



Two centuries before Christ, Jesus, son of Sirach, wrote this book which is a synthesis of the traditions and teachings of the “sages.”

He was well-off and well educated and appears to have been the head of an important household with servants. He dealt with many people being involved with works and business which turned out well. In the end, this sage confessed that it was the sacred books which taught him the secret of success. In writing this book, he intended to share with others what he learned in the sacred books, and verified through his own experience.

He wrote a few years before the religious crisis related in the book of Maccabees. Many of his contemporaries to whom the Jewish religion seemed antiquated allowed themselves to be attracted by Greek culture. The author tried to offer a new presentation of the faith of Israel. In no other nation was there a wisdom superior to that of God’s people, because it was there, by divine decree, that Wisdom came to dwell. This book shows us how the Law of God leads people to a more human, more intelligent and more responsible personal and social life.

This book consists of two main parts:

- Chapters 1–42 include seven series of maxims. Each one starts with the praise of wisdom. The poem on wisdom in chapter 24 is particularly interesting.
- Chapters 43–51 begin by praising God whose wisdom shines in the order of the universe and continue with a description of God’s wise activity through the great people of the Old Testament.

This book is one of the *deuterocanonical* books: see p. 887.

Foreword by the translator from Hebrew to Greek

• The Law, the Prophets and the other Writings which came later have transmitted to us so many and such great lessons that it seems fitting to praise Israel for its reputation in knowledge and wisdom. But it would not be enough to keep these truths for our own instruction: those who love wisdom want to be helpful in what they say and write to those who are not so familiar with her teachings.

My grandfather, Jesus, who devoted himself constantly to the reading of the Law, the Prophets and the later Writings of our fathers and had acquired a thorough familiarity with

them, began himself to write something about their teachings and wisdom, in order that those people desiring to gain knowledge might take advantage of his writings and make even greater progress in living according to the Law.

You are therefore invited to read this book with kind consideration and attention, and to show indulgence where, in spite of my painstaking efforts in interpretation, I may appear to have badly conveyed the meaning. Those things, which in this book are written in Hebrew, lose their force when they are translated into another language. In fact, not only this book but the Law itself, the Prophets and

the other Writings differ considerably from the original text.

When I went to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of King Euergetes and settled there, I found an example of this important teaching and I judged it very necessary to exercise great care and make serious efforts in translating this book.

I have therefore, during this time, devoted many sleepless nights and much study in order to finish this book and to publish it for the use of those who, though they live outside Palestine, wish to become lovers of wisdom and to conform their manner of living to the Law.

Wisdom comes from God

1 • ¹All wisdom comes from the Lord and endures with him forever.

²The grains of sand, the drops of rain and the days of eternity, who can count them?

³The height of heaven, the extent of the earth and the depths of the abyss, who can measure them?

⁴Wisdom was created before all things and the prudent intellect before the beginning of time.

⁶To whom was the source of Wisdom revealed? Who has known her secret designs?

⁸One alone is wise and greatly to be feared. The One who is seated upon his throne.

⁹The Lord himself created Wisdom. He looked on her and knew her value. He poured her out over all his works; ¹⁰upon all mortal beings, in accordance with his goodness. He lavished her on those who love him.

¹¹The fear of the Lord is our glory and honor, it is joy and a triumphant crown.

¹²The fear of the Lord gladdens the heart; it gives joy, gaiety and long life.

¹³For the one who fears the Lord all will go well at the end of his life, and he will be blessed on the day of his death.

¹⁴The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; he put wisdom into the hearts of his faithful ones before their birth.

¹⁵Founded from eternity she has made her

home among people and she will remain faithful to their descendants.

¹⁶The fear of the Lord is the fullness of wisdom. It will fill you with its fruits.

¹⁷It will fill your whole house with desirable things.

It will fill your houses with its riches.

¹⁸The fear of the Lord is the crown of wisdom.

¹⁹Wherever it is, peace and good health flourish; knowledge and prudence rain down. Wisdom exalts those who possess her.

²⁰The fear of the Lord is the root of wisdom. Its branches are long life.

²²Unjust violence cannot be justified, it will destroy itself by its own excesses.

²³The patient man will hold out until the appointed time; but finally joy will be given to him.

²⁴He will guard his words until the appointed time and in the end many will recognize his worth.

²⁵Proverbs rich in content are among wisdom's treasures but the sinner does not want to know about God.

²⁶Do you desire wisdom? Keep the commandments and the Lord will give her to you without measure; ²⁷for fear of the Lord is wisdom and learning; what pleases him is faithfulness and gentleness.

²⁸Do not put aside fear of the Lord; approach him with a sincere heart. ²⁹Do not be a hypocrite before others; watch well your words.

³⁰Do not praise yourself lest you fall and bring dishonor on yourself. For the Lord will reveal your secrets and throw you to one side in the midst of the assembly, if you have no fear of the Lord and your heart is full of deceit.

Fear God in time of trials

2 • ¹My son, if you have decided to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. ²Keep your heart upright and remain resolute; do not be upset in the time of adversity.

³Hold fast to the Lord, do not separ-

To fear God is to see him always present and to take decisions in his presence. Whoever knows God is near fears to offend him because he is aware of his love and fidelity. To fear God signifies to respect him and to be mindful of him before all else.

Fearing the Lord is the opposite of fearing what others will say, fearing to be made fun of, or fear of failure. Those who fear the Lord give more importance to what God says, what he promises when he invites us to seek him and to save others.

• **2.1** Those who want to serve God must

• The Jews do not use the word "Bible." They refer to the Bible as: "The Law, the Prophets and the Writings," these being the three major headings of the sacred book. See a similar expression in Luke 24:44.

• **1.1** In this poem, the author professes his faith. To those who think they are more modern because they seek human wisdom and doctrine, he simply declares that true wisdom consists in trusting God and fearing him.

He often speaks of *fearing the Lord* just as the Psalms do. This is different from the fear of pagans who imagine a resentful God.

24:8-9
Pro
8:22

Job
28:28
Ps
111:10

Jas
1:2-4
Rev
2:3,
10

Rev
3:21

ate yourself from him so that you may be successful to the end of your days.

^{1P}^{1:7} ⁴Accept all that happens to you, be patient when you are humbled, ⁵for as gold is tested in the fire, so those acceptable to God are tested in the crucible of humiliation. ⁶Have confidence in him and he will take care of you; follow the right path and hope in him.

⁷You who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy and do not turn away lest you fall. ⁸You who fear the Lord, trust him and you will not lose your reward. ⁹You who fear the Lord, hope for all good things; hope for eternal joy and mercy.

^{Ps}^{22:5} ¹⁰Remember what happened to your ancestors. Who has ever trusted in the Lord and been confounded? Who has persevered in fear of the Lord and been abandoned? Who has called upon him and not been heard?

^{Ex}^{34:6} ¹¹For the Lord is compassion and loving-kindness; he forgives our sins and saves us in time of distress.

¹²Woe to faint hearts and weak hands, to the sinner who wavers between two paths.

¹³Woe to the fainthearted who lack confidence, because of this they will not be protected. ¹⁴Woe to you who have lost patience! What will you do when the Lord calls you to account?

^{Jn}^{14:15, 23} ¹⁵Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his commandments; those who love him faithfully keep his laws.

¹⁶Those who fear the Lord seek to please him; those who love him are filled with his law.

^{2S}^{24:14} ¹⁷Those who fear the Lord keep their hearts ready and humble themselves in his presence saying, ¹⁸“Let us fall into the hands of the Lord and not into the hands of mortals, for great as his power is his mercy.”

Duties towards parents

3 ¹My children, it is your father who speaks, listen to me and follow my advice and so be saved. ²For the Lord established that children should respect their father; he confirmed the right of the mother over her children.

Ex
20:12
Eph
6:1-3

³Whoever honors his father atones for his sins; ⁴he who gives glory to his mother prepares a treasure for himself.

⁵Whoever honors his father will receive joy from his own children and will be heard when he prays.

⁶Whoever glorifies his father will have a long life. Whoever obeys the Lord gives comfort to his mother. ⁷He serves those who brought him to birth as he would serve the Lord.

⁸Honor your father in word and deed so that his blessing may come on you. ⁹For a father's blessing secures the future of his children, but a mother's curse destroys them at their roots.

Gen
49:2-27

¹⁰Do not rejoice at the humiliation of your father because his dishonor is no glory for you. ¹¹For a man's glory comes from his father's reputation; a mother who is not respected is a disgrace to her children.

Pro
19:26

¹²My child, take care of your father in his old age, do not cause him sorrow as long as he lives.

Mt
15:4

¹³Even if he has lost his mind, have patience; do not be disrespectful to him while you are in full health.

¹⁴For kindness done to one's father will never be forgotten, it will serve as reparation for your sins.

¹⁵In the day of adversity the Lord will remember it to your advantage; for just as ice melts in the heat, so will your sins melt away. ¹⁶The man who abandons his father is like a blasphemer; he who annoys his mother is cursed by the Lord.

Ex
21:17

be ready to face trials and contradictions. Authentic trust in God is demonstrated when things do not turn out well. Along with faith and perseverance, trust is the basic quality of the believer.

• **3.1** This is the best commentary on Moses' commandment concerning children's responsibilities toward their parents. To honor our parents means: to respect, to be understanding and to offer material assistance in their difficulties.

Humility

¹⁷My son, conduct your affairs with discretion and you will be loved by those who are acceptable to God.

¹⁸The greater you are, the more you should humble yourself and thus you will find favor with God. ²⁰For great is the power of the Lord and it is the humble who give him glory.

²¹Do not seek what is beyond your powers nor search into what is beyond your ability. ²²Reflect on what you are commanded to do; there is no need for you to know things that are hidden.

²³Do not tire yourself in resolving useless questions since the knowledge you already have goes beyond human understanding.

²⁴For many have been led astray by their personal theories and false pretension has undermined reason.

²⁶The obstinate man will eventually fall into evil, and he who loves danger will perish therein. ²⁷The obstinate man will be weighed down with sufferings; the sinner heaps up sin upon sin.

²⁸For the sufferings of the proud man there is no remedy, the roots of evil are implanted in him. ²⁹The wise man reflects on proverbs. What the wise man desires is an attentive ear.

Almsgiving

³⁰As water extinguishes the burning flames, almsgiving obtains pardon for sins. ³¹The man who responds by doing good prepares for the future, at the moment of his downfall he will find support.

4 ¹My son, do not deny the poor his food and do not make the man who looks at you with pleading eyes wait.

²Do not sadden the hungry person nor annoy anyone who is in need. ³Do not exasperate an angry man nor withhold alms from the beggar.

⁴Do not drive away the beggar who is weighed down with afflictions, nor turn away your face from the poor; ⁵do not snub the needy nor give anyone a reason to curse you.

⁶If someone curses you in the bitterness of his heart, the Creator will hear his prayer.

⁷Make yourself acceptable to the community; bow your head before the one in authority.

⁸Listen to the poor man and reply to him with kind words and with peace.

⁹Deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor. Do not be weak when you administer justice. ¹⁰Be like a father towards orphans and like a husband towards their mothers. Then you will be like a son of the Most High and he will love you more than your own mother.

¹¹Wisdom brings up her children and takes care of those who look for her. ¹²Whoever loves her loves life. Those who rise early in the morning in search of her will be filled with joy.

¹³Whoever possesses her will have glory and wherever he goes blessings will follow. ¹⁴Those who serve her are ministers of the Holy One; those who love her are loved of the Lord. ¹⁵He who listens to her will have good judgment. He who obeys her will rest in safety.

¹⁶Whoever trusts in her will possess her and his children after him will inherit her.

¹⁷For in the beginning she will lead him by rough paths, causing him to fear and be terrified; she will plague him with her discipline until she can count on him; and she will put him to the test by her demands.

¹⁸Then she will lead him on a level path, give him joy and reveal her secrets to him.

¹⁹But if he wanders from the path, she will abandon him and allow him to be lost.

²⁰In every situation weigh the pros and cons and avoid evil. A wrong kind of shame could harm you. ²¹There is a shame which leads to sin and there is a shame which merits praise and respect. ²²Do not act against your better self to win favor from others. Do not let this kind of shame lead you into sin.

²³Do not remain silent when it is necessary to speak. Do not, through pride, hide your wisdom. ²⁴It is in speech that wisdom is recognized and learning in the spoken discourse.

²⁵Do not contradict the truth; rather confess your lack of knowledge.

²⁶Have no shame in confessing your sins, do not swim against the tide.

²⁷Do not cringe before a fool; do not be influenced by the powerful.

²⁸Fight for the truth till death and the Lord will fight for you.

²⁹Do not be daring in your speech, but lazy and negligent in works.

³⁰Do not be like a lion in your household, finding fault with your servants and oppressing those under you.

³¹Do not open your hand to receive and keep it closed when you should give.

Job
29:15-17

Lk
6:35
Jn
14:21

Mt
7:14

Lev
5:5
Num
5:7
Jas
5:16

1Jn
3:18

Acts
20:35

Do not rely on wealth

11:24 Lk **5** • ¹Do not rely on your wealth. Do not say, ²“I am self-sufficient.” ³Do not let yourself be carried away by greed and violence; they would make you their slave.

