reward.

<sup>19</sup>Upright living leads to life but the way of evil leads to death.

1Cor  
13:7;  
1P 4:8

Jas 3:8;  
3:2;  
1:19

Ps 127:1

<sup>20</sup>Yahweh detests the corrupt of heart but loves those whose life is upright.

<sup>21</sup>Be assured that the wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will be saved.

<sup>22</sup>The pretty woman without discretion is like a gold ring in the snout of a pig.

<sup>23</sup>The upright desire nothing but good; the desires of the wicked are in vain.

<sup>24</sup>Those who are generous increase their riches; others are misers and impoverish themselves.

<sup>25</sup>The warmhearted soul will prosper; he who waters will himself be watered.

Gen  
41:56

<sup>26</sup>He who hoards wheat is cursed by the people; blessed is he who sells his seeds.

<sup>27</sup>Yahweh rewards the one who seeks good; but he who pursues evil will be caught by it.

<sup>28</sup>He who trusts in riches will stumble; while the upright will flourish like leaves.

<sup>29</sup>Whoever mismanages his house will inherit only wind; the fool will end up a slave of the wise.

<sup>30</sup>The fruit of the upright is a tree of life while the wicked are uprooted before their time.

<sup>31</sup>If here on earth the upright get their due, how much more the wicked and the sinner!

**12** <sup>1</sup>He who loves discipline, loves knowledge; foolish is he who rejects correction.

<sup>2</sup>The good man wins the favor of Yahweh who condemns the one of evil schemes.

<sup>3</sup>No man is made secure by evil but nothing undermines the roots of the upright.

<sup>4</sup>A good wife is her husband's crown while the shameless woman is like a cancer in his bones.

<sup>5</sup>The plans of the upright are honest and the plottings of the wicked deceitful.

<sup>6</sup>The words of the wicked are mortal snares but the virtuous refute and elude them.

<sup>7</sup>The evildoers are thrown down and are no more; but the house of the virtuous will never crumble.

<sup>8</sup>Everyone is praised in proportion to his prudence; while the cor-

rupt of heart will be met with contempt.

<sup>9</sup>Better to be a common man and have a servant than to feel oneself great and run short of bread.

<sup>10</sup>The upright man looks after his animals but the wicked are heartless.

<sup>11</sup>He who cultivates the earth will have his fill of bread, while the fool chases after illusions.

<sup>12</sup>The desires of the wicked produce evil, but the roots of the virtuous produce fruit.

<sup>13</sup>The wicked man is entangled in his own lies, but the virtuous man will be saved from misfortune.

<sup>14</sup>Those who meditate on wisdom will attain all that is good; each one is rewarded according to the works of his hands.

<sup>15</sup>The fool considers his way right while the wise man listens to advice.

<sup>16</sup>The fool shows his annoyance immediately, but the discreet man overlooks an insult.

<sup>17</sup>The trustworthy witness leads to the truth, and the liar to confusion.

<sup>18</sup>The one who speaks thoughtlessly pierces like a sword; but the words of the wise bring healing.

<sup>19</sup>Truthful words endure forever but lies, for only a moment.

<sup>20</sup>Deceit dwells in the heart of the schemer, happiness in those who pursue peace.

<sup>21</sup>No misfortune will befall the virtuous but the wicked will have their fill of troubles.

<sup>22</sup>Yahweh hates the lips of liars and loves those who speak the truth.

<sup>23</sup>The discreet man conceals his wisdom while fools make public their nonsense.

<sup>24</sup>The hardworking hand will rule; and the lazy will have to obey.

<sup>25</sup>Intense grief depresses the heart while a friendly word makes it glad.

<sup>26</sup>The just man guides his neigh-

bor while the way of the wicked leads them astray.

<sup>27</sup>The lazy hand will have no game to cook: being industrious is the secret of wealth.

Mt 7:13;  
Jn 14:6

<sup>28</sup>Life is to be found on the path of virtue, the way of the wicked leads to death.

**13** <sup>1</sup>An intelligent child listens to his father's advice, but a mocker listens to no correction.

<sup>2</sup>A man can taste goodness from the fruit of his own mouth, but the treacherous feed on violence.

<sup>3</sup>He who guards his mouth preserves his life, the constant talker is lost.

<sup>4</sup>The lazy man hopes but his desires are in vain, whereas hard workers have their desires fulfilled.

<sup>5</sup>The righteous hates lying words but the evildoer slanders and defames.

<sup>6</sup>Virtue protects those of honest life; while sin brings ruin to the wicked.

<sup>7</sup>One pretends to be rich but has nothing, another, of great wealth, feigns poverty.

Ecd 5:11

<sup>8</sup>A man's wealth lets him ransom his life but the poor man has nothing with which to do so.

<sup>9</sup>The light of the virtuous is bright, the lamp of the godless is extinguished.

<sup>10</sup>Arrogance only brings trouble; wisdom is found in those who take advice.

<sup>11</sup>Sudden riches will decrease, he who gathers little by little will be enriched.

<sup>12</sup>Delayed hope makes the heart languish, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Dt 4:40

<sup>13</sup>The one who scorns teaching will be in want, those who respect the commandment will be rewarded.

14:27;  
Sir 21:13

<sup>14</sup>The wise man's teaching is a life-giving fountain for escaping the snares of death.

<sup>15</sup>Prudent intelligence wins favor, the way of liars leads nowhere.

<sup>16</sup>Every prudent man acts with reflection, the fool parades his stupidity.

<sup>17</sup>A wicked messenger falls on misfortune, the reliable one brings healing.

<sup>18</sup>Poverty and shame to the one who rejects correction; honor to him who accepts rebuke.

<sup>19</sup>Desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul; but fools spurn rejection of evil.

<sup>20</sup>Walk with the wise and you will gain

wisdom; those who befriend fools become wicked.

<sup>21</sup>Misfortune hounds the sinner, while the upright abound in good fortune.

<sup>22</sup>A good man's inheritance is for his children's children, a sinner's wealth will be kept for the virtuous.

<sup>23</sup>The tillage of the poor supplies food, while others perish because of their lack of righteousness.

<sup>24</sup>Unloved is the child whom the father hates to punish; the loving father frequently corrects.

<sup>25</sup>The upright man eats his fill, while the stomach of the wicked goes hungry.

**14** <sup>1</sup>Wisdom builds her house, foolishness destroys it with her own hands.

<sup>2</sup>Upright living is fear of Yahweh, but he who is devious in his ways scorns him.

<sup>3</sup>From the fool's mouth comes the rod of his pride, the wise man's lips protect him.

<sup>4</sup>Where there's no oxen, there's no wheat, in the oxen's strength there's abundant harvest.

<sup>5</sup>The truthful witness does not lie; the false witness breathes deceit.

<sup>6</sup>The mocker searches for wisdom in vain; knowledge comes easily to the discreet man.

<sup>7</sup>Keep away from the fool for you will find no wisdom in his words.

<sup>8</sup>The wisdom of the discreet man lies in guarding his conduct, but the foolishness of fools is full of deceit.

<sup>9</sup>Fools never make amends, while goodwill dwells among the upright.