Ps ³Do not say, “Who can stop me?” For the Lord has power to punish you. ⁴Do not say, “I have sinned and nothing has happened!” For the Lord bides his time.

Ex ⁵Do not be so sure of pardon when you are heaping sin upon sin. ⁶Do not say, “His compassion is great! He will forgive the vast number of my sins!” For with him is mercy but also anger; his fury will be poured out on sinners.

Lk ⁷Do not delay your return to the Lord, do not put it off from day to day. For suddenly the anger of the Lord will blaze forth and you will perish on the day of reckoning.

⁸Do not rely on riches wrongfully acquired for they will be of no use to you on the day of wrath.

Mt ⁹Do not be swayed by every wind nor try to walk by every path, as does the sinner who is accustomed to lie. ¹⁰Remain firm in your convictions, and be consistent in your speech. ¹¹Be ready to listen, and know how to wait before giving your reply.

¹²If you know what you are saying, answer your neighbor; if not, it is better to say nothing. ¹³Your words can bring you honor and dishonor; a man’s tongue brings about his downfall.

¹⁴Do not let yourself be known as a scandalmonger or a deceiver. For if shame is the lot of the robber, severe condemnation is the lot of the liar.

¹⁵Do not sin in big things nor in little things, and from being a friend do not turn into an enemy. An evil reputation brings in its train shame and disgrace; such is the lot of the sinner who is accustomed to lying.

6 ¹Just as the wicked man inherits confusion and shame so will the sinner accustomed to lying. ²Do not give yourself over to your passions; they will turn against you and, like a bull, tear you to pieces. ³They will devour the foliage and destroy the fruit, leaving you like a dry stump. ⁴An evil passion will destroy the one who is held in its power; it will make him the laughingstock of his enemies.

• **5.1** 5:6. At times, some Christians take advantage of God’s infinite mercy to continue with their evil behavior.

• **6.5** Here, we have a text concerning true friendship. Ben Sira invites us not to be naive or off guard.
We should reflect before confiding in a friend,

Friends

• ⁵A gentle word makes many friends, an agreeable tongue calls forth gracious replies. ⁶Let your friends be many; but your counselors, one in a thousand!

⁷If you would gain a friend, begin by testing him and do not put your confidence in him too quickly. ⁸For there is the friend who is such when it suits him but he does not remain faithful in the time of your adversity.

⁹There is the friend who becomes an enemy and, to your confusion, makes known why you quarreled.

¹⁰There is the friend who shares your table but does not remain faithful when things go against you. ¹¹In times of prosperity he will be like your shadow and he will speak freely to those of your household. ¹²But if you are humiliated, he will turn against you and will avoid meeting you.

¹³Distance yourself from your enemies and be careful about your friends.

¹⁴The faithful friend is a secure refuge; whoever has found one has found a treasure. ¹⁵A faithful friend is beyond all price; hold him as priceless. ¹⁶A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy, and those who fear the Lord will find one.

¹⁷Whoever fears the Lord will make true friends for, as a man is, such will his friend be.

¹⁸My son, dedicate yourself to learning from your youth, and you will grow in wisdom until old age. ¹⁹Work at it like the worker and the sower, cultivate wisdom and wait for her excellent fruits. For in cultivating her you will have some trouble, but soon you will enjoy her fruits.

²⁰Wisdom is very severe with the ignorant. Fools will not persevere. ²¹She will be like a

but should also have this *life-saving remedy* which a true friend is, a grace that God grants to those who fear him. Also see 12:8-18 and 37:1-15.

6:18-37. We obtain wisdom through a disciplined life.

7:15. Ben Sira appreciates manual work, specifically work in the fields.

heavy weight or a difficult test which he will quickly throw away.

²²For wisdom brings her own honor, she does not reveal herself to everyone. ²³Listen, my son, and receive my teaching, do not reject my counsel. ²⁴Put her constraints on your feet and her yoke on your neck. ²⁵Put your shoulder to the burden and bear her yoke; do not rebel against her chains. ²⁶Come to her with all your soul and with all your strength observe her ways. ²⁷Pursue her, search for her, she will make herself known to you; when you have her, do not let her go.

²⁸For, in the end, you will find in her your rest and she will become your joy. ²⁹Her constraints will strengthen your steps and her collar will be like a glorious garment. ³⁰Her yoke will become an ornament of gold and her chains like precious girdles of hyacinth blue. ³¹You will adorn yourself as with a garment of glory and you will put her on like a crown of jubilation.

³²If you wish, my son, you will be learned; if you pay attention, you will become clever.

³³If you love to listen, you will learn; if you really pay attention, you will become wise.

³⁴Be on your guard in the assembly of the elders and if there is a wise man there, attach yourself to him. ³⁵Be willing to listen to all discourses on divine things, and do not let the sayings of the wise escape you.

³⁶If you see an intelligent man, follow him from daybreak and let your feet beat a path-way to his door.

³⁷Meditate on the precepts of the Lord and apply yourself unceasingly to his commandments. He will strengthen your heart and the wisdom you desire will be given to you.

7 ¹Do no evil and evil will not take hold of you.

²Keep away from wrongdoing and it will leave you alone.

³Do not sow in the furrows of injustice for fear of reaping its harvest sevenfold.

⁴Do not demand authority from the Lord nor from the king a place of honor.

⁵Do not make yourself out to be a just man before the Lord nor a wise man in front of the king.

⁶Do not seek a position of responsibility lest you not be powerful enough to root out injustice and, overawed by a powerful man, you lose your integrity.

⁷Do not offend the city's assembly; do not grovel before the people.

⁸Do not commit the same sin twice; once is enough to bring punishment upon you.

⁹Do not say, "When I sacrifice to God, the Most High will take into account the number of gifts and he will accept them." ¹⁰Pray with a strong spirit and do not neglect to give alms.

¹¹Do not despise a man when he is down-cast, for there is one who casts down and who raises up.

¹²Do not lie about your brother; likewise, do not lie about your friend.

¹³Do not allow yourself any kind of lie for nothing good will come of it.

¹⁴Do not gossip in front of the council of the elders, nor keep on repeating your words in prayer.

¹⁵Do not hate hard work nor the tilling of the land as instituted by the Most High.

¹⁶Do not join the company of sinners, remember that the wrath of God will not be delayed.

¹⁷Remain humble, because the godless are punished with fire and worms.

¹⁸Do not exchange your friend for money, nor a real brother for the gold of Ophir.

¹⁹Do not separate yourself from a wise and good woman, because a gracious wife is worth more than gold.

²⁰Do not maltreat the servant who works honestly, nor the laborer who works diligently. ²¹Love the intelligent slave as yourself and do not deprive him of his freedom.

²²Have you any cattle? Take care of them. If they are profitable to you, keep them.

²³Have you children? Educate them and teach them to obey from their childhood.

²⁴Have you any daughters? Guard their virginity and do not be indulgent towards them.

²⁵If you marry off your daughter you will have accomplished something of importance, but give her to an intelligent man.

²⁶Have you a wife who is according to your liking? Do not send her away. As for the one you dislike, do not trust her.

²⁷Honor your father with your whole heart and do not be forgetful of the sufferings of your mother.

²⁸Remember that they gave you birth. How can you repay them for what they have done for you?

²⁹Reverence the Lord with all your being and respect the priests.

³⁰Love your Creator with all your strength and do not abandon his ministers.

³¹Fear the Lord and honor the priest. Give him the share which has been commanded: the first harvest, the sin-offering, the shoulders of the victims, the holy offerings and the first fruits of sacred things.

³²Stretch out your hand to the poor and you will receive a blessing from the Lord.

³³May your gifts benefit the living and do not forget the dead.

³⁴Do not turn away from those who weep, and grieve with those who are in sorrow.

³⁵Do not neglect to visit the sick because it is for such acts that you will be loved.

1S
2:7
Lk
1:52

Mt
6:7

Pro
24:27

2Mac
9:9
Is
66:24

Dt
24:14-
15

Tb
4:4

Dt
14:29

Rom
12:15

Mt
25:36

³⁶In all your actions remember your last end and you will never sin.

Prudence and common sense

^{Pro 10:15} **8** ¹Do not argue with a powerful man lest you fall into his hands.

²Do not quarrel with a rich man lest he throw his weight into the scale against you.

³Do not argue with a talkative person; do not heap up wood on his fire.

⁴Do not joke with an ignorant man for fear your ancestors will be insulted.

^{Mt 7:1-5} ^{1Jn 1:8-10} ¹⁰ ⁵Do not offend the man who repents of his sins, remember that we are all deserving punishment.

⁶Do not despise a man in his old age, because we ourselves will grow old.

⁷Do not rejoice at the death of any man, remember that we shall all die.

⁸Do not neglect the teaching of the wise, apply yourself well to their precepts. Through them you will learn how to live and how to serve the great.

⁹Do not set aside the teachings of the elders for they also learnt it from their forebears; they will open up your understanding and enable you to reply at the right moment.

¹⁰Do nothing to arouse the sinner for fear of being burned by the flames of his fire.

¹¹Do not annoy the angry man for fear that he will twist your words to his own advantage.

¹²Do not lend to those more powerful than yourself; if you have lent anything, consider it as lost.

¹³Do not stand surety beyond your means; if you have done so, be ready to pay.

¹⁴Do not go to law with a judge because, due to his position, judgment will be given in his favor.

¹⁵Do not travel with an adventurer lest he impose himself on you and, as he does whatever he pleases, you both perish through his folly.

¹⁶Do not quarrel with a bad-tempered person nor get involved with him in a lonely place; blood counts for little in his eyes and, when he sees you defenseless, he will attack you.

¹⁷Do not take counsel with a fool because he will not be able to remain silent about what you have said.

¹⁸Do nothing which should be secret before a stranger because you do not know how he will react.

¹⁹Do not reveal your secrets to any man, he will not be grateful to you for doing so.

Man with women

9 ¹Do not be jealous of your own wife; do not give her reason to disgrace you.

²Do not put yourself into the power of any woman to the point where she can dominate you. ^{33:21}

³Do not go near a woman of ill-repute for fear of falling into her nets.

⁴Do not dally with a singing girl for fear of being caught in her snare.

⁵Do not fix your gaze on a young girl for fear of being involved in her condemnation. ^{Job 31:1}

⁶Do not deliver yourself into the power of prostitutes lest you lose your inheritance. ^{Mt 5:28}

⁷Do not glance about you in the streets of the town; do not loiter in lonely places. ^{Lk 15:13}

⁸Turn your eyes away from a good-looking woman and do not stare at a beautiful foreigner. For the beauty of a woman has caused many to fall; in her presence love blazes up like a fire. ^{Pro 2:16}

⁹Never sit near a married woman or drink wine with her, for fear that your feelings towards her be roused and that in your passion you slide towards your downfall.

¹⁰Do not abandon an old friend, for a new one has not the same value.

New wine, new friend; let them mature, then you will enjoy them with pleasure.

¹¹Do not envy the success of the sinner, you do not know what his end will be. ^{Ps 37}

¹²Do not take pleasure in what pleases the godless, remember that they will be punished before they die. ³⁷

¹³Keep well away from the man who has power to kill and you will not experience the fear of death. But if you go with him avoid all offense for fear that he will deprive you of life: realize that you are passing through death-traps and that you are walking on top of the wall.

¹⁴As far as you can, be sociable and take counsel with learned men.

¹⁵Love to speak with intelligent men and let all your discourses be about the law of the Most High.

¹⁶Let just men be your companions at table; take pride in your fear of the Lord.

¹⁷An artisan is judged by his work and a leader of the community, by the wisdom of his words.

¹⁸A talkative man is dreaded in his town and the gossip makes himself disliked.

10 ¹The wise leader will teach his people; the government of the intelligent man will be well-ordered.

• **9.1** Ben Sira lives in a society which holds women in contempt. It is a society which had not yet discovered the rich quality of married love, so there were great temptations for young and adult men who would easily be satisfied with occa-

sional love. Thus Ben Sira has many warnings against women's seduction, but always as if they were in the first place culpable. See 23:12 and 42:12.

²As the leader is, so will his ministers be; as the leader of the city is, so will be its inhabitants.

³A king without wisdom will ruin his people; a city will prosper through the wisdom of its rulers.

⁴The government of the earth is in the hands of the Lord; in his own time he will raise up the right leader.

Rom 13:1 ⁵Human success is in the hands of the Lord and he clothes the rulers with his glory.

Pride

Lev 19:18 • ⁶Do not store up resentment against your neighbor, no matter what his offense; do nothing in a fit of anger.

⁷Pride is odious to both God and man; injustice is abhorrent to both of them.

⁸Sovereignty passes from one nation to another because of injustice, violence and wealth.

⁹How can there be such pride in someone who is nothing but dust and ashes? Even while he is living, man's bowels are full of rotteness.

¹⁰Look: the illness lasts while the doctor makes light of it; and one who is king today will die tomorrow.

¹¹Once a man is dead, grubs, insects and worms are his lot.

Dt 8:14 ¹²The beginning of man's pride is to separate himself from the Lord and to rebel against his Creator.

¹³The beginning of pride is sin. Whoever perseveres in sin, God opens the floodgates to everything that is evil. For this the Lord has inflicted dire punishment on sinners; he has reduced them to nothing.

Lk 1:52 ¹⁴The Lord has overturned the thrones of princes and set up the meek in their place.

Dn 2:35 ¹⁵The Lord has torn up the proud by the roots and has planted the humble in their place.

Wis 11:21 ¹⁶The Lord has overturned the land of the pagans and totally destroyed them.

¹⁷He has devastated several of them, destroyed them and removed all remembrance of them from the face of the earth.

¹⁸Pride was not created for man nor violent anger, for those born of woman.

¹⁹Which race is worthy of honor? The human race.

Which race is worthy of honor? Those who fear the Lord.

Which race is despicable? The human race.

Which race is despicable? Those who break the commandments.

²⁰The leader is worthy of respect in the midst of his brethren, but he has respect for

those who fear the Lord. ²²Whether they be rich, honored or poor, their pride should be in fearing the Lord.

²³It is not right to despise the poor man who keeps the law; it is not fitting to honor the sinful man.

²⁴The leader, the judge, and the powerful man are worthy of honor, but no one is greater than the man who fears the Lord.

²⁵A prudent slave will have free men as servants, and the sensible man will not complain.

²⁶Do not feel proud when you have only accomplished your work; do not put on airs when times are difficult for you. Lk 17:10

²⁷Of greater worth is the man who works and lives in abundance than the one who shows off and yet has nothing to live on.

²⁸My son, have a modest appreciation of yourself, estimate yourself at your true value. 1Cor 1:31

²⁹Who will defend the man who makes an attempt on his own life? Who will respect the man who despises himself?

³⁰The poor man will be honored for his wisdom and the rich man, for his riches.

³¹Honored when poor – how much more honored when rich!

Dishonored when rich – how much more dishonored when poor!

11 ¹The poor man who is wise carries his head high and sits among the great.

²Do not praise a man because he is handsome and do not hold a man in contempt because of his appearance. 1S 16:7 2Cor 10:10

³The bee is one of the smallest winged insects but she excels in the exquisite sweetness of her honey.

⁴Do not be proud because of the clothes you wear; do not be proud when people honor you. Do you know what the Lord is preparing in a mysterious way? ⁵Many tyrants have been overthrown and someone unknown has received the crown. Ecl 4:14 10:6-7

⁶Many powerful men have been completely disgraced and famous men handed over into the power of others.

⁷Do not reprehend anyone unless you have first been fully informed, consider the case first and thereafter make your reproach.

⁸Do not reply before you have listened; do not interrupt the one who is speaking. Pro 18:13

⁹Do not interfere in what is not your business; do not meddle in the disputes of sinners.

¹⁰My child, do not undertake too many activities. If you keep adding to them, you will not be without reproach; if you run after them, you will not succeed nor will you ever be free, although you try to escape.

- **10.6** A few words of simple philosophy about suitable modesty for everyone.

Put your trust in God

• ¹¹ There are those who exhaust themselves, tire themselves out and become anxious, yet in the end they are only the poorer.

¹² There are those who are weak, needing support, lacking goods and in great poverty, yet the eyes of the Lord look on them with favor. The Lord will redress their humiliation. ¹³ He will raise their heads and many people will marvel on this account.

Lk 12:16-21 ¹⁴ Good and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, all come from the Lord.

¹⁷ The just can count on the generosity of the Lord and his goodness will guide them forever.

¹⁸ A man may become rich through being careful and miserly and this is his reward. ¹⁹ The day on which he thinks, "I have earned my rest, now I can live on my possessions," he does not know how long he is going to live. He will have to die and leave his goods to others.

²⁰ Remain faithful to your duty, give your life to it and grow old in your work.

Mt 6:25-26 ²¹ Do not be disconcerted at the success of sinners but have confidence in God and persevere in your own efforts. It is easy for the Lord in an instant to make the poor man rich.

Lk 12:16-21 ²² The blessing of the Lord is the just man's reward and quickly, in an instant, his benediction will bear fruit.

Jn 16:21 ²³ Do not say, "What do I need? What more could I have or desire?"

²⁴ Do not say, "I have all that is necessary, what misfortune can harm me now?"

²⁵ On good days, one forgets the bad; and on bad days one forgets the good.

²⁶ Even when the end draws near, it is easy for the Lord to reward a man according to the way he has lived.

²⁷ The hour of adversity makes one forget pleasure; at the end of a man's life his deeds will be revealed.

²⁸ Do not consider anyone as blessed before his death, for only then he will be known.

²⁹ Do not invite just anybody into your house for many are clever deceivers.

³⁰ Like a partridge in its cage acting as a decoy, so is the heart of the proud man; like a spy he watches out for your weaknesses.

³¹ He changes good things into evil, he lays his traps and criticizes even the best things.

³² Just as a spark sets coals on fire, the wicked man prepares his snares in order to draw blood.

³³ Beware of the wicked man for he is planning evil. He might dishonor you forever.

³⁴ If you take a stranger into your house, he will cause you trouble; he will estrange you from your household.

12 ¹ If you do good, know to whom you are doing it and you will receive thanks for your kindness.

² Do good to the godly man and you will receive a reward, if not from the man himself, at least from the Most High.

³ Blessings are not for those who persist in evil-doing, nor for those who refuse to show compassion.

⁴ Give to the godly man, do not help the sinner; ⁵ do good to the humble, do not give to the ungodly; deny him bread, do not give it to him lest he eventually dominate you. He will repay you with a double evil for all the good that you have done for him.

⁶ For the Most High himself detests sinners and carries out his vengeance on the ungodly.

⁷ Give to the good man but do not help the sinner.

⁸ A friend does not become an enemy in the time of prosperity, nor does an enemy remain hidden in the time of adversity.

⁹ When a man is doing well, his enemies are sad; when he is suffering misfortune, even his friends hasten to abandon him.

¹⁰ Never trust an enemy, for his malice is like bronze covered in rust.

¹¹ Even if he should act as a humble man and walk with head bowed down, watch yourself and be on your guard against him. Behave towards him as a man who polishes a bronze mirror. Know that the rust will not remain until the end.

¹² Do not place him near you lest he overthrow you and take your place. Do not make him sit on your right hand lest he covet your seat. Let it not be that in the end you understand my words and regret not having listened to my advice.

¹³ Who will have pity on the snake-charmer bitten by a snake or on those who go near wild beasts? ¹⁴ It is the same for the man who joins company with a sinner and finds himself involved in his wrongdoing. ¹⁵ The sinner will remain quietly with you for an hour but when you are distracted he will throw away his mask.

Mt 5:45
Lk 6:35

Pro 26:24-26

• **11.11** These thoughts are not new in the Bible which encourages us on every page to trust in God. Ben Sira foretells what we will find on the lips of Jesus concerning wealth (see Lk 12:16).

And he says: Love the Covenant, dedicate your life to it. The Covenant means following the Law. Jesus, too, will speak of seeking the king-

dom of God instead of being preoccupied with providing for the future.

Note the end of this text. The Book of Sirach, like certain parts of the Book of Job, affirms that God may wait until death to give a reward; but he does not risk speaking of what will follow: faith in the resurrection was as yet undeveloped.

¹⁶The enemy is all sweetness in his speech, but in his heart he is planning to throw you in the ditch. The enemy has tears in his eyes but, if he finds an opportunity, he cannot have enough of your blood.

¹⁷If misfortune comes to you, you will find him there before you; pretending to help you, he will be scheming to get rid of you. ¹⁸He will wag his head in mockery and clap his hands, he will whisper unceasingly and will show his true face.

Beware of the great

13 • ¹He who touches tar will be soiled; he who associates with an arrogant man will become like him.

²Do not carry too heavy a load; do not make friends with someone stronger and richer than you. Why put the earthen pot near the iron one? One will bang the other and break it.

³The rich man does wrong and is unconcerned; the poor man is insulted and apologizes.

⁴The rich man uses you as long as you are useful to him; when you have nothing left he deserts you.

⁵He will stay with you as long as you have something; he will drain you without a second thought.

⁶If he really needs you he will deceive you, smile at you and raise your hopes; he will speak smooth words and say, "What would you like?"

⁷He will show his gratitude by entertaining you until he has taken all you possess, and he will make fun of you in the end. Afterwards, when he sees you, he will have nothing to do with you, shaking his head when he meets you.

⁸Take care not to be deceived and humiliated through stupidity.

⁹When an influential person invites you, delay and he will call you all the more.

¹⁰Do not go so far forward that you

are pushed aside or so far back that you are overlooked.

¹¹Do not try to talk to him as an equal or trust his many words. With all this verbiage he is only trying to test you and, under pretense of kindness, he is weighing you up.

¹²He will repeat your words without pity and will not spare you either blows or chains. ¹³Be wary and take great care because you are walking with your own stumbling block.

¹⁵All that lives loves its own kind and each person, his own neighbor.

¹⁶Every animal relates to its own species and man to his own kind.

¹⁷What has the wolf in common with the lamb? It is the same with the sinner and the virtuous man. ¹⁸What kind of peace can exist between the hyena and the dog? What peace between the rich man and the poor man?

¹⁹Wild donkeys are the prey of desert lions; so, also, are the poor the prey of the rich.

²⁰The proud man hates humility; so, also, the poor man is detestable to the rich.

²¹When the rich man stumbles, his friends support him, but when the poor man falls, his friends desert him.

²²When the rich man gets into trouble, there are many who come to his rescue; if he speaks nonsense, they congratulate him. When the poor man makes a mistake, they criticize him; if he speaks sensibly, they pay no attention. ²³When the rich man speaks, all are silent and they praise his words to the skies. The poor man speaks and people ask, "Who is this?" And if he stumbles, they push him down.

²⁴Wealth is good if there is no sin in it

• **13.1** This long paragraph is an invitation not to seek the company of those above us. Often the *rich*, those above, are godless, without conscience. The author points out the dangers:

- those above take advantage of those who seek to become familiar with them;

- to be admitted into the friendship of the rich, we have to accept many humiliations and to forget our own dignity;
- contact with the rich will lead us to imitate their faults.

Pro
18:23

Pro
19:4,
7

Pro
14:20

and poverty is evil when it is the reward for godlessness.

Enjoy life without being greedy

^{Pro 15:13} ²⁵Man's heart is reflected in his face, for better or for worse.

²⁶Does he show a happy face? All is going well to him. Has he found words of wisdom? He has reflected on suffering.

14 ¹Happy the one who has not sinned in speech or who feels no remorse for his faults.

²Happy is he whose own conscience does not condemn him and who has not fallen from his ideals.

³Wealth does not befit the small-minded man; why would you give the greedy man riches? ⁴He who hoards, depriving himself, is hoarding for others: others will enjoy his goods.

⁵He who is mean to himself, with whom will he be good? He does not even enjoy his own riches.

⁶There is nothing worse than one who is mean to himself, this is how his evil repays him.

⁷If he does good, he does it without realizing it but, in the end, his evil will be revealed.

⁸Evil is the greedy-eyed man who does not pay attention to persons and looks down on people.

⁹The ambitious man is not content with what he has, wicked injustice shrivels up the heart.

¹⁰The envious eye covets the food of others; there will be misery and famine at his table.

¹¹My son, use well whatever you have and give worthy offerings to the Lord.

¹²Remember that death will not delay and your time has not yet been revealed to you.

¹³Be good to your friend before you die and be generous to him in any way you can.

^{Ecl 2:24} ¹⁴Enjoy happiness and do not reject lawful pleasure when it comes your way.

¹⁵Will you not have to leave to another the fruit of your works? The fruit of your labor, will it not be shared out by lot?

¹⁶Give, take and treat yourself well, for in the netherworld there are no pleasures to seek.

¹⁷All living things grow old like clothing. This is the eternal law: "You will die."

¹⁸Like green leaves on a bushy tree: some sprout and others fall off, so are the genera-

tions of flesh and blood: one dies and another is born. ¹⁹All finite things pass away and their maker with them.

Rev
14:13

Happy the one seeking wisdom

²⁰Happy the one who is intent on wisdom and who can reply to those who question him; ²¹who makes his own the ways of wisdom and meditates on her secrets; ²²who pursues her like a hunter, lies in wait by her paths, ²³peeps in at her windows and listens at her doors; ²⁴he sets up camp near her house, fixing his stakes in her walls.

²⁵He places his tent in the hands of wisdom; he stays in a happy lodging. ²⁶He places his sons beneath her protection and finds shelter beneath her branches. ²⁷He is shaded by her from the heat and makes his camp in her glory.

15 ¹Such is the one who fears the Lord; whoever embraces the Law will obtain wisdom. ²She will come out to meet him like a mother and greet him like a virgin bride; ³she will feed him with the bread of understanding and give him the water of wisdom to drink. ⁴He will rely on her and will not waver; he will lean on her and will not be let down.

Wis
6:16
8:12

⁵Wisdom will make him greater than his friends and he will be able to speak in the full assembly. ⁶He will be crowned with happiness and joy. He will inherit an everlasting name.

Wis
8:10-
15

⁷The fool will never possess her, and sinners will never set eyes on her. ⁸She is far away from pride, and liars will know nothing of her.