<sup>10</sup>The heart understands its own grief; no stranger can share in its joy.

<sup>11</sup>The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will stand firm.

<sup>12</sup>To one, his way appears correct, but in the end it leads to death.

<sup>13</sup>The heart feels pain in the midst of laughter, and joy ends in sorrow.

<sup>14</sup>The reckless man reaps the fruit of his ways; the good man will earn reward.

<sup>15</sup>The simpleton believes all he's told, the prudent man watches his step.

<sup>16</sup>The wise man fears and avoids evil, the fool goes near and feels safe.

<sup>17</sup>The angry man does foolish things, the crafty man makes himself hated.

<sup>18</sup>Foolishness is the inheritance of fools, the prudent choose wisdom as their crown.

<sup>19</sup>The wicked shall kneel before the good, and the godless, before the gates of the virtuous.

<sup>20</sup>The poor man is detestable even to his neighbor while the rich man has many friends.

<sup>21</sup>A sinner is he who looks down on his neighbor, happy is he who shows pity to the poor.

<sup>22</sup>Does evil plotting not lead to ruin? Do goodness and sincerity not belong to those devoted to good?

<sup>23</sup>Hard work yields a profit but the idler brings misfortune.

<sup>24</sup>Wealth is the wise man's crown, foolishness the diadem of fools.

<sup>25</sup>A truthful witness saves lives; he who lies will be lost.

<sup>26</sup>There is great security in the fear of Yahweh, his sons find refuge in him.

<sup>27</sup>The fear of Yahweh is a life-giving fountain for escaping the snares of death.

<sup>28</sup>Numerous people are a king's glory; lack of subjects ruins a prince.

<sup>29</sup>The discerning man is slow to anger, the impatient one displays stupidity.

<sup>30</sup>A peaceful heart is the body's life but the passions are a cancer in the bones.

<sup>31</sup>Oppression of the weak insults their creator, he is honored by those who have compassion on the needy.

<sup>32</sup>The evildoer is overthrown by his own evil, the upright man feels safe up to death.

<sup>33</sup>Wisdom resides in the heart of the discerning; who ever sees her among fools?

<sup>34</sup>Virtue makes a nation great; the sinner disgraces a people.

<sup>35</sup>The clever servant enjoys the king's favor but the fool has to suffer his anger.

<sup>2</sup>The tongue of the wise speaks knowledge, but the mouth of fools spreads stupidity.

<sup>3</sup>The eyes of Yahweh are everywhere, watching the good and the evil.

<sup>4</sup>The pacifying tongue is a tree of life, while the viper's tongue destroys the heart.

<sup>5</sup>Paternal correction is scorned by the fool, but the one who listens shows discretion.

<sup>6</sup>Abundance resides in the house of the virtuous, but disgrace descends on the profits of the wicked.

<sup>7</sup>The lips of the wise sow knowledge whereas the fool's thoughts are not safe.

<sup>8</sup>Yahweh detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but listens to the prayer of the honest man.

<sup>9</sup>Yahweh abhors the conduct of the wicked but loves him who seeks virtue.

<sup>10</sup>Correct severely him who strays from the way; whoever hates being rebuked will die.

<sup>11</sup>Yahweh sees into hell and the abyss; how much more into the hearts of the sons of men!

<sup>12</sup>The mocker does not like being reprimanded; he does not go to the wise.

<sup>13</sup>A glad heart brightens the face, a sad one weighs down the spirit.

<sup>14</sup>A discerning heart seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on stupidity.

<sup>15</sup>Every day is evil to the afflicted one; while the happy heart is always feasting.

<sup>16</sup>Better to have little but fear the Lord than to have a fortune accompanied by anxiety.

<sup>17</sup>Better to have vegetables where there is love than to have a fattened ox with nothing but hatred.

<sup>18</sup>The hotheaded man provokes disputes, while the one slow to anger reconciles differences.

<sup>19</sup>The way of the lazy is strewn with thorns, but the path of hard workers is a spacious road.

<sup>20</sup>The wise child is his father's joy, but the foolish despises his mother.

<sup>21</sup>Foolishness appeals to the man with no sense but the discerning man goes on his way.

<sup>22</sup>Plans fall through for lack of deliberation; a multitude of counselors ensures success.

<sup>23</sup>Happy is he who knows how to answer. Welcome indeed is the apt word!

<sup>24</sup>To the discerning man, the way of life leads upward; he will be saved from the place of darkness below.

Dt 19:14 <sup>25</sup>Yahweh tears down the house of the proud, but he strengthens the widow's boundaries.

<sup>26</sup>Yahweh detests corrupt designs but words of goodness are pleasing to him.

Am 2:6; Is 1:23 <sup>27</sup>He who craves dishonest gain brings trouble on his house; he who accepts no tempting bribes will live.

<sup>28</sup>The man of upright heart thinks before he speaks, the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.

<sup>29</sup>Yahweh stays far away from the wicked but hears the prayer of the virtuous.

<sup>30</sup>A kind look delights the heart, good news revives one's strength.

<sup>31</sup>The ear which listens to helpful correction is found among the wise.

<sup>32</sup>He who ignores correction despises himself, he who heeds the reprimand acquires discernment.

<sup>33</sup>The fear of Yahweh is a school of wisdom; humility precedes praise.

**16** <sup>1</sup>Man's heart makes plans but it is Yahweh who answers.

<sup>2</sup>Although people are satisfied with all of their deeds Yahweh considers the motives.

<sup>3</sup>Entrust all you do to Yahweh and your plans will be realized.

<sup>4</sup>Yahweh made everything for a purpose, even the evildoer for the day of punishment.

<sup>5</sup>Yahweh hates the arrogant heart; you can be sure it will not go unpunished.

<sup>6</sup>With goodness and faithfulness you atone for your sin; with fear of Yahweh you may turn away from evil.

<sup>7</sup>When Yahweh is pleased with a man's conduct, he reconciles even his enemies with him.

<sup>8</sup>Better to have little but be just than to have a great income without honesty.

<sup>9</sup>Man's heart seeks the right way

but it is Yahweh who makes his footsteps sure.

<sup>10</sup>The lips of the king utter oracles; he will not be mistaken when he judges.

<sup>11</sup>Yahweh demands a just balance and scales; the weights are the work of his hands.

<sup>12</sup>Kings who do evil are an abomination; it is justice that supports the kingship.

<sup>13</sup>He who judges according to justice wins the king's favor, honest men are pleasing to him.

<sup>14</sup>The king's anger is a messenger of death but the wise man knows how to appease him.

<sup>15</sup>The king's serene countenance means life, his favor is like the spring rain.

<sup>16</sup>Better to have acquired wisdom rather than gold, discernment rather than silver.

<sup>17</sup>The way of the honest man is to turn away from evil; he who watches his steps keeps his life safe.

<sup>18</sup>Pride goes before destruction, an arrogant spirit before a fall.

<sup>19</sup>Better be humble among the lowly than share loot with the proud.

<sup>20</sup>He who listens to the word will find happiness; blessed is he who trusts in Yahweh.