⁹Praise is not fitting on the lips of sinners since it does not come from the Lord. ¹⁰Praise must come from the wise man; so the Lord himself inspires it.

God made us free and responsible

• ¹¹Do not say, "It was God who made

• **15.11** This poem clearly declares that human beings are free and responsible. In his letter (1:13), James will recall the first sentence of this

paragraph. In Deuteronomy 30:15-20, Moses already told his people: "Life and death are before you; choose."

me sin." God does not cause what he hates.

^{Jas 1:13-14} ¹²Do not say, "He made me do wrong," for he has nothing to do with a sinner. ¹³The Lord hates all evil and those who fear him hate it as well.

¹⁴When he created man in the beginning, he left him free to make his own decisions. ¹⁵If you wish, you can keep the commandments and it is in your power to remain faithful.

¹⁶He has set fire and water before you; you stretch out your hand to whichever you prefer.

^{Dt 11:26-30:15-20} ¹⁷Life and death are set before man: whichever a man prefers will be given him.

¹⁸How magnificent is the wisdom of the Lord! He is powerful and all-seeing.

¹⁹His eyes are on those who fear him. He knows all the works of man.

²⁰He has commanded no one to be godless and has given no one permission to sin.

No happiness for the wicked

^{Pro 17:21-19:13} **16** ¹Do not long for a brood of worthless children, and take no joy in godless sons.

²However many you have, do not rejoice in them if they have no fear of God.

³Do not depend on their having a long life, or trust in their number, because one is better than a thousand and their death is preferable to their being godless.

^{Wis 3:19} ⁴A city can arise from one man who is prudent. Yet, even though the wicked become a great tribe, they will be destroyed. ⁵I have seen such things with my own eyes and my ears have heard of still greater things.

⁶Fire has come upon the meeting of sinners and God's wrath is kindled against rebellious people.

^{Gen 6:1-7} ⁷God did not pardon the leaders of old who rebelled in their pride of strength.

^{Gen 19:1-29} ⁸He did not spare the city where Lot lived; he detested their pride.

⁹He showed no pity on the people doomed to destruction; they were annihilated for their sins.

¹⁰In the same way, he dealt with the six hundred thousand men who, in the hardness of their hearts, had revolted.

¹¹Had there been only one stubborn man it would have been amazing if he had escaped unpunished, since mercy and anger belong to the Lord who is powerful both in forgiveness and in punishment. ^{Ex 34:6-7}

¹²His justice is as great as his mercy and he judges people by their deeds.

¹³Just as the sinner will not escape with his booty, the patience of the upright man will not go unrewarded.

¹⁴God will reward every act of mercy; each person will be treated according to his deeds.

¹⁷Do not say, "I will hide from the Lord; who will remember me up there? I will not be recognized in the midst of so many. What am I in the immensity of creation?"

¹⁸Look: the sky and the heavens above the sky, the sea and the earth tremble when he comes.

¹⁹The mountains, together with the foundations of the earth, are filled with dread before his sight.

²⁰But nobody thinks of such things: who is interested in the ways of God?

²¹Most of his works go unnoticed and man does not see where the storm originates. ^{Rom 11:33}

²²"Who tells us of the interventions of God? Who expects them? The Covenant is far away."

²³Such are the thoughts of the man of little sense, the foolish, dissolute man who loves his illusions.

²⁴Listen to me, my sons; acquire knowledge and apply your heart to my words. ²⁵I will expound the teaching step by step and impart knowledge carefully.

God the Creator

²⁶God created his works from the beginning and, as he made them, he assigned to each its place. ²⁷He arranged them for all time, their beginning and their unfolding. They do not

At times the Bible seems to say that God pushes a person to sin in order to punish him later (see Ex 10:27; 2 S 24:1); yet there is no doubt that humans are free. The Israelites were so convinced that nothing is done without God, that they had trouble explaining how someone can sin without this being God's will. Even though they lacked the words to express it, they always saw human beings as persons responsible for their actions.

• **16.26** Here we have an optimistic vision of humankind. God gave them power over all things on earth. This is why they must not give themselves to evil.

He put his own eye in their hearts (17:8): this

means conscience and intuitions of the spirit (see Pro 4: 23) which lets us see the work of God.

What is greatest in us is not reason which discusses and argues, but an intuition of the truth, which in a time seeks reasons to support it. When we forget about this intuition which is in fact the dynamic of scientific research, we are always capable of using reason in such a way that denies the evidence of the divine presence in the universe. It is this divine capacity that leads us to true wisdom.

Then, God had to reveal himself to us, so that this capacity to come to the truth would lead to sound knowledge, decisive in terms of the direction of our lives: in verses 11-14, the author refers to the gift of the Law to Israel through Moses.

hunger or grow weary and they never cease from their duties. ²⁸Not one has collided with its neighbor; they will never disobey his commands.

²⁹Afterwards, the Lord looked down on the earth and filled it with his riches.

³⁰He covered its surface with all kinds of living things which must return to it.

17 ¹The Lord created man from the earth and let him return to earth.

²He settled a fixed time for them and a set number of days, giving them power over everything on earth. ³He endowed them with a strength like his own, making them in his own image.

⁴He put the fear of them in all living things, thus they had mastery over the animals and birds. ⁶He endowed them with knowledge; he gave them tongue and eyes, ears and a mind to think with.

⁷He filled them with wisdom and knowledge; he taught them good and evil. ⁸He put his own eye in their hearts so they would understand the greatness of his works. ¹⁰They will praise his holy Name and ⁹relate the magnificence of his creation.

¹¹He gave them revealed knowledge as well and handed over to them the Law of life. ¹²He established an everlasting covenant with them and let them know his judgments.

¹³Human eyes saw the splendor of the Glory of God; their ears heard the grandeur of his voice. ¹⁴He said to them, "Keep yourselves from all wrongdoing," and to each of them he gave commands regarding his neighbor.

¹⁵Their conduct is always before the Lord; they cannot escape his sight.

¹⁷He has placed a leader over each nation, but Israel is the Lord's own portion.

¹⁹Their deeds are as clear as the sun to him, he always observes their ways.

²⁰Their misdeeds cannot be hidden from him, all their sins are before the Lord.

²²He holds a man's almsgiving dear as a priceless signet ring; he cherishes a good deed like the apple of his eye.

²³One day he will rise and reward them; he will place their prize on their heads.

²⁴He allows those who repent to return; he comforts those whose hopes are fading.

²⁵Be converted to the Lord and give up your sins, plead with him to lessen your offense.

²⁶Return to the Almighty, turn aside from wrongdoing and totally detest evil.

²⁷For who in the grave will praise the Almighty, if the living do not give him glory?

²⁸The dead man is as if he did not exist and cannot give praise; he who has life and health can praise the Lord.

²⁹How great is the mercy of the Lord and his forgiveness for those who turn to him!

³⁰Man cannot have everything in his power since he is not immortal.

³¹What is brighter than the sun? Yet it disappears. Man is no more than flesh and blood, yet he thinks of doing evil. ³²While the sun surveys the stars in the lofty sky, human beings remain dust and ashes.

The greatness of God

18 ¹He who lives forever created all without exception. ²The Lord alone will be found righteous.

⁴He has made no one powerful enough to proclaim his works; who then, will reveal his marvels?

⁵Who can calculate the power of his majesty and relate his great goodness?

⁶Nothing can be added to him or taken away; no one can fathom the wonders of the Lord.

⁷When man thinks he has finished, then he is only beginning and when he stops he is puzzled by it all.

⁸What is man? What is his purpose? What is the good in him and what the bad?

⁹Take the length of his life: a hundred years is long. ¹⁰Like a drop of water from the sea, a grain of sand, such are his few years compared with eternity.

¹¹For this reason, the Lord has patience with them and pours out his mercy on them.

¹²He sees and realizes how miserable their end is and so he heaps his forgiveness upon them.

¹³Man's mercy is for his neighbor but the compassion of the Lord reaches all people; he rebukes, corrects, teaches and brings back his flock like a shepherd. ¹⁴He takes pity on those who accept correction and eagerly seek his will.

¹⁵My son, do not mix your favors with unkind remarks or your gifts with bitter words.

¹⁶Does not dew temper the heat? So, too, a kind word is much better than a gift.

¹⁷The gift is not as valuable as the words which accompany it, but a generous man brings both.

Ps
104:
29

Gen
2:7
Ecl
3:20
12:7
Gen
1:28
6:3
Wis
9:2-3
Gen
1:27

Wis
13:1
Rom
1:19-
20

Dt
4:11-
12

Dt
7:6

Ps
115:
17

Ps
139:
17

Ps
90:10

¹⁸The fool intends to please but insults, a grudging man's gift makes the eyes smart.

¹⁹Find out the facts before you speak; look after yourself before you become ill.

²⁰Examine yourself before judgment comes and, on the day of God's visitation, you will be forgiven.

²¹Humble yourself before you become ill and show repentance for your sins.

²²Let nothing prevent you from fulfilling your vow on time; do not wait until death to put things in order.

^{Ecl 5:1-6} ²³Prepare yourself before praying and do not be one of those who tempt the Lord.

²⁴Keep in mind the justice of the last days; God will turn his face from you on the day of vengeance.

²⁵When you experience abundance, remember the days of famine; when you enjoy riches, think of poverty and misery.

²⁶Time slips by between morning and evening, all things pass quickly before the Lord.

²⁷The prudent man is cautious in everything; when sin abounds he will keep away from wrongdoing.

²⁸Every sensible man recognizes wisdom and respects those who obtain her.

²⁹Those who speak sensibly are wise, and marvelous sayings flow from them.

³⁰Do not let your passions rule you and restrain your desires.

³¹If you satisfy your lusts you will make yourself the laughingstock of your enemies.

³²Do not take pleasure in great luxury, lest you become impoverished by its expense.

³³Do not impoverish yourself by feasting on credit when you have nothing in your pocket.

19 ¹A drunken worker will never be rich; he who is careless in small things will soon fall.

²Wine and women corrupt the best of men; whoever frequents prostitutes loses all sense of shame. ³He will be the victim of grubs and worms and lose his life because of his stupidity.

When to speak and when to be silent

• ⁴He who is too quick to trust others reveals a shallow mind, whoever sins injures himself.

⁵One who revels in pleasure will be condemned, ⁶hating gossip will save one from evil.

⁷Never repeat what you are told and you will come to no harm.

⁸Report nothing to friend or foe and, unless silence is sinful, reveal it to no one. ⁹They will listen, distrust you and you will end up being hated.

¹⁰Have you heard something? Let it die with you, remain calm; you will not burst with it.

¹¹A fool suffers like a woman in childbirth over something he is told.

¹²Like an arrow stuck in his thigh, such is a secret inside a fool.

¹³Speak with your friend: perhaps he has done nothing and, if he has, he will not do it again.

¹⁴Speak with your friend: perhaps he has not said anything and, if he has, he will not say it again. ¹⁵Speak with your friend for there is much slander; do not believe all that you hear. ¹⁶Often, unintentional slips are made; for who has never sinned by evil tongues? ¹⁷Speak with your neighbor before you heap accusations on him; then leave room for the Law of the Almighty.

²⁰All wisdom is in the fear of the Lord; in all wisdom is the fulfillment of the Law.

²²Knowledge of evil is not wisdom, and prudence is not found in the advice of sinners.

²³There is a cleverness that is loathsome; it belongs to the evildoer who lacks wisdom.

²⁴Better to lack sense and be full of the fear of the Lord, than to be clever in violating the Law.

²⁵There is an ingenious shrewdness which carries out injustice; it is the art of dissimulating in order to do evil. ²⁶One pretends to be grieving and weighed down with burdens but in his heart there is only cunning; ²⁷he hides his face and pretends to be deaf, but as soon as you are distracted, he will take advantage of you.

²⁸One does not sin when the means are lacking; at the first opportunity, he will do wrong.

²⁹You can tell a man by his appearance; the responsible man can be recognized by his face.

³⁰A man's way of dressing reveals who he is, as does his manner of laughing and walking.

• **19.4** In many passages throughout the book of Sirach, as in Proverbs, the author shows that controlling one's tongue is a prerequisite for dominating our person and our destiny (James 3).

The stupid and foolish

20 • ¹There are rebukes which are inopportune; there is the silence of a sensible man.

²Better to rebuke than nurse a grudge.

³He who recognizes his fault diminishes its consequences.

⁴Like a eunuch desiring to violate a girl, such is he who uses force in pretending to be just.

⁵One keeps silent and is thought to be wise, the other makes himself hated because of his gossiping.

⁶One remains silent because he does not know how to reply; the other keeps quiet, waiting for the right moment.

⁷The wise man keeps silent until the right moment; the chatterer and fool speak out of turn.

⁸He who speaks too much makes himself hated; he who wishes to impose himself stirs up ill will.

⁹Man can turn his troubles to his advantage; a lucky chance can turn to loss.

¹⁰There is a type of generosity which will not reward you and another which will repay you double.

¹¹One is humiliated for having had honors; another is humiliated, and then lifts up his head.

¹²One buys much with little money; another pays seven times its value.