<sup>21</sup>He whose heart is wise will be proclaimed discerning; moderate speech brings knowledge.

<sup>22</sup>Good sense is a life-giving fountain to those who possess it, foolishness is the punishment of fools.

<sup>23</sup>The wise man's heart keeps guard over his mouth, making his words more effective.

<sup>24</sup>Kind words are like a honeycomb: sweet to the spirit and healthy to the body.

<sup>25</sup>To one, his way seems honest, but ultimately it leads to death.

<sup>26</sup>The worker's appetite works to his benefit; the need to eat spurs him on.

<sup>27</sup>The troublemaker prepares disgrace, a scorching fire is on his lips.

<sup>28</sup>The scoundrel stirs up trouble; his critical comments split up friends.

<sup>29</sup>A violent man deceives his neighbor and leads him along a path that is not good.

Ecl 10:4

Jas 3:6

<sup>30</sup>He who closes his eyes and purses his lips to plot deceit already commits evil.

<sup>31</sup>White hairs are a magnificent crown for the one who has followed the path of virtue.

<sup>32</sup>The patient man is to be preferred to the hero; better the man who masters himself than the conqueror of cities.

<sup>33</sup>Fate is thrown in the bag but the decision depends on Yahweh.

**17** <sup>1</sup>Better a crust of dry bread in peace than the discord of a house full of feasting.

<sup>2</sup>A shrewd servant will replace the foolish son of the master and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.

<sup>3</sup>A crucible for silver and a furnace for gold but Yahweh is the tester of hearts.

<sup>4</sup>The evil plotter listens to the lips of liars; and the liar gives an ear to the corrupt tongue.

<sup>5</sup>He who mocks the poor insults their Creator, he who laughs at the deprived will not go unpunished.

<sup>6</sup>The crown of the aged is their children's children, the children's glory is their father.

<sup>7</sup>Noble language does not suit the fool and even less do lies suit a prince.

<sup>8</sup>The giver of gifts possesses a treasure, wherever he goes he will succeed.

<sup>9</sup>Whoever covers over a fault promotes friendships, but he who reveals a word divides friends.

<sup>10</sup>A discerning man is more impressed by a reprimand than a fool is by a hundred lashes.

<sup>11</sup>The wicked man seeks nothing but rebellion; a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

<sup>12</sup>It is better to meet with a bear deprived of her cubs than with a fool in his foolishness.

<sup>13</sup>He who repays good with evil will not rid his house of evil.

<sup>14</sup>To begin legal proceedings is like opening a dam; withdraw before the dispute erupts.

<sup>15</sup>To excuse the guilty and condemn the just: both are detestable to Yahweh.

<sup>16</sup>What good is money in a fool's hand? How can he buy wisdom? He has no sense.

<sup>17</sup>A friend will love you at all times, a brother has been born to you for times of adversity.

<sup>18</sup>He who is full of promises and goes bail for his neighbor has no sense.

<sup>19</sup>The sinner loves disputes, the man of arrogant words hastens his own ruin.

<sup>20</sup>The man of double-dealing does not find happiness, the sly tongue falls into disgrace.

<sup>21</sup>He who fathers a fool has acquired misery, there is no joy for a fool's father.

<sup>22</sup>A joyful heart gives health to the body, while a sad spirit dries up the bones.

<sup>23</sup>The corrupt man takes bribes to pervert the course of justice.

<sup>24</sup>The discerning man keeps wisdom before his eyes; the fool's eyes are on every corner of the world.

<sup>25</sup>The foolish son is a worry to his father and distress to her who gave him birth.

<sup>26</sup>It is not right to fine the upright; the noble ought not to be beaten.

<sup>27</sup>The prudent of speech are wise; he who keeps his temper is an educated man.

<sup>28</sup>Then the fool, if silent, can pass as wise; the clever man keeps his lips sealed.

**18** <sup>1</sup>He who holds himself aloof follows his own whims and is annoyed at others' advice.

<sup>2</sup>The fool does not relish reflection but only the airing of his own views.

<sup>3</sup>When the wicked come, scorn also comes, and offense brings shame.

<sup>4</sup>Man's words are like deep waters; an overflowing torrent is the fountain of wisdom.

<sup>5</sup>It is not good to give consideration to the wicked or to harm the virtuous when giving judgment.

<sup>6</sup>The fool's lips cause disputes and his mouth attracts blows.

<sup>7</sup>The fool's mouth is his undoing; his lips will ensnare his life.

<sup>8</sup>The gossip's words are tasty mouthfuls which go right to the bottom of the stomach.

<sup>9</sup>He who dawdles at work is a brother of the destroyer.

<sup>10</sup>Yahweh's name is a strong tower, the virtuous rely on it and are safe.

<sup>11</sup>The rich man's wealth is his fortress; he relies on it as on a high wall.

<sup>12</sup>Before its downfall, the heart is wrapped in pride; while humility goes before honor.

<sup>13</sup>To argue before listening to the facts shows stupidity which leads to disgrace.

<sup>14</sup>The spirit of man sustains him when ill but who will lift the one of broken spirit?

<sup>15</sup>The discerning heart obtains wisdom, the ear of the wise searches out knowledge.

<sup>16</sup>A present opens all doors to you and brings you into the company of the powerful.

<sup>17</sup>The first to plead his case seems to be right, but his opponent appears and there is matter for trial.

<sup>18</sup>Casting lots terminates disputes and decides between the powerful.

<sup>19</sup>A brother who is helped is more steadfast than a fortress but quarrels are like the bars of a castle.

<sup>20</sup>A man is filled with what comes from his mouth and is nourished by what his lips provide.

<sup>21</sup>The tongue has power over life and death, those who like speaking will eat its fruit.

<sup>22</sup>He who finds a wife finds happiness, he has won Yahweh's favor.

<sup>23</sup>The poor man pleads, while the rich man responds harshly.

<sup>24</sup>Some friends only bring ruin, others are closer than a brother.

**19** <sup>1</sup>Better the poor man who lives honestly than the fool who lies.

<sup>2</sup>It is bad for men not to reflect, and acting too quickly can lead one astray.

<sup>3</sup>A man spoils his chances through his own stupidity but it is against Yahweh that his heart rages.

<sup>4</sup>Wealth multiplies friends, but the poor man is deprived of his only friend.

<sup>5</sup>The false witness will not go unpunished, the liar will not escape.

<sup>6</sup>Many are the flatterers of the noble man, the whole world is a friend to the rich man.

<sup>7</sup>A poor man is hated by all his brothers, and even more so do his friends desert him. He searches for someone to talk to but finds no one.

<sup>8</sup>He who acquires wisdom loves himself, he who respects knowledge will be happy.

<sup>9</sup>The false witness will not go unpunished, the liar will perish.

<sup>10</sup>It is not good that a fool live luxuri-

ously, still less that a slave command princes.

<sup>11</sup>A clever man is slow to anger; his glory lies in forgetting offenses.

<sup>12</sup>The angry king is like a roaring lion but his favor is like the dew on the grass.

<sup>13</sup>The foolish son is the ruination of his father; the nagging wife is like a dripping gutter.