¹³The wise man makes himself lovable through his words alone, while the favors of the fool are lost.

¹⁴The fool's gift is not to your advantage; he gives with greedy eyes. ¹⁵He gives little but puts on a great outward appearance and exclaims for all to hear; he lends today and recovers the loan tomorrow; he is a despicable man.

¹⁶The fool says, "I have no friends, no one welcomes my favors. ¹⁷Those who eat my bread have evil tongues." How often they will mock him, and by how many!

¹⁸Better to stumble on the ground than to make a slip with the tongue; this is how easily the wicked fall.

¹⁹The rough-mannered man is like an indiscreet story that ill-mannered people tell out of time.

²⁰The proverb told by a fool will fail, since he does not speak it at an appropriate time.

²¹One keeps himself from sin because he does not have the means to act; when he gets the chance, he will have no remorse.

²²One loses his soul out of false shame; he loses himself for fear of what a foolish man thinks. ²³Out of false shame he wants to win

a friend; he gets an enemy, in fact, for nothing.

²⁴Lying is a shameful defect in a man; fools are used to it. Pro 13:5

²⁵Better to be a thief than a liar, yet both are heading for disaster.

²⁶Habitual lying is detestable; disgrace never leaves the liar. Pro 12:22

²⁷The wise man's words advance his cause; the shrewd man will gain favor with the powerful.

²⁸He who tills the earth increases his produce; he who pleases the great is forgiven his wickedness.

²⁹Presents and gifts blind a wise man's eyes; like a muzzle they silence the conscientious.

³⁰Concealed wisdom and hidden treasure: what good are these?

³¹The man who conceals his stupidity is better than one who conceals his wisdom.

21 ¹Have you sinned, my son? Do not do it again and beg forgiveness for your past sins.

²Escape from sin as you would from a snake; if you go near, it will bite you. Its teeth are like those of a lion and destroy human lives.

³All evil is like a double-edged sword which inflicts wounds past remedy. Pro 5:4

⁴Violence and pride bring down the rich; the arrogant man's house will be brought low.

⁵The poor man's prayer reaches the ears of the Lord and his judgment will not delay.

⁶Whoever hates correction goes the way of sinners; he who fears the Lord turns to him in his heart.

⁷The chatterer is known everywhere, but the discreet man recognizes his weakness.

⁸Building a house with borrowed money is like collecting stones for your own tomb.

⁹The meeting of sinners is like a pile of rope which will go up in fire and flames.

¹⁰The path of sinners is well paved but it ends in the fiery abyss. Mt 7:13

¹¹He who keeps the Law is in control of his thoughts; the fear of the Lord brings wisdom.

¹²The man who is not clever will never be taught; but there is a cleverness which leads to bitterness.

¹³The wise man's knowledge spreads out like a flood and his advice is like a spring.

¹⁴The fool's heart is like a broken glass which cannot hold any teaching.

¹⁵If an educated man hears a wise saying he values it and adds another. If the good-for-nothing hears it he is annoyed and tosses it over his shoulder.

• **20.1** We must avoid two errors: correction with anger, because we fall into excesses, and being resentful in silence, without letting off steam.

¹⁶The fool's talk weighs like a load while the wise man's words give rest.

¹⁷The assembly awaits the wise man's words; each one takes to heart whatever he says.

¹⁸The fool's wisdom is like a house in ruins, the knowledge of the fool amounts to nonsense.

The stupid and foolish

• ¹⁹As far as the fool is concerned, instruction is no more than handcuffs and fetters. ²⁰The idiot laughs aloud while the intelligent man merely smiles quietly.

²¹Instruction is like a golden ornament to the shrewd man, like a bracelet on his right arm.

²²The fool steps inside the house immediately, the experienced man would not be so bold. ²³The fool looks in through the door, the polite man remains outside. ²⁴Listening outside doors reveals a bad upbringing, the upright man would be ashamed of doing so.

²⁵Strangers speak thoughtlessly of everything, while wise men's words are carefully weighed. ²⁶The heart of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of the wise is in their heart.

²⁷When the godless man curses his opponent, the curse descends on himself. ²⁸The slanderer taints himself and makes himself hated by all around him.

22 ¹The idler is like a dirty stone, his disgrace is laughed at.

²The idler is like a heap of dung, all who touch it shake it off their hands.

³Badly brought up sons are the shame of their father, and daughters, a humiliation.

⁴A sensible daughter is a treasure to her husband, but the disgraceful one is a burden to her father.

⁵A shameless daughter brings disgrace on her father as well as her husband; both hate her.

⁶The untimely word is like music at a funeral but beating and correction guided by wisdom are never out of place.

⁹Teaching a fool is like gluing a broken jar,

it is easier to awaken a man from deep sleep.

¹⁰Reasoning with a fool is like reasoning with a drowsy man; in the end, he will ask you, "What is it all about?"

¹¹Weep for the dead man since the light has deserted him, weep for the fool because understanding has deserted him.

Cry less for the dead man; he has found his rest but the fool's life is worse than death.

¹²Mourning the dead lasts seven days, but it lasts a lifetime for the fool and godless man.

¹³Do not waste words on the fool or go with the stupid man; beware of him lest he bring you trouble and his contact leave you contaminated. Stay away from him if you want rest and do not want to be worn out by his requests.

¹⁴What is heavier than lead? What is its name but "Fool"?

¹⁵Sand, salt and a load of iron are easier to bear than a fool.

¹⁶The wooden joint in a building is not dislodged by an earthquake; a determined heart, after careful reflection, will not be moved when crises come.

¹⁷A decision based on serious reflection stands like plaster on a firm wall.

¹⁸Stakes set on a height do not resist the wind; the fool's heart, frightened by his own imaginings, cannot withstand fear.

¹⁹Striking the eye brings tears; if you strike the heart, lucidity will come forth.

²⁰Whoever throws stones at birds scares them off; reproach a friend and you will kill the friendship.

²¹If you have drawn your sword against a friend, do not despair, it can be put back; ²²if you have spoken harshly to a friend, do not fear, reconciliation is possible; but in the event of insult, contempt, betrayal of a confidence or treacherous blow, any friend would desert you.

²³Win your neighbor's confidence when he is poor so that you may enjoy his goods with him when he grows rich; be loyal in his hour of trouble and you will win, in the end, a share in his inheritance.

²⁴Smoke and fumes precede the fire; so, too, insults herald the blows.

²⁵I will not be ashamed of protecting a friend nor will I avoid him; ²⁶if evil comes to me from him, all who hear of it will beware of him.

²⁷Who will put a guard on my mouth and effectively lock up my lips to prevent me from sinning and my tongue from hastening my ruin?

Ps
141:3

• **21.19** The politeness of well-educated people shows their noble spirit. When we are truly wise, we instinctively discover the rules of

good and noble conduct. As Saint Francis de Sales used to say: "Courtesy is the precious flower of charity."

23 • ¹O Lord, Father and master of my life, do not abandon me to the thoughtless words of my lips or allow me to fall because of them.

^{Ps} ^{141:5} ²Who will deal out punishment to my thoughts and apply the discipline of wisdom to my heart? ³Let them not be indulgent at my sins or the mistakes of my mind, lest my errors increase and sins multiply, and I fall into the hands of my enemies, to the joy of my foes.

⁴Lord, Father and God of my life, do not allow me to become haughty; ⁵keep greed far away from me.

⁶Do not let lust and lechery take hold of me; do not deliver me to filthy passions.

⁷Children, learn how to control your language; if you are able to watch over it, you will not be taken by surprise.

⁸The sinner will be caught in his own words, as happens to the proud man and to him who curses.

^{Mt} ^{5:34} ^{Jas} ^{5:12} ⁹Do not get used to swearing, taking the name of the Holy One.

¹⁰For, just as the slave who is constantly watched will not escape without blows so you, also, will not be found guiltless after constantly calling upon his name.

¹¹The man who swears habitually will be found full of sins, and disgrace will not depart from his house. If he fails to keep his oath due to carelessness, punishment will descend upon him; if he fails knowingly, his sin is double and if he has sworn falsely, he will not be forgiven; in any case, his house will be filled with disasters.

About impurity and adultery

• ¹²There is a way of talking which deserves death; let it not be used by Jacob's descendants. Virtuous people keep far away from it and do not wallow in sin.

¹³Do not accustom your mouth to foul language for it will be sinful talk.

¹⁴Remember your father and mother when you are sitting in the company of the great, lest you forget yourself in their presence and act like a fool. Then you would wish you had never been born, and curse the day of your birth.

¹⁵A man used to indecent talk will never be reformed in his lifetime.

¹⁶Two kinds of people multiply sins and a third attracts the Lord's anger:

A blazing passion which burns like fire will not be extinguished until it burns itself up.

A man who seeks pleasure from his own body, he will not give up until he catches fire; ¹⁷to the indecent man, all food tastes sweet and he will not be satisfied until death.

¹⁸The man unfaithful to the marriage bed who thinks like this, "Who sees me? Darkness surrounds me, the walls hide me; nobody can see me. Why should I worry? The Almighty will not take note of my faults."

¹⁹He fears the scrutiny of men and does not realize that the Lord's eyes are a thousand times brighter than the sun, that they watch the conduct of all men and penetrate into the most secret corners. ²⁰All things were present to him before they were created and so will they be after their end.

²¹This man will be punished in view of the whole city, he will be caught when he least expects it.

²²In the same way, the woman who is unfaithful to her husband and gives him an heir by another man will be pun-

• **23.1** Prayer of the youth who discovers his weakness when faced with life's temptations. Prayer of the adult person who has experienced that evil is deeply-rooted in his heart. An invitation to parents to look after their children's training.

The sin of the tongue (or the lips) means, first of all, proud words and proud projects. This is always the beginning of all the other sins.

• 12. Ben Sira speaks of impurity in the traditional sense: sin against chastity.

– In 23:12-15, he speaks of vulgar words and malicious conversations. As Jesus says in Matthew 12:34: *the mouth speaks of what fills the heart.*

– 23:16-21 refers to extramarital relationships.

– 23:22-23 deals with an adulterous woman, though it can also be applied to the adulterous man: 1) it is a sin against God; 2) it is a sin against the spouse; 3) it is a sin against the family's honor.

ished. ²³First, she has disobeyed the Law of the Almighty. Secondly, she has sinned against her husband and thirdly, she is tainted with adultery, for she has had children by another man.

²⁴She will be taken before the assembly and questioned about her children. ²⁵The children will not be able to take root; their branches will not bear fruit. ²⁶She will leave behind a cursed memory and her shame will never be blotted out.

²⁷People who have seen her will know that nothing matters more than the fear of the Lord and nothing is sweeter than fulfilling his commands.

The hymn of wisdom

Job
28
Pro
1:20
8
9:1-6
Bar
3:9

24 • ¹Listen to wisdom singing her own praises and extolling herself in the midst of her people. ²See, she opens her mouth in the assembly of the Most High, she glories in herself before the Almighty.

Ex
13:21

³I came out from the mouth of God and covered the face of the earth like a mist; although ⁴my dwelling place is in the highest heavens, my throne is within a pillar of cloud.

⁵I alone have seen and understood the vault of the skies and strolled through the depths of the abyss, ⁶taking possession of the raging sea and of the earth as well, with all its peoples and nations.

⁷In all of these, I looked for a place to

rest; in which territory would I set up my abode?

⁸Then the creator of the universe commanded me, he who created me assigned the place of my rest, "Pitch your tent in Jacob; Israel will be your homeland."

Pro
8:27
Ps
132:8

⁹He created me from the beginning, before time began, and I will never cease to be, ¹⁰I celebrate in his presence the liturgy of his Holy Dwelling and this is why I settled in Zion.

¹¹The Lord let me rest in his beloved city and Jerusalem is the heart of my kingdom. ¹²I took root in the people God has favored, in the land of the Lord, in their inheritance.

¹³I grew like a cedar in Lebanon, as the cypress on Mount Hermon.

¹⁴I grew like the palm trees in Engedi and the rosebuds of Jericho; as a magnificent olive on the plains and like a plane tree I grew tall.

¹⁵I poured out my perfume like a fragrant flower, like exquisite myrrh I have given choice scent; like fragrant plants and as the smoke of incense which burns in the Sanctuary of God.

¹⁶I spread out my branches like a vine; these are Glory and Grace. ¹⁷As a vine I put out graceful shoots and my blossoms are riches and glory.

¹⁹Come to me, you who desire me and take your fill of my fruits. ²⁰To experience me is sweeter than honey

Ps
19:11

• **24.1** This poem attributed to the Wisdom of God is similar to those in Proverbs 8 and Wisdom 7. What is emphasized here is the presence of Wisdom in God's people.

Two events from sacred history help us understand this presence of God himself through his Wisdom:

– the *cloud* which accompanied the Hebrews in the desert (see Ex 13:21);

– the *Tent* which served as sanctuary in the desert (see Ex 25).

The first image teaches us that God's glory so surpasses us, that we can only know something of God when he hides his glory in the cloud. The second image teaches us that the real dwelling of God is not something material that we call "heaven"; God dwells in this world in a mysterious and provisional way, as in a tent.

The Wisdom of God rules the universe and all the nations. It has inspired the sages and the religions of all countries and yet it came in a special way to Israel, which is its dwelling and inheritance. This prepares us for what John says in his Gospel 1:3 and 1:9: the Wisdom of God is Christ, and the people through whom it will be present is the Church.

Catholic liturgy has used this poem for the feasts of the Virgin Mary, because the words fit the role that God gave her in the Church. On the day of the Annunciation, she received the Wisdom in the name of all. This is why she has been granted to be the first of God's people and the mother of all others.

The last verses return to practical things: the Wisdom of God is found especially in the Law, that is, in the book of his words.

and to possess me sweeter than any honeycomb. ^{Jn 4:13 6:35} ²¹Those who eat me will hunger still; those who drink me will thirst for more. ²²Those who obey me will not be put to shame; those who serve me will not fall into sin.

^{Dt 33:4} ²³All this is in the Bible, the Testament of the Most High God, the book of the Law which Moses entrusted to us, the inheritance of the congregations of Israel.

^{Jos 3:15} ²⁵This Law feeds the springs of wisdom, like the Pishon or Tigris in the season of fruit. ²⁶Waters overflowing with understanding come from it, as from the Euphrates and Jordan at harvest time; ²⁷the floods of instruction run like the Nile or the Gihon in time of vintage.

²⁸He who comes first is unable to grasp her fully and neither will the last exhaust her. ²⁹For her thoughts are wider than the sea and her designs, deeper than the abyss.

I have not worked for myself alone

• ³⁰I, for my part, went forth like a brook from a river, a stream diverted into a delightful garden. ^{Ezk 47:1-12} ³¹I thought, "Let me irrigate my orchard and water my flowers." But now my brook has grown into a river and the river, into a sea.

³²May my teaching shine forth like the dawn; may I carry its light to far-away places. ³³I will spread my teaching like a prophecy and leave it to future generations.

³⁴See, all of you, that I have not worked for myself alone but for all those who seek wisdom.

25 ¹Three things delight me and are delightful to God and people: agreement between brothers, friendship between neighbors, and perfect harmony between husband and wife.

²There are three kinds of persons whom I detest and whose existence I cast away from me: a poor man full of pride, a rich man who is a liar, and an adulterous old man who is a fool.

³If you have saved nothing in your youth, what will you have in old age?

⁴What a great thing is old age with sound judgment, an old man who can counsel!

⁵What a great thing is wisdom in those who are old, or understanding and prudence in the great.

⁶Rich experience is the crown of the old, their pride is the fear of the Lord.

⁷I think of nine things which I consider happy and a tenth to which I will also refer: the man who finds his happiness in his children; the man who sees the ruin of his enemies in his lifetime. ⁸Happy the man who lives with a sensible wife; he who does not plow with a donkey and ox; he who has done no wrong in speech; he who does not serve an unworthy master. ⁹Happy he who has acquired good sense and is able to speak before an attentive audience! ¹⁰Great is he who has gained wisdom, but no one surpasses the man who fears the Lord.

¹¹Since the fear of the Lord excels everything, who can compare with the one who possesses it?

¹³Any wound rather than the wound of the heart; any wickedness rather than the wickedness of a woman; ¹⁴any sadness rather than that inflicted by an enemy; any vengeance rather than the vengeance of a foe.

¹⁵There is no poison worse than a snake's venom, there is no rage worse than an enemy's.

¹⁶Better to live with a lion and a snake than to share a house with a wicked woman.

¹⁷Wickedness disfigures a woman's appearance, it saddens the face, making her look like a bear.

¹⁸When her husband dines with his neighbor, he sighs bitterly, in spite of himself.

¹⁹All wickedness is nothing compared with a woman's wickedness. Let her lot be that of a sinner!

²⁰As a sandhill is to an old man's feet, so is the talkative woman to her quiet husband. ²¹Do not be fooled by a woman's beauty or fall in love with her.

²²Expect anger, reproach and plenty of shame when the wife rules the husband.

²³Dejected spirits, a sad face and unseen wounds, these are the work of a wicked woman. Idle hands and unsteady knees are

• 30. Ben Sira is a sage. After years of fidelity in his duty as father of a family, counselor and businessman, he marvels at all that he has received from divine Wisdom. He is well aware

that his work is of exceptional importance for many believers in the future, and he gives thanks to God. *The All-powerful has done great things for me* (Lk 1:49).

found when a wife brings her husband no happiness.

²⁴For sin began with woman and we all die because of the inheritance of the congregations of Israel.

^{1Tim}^{2:14} ²⁵Do not let water leak out or give free rein to a wicked woman. ²⁶If she does not do as you tell her, get rid of her.

^{Pro}^{31:10} **26** • ¹Happy the husband of a good wife, the number of his days will be doubled. ²A woman of character is her husband's joy, he will live in peace all the years of his life.

³A good wife is the best of gifts, reserved for those who fear the Lord; ⁴rich or poor, he will have a serene heart and a happy face.

⁵Three things disturb me and a fourth frightens me: neighborhood gossip, a rioting mob, a false accusation, all these are worse than death. ⁶But the woman jealous of another woman brings heartbreak, her tongue lashes out at everyone.

^{Mt}^{7:16} ⁷A bad wife is like a badly fixed yoke; taking her is like grasping a scorpion.

⁸A drunken wife causes scandal; her disgrace will not remain hidden.

⁹A licentious woman is noticed by her secretive looks and recognized by her lively eyes. ¹⁰Keep a firm eye on a defiant daughter, so that she may not take advantage of some occasion.

¹¹Guard against the provocative woman and do not be surprised if she wishes to drag you into disgrace.

¹²She opens her mouth like a thirsty traveler to drink any water coming her way; she sits by any pole and opens her quiver to every arrow.

^{Ecl}^{7:3-6} ¹³A wife's grace gladdens her husband and her prudence refreshes his body. ¹⁴A wife who knows how to be silent is a gift from the Lord; the well-trained wife is invaluable. ¹⁵A modest wife is a favor among favors; the chaste wife is priceless.

¹⁶Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord, such is the enchantment of a good wife in a well-kept house.

¹⁷Like the light which shines from the sacred lampstand, such is a beautiful face in a well-shaped body. ¹⁸Like pillars of gold on a silver base, such are beautiful legs on sturdy feet. ()

²⁸There are two things which grieve me and a third which makes me angry: a warrior who suffers want; intelligent men who are treated contemptuously; a man who turns from virtue to sin. The Lord singles this man out to strike him down.

²⁹The merchant can barely avoid greed; the shopkeeper cannot remain sinless.

27 ¹Many sin for love of gain, he who desires riches silences his conscience.

²Just as the stake is settled between two stones, so sin wedges itself between buying and selling. ³The house of him who does not keep himself firmly in the fear of the Lord will soon be knocked to the ground.

⁴When a sieve is shaken the dirt falls through; so, too, the defects of a man are seen when he begins to speak.

⁵The kiln tests the potter's handiwork; a man is tested by his conversation.

⁶A well-tended tree is shown by its fruits so a man's feelings can be detected in what he says.

⁷Praise no one before he has spoken, since this is the acid test.

⁸If you pursue righteousness, you will achieve it and wear it like a festive garment.

⁹Birds associate with their own kind, so, too, does truth greet those who are faithful.

¹⁰The lion lurks in wait for its prey; so, too, does sin lie in wait for those who do wrong.

¹¹The wise man's conversation follows wisdom all the time. In contrast, the fool changes like the moon.

¹²When among fools, be sparing with your time; among thoughtful people, be lavish with it. ¹³The conversation of fools is hateful, their laughter is coarse and raucous.

¹⁴No one can bear those who swear all the time. Their quarrels make you cover your ears.

¹⁵Blood is spilt when proud men quarrel and their insults are painful to the ear.

¹⁶He who betrays a secret is no longer trusted; he will no longer find reliable friends.

¹⁷Love your friend and be loyal; if you have revealed his secrets, go with him no longer.

• **26.1** Ben Sira praises the perfect woman from a moral and physical viewpoint. With regard to this it would be necessary to show how the modern urban society is destructive of all those who are not in an independent situation.

It is true for both man and woman, even if the latter does not know the slavery and endemic misery of Ben Sira's time. Today's cities offer an immense field of action for Christian family groups.

¹⁸It is like having lost some of your relatives: his friendship to you has died.

¹⁹Like a bird, you have let your friend go, you will not get him back. When you open your hand, the bird flies off; ²⁰do not pursue him: he is far away and has fled like a gazelle from the snare. ²¹For a wound can be banded and an insult forgiven, but if you betray a secret there is no hope.

²²The man who winks an eye is plotting evil, no one can persuade him to change.

²³He is all sweetness to your face, praising your words, but behind your back he speaks differently and twists your words.

²⁴I hate many things but nothing more than this man; the Lord, also, hates and curses him.

²⁵When one tosses a stone in the air it falls back on his head; whoever deals a treacherous blow, wounds himself.

²⁶He who digs a pit will fall into it; he who sets a snare will be caught in it.

²⁷If you do evil, evil will befall you and you will not know from where it comes.

²⁸The proud man makes use of mockery and insults, but vengeance lies in wait for him like a lion.

²⁹Those who gloat over the downfall of good men will fall into the snare; suffering will consume them before they die.

³⁰Grudge and wrath, these also are abominations in which sinful people excel.

Don't bear grudges

28 ¹He who demands revenge will suffer the vengeance of the Lord who keeps a strict account of his sins.

²Forgive the mistakes of your neighbor and you may ask that your sins be forgiven.

³If a man bears resentment against another, how can he ask God for healing? ⁴If he has no compassion on others, how can he pray for forgiveness for his sins? ⁵As long as he, mere flesh, is resentful, who will obtain his pardon?

⁶Remember your end and give up hatred; keep in mind your final corruption in the grave and keep the commandments. ⁷Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

⁸Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

⁹Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁰Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹¹Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹²Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹³Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁴Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁵Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁶Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁷Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁸Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

¹⁹Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

²⁰Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

²¹Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

²²Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

²³Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

²⁴Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

²⁵Remember the commandments and do not bear grudges against your neighbor. Remember the

covenant with the Most High and overlook the offense.

⁸Refrain from quarreling and you will avoid sin; the hot-headed man sparks off disputes.

⁹The sinner causes trouble between friends, sowing discord among peaceful people.

¹⁰Fire burns when fuel is thrown on it; stubbornness drags out the discussion.

The more powerful the man, the greater his rage; his anger will be in proportion to his riches.

¹¹A sudden quarrel sparks off a fire; a hasty dispute leads to bloodshed.

¹²Blow on a spark and it ignites; spit on it and it dies out: both come from your mouth.

¹³Cursed be the gossip with his spiteful tongue. He has destroyed many who lived peacefully. ¹⁴The vicious tongue has demolished many and hounded them from nation to nation. It has ruined powerful cities and laid low great households.

¹⁵The vicious tongue has cast out wives who were beyond reproach, depriving them of the fruit of their work. ¹⁶Whoever listens to it will never find rest or be able to live in peace.

¹⁷The whip leaves a mark but the lash of the tongue shatters bones.

¹⁸Many have been felled by the sword but many more have perished by the tongue.

¹⁹Happy he who has escaped it and has not been exposed to its fury, who has not been weighed down by its yoke or been tied up in its chains.

²⁰For it is a yoke of iron and its chains are bronze. ²¹It brings a miserable death. Actual death is better! ²²But it will not tyrannize those who keep faith, it will not consume their soul.

²³Those who desert the Lord will be its victims, it will burn them without being burnt up itself; it will lunge at them like a lion, and rip them apart like a leopard.

²⁴Look, you put a fence around your property and protect your silver and gold. ²⁵In the same way, make weights and scales for your words and put a bolted door at your mouth.

²⁶Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

²⁷Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

²⁸Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

²⁹Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁰Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³¹Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³²Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³³Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁴Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁵Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁶Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁷Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁸Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

³⁹Beware of a slip of the tongue when you speak, lest you fall in front of those who lie in wait for you.

Jas
3:1-
12

• **29.1** 29:2-6, this deals with those who ask for loans and do not pay back.

Alms and, in a broader sense, all that we do for

others without charge is the best assurance against misfortune. On this subject see Tobit 4:9 and Luke 16:9.

³Keep your word, remain faithful and you will find what you need on every occasion.

⁴Many think of a loan as a quick deal and put those who help them in a fix.

⁵The moment they receive it, they kiss the hand of the moneylender and humble themselves in deference to his wealth. But on the day repayment is due, they prolong the time, repay with reproaches and blame the current situation.

⁶If they can repay, they pay barely half and the moneylender will be grateful for that much. They have robbed him of his money and, moreover, he has gained enemies, for they repay him with curses and insults and reproaches instead of gratitude.

^{Tb} ^{12:8-9} ^{Mt} ^{6:19-21} ^{19:21} ⁷Many a good person refuses to lend, not for any malicious reason: he is afraid of being cheated without cause.

⁸Nevertheless, be kind to those who have fallen on hard times, do not keep them waiting for your help.

⁹For the commandments' sake, help the poor man; see his need and do not turn him away empty-handed.

^{Jas} ^{5:3} ¹⁰Better to spend your money on a brother or friend than to let it rust under a stone, to your discredit.