<sup>14</sup>House and wealth are inherited from a father but a sensible wife is a gift from Yahweh.

<sup>15</sup>Laziness makes a man fall asleep, the idler will go hungry.

<sup>16</sup>He who keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises it dies.

<sup>17</sup>He who shows compassion to the poor lends to Yahweh, who will repay his good deed.

<sup>18</sup>Correct your son as long as there is hope, lest you be responsible for his death.

<sup>19</sup>The violent man leaves himself open to a fine; if you spare him he will continue.

<sup>20</sup>Listen to counsel and accept correction, and you will be wise in the end.

<sup>21</sup>Plans abound in the human heart but only Yahweh's purpose will be realized.

<sup>22</sup>Goodness is attractive in a person; better a poor man than a liar.

<sup>23</sup>Love of Yahweh leads you to life; you will have your fill and live without fear.

<sup>24</sup>The lazy man dips his hand in the dish but he cannot even lift it to his mouth.

<sup>25</sup>Punish the mocker and the ignorant will be more careful; rebuke a discerning man and he will listen to reason.

<sup>26</sup>He who dispossesses his father and evicts his mother is a shameful and degenerate son.

<sup>27</sup>My son, listen to instruction and stop straying from the words of wisdom.

<sup>28</sup>An unworthy witness makes a mockery of justice; the mouth of the wicked feeds on evil.

<sup>29</sup>Punishments were made for mockers and blows, for the backs of fools.

**20** <sup>1</sup>Wine leads to vulgarity and strong drink, to bravado; he who strays in it will never be wise.

<sup>2</sup>The angry king is like a roaring lion; whoever provokes him risks his life.

Sir 25:16

Mt 25:40

<sup>3</sup>It is good for man to avoid quarrels; it is the fool who does not master himself.

<sup>4</sup>Autumn is over, yet the fool does no work; come the harvest, he searches and finds nothing.

<sup>5</sup>Counsel is like deep water in the heart, the discerning man has only to draw it out.

<sup>6</sup>Many are called good but where can the trustworthy man be found?

<sup>7</sup>The upright man who works honestly will make his sons happy after him.

<sup>8</sup>The king who sits in judgment discovers evil at a single glance.

<sup>9</sup>Who can say, "I have purified my heart, I am cleansed from sin?"

<sup>10</sup>The crooked measure and scales—these are the things that Yahweh detests.

<sup>11</sup>The child reveals himself in his deeds: whether his actions are honest and upright.

<sup>12</sup>The ear that hears, the eye that sees, Yahweh has made them both.

<sup>13</sup>Do not love sleep lest you become poor; keep your eyes open and you will have your fill of bread.

<sup>14</sup>"No good, no good," says the buyer but off he goes congratulating himself.

<sup>15</sup>Although you have gold and abundance of pearls, the most valuable adornment is lips which speak wisely.

<sup>16</sup>Get rid of his clothes because he has stood bail for a stranger; arrest him for the profit of those unknown!

<sup>17</sup>Stolen bread tastes good but later on your mouth is full of sand.

<sup>18</sup>Plans take shape, thanks to advice; do battle, then, with wise strategies.

<sup>19</sup>The gossip reveals secrets; have nothing to do with chatterers.

<sup>20</sup>Whoever curses his father and mother will see his lamp extinguished in the midst of darkness.

<sup>21</sup>Advantage hastily gained in the beginning will not be blessed in the long run.

<sup>22</sup>Never say, "I will take revenge." Trust in Yahweh; he will save you.

<sup>23</sup>Yahweh detests false weights; it does no good to have false scales.

<sup>24</sup>Yahweh directs a man's steps, who can know where his way leads?

<sup>25</sup>It is dangerous to make hasty promises to Yahweh and only then reflect on them.

<sup>26</sup>A king throws evildoers to the wind and runs the thresher over them.

<sup>27</sup>Man's spirit is Yahweh's lamp which searches the hidden places of the heart.

<sup>28</sup>Goodness and loyalty keep guard over the king; his throne stands due to goodness.

<sup>29</sup>Energy is the adornment of youth, white hair the dignity of age.

<sup>30</sup>Bleeding wounds purify evil, blows bring healing to the inner self.

**21** <sup>1</sup>In the hands of Yahweh, the heart of the king is like running water; he directs it wherever he wishes.

<sup>2</sup>To the eyes of man all his ways are honest but it is Yahweh who weighs the heart.

<sup>3</sup>To do what is upright and just pleases Yahweh more than sacrifice.

<sup>4</sup>Haughty looks, proud heart, the light of the wicked is sin.

<sup>5</sup>The plans of a hardworking man result in earnings; poverty is for those who act too hastily.

<sup>6</sup>To make a fortune by means of deceit is like running after the wind; the end is death.

<sup>7</sup>The violence of the wicked carries them away because they refuse to practice justice.

<sup>8</sup>The way of the criminal is devious; but honest are the ways of the innocent man.

<sup>9</sup>Better the corner of a barn to live in than a house shared with a raging woman.

<sup>10</sup>The soul of the wicked desires nothing but evil; not even his friend is treated with compassion.

<sup>11</sup>When the mocker is punished the ignorant man grows wise; when the wise man is instructed he grows in knowledge.

<sup>12</sup>The Just One watches the house of the evildoer and hurls the wicked into misfortune.

<sup>13</sup>He who is deaf to the poor man's cry will not be heard when he himself calls out.

<sup>14</sup>A discreet gift pacifies anger, a bribe diverts violent rage.

<sup>15</sup>Upright men are glad when justice reigns but evildoers tremble.

<sup>16</sup>He who departs from the ways of prudence will sleep in the assembly of the Shades.

<sup>17</sup>Pleasure-lovers remain poor, he who loves wine and perfume will never grow rich.

Job 32:8;  
Mt 6:22;  
1Cor 2:11  
Is 16:5

16:2;  
Lk 16:15

<sup>18</sup>The wicked man will pay for the virtuous and the treacherous man, for the honest.

<sup>19</sup>Better to live in a deserted place than with a raging and abusive woman.

<sup>20</sup>There is oil and precious treasure in the wise man's house, things which the fool squanders.

<sup>21</sup>He who seeks justice and mercy will gain life, prosperity and honor.

Ecd 9: 13-15 <sup>22</sup>The wise man conquers a city of warriors and tears down the walls they trust in.

<sup>23</sup>He who keeps guard over his mouth and tongue saves himself from anguish.

<sup>24</sup>"Mocker" is the name of the arrogant and haughty, he in whom pride abounds.

<sup>25</sup>The idler's desires lead him to death because his hands refuse to work. <sup>26</sup>He covets all day long while the upright man gives without stinting.

<sup>27</sup>Yahweh detests the sacrifice of the wicked, above all when they offer it for an unjust cause.

<sup>28</sup>The lying witness will perish but he who listens wisely will be given time to speak.

<sup>29</sup>The wicked man tries to appear firm and stable while the honest man confirms his way.

<sup>30</sup>No wisdom, prudence or advice can withstand the look of Yahweh.

Ps 20:8 <sup>31</sup>The horse is equipped for the day of battle but it is Yahweh who gives the victory.

**22** <sup>1</sup>A good name is better than great wealth; fame is preferable to silver or gold.

Wis 6:7 <sup>2</sup>Rich and poor have something in common, Yahweh has made them all.

<sup>3</sup>The discreet man foresees disgrace and hides, the ignorant keep going at their own expense.

<sup>4</sup>The reward of humility is fear of Yahweh, wealth, honor and life.

<sup>5</sup>The path of the wicked is paved with thorns and traps, he who loves his life will keep his distance.

Sir 6:18 <sup>6</sup>Teach a child the way he should go, he will not stray from it while he lives.

<sup>7</sup>The rich man lords it over the poor, the borrower is the moneylender's slave.

<sup>8</sup>Whoever sows injustice reaps disaster; the power of the wicked will be broken.

<sup>9</sup>The warmhearted man will be blessed since he shares his bread with the poor.

<sup>10</sup>Throw out the mocker and the dispute will cease, fighting and insults will end.

<sup>11</sup>He who loves purity of heart and speaks sensibly will find a friend in the king.

<sup>12</sup>Yahweh's look protects the wise man and discredits the words of the liar.

<sup>13</sup>The lazy man says, "There is a lion outside, he will kill me in the street."

<sup>14</sup>The adulterous woman's mouth is a deep pit, he whom Yahweh wishes to punish will fall into it.

<sup>15</sup>The heart of the child is naturally foolish, the beating of instruction will cure it.

<sup>16</sup>When you oppress the poor, you make them grow; when you give to the rich, you waste everything.

### The proverbs of the wise

<sup>17</sup>Give ear, listen to the words of the wise and apply yourself to understanding them, <sup>18</sup>because it will be your delight to keep them deep within you, to have them always ready on your lips.

<sup>19</sup>I wish now to teach you, so that you will place your trust in Yahweh. <sup>20</sup>Have I not written for you thirty chapters of advice and knowledge <sup>21</sup>so that you may recognize the truth and be able to answer rightly him who sent you?

<sup>22</sup>Do not take from the poor man just because he is poor or condemn the one in misfortune, <sup>23</sup>because Yahweh will intercede for them and will carry off the life of their oppressors.

<sup>24</sup>Do not befriend the angry man or be a companion to the one of rage, <sup>25</sup>for fear you adopt their ways and lose your life in their midst.

<sup>26</sup>Do not be one of those who undertake a commitment and act as guarantor of debts; <sup>27</sup>if you cannot pay, they will take from you the very bed in which you sleep.

<sup>28</sup>Do not move the ancient boundaries established by your ancestors.

<sup>29</sup>You see a clever man at work? He will enter the service of kings; he will not stay in the service of people of no renown.

**23** <sup>1</sup>If you sit at a table with a great man, beware of what is in front of

you; <sup>2</sup>if your appetite is too great, put a knife to your throat. <sup>3</sup>Do not greedily desire his fine food for it is deceptive nourishment.

<sup>4</sup>Do not wear yourself out trying to be rich, do not dwell on it. <sup>5</sup>Set your eyes on wealth and it no longer exists; it sprouts wings and flies into the sky like an eagle.

<sup>6</sup>Do not eat with the wicked man or be greedy for his choice food. <sup>7</sup>All is appearance, for he plots in his heart. "Eat and drink," he says but he is not to be trusted. <sup>8</sup>You will spit it out as soon as it is tasted and your words of praise will be wasted.

<sup>9</sup>Do not speak with a fool; he will not be able to appreciate your remarks.

<sup>10</sup>Do not move the ancient boundaries or take possession of the orphan's land because his Avenger is powerful; <sup>11</sup>he will take sides against you.

<sup>12</sup>Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of wisdom.

<sup>13</sup>Do not hold back from correcting a youth; the rod will not kill him. <sup>14</sup>With several strokes, you save him from death.

<sup>15</sup>My son, if your heart is wise, then my own heart is glad, <sup>16</sup>and my whole being will rejoice when you speak the truth.

<sup>17</sup>Do not envy sinners but, each day, fear Yahweh; then you will have a future and <sup>18</sup>your hope will not be in vain.

<sup>19</sup>Listen, my son, and you will be wise and you will make your heart go straight on its way.

<sup>20</sup>Do not be one of those who get drunk with wine or who stuff themselves with meat, <sup>21</sup>since the drunkard and the glutton impoverish themselves and the sleepyhead is clothed in rags.

<sup>22</sup>Listen to your father who begot you; do not despise your mother in her old age.

<sup>23</sup>Acquire truth and never sell it; gain wisdom, discipline and discernment.

<sup>24</sup>Happy the father of a virtuous man! How he will rejoice, <sup>25</sup>he who fathers a wise man! May your father and mother rejoice and may she who bore you be glad.

<sup>26</sup>My son, give me your heart, that your eyes may delight in my ways. <sup>27</sup>You should know that the prostitute is a deep abyss and the unknown woman a narrow well. <sup>28</sup>Like a thief she lies in wait and she increases the sinners among men.

<sup>29</sup>For whom are the cries and laments? For whom the complaints and sighs? For whom the blows without reason? For whom the eyes which see double?

<sup>30</sup>For those who abandon themselves to wine and go in search of the well-blended wine. <sup>31</sup>Do not consider the wine: how red it is and how sparkling the glass! How smoothly it flows!

<sup>32</sup>In the end, it bites like a snake and stings like a viper. <sup>33</sup>Your eyes will see strange things and you will end up speaking nonsense. <sup>34</sup>You will be like a man asleep on the high seas or at the rudder: "They hit me but I am not hurt. <sup>35</sup>They beat me but I feel nothing. When will I wake up? I will go in search of more."

**24** <sup>1</sup>Do not envy the wicked or desire their company, <sup>2</sup>for their hearts dream only of violence and their lips speak nothing but evil.

<sup>3</sup>With wisdom a house is built. <sup>4</sup>It is strengthened by prudence. Its granaries are filled by knowledge with all that is good, precious and desirable.

<sup>5</sup>The wise man is powerful; the one of knowledge adds to his strength. <sup>6</sup>Because of this, he goes into battle with wise plans, since success depends on many advisers.

<sup>7</sup>Wisdom is beyond the reach of the fool; let him not open his mouth in the assembly.

<sup>8</sup>The plotter of evil is called an unscrupulous mastermind.

<sup>9</sup>The fool dreams only of sin, the mocker deserves only contempt.

<sup>10</sup>If you lose heart when misfortune comes, miserable is your strength.

<sup>11</sup>Rescue those who are being carried away to die; save those who are being dragged away to torture. <sup>12</sup>Afterwards you will say, "We did not know." But he who weighs the heart, does he not understand? He who watches over the soul is aware and he will give to each one according to his deeds.

<sup>13</sup>Eat honey, my son, because it is good; the honeycomb is sweet to the taste. <sup>14</sup>So also will wisdom be to your soul. If you find it, you have a future and your hope will not be in vain.

<sup>15</sup>Evildoer, do not spy on the house of the virtuous man, do not disturb his

Lk 14:31

Dn 13;  
Jer  
17:10

home. <sup>16</sup>Because even though the virtuous man falls seven times, he gets up again, while the wicked sink in their adversity.