¹¹Use your money according to the commandments of the Most High and you will find it more valuable than gold.

^{Tb} ^{4:9-11} ^{Lk} ^{16:9} ¹²Fill your barns with good deeds and these will rescue you from misfortune.

¹³They will fight for you against your enemy better than any strong shield and mighty spear.

¹⁴A good man goes surety for his neighbor; the scoundrel leaves him to his fate.

¹⁵Do not forget the favors of your guarantor: he has risked his life for you.

¹⁶The sinner wastes his guarantor's money; the ungrateful man forgets the one who saved him. ¹⁷Acting as guarantor has ruined many a good man and has tossed him like the waves of the sea. ¹⁸It has banished powerful men and forced them to wander among foreign nations.

¹⁹The sinner is anxious to be a guarantor but he will be condemned as a loan shark.

²⁰Help your neighbor as far as you can but beware of falling into the same plight.

²¹Some things you cannot live without: water, bread, clothes and a house for shelter.

²²Better a poor man's life in his wooden shack than lavish banquets in another man's house.

²³Be content with whatever you have, be it great or small; this is better than to go elsewhere and be reproached as an outsider.

²⁴It is hard to go from house to house; ²⁵when you are an outsider, do not risk opening your mouth. You will eat and drink without much welcome and, on top of that, hear bitter remarks: ²⁶"Come, stranger, set the table and whatever you have, give it to me to eat."

²⁷"Be off, stranger, make room for somebody more important; my brother is coming to see me, I need the house."

²⁸It is hard for a good man to have hospitality denied him and to be treated like a debtor.

Correct your child

30 • ¹The man who loves his son makes use of the rod; later on he will be proud of him. ²The man who corrects his son will reap the benefit and be proud of him among his acquaintances. ³By instructing his son he makes his enemy envious; he will be well pleased with him in the company of his friends.

⁴If such a father dies it is as if he had not died, for he leaves behind him another man like himself. ⁵In life he had the joy of his company and he is not sorrowful when death comes.

⁶He leaves it to his family to take revenge on his enemies and to return gifts to his friends.

⁷The man who coddles his son will be constantly bandaging his wounds; at his every cry he will be troubled.

⁸Just as a badly broken-in horse cannot be mounted, so a spoiled son becomes insolent. ⁹Pamper your child and later he will terrify you; play with him and he will bring you sorrow.

¹⁰Do not laugh at him lest you have

• **30.1** Here Ben Sira touches a point on which the destiny of a people depends. Everyone complains that there are few responsible people. We experience good intentions everywhere, but where are the people who can persevere in doing good and carry out their good intentions? The major cause of a lack of maturity in willpower is found in the total lack of parental authority. A three-month-old baby knows that if he keeps crying he will force the mother to pick him up.

When he is two years old, a child knows how to threaten, scream, have a tantrum, with the assurance that, in the end, his parents will give in: "What can we do? The child does not want it."

Ben Sira knows that only children who are subject to discipline and whose whims are not satisfied by their parents, only they will come to real freedom, because they are able to persevere in doing good.

Christianity, of course, is not founded on the

to suffer and grind your teeth. ¹¹Do not let him be independent as a child, ¹²but rather bruise his ribs while he is still young, lest he grow stubborn and refuse to obey.

¹³Be strict with your son and persevere in this, so as not to suffer because of his misconduct.

¹⁴Better a poor man healthy and fit, than a rich man tormented in body.

¹⁵Health and vigor are worth more than gold, a robust body, more than great wealth.

¹⁶No riches are preferable to physical well-being, and no joy is greater than a cheerful heart.

^{Job 7:13} ¹⁷Death is better than a wretched life and eternal rest preferable to lasting sickness.

¹⁸Dishes of food placed on an empty tomb are like good things offered to one who cannot eat.

¹⁹What good is a sacrifice offered to an idol? It can neither eat nor smell. So is it with the one whom the Lord has stricken; ²⁰he sees with his eyes and groans, like a eunuch embracing a virgin and sighing.

²¹Do not give yourself over to sadness or torment yourself with brooding.

²²Joy of heart is life to a man; gladness gives him length of days.

²³Delight your soul and console your heart; chase sorrow far away, for sorrow has destroyed many and never did good to anyone.

²⁴Jealousy and anger shorten your life; worry makes you old before the time.

^{Pro 15:15} ²⁵A cheerful and kindly person will have a good appetite and enjoy his food.

31 ¹The sleeplessness that wealth brings makes a man lose weight; his worries drive sleep away.

²The cares of the day prevent sleep; in the same way, serious illness makes rest impossible.

Happy the one who doesn't go after gold

³The rich man toils to increase his wealth and then sits back and lives in luxury; ⁴the poor man toils to survive and is in want as soon as he leaves off.

⁵He who loves gold cannot be right-

eous; whoever runs after gain will be led astray. ⁶Many have been ruined because of gold; disgrace went to meet them.

⁷Gold is a snare for those who are possessed by love of it. The senseless will be caught in it.

⁸Happy is the rich man who has not sinned in this way and has not gone after gold! ⁹Who is he? Let us say: Fortunate man! For he has given a wonderful example.

¹⁰Who has been tested in this and found perfect? He has reason to be proud. Who could have sinned but resisted, who could have done wrong and did not do it? ¹¹His fortune is firmly established and the assembly will acknowledge his generosity.

Dinner parties

• ¹²Are you seated at a lavish banquet? Don't be over-ready to eat and don't say, "What a feast!"

¹³Remember that a greedy eye is an evil thing. What is worse than such an eye? That is why it was condemned to weep.

¹⁴Do not stretch out your hand to everything you see or be quick in reaching for a dish. ¹⁵Judge the needs of your fellow guest by your own and in all things act prudently.

¹⁶Eat what is set before you like an educated person and don't be a glutton, lest you be detested.

¹⁷Like a well-mannered man, be the first to stop; don't be voracious if you are to avoid difficulties. ¹⁸If important people are present, do not be the first to serve yourself.

¹⁹A little is sufficient for a well-bred person; your breathing moreover will be easier when you go to bed. ²⁰Healthy sleeping is for the moderate eater. He rises early and feels fit! Sleeplessness and stomach trouble attend the overindulgent. ²¹If you are obliged to eat too much, go off and vomit and you will be at ease.

²²Listen to me, my friend, and do not neglect what I say; in the end you will see the truth of it. Be moderate in all that you do and you will be without illness.

observance of law. Yet, though every believer may experience something of the "spirit," we will have trouble reaping its fruits if we are not disciplined.

• **31.12** The Bible does not condemn the use of wine: it was made for our delight (see Ps

104:15). Only those consecrated as nazirs abstain from wine. The New Testament will not condemn wine either: such is the meaning of Jesus' first miracle in Cana (Jn 2).

Nevertheless, the books of Wisdom have many warnings against drunkenness. See what Paul has to say in Eph 5:18 and 1 Cor 5:11.

²³A generous host is appreciated: he is justly praised, ²⁴but everyone will complain about a stingy host and their complaints will be justified.

²⁵Do not try to show how much wine you can take, for wine has been the ruin of many. ²⁶As the furnace tests the temper of steel, so wine proves hearts and makes proud men quarrel.

^{1Tim} ^{5:23} ²⁷Wine is life for man if taken in moderation. What is life without wine? ²⁸Wine makes for a glad heart and a cheerful mind, if taken moderately and at the right time. ²⁹But if taken to excess it brings bitterness of soul, excitement and a fumbling step.

³⁰Drunkenness inflames the anger of a stupid person to the point of scandal. It reduces his strength and brings him blows. ³¹Do not reproach a neighbor during a wine feast, and don't look down on him when he is merry; do not speak harshly to him or annoy him by asking him to settle a debt.

32 ¹Have you been chosen to preside at a party? Don't give yourself airs! Just be like everyone else in the group; see to their needs and then sit down. ²When you have done what you should, take your place and enjoy yourself with the others. They will congratulate you for a job well done.

³If you are older, speak as befits your age, but know what you are talking about and do not interrupt the music.

⁴If there is a concert, refrain from speaking; it is not the time for playing the wise man. ⁵A musical concert at a wine banquet is like a ruby set in gold. ⁶As an emerald signet set in a work of gold, so is the music with good wine.

⁷If you are young, speak if you have to, but not more than twice and only if requested. ⁸Keep to the point and say it all in a few words. Show that you are well informed but not over-anxious to speak.

⁹Do not try to be the equal of eminent people and do not chat when someone else is speaking.

¹⁰As lightning goes before thunder, the reputation of a modest man goes before him.

¹¹Leave the party at the right time and do not be slow about it; no lingering, go straight home!

¹²There you may relax and do as you please, but do not sin by bragging.

¹³And thank your Creator for the enjoyment of all good things.

¹⁴Whoever fears the Lord will accept his correction, and those who rise at dawn will win his favor.

¹⁵The man who follows his Law will be nourished by it, but the hypocrite will find it a stumbling block.

¹⁶Those who fear the Lord will please him and their good deeds will shine as a light.

¹⁷The sinner refuses correction and excuses himself for doing what he wants.

¹⁸A person of judgment reflects beforehand; the stubborn and proud man goes ahead without worrying about anything.

¹⁹Never act without first reflecting, and you will have no regrets.

²⁰Do not go along a rough road lest you stumble on stones. ²¹And do not be too sure of your step on a smooth path. ²²Beware even of your own children.

²³Be careful in whatever you do. In so doing you keep the commandments.

²⁴Those who trust in the Law will keep the commandments and those who obey the Lord will come to no harm.

33 ¹Evil will not go to meet the one who fears the Lord; if he is in danger he will be rescued.

²The wise man never departs from the Law; he who only pretends to keep it is like a storm-tossed boat.

³An intelligent man has faith in the Law, which for him is as trustworthy as an oracle.

⁴If you want people to listen to you, prepare what you have to say; recall what you have learned before you give an answer. ⁵A cart wheel! That is what the feelings of a fool are like. His mind resembles a turning axle.

⁶A mocking friend is like a wild horse, neighing when anyone rides him.

⁷Why is one day holier than another, when the light of the sun shines on every day of the year? ⁸By the Lord's decision they were made different; he arranged the different seasons and feasts.

⁹Some of these he chose to make holy, others he made ordinary days. ¹⁰All human beings come from clay just as Adam himself was formed. ¹¹In the fullness of his wisdom the Lord made each one unique and diversified his conditions.

¹²Some he made holy, keeping them near to himself. Others he cursed and humiliated, removing them from where they were.

¹³As clay in the hand of the potter to be molded as he pleases, so are all in the hands of the Creator to be dealt with as he sees fit.

¹⁴Good is the opposite of evil, and life, of death, and the sinner is the opposite of the upright. ¹⁵Consider all the works of the Most High and you will see how they go in pairs, by opposites.

¹⁶As for me I have been the last to keep watch, like a gleaner following the grape-pickers. ¹⁷By the blessing of the Lord I have taken the lead and like the grape-picker I have filled the winepress. ¹⁸Note that not only for myself have I toiled, but for all who seek instruction. ¹⁹Hear me, rulers of the people, leaders of the assembly hear!

²⁰Neither to son, wife, brother nor friend give power over yourself during your life. Do

1S
14:41
1Mac
3:48

1S
2:6-8
Lk
1:51-
53
Is
29:16
Rom
9:21

4224-
25
Ecl
3:1-8

not give your property to another in case you regret it and have to beg them to return it.

²¹ As long as you live and there is breath in you, do not give power over yourself to anyone. ²² It is preferable for your children to be dependent on you, than that you be obliged to depend on them. ²³ Be master of all that you do; let not others stain your reputation.

²⁴ Wait until the end of your days, until death is near, to distribute your inheritance.

Your slaves

Pro ²⁵ Fodder, stick and burdens are for the donkey; bread, correction and work are for the slave.

²⁶ Put your slave to work and you will have peace. Let him take it easy and he will want to be free. ²⁷ Yoke and harness will bow the neck. For a criminal slave there are torture and the stocks.

²⁸ Send him to work or he will be idle, and idleness teaches much evil. ²⁹ Give him work that is appropriate for him; if he does not obey, put his feet in chains.

³⁰ But do not be over-demanding with anyone and do nothing without discernment.

³¹ You have a slave? Let him be like you; for you bought him through blood.

³² You have a slave? Treat him like a brother. You need him as you need yourself.

³³ If you ill-treat him and he escapes, where will you go to look for him?

Dreams

34 ¹ The foolish are deceived by vain and false hopes; dreams give them wings.

² To rely on dreams is like grasping a shadow or chasing the wind. ³ What you see in dreams are only reflections: a person sees his own image.

Job ⁴ What clean thing can come from what is unclean? What truth comes from what is false? ⁵ Divinations, omens and dreams are empty like the fantasies of a woman in labor.

Ecl ⁶ Unless they come as messengers of the Most High, do not pay attention to them. ⁷ For dreams have led many people astray. Those who hoped in them have fallen.

• **34.1** Previously in Israel, dreams were very important. Here we have a reaction against dreams. Without denying that, in some cases, God can guide or warn the believer through a dream, the author teaches that we must not be guided by dreams: the sure way is to fulfill God's

⁸ Not so the Law, which never fails but comes true. Wisdom from the truthful lips of God is the highest truth.