<sup>17</sup>Do not rejoice if your enemy falls or let your heart be glad if he stumbles, <sup>18</sup>lest Yahweh see and be displeased and his anger be turned on you.

<sup>19</sup>Do not be incensed by the wicked or envious of the ungodly, <sup>20</sup>since there is no future in evil and the lamp of the wicked will be extinguished.

<sup>21</sup>Fear Yahweh and the king, my son; make no deals with agitators, <sup>22</sup>for disaster will befall them without warning and who knows when their ruin will come?

### **Other proverbs of the wise**

<sup>23</sup>It is not good for judges to show partiality. People curse and nations hate him <sup>24</sup>who says to the wicked man, "You are just." <sup>25</sup>But those who punish the evildoer can boast; blessing and happiness will be theirs.

<sup>26</sup>An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.

<sup>27</sup>Finish your work out-of-doors and plan your work in the fields; afterwards, you can think of building your house.

<sup>28</sup>Do not lightly bear witness against your neighbor lest you lie.

<sup>29</sup>Do not say, "I will do to him what he did to me; I will repay him for his deeds."

<sup>30</sup>I passed by the lazy man's field, near the vineyard of the senseless man.

<sup>31</sup>Everywhere it was full of weeds; thistles covered the ground and the stonewall was fallen apart. <sup>32</sup>Seeing all this, I reflected and drew this lesson from what I saw. <sup>33</sup>A little sleep, a little drowsiness and <sup>34</sup>your laziness creeps upon you and then, like a tramp, poverty comes, bringing misery like a vagabond.

### **Solomon's proverbs**

**25** <sup>1</sup>These are also Proverbs of Solomon, recorded in the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

<sup>2</sup>The glory of God is in hiding secrets and the glory of the king, in revealing them. <sup>3</sup>As high as the skies, as deep as the earth, such is the heart of kings.

<sup>4</sup>Remove the impurity from silver and it will become a vessel in the hands of the silversmith. <sup>5</sup>Remove the wicked from the king's presence and he will affirm his power through justice.

<sup>6</sup>Do not boast before the king or put yourself among the great. <sup>7</sup>It would be better to be invited, "Come up here," than to be humiliated after having seen the prince.

<sup>8</sup>Do not be too hasty in accusing your neighbor for what would happen to you should he confound you?

<sup>9</sup>Defend your case against your neighbor but do not reveal the secret of another, <sup>10</sup>lest he overhear it and despise you and your reputation be lost.

<sup>11</sup>An opportune word is like golden apples encased in silver. <sup>12</sup>A gold ring or an ornament of fine gold, such is the wise man's rebuke to a responsive person.

<sup>13</sup>The trustworthy messenger is like the coolness of snow at harvest time, to him who sends him: he revives the soul of his master.

<sup>14</sup>Clouds and wind but no rain, such is the one who promises but does not fulfill.

<sup>15</sup>With a little patience you will persuade the judge; a soft tongue can break bones.

<sup>16</sup>If you find honey, eat enough but not too much, lest you bring it up again.

<sup>17</sup>Go rarely to your neighbor's house lest he tire of you and grow to hate you.

<sup>18</sup>A mace, a sword, a keen arrow: such is the one who lies about his neighbor.

<sup>19</sup>A decaying tooth, a lame foot, such is the trust put in the ungodly on the day of trouble.

<sup>20</sup>Singing songs to a grieving person is like taking off your cloak in frosty weather or pouring vinegar into a wound.

<sup>21</sup>If your enemy is hungry give him something to eat, if thirsty, something to drink; <sup>22</sup>thus you pile up red-hot coals on his head and Yahweh will reward you.

<sup>23</sup>As the north wind brings the rain, so the gossiping tongue leaves angry faces.

<sup>24</sup>Better the corner of a barn to

live in than a house shared with a whimsical woman.

<sup>25</sup> Good news from a distant country is like cool water to a dry throat.

<sup>26</sup> A churning river or a polluted spring is like the virtuous man who trembles before the evildoer.

<sup>27</sup> It is not good to eat too much honey and even less good to be greedy for honors.

<sup>28</sup> The man who cannot contain his anger is like an open city, without defenses.

**26** <sup>1</sup> Honors do not suit the fool any more than snow in summer and rain at harvest.

<sup>2</sup> The sparrow escapes, the swallow flies off, so the motiveless curse will have no effect.

<sup>3</sup> A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, a stick for the backs of fools.

<sup>4</sup> Do not answer the stupidity of fools lest you become like them.

<sup>5</sup> Answer the stupidity of the fool lest he consider himself intelligent.

<sup>6</sup> He who sends messages by a fool is cutting his own feet.

<sup>7</sup> Like the unsteady legs of a lame man, such is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

<sup>8</sup> Honoring a fool is like tying a stone in a sling.

<sup>9</sup> Like a thorn branch in a drunkard's hands, such is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

<sup>10</sup> Like an archer wounding all passers-by, so is he who employs a fool.

<sup>11</sup> The fool reverts to his stupidity just as a dog returns to his vomit.

<sup>12</sup> See that man who thinks himself wise? There is more hope for a fool!

<sup>13</sup> "There's a lion in the street," the lazy man says, "a lion in the square."

<sup>14</sup> The door turns on its hinges and the lazy man, on his bed. <sup>15</sup> The idler dips his hand in the dish but is too tired to lift it to his mouth. <sup>16</sup> The idler considers himself wiser than many people who answer tactfully.

<sup>17</sup> Interfering in the disputes of others is like grabbing a passing dog by the tail.

<sup>18</sup> As a madman hurls flaming, deadly arrows, <sup>19</sup> so does the one who lies to his friend and then says, "It was just a joke."

<sup>20</sup> For lack of wood, the fire goes out; for want of a gossip, the quarrel dies down.

<sup>21</sup> Charcoal on hot coals, wood on a fire, and a quarrelsome man for stirring up disputes.

<sup>22</sup> The words of the gossip are delicious mouthfuls which go right down to the bottom of the stomach. <sup>23</sup> Like silver on earthenware, so are smooth lips with a corrupt heart.

<sup>24</sup> The one who hates, disguises his words and keeps his treachery inside; <sup>25</sup> do not trust his sweet language for seven evils fill his heart. <sup>26</sup> But although he conceals his hatred like a hypocrite, his evil will be revealed in the assembly.

<sup>27</sup> He who digs a pit falls in it and the rock he rolls away falls back on him.

<sup>28</sup> The liar hates his victims, the flattering mouth brings destruction.

**27** <sup>1</sup> Do not feel confident about tomorrow since you do not know how today will end.

<sup>2</sup> Let another praise you but not your own mouth; a stranger but not your own lips.

<sup>3</sup> Heavy the stone and weighty the sand but the fool's anger outweighs both.

<sup>4</sup> Wrath is cruel and anger, impulsive but who can withstand jealousy?

<sup>5</sup> Better an honest rebuke than false affection.

<sup>6</sup> Worthy of trust is the friend who speaks honestly; the enemy is he who multiplies caresses.

<sup>7</sup> The full mouth looks down on honey, the hungry one finds any bitter thing sweet.

<sup>8</sup> Like a bird far from its nest, so is the one who wanders from his own place.

<sup>9</sup> Oil and perfume gladden the heart; so too does the sweetness of friendship comfort the soul.

<sup>10</sup> Never desert your friend or your father's friend; do not hasten to your brother's house when troubles strike: better a friend nearby than a brother far away.

<sup>11</sup> Learn to be wise, my son, and make me happy so that I can reply to those who insult me.

<sup>12</sup> The discerning man foresees danger and takes cover, but fools keep going, to their own loss.

<sup>13</sup> Get rid of his clothes since he has

gone surety for a stranger, seize him for the benefit of those unknown.

<sup>14</sup>If he, at dawn, blesses his neighbor in a loud voice, it shall be interpreted as a curse.

<sup>15</sup>The constant dripping of a gutter on a rainy day and a nagging woman have something in common. <sup>16</sup>Stopping her is like stopping the wind and grasping oil in one's hand.

<sup>17</sup>Iron is sharpened with iron, contact with a neighbor sharpens a man's wit.

<sup>18</sup>He who tends the fig tree eats its fruit, he who looks after his master will be honored.

<sup>19</sup>As the face is reflected in water, so man finds himself in his own heart.

<sup>20</sup>Death and hell are never satisfied; so, also, the eyes of men.

<sup>21</sup>A crucible for silver, a furnace for gold; you will know a man by his reputation.

<sup>22</sup>Even though you grind the fool in a mortar, you will not rid him of his stupidity.

<sup>23</sup>Know well the state of your herd and tend to your flock <sup>24</sup>because wealth does not last forever and riches are not handed down from generation to generation. <sup>25</sup>Once the pasture is mowed and the aftergrowth appears and the hay is gathered in from the hills, <sup>26</sup>you should have lambs to clothe you and goats to pay for your fields, <sup>27</sup>sufficient goats' milk to feed you, to sustain your household and provide for your serving girls.

**28** <sup>1</sup>The wicked man runs away even when no one is after him but the virtuous man feels as safe as a lion.

<sup>2</sup>A country, for its sins, has many rulers; but with one wise ruler there is stability.

<sup>3</sup>The evildoer oppressing the poor is like destructive floods which leave no food.

<sup>4</sup>Those who foresake the Law applaud evil; those faithful to the Law fight evil.

Wis 3:9 <sup>5</sup>The wicked have no understanding of justice but those who seek Yahweh understand all.

<sup>6</sup>Better the poor but honest life than devious living, with riches.

<sup>7</sup>A clever man keeps the Law, while he who associates with scoundrels brings shame to his father.

<sup>8</sup>He who adds to his wealth by usury and greed amasses it for another who has compassion on the poor.

<sup>9</sup>If anyone turns a deaf ear to the Law, even his prayer is contaminated by sin.

<sup>10</sup>He who leads the virtuous astray will fall into his own trap. The upright will inherit happiness.

<sup>11</sup>The rich man thinks himself wise while the poor but sensible man knows how to show him up.

<sup>12</sup>When the virtuous triumph, there is great feasting, but when the wicked dominate, everybody hides.

<sup>13</sup>Whoever conceals his faults will not prosper, but he who confesses and renounces them will be shown mercy.

<sup>14</sup>Happy the one who always lives in the fear of God; he who hardens his heart will fall on disaster.

<sup>15</sup>A roaring lion, a hungry bear, such is the bad leader of a poor people.

<sup>16</sup>The ruler lacking intelligence multiplies oppression; but he who abhors greed will endure.

<sup>17</sup>The man wanted for murder will be on the run until death. Let him go!

<sup>18</sup>He who goes his way honestly will be saved, he who vacillates between two ways will fall in one of them.

<sup>19</sup>He who tends his land will have an abundance of bread, while he who chases illusions will have his fill of misery.

<sup>20</sup>The trustworthy man will be heaped with blessings, but he who is preoccupied with getting rich will not be guiltless.

<sup>21</sup>It is not good to show partiality but a man will do wrong for a mouthful of bread.

<sup>22</sup>The greedy-eyed man is on the lookout for wealth not knowing that misfortune will befall him.

<sup>23</sup>He who reproves another will eventually enjoy more favor than the flatterer.

<sup>24</sup>He who steals from his father and mother saying, "It's not a sin," is just like a criminal.

<sup>25</sup>The greedy man brings about trouble; but he who trusts in Yahweh will be filled with good things.

<sup>26</sup>He who trusts in himself is just like a fool; while he who walks wisely will be saved.

<sup>27</sup>He who gives to the poor will not be in need; but he who turns a blind eye to them will have his fill of disgrace.

<sup>28</sup>When the wicked triumph, everybody hides; but when they perish, the virtuous multiply.

**29** <sup>1</sup>He who resists correction will be broken suddenly and without remedy.

<sup>2</sup>When the virtuous rule, the people are happy, but they groan when the wicked are in power.

<sup>3</sup>He who loves wisdom makes his father happy, but whoever maintains prostitutes will lose his wealth.

<sup>4</sup>Through justice a king makes his country prosper; but the extortioner brings it to ruin.

<sup>5</sup>The one who flatters his neighbor lays a snare at his feet.

<sup>6</sup>In the wicked man's sins lies a snare for himself, while the upright man runs on rejoicing.

<sup>7</sup>The virtuous man is concerned about the problems of the poor; the evildoer, however, understands nothing.

<sup>8</sup>Mockers create disturbances in the city but the wise turn troubles away.

<sup>9</sup>When the wise man argues with the fool, whether he is annoyed or joking, he will get nowhere.

<sup>10</sup>The violent hate the blameless man but the virtuous seek out his presence.

<sup>11</sup>The fool gives free rein to his rage; while the wise man restrains it.

<sup>12</sup>When a ruler listens to false reports, all his ministers will be scoundrels.

<sup>13</sup>The poor man and usurer have something in common: both receive the light of day from God.

<sup>14</sup>The king who judges the poor with justice will affirm his throne forever.

<sup>15</sup>Both the stick and rebuke bring wisdom, while the spoilt child brings shame to his mother.

<sup>16</sup>When the wicked rule, sin abounds, but the virtuous shall witness their downfall.

<sup>17</sup>Correct your son and he will bring you rest; you will be happy in him.

<sup>18</sup>Where prophets are lacking, the people get out of hand; happy is he who obeys the Law.

<sup>19</sup>A slave is not corrected by words; even if he understands he will take no notice.

<sup>20</sup>You see a man dying to speak? There is more hope for a fool.

<sup>21</sup>If you spoil your slave from childhood, he will end up a rebel.

<sup>22</sup>The hot-tempered man provokes disputes, his anger multiplies his sins.

<sup>23</sup>A man's pride results in his humiliation, but he who humbles himself will achieve honors.

<sup>24</sup>He who shares with the thief harms himself; even you who kept silent when you should have denounced him.

<sup>25</sup>To be afraid of people is a trap; but whoever trusts in Yahweh will be safe.

<sup>26</sup>Many seek a ruler's favor but each one's fate comes from God.

<sup>27</sup>The upright man detests the wicked and the evildoer hates the honest man.

**Sayings of Agur**

**30** <sup>1</sup>*The sayings of Agur, Son of Jakeh, of Massa.*

<sup>2</sup>He says, "My God, my God, I am worn-out and weary. Too stupid to be human, I am devoid of intelligence; <sup>3</sup>I have not acquired wisdom or grasped the knowledge of the Holy One."

<sup>4</sup>Who has ascended the heavens and descended? Who has gathered the wind in his hands? Who has encircled the waters with his cloak? Who has established the limits of the earth? What is his name or the name of his son?

Do you know?

<sup>5</sup>Every word of God is true, he is a shield in whom man can find refuge.

<sup>6</sup>Add nothing to his words lest he rebuke you and take you for a liar.

<sup>7</sup>O God, two things I beg of you, do not deny me them before I die. <sup>8</sup>Keep lying and falsehood far away from me, give me neither poverty nor riches. Give me just as much food as I need lest, <sup>9</sup>satisfied, I deny you and say, "Who is Yahweh?" Or else, out of necessity, I steal and profane the name of my God.

<sup>10</sup>Do not accuse a slave to his master's face lest he curse you and you have to pay.

<sup>11</sup>What a people are those who curse their father and do not bless their mother, <sup>12</sup>who consider themselves pure but their sins have not been cleansed! <sup>13</sup>They have a haughty look and disdainful eye; <sup>14</sup>their teeth are like daggers and their fangs, like blades to devour the weak of the land and the poor of the people.

<sup>15</sup>The leech has two daughters, "Give me!" and "Give me!"

Sir 9:6;  
Lk 15:13

Mt 23:12

Job  
38:39;  
Sir 1:2

<sup>16</sup>There are three insatiable things and four which never say, "Enough": the grave, the sterile womb, the earth longing for water and the fire which never cries, "Enough."

<sup>17</sup>The eye which challenges a father and despises his aging mother, will be gouged out by the ravens of the valley and devoured by the eagles.

<sup>18</sup>There are three things which I cannot comprehend and four which I do not understand: <sup>19</sup>the way of the eagle through the sky, the way of the snake on the rock, the way of the ship on high seas and the way of the human being within the mother.

<sup>20</sup>What can I say of the adulterous woman? She eats, and having wiped her mouth, she says, "I have done nothing wrong."

<sup>21</sup>Three things make the earth tremble; there are four which it cannot withstand: <sup>22</sup>the slave who becomes king, the fool stuffed with bread, <sup>23</sup>the unbearable woman who marries and the maid who inherits from her mistress.

<sup>24</sup>There are four tiny creatures on the earth that are among the wisest of the wise: <sup>25</sup>the ants that are without strength, but in summer make sure of their supplies; <sup>26</sup>the rock-rabbits that are without vigor, but make their home in the rocks; <sup>27</sup>the locusts that have no king, but move forward in organized groups; <sup>28</sup>the lizard which can be caught by hand, but lives in the palaces of kings.

<sup>29</sup>Three things have a stately step and four have a noble bearing: <sup>30</sup>the lion, the bravest of animals, that retreats before nothing; <sup>31</sup>the cock that struts proudly among the hens; the he-goat that leads his flock, and the king at the head of his army.

<sup>32</sup>If you have been foolish enough to get angry and afterwards regret it, cover your mouth with your hand. <sup>33</sup>Since by churning the milk butter is produced, by squeezing the nose blood flows, and by stirring up anger arguments arise.

### **The sayings of Lemuel**

**31** <sup>1</sup>*The sayings of Lemuel, king of Massa, taught him by his mother.*

<sup>2</sup>No, my son! Son of my womb, no! No, my most beloved son!

<sup>3</sup>Do not waste your strength on women, or your life on those who destroy kings.

<sup>4</sup>It is not for kings, O Lemuel, not for kings to drink wine or for rulers to love strong drink. <sup>5</sup>Lest in drinking they forget what they have decreed and override the cause of the helpless.

<sup>6</sup>Give strong drink to the one about to die and wine to the heart full of bitterness: <sup>7</sup>so that he may drink and forget his misfortune and remember his pain no more. <sup>8</sup>Speak on behalf of the dumb and defend the cause of all who are destitute.

<sup>9</sup>Open your mouth, pronounce just sentences, defend the needy and the poor.

### **The perfect wife**

• <sup>10</sup>The woman of character, where is she to be found? She is more precious than any jewel.

<sup>11</sup>Her husband has complete confidence in her; she will be of great benefit to him.

<sup>12</sup>She brings him only good and not evil, all the days of her life.

<sup>13</sup>She has obtained wool and flax, and works them with skillful hands.

Dt 17:17

Sir 26

• **31.10** Mother's Day was established recently to celebrate the women who spend their lives in the hidden tasks of the home, and who, through their sacrifices and love, build the best of our world. This poem concluding the book of Proverbs expresses a similar viewpoint.

It is not by chance that this poem concludes the book of Proverbs. Wisdom in Israel was not intellectual reflection far removed from real life with slight interest in discovering reasons for living. Wisdom, first of all was knowing how to organize one's life, just as Solomon said. And, actually women often have a predominant role

in all that makes for a happy home and allows persons who believe in life, to be formed and capable of serving the world.

The author lists the numerous activities of women: happiness on earth depends on very little: care is needed, and fidelity to tasks, also something not often insisted upon.

In Israel, men dominated. Women worked more than men. While the men would talk "at the gate" of their village, women looked after the house and the orchard and raised the children. This poem urges all husbands to praise their wives and be grateful to them.

<sup>14</sup>She is like the merchant ships which bring provisions from afar.

<sup>15</sup>She gets up while it is still dark, feeds her household and allots tasks to the servants.

<sup>16</sup>If she sets her heart on a field, she buys it and plants a vineyard with her own hands.

<sup>17</sup>She is full of energy and her arms show her strength.

<sup>18</sup>She knows her work is successful and, at night, her light remains unextinguished.

<sup>19</sup>She puts her hand to the distaff and her fingers hold the spindle.

<sup>20</sup>She reaches out her hand to the helpless and gives to the poor.

<sup>21</sup>When snow comes, she has no fears for her household since they are all doubly clothed.

<sup>22</sup>She makes her own quilts and her clothes are purple and fine linen.

<sup>23</sup>Her husband is well-respected;

he sits in council with the elders of the people.

<sup>24</sup>She weaves linen cloth and sells it; she supplies the merchants with sashes.

<sup>25</sup>She is strong and dignified and looks with confidence to the future.

<sup>26</sup>She speaks wisely and her words are kind.

<sup>27</sup>She keeps an eye on the conduct of her household and is never idle.

<sup>28</sup>Her sons rise up and call her blessed, her husband sings her praises:

<sup>29</sup>“Many women have done wonders but you surpass them all.”

<sup>30</sup>Charm is deceptive and beauty useless; the woman who is wise is the one to praise.

<sup>31</sup>May she enjoy the fruits of her labor and may all praise her for her works.