⁹ One who has traveled knows a great deal, and a man of wide experience will talk soundly. ¹⁰ A person who has not had trials knows very little. But the traveled man is competent in many ways. ¹¹ I have made many discoveries on my travels and understood more than I can express. ¹² I have often been in danger of death but have been saved thanks to my experience.

¹³ The spirit of those who fear the Lord will live, for their hope is placed in the One who saves.

¹⁴ He who fears the Lord is in dread of nothing. He will not be cowardly for he is his hope. ¹⁵ He who fears the Lord is a happy person. To whom does he turn? Who is his support?

¹⁶ The eyes of the Lord are on those who love him. For them he is powerful protection, strong support, shelter against scorching wind and the midday sun. He is a safeguard against stumbling and assurance against a fall. ¹⁷ He lifts up the soul and gives a sparkle to the eyes; he gives healing, life and blessing.

Ps
33:18
34:16

Offerings pleasing to God

• ¹⁸ An offering to God from stolen goods is a stained offering, the sacrifices of the wicked do not please God.

¹⁹ The Most High takes no pleasure in the offering of the godless. It is not the number of victims that obtains pardon for sin.

Is
1:11
Am
5:21
Ps
50:8

²⁰ Offering to God from what belongs to the poor is like slaughtering a son in the presence of his father.

²¹ Bread is life to the poor; he who takes it from them is a murderer. ²² He who deprives others of a livelihood kills them, and whoever withdraws the salary of a worker is guilty of blood.

Lev
19:13
Jer
22:13

²³ If one builds and the other destroys, what do they gain besides trouble? ²⁴ If one prays and the other curses, whose voice will the Master listen to?

Law (see commentary on Gen 37).

• 18. What infuriates the sacred author is that after they have stripped the humble, the rich come to the Temple to offer their magnificent presents.

²⁵If a man is cleansed after touching a corpse and then touches it again, what good was there in his cleansing?

²⁶If anyone fasts for his sins and then commits the same sins, who will hear his prayer? What value is there in his fasting?

35 ¹Keeping the Law is worth many offerings. Being faithful to the commandments is like a peace offering.

²Returning kindness is an offering of fine flour; giving alms is a sacrifice of praise.

³Renouncing sin pleases the Lord, and shunning injustice is a sacrifice of atonement.

⁴Do not appear before the Lord with empty hands. The commandment requires that you bring an offering.

⁵When the offering of the righteous is burned on the altar, the fat drips down and a fragrant aroma rises to the Most High.

⁶The sacrifice of the just man pleases God and will not be forgotten.

⁷Honor the Lord with a generous heart and do not be stingy with the first fruits of your harvest.

⁸Offer your gifts with a smiling face and when you pay your tithes do it gladly.

The Lord will not delay

⁹Give to the Most High as he has given to you; give generously to the Lord according to what you have; ¹⁰the Lord will repay, he will reward you sevenfold.

¹¹If you attempt to bribe him with

gifts he will not accept them; do not rely on offerings from dishonest gain.

¹²The Lord is judge and shows no partiality. ¹³He will not disadvantage the poor, he who hears the prayer of the oppressed. ¹⁴He does not disdain the plea of the orphan, nor the complaint of the widow.

¹⁵When tears flow down her cheeks, is she not crying out against the one who caused her to weep?

¹⁶The one who serves God wholeheartedly will be heard; his petition will reach the clouds. ¹⁷The prayer of the humble person pierces the clouds, and he is not consoled until he has been heard. ¹⁸His prayer will not cease until the Most High has looked down, until justice has been done in favor of the righteous.

¹⁹And the Lord will not delay, nor will he be patient with the wicked, ²⁰but he will crush the backbone of the merciless and have vengeance on the nations, ²¹until he has completely destroyed the hordes of the violent and broken the power of the wicked, ²²until he has repaid each one according to his deeds, ²³until he has judged his people and made them rejoice because of his mercy.

²⁴Blessed is his mercy in the time of adversity! It is like rain clouds during a drought!

Prayer for the deliverance of Israel

36 ¹Have mercy on us, Master, God of all, and look on us; make every nation stand in fear of you.

²Take action against the pagan nations and let them see your power. ³You

• **35.9** We must generously assist in the cost of worship as long as it is not a way of forgetting our responsibilities concerning injustice in our world. The Lord is pleased with our sacrifices but, above all, he hears the prayer of the orphan and sees the tears of the widow.

• **36.1** The author shares the ideas of his contemporaries who think only of the salvation of the world through the salvation of the Jewish people. He believes in the promises of the

prophets: God will do justice and will gather together the dispersed children of Israel.

This hope has always been the strength of the Jewish people. After Christ the Jews were dispersed as the Gospel foretold. Counting on God's promises and the certitude of their unique vocation they were often able to resist dispersion and assimilation.

The New Testament shows us that all of God's promises to his people have been fulfilled in Jesus. It is on the basis of this certitude

Dt
10:17Ex
22:21
Pro
23:10-
11Job
16:18Ps
79
Jer
10:25

^{Ezk 38:22-23} have shown them your holiness through what happened to us, so now let us see your great power in acting among them.

^{1K 8:43 Is 45:14} ⁴Let them acknowledge, as we have acknowledged, that there is no God but you, Lord.

⁵Give new signs, do fresh wonders, stretch out your hand and be glorified in your strength.

⁶Kindle your fury and rouse your anger, destroy your opponents, crush your enemy.

⁷Hasten the day, remember your covenant so that we may speak of your great deeds. ⁸Let the survivors be consumed in fiery wrath, let those who oppress send to perdition. ⁹Crush the heads of hostile rulers – those who say they alone count.

¹⁰Gather all the tribes of Jacob, give them back their inheritance as in the beginning.

^{Ex 4:22} ¹¹Have pity, Lord, on the people known by your Name, on Israel whom you called your firstborn.

^{2S 5:9} ¹²Show compassion to the holy city, to Jerusalem where you rest.

¹³Fill Zion with the fame of your wonders, and your people with your glory.

¹⁴Confirm the promises made to your people long ago and fulfill the promises made in your name.

¹⁵Reward those who wait for you and fulfill the words of your prophets.

^{Num 6:22-27} ¹⁶Hear the prayer of your servants, Lord; hear your priests giving Aaron's blessing to your people.

¹⁷So that all on earth may acknowledge that you are Lord and everlasting God.

Choosing a wife

¹⁸The stomach takes in all kinds of food but one food is better than another.

¹⁹Just as the tongue can distinguish the flavor of game, so does the alert mind detect lies.

²⁰A crooked heart causes sorrow, but an experienced person knows how to get even with him.

²¹A woman will accept any husband but some daughters are better than others. ^{Pro 5:15-19}

²²Woman's beauty rejoices people and is beyond all that could be wished for.

²³If she is kindly-spoken and gentle he is the most fortunate of men. ^{Pro 15:4}

²⁴When a man marries he acquires a fortune, someone who understands him and who will help and support him.

²⁵When there is no hedge the property will be destroyed; and when a man has no wife he is a fretful wanderer.

²⁶Who would trust a clever robber flitting from town to town? ²⁷And who would trust a man without a nest, who lodges wherever nightfall finds him?

Friends and counselors

37 ¹Every friend says, "I am your friend, too," but some friends are only friends in name. ^{6:5-17 Pro 2:6}

²Is it not a deadly grief when a companion or friend turns into an enemy?

³O evil intention! From where have you sprung, to cover the earth with deceit?

⁴One kind of comrade takes advantage of his friend's good fortune; in time of trouble he turns against him. ⁵Another kind shares his friend's suffering, for the sake of a meal; when it comes to a fight, he thinks only of saving himself.

⁶Do not neglect a friend or forget him once you are wealthy.

⁷All advisers give advice but some seek only their own gain.

⁸Distrust the person who offers advice, lest he take advantage of you; first of all, ask yourself what he lacks, and what his own interest suggests to him.

⁹Perhaps he says to you, "You are on the right road," while he keeps his distance, to see what happens to you.

¹⁰Do not seek advice from one who looks at you suspiciously; hide your plans from those who envy you.

¹¹Do not consult a woman about her rival, or a coward about war, or a merchant about exchange rates, or a buyer about selling, or a jealous man about gratitude, or a selfish person about generosity, or an idler about any kind of work, or a casual worker about finishing a job, or a lazy servant about an

that we must re-evaluate the words of God. At first they all seemed centered on the gift to Israel of material land within the limits of Palestine. The prophets show that things were

not so simple, and Jesus teaches his apostles that salvation history is a process of deaths and resurrections.

important task. Do not rely on these people for any advice.

¹²But go to a trustworthy man whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments, whose soul reflects your own and who will suffer with you, if you fail.

¹³In the end, keep to your own heart's advice, since no one deserves to be trusted more than your heart.

¹⁴For a man's soul often gives better advice than seven watchmen placed on a height.

¹⁵Besides all this, implore the Almighty to guide your steps in the truth.

¹⁶A plan must be at the beginning of all work; reflection comes before every action.

¹⁷When you decide, four ways are open before you: ¹⁸good, evil, life and death. Your own decision makes the choice.

¹⁹A clever man may teach many but do no good for himself.

²⁰A man may be wise, but if his words are rejected he will end up starving,

²¹not having won the favor of the Lord and being destitute of all wisdom.

²²Another man is wise for himself. He himself takes advantage of his wisdom.

²³The truly wise man teaches his people, and they benefit by his knowledge.

²⁴The wise man is full of blessings; those who see him call him happy.

²⁵Man's days are numbered but Israel's days are countless.

²⁶The wise man will win the confidence of his people; his name will live forever.

²⁷My son, test yourself during the course of your life; see what is harmful and avoid it.

²⁸For everything does not suit everybody, nor is everyone satisfied with all things.

²⁹Do not be insatiable in every pleasure, or be excessive in what you eat; ³⁰for overeating leads to sickness and gluttony brings indigestion. ³¹Many have died because of gluttony; he who takes care prolongs his life.

The doctor

38 • ¹Give due honor to the doctor, for you need him and God himself established him.

²Healing, in fact, comes from the Most High; the gift of healing comes from the Sovereign.

³The doctor's expertise gives him prestige and wins for him the admiration of the powerful.

⁴The Lord created the medicinal

herbs which grow on the earth, and these a sensible person will not despise.

⁵Remember that he used a simple wooden rod to purify water and so make known his power to everyone.

⁶It is he who gives knowledge to humans so that his power be glorified; ⁷the doctor uses it to heal and comfort, the chemist to make his mixtures. ⁸In that way the Lord's work never ceases and well-being prevails on the earth.

⁹My son, when you are sick do not be anxious; pray to the Lord to heal you. ¹⁰Give up bad habits, keep your hands unsoiled, and purify your heart from all sin.

¹¹Offer incense and a memorial gift of fine flour and rich offerings according to your means. ¹²Then consult the doctor; remember that he was established by the Lord, so do not disregard him – you need him. ¹³There are cases when good health depends on doctors. ¹⁴They, too, will pray to the Most High to grant them success in healing in order to save life.

¹⁵May he who sins before his Maker, fall into the hands of the doctor!

Grieving

¹⁶My son, weep for the dead, lament to express your sorrow and bury the dead with fitting ceremony, and do not fail to honor his tomb.

¹⁷Weep bitterly, cry out with full voice, and observe the period of mourning in accordance with the merits of the deceased. Let it be for one or two days, and so avoid criticism, and then be consoled in your grief.

¹⁸For sorrow may lead to death and a dejected heart loses its vitality.

¹⁹Let your affliction cease with the funeral; a life of sorrow is intolerable.

²⁰Do not let your heart give way to grief; bear up and think of your own end.

²¹Remember! There is no coming back, you do the dead no good, but rather harm yourself.

²²Keep in mind my sentence which will be yours as well: mine yesterday, yours today!

Ex
15:23-
25

Jer
9:17
Ezk
24:15
Mk
5:38

• **38.1** We must pray to be healed of a disease, but without neglecting the help of doctors as some people do. This is clearly stated in the Bible.

²³When the dead person is at rest, let his memory be one of peace; be comforted on his account once his spirit has departed.

Craftsmen and wise men

²⁴A law student acquires wisdom during his leisure hours; free from business he is capable of becoming wise.

²⁵How can the man who guides a plow become wise, he whose pride lies in snapping a whip and driving a bullock, who works continually and talks of nothing but cattle?

²⁶His heart is set on plowing furrows and all his attention is given to fattening heifers.

²⁷It is the same for all craftsmen and skilled workers who toil day and night, professional engravers and designers of seals. All are intent on creating different designs and reproducing the model, and they work even at night in order to succeed.

²⁸So, too, is the smith standing beside the anvil intent on forging iron; his face is scorched by flames from the fire and he struggles in the heat of the furnace; the clang of the hammer is deafening; his eyes are fixed on the model to be copied, he makes every effort to work well and spends time at night in bringing his task to perfection.

²⁹It is the same for the potter seated at his work, his foot turning the wheel, always concentrating on what he is molding, every movement purposefully controlled. ³⁰His arm kneads the clay, his feet make it pliable. All his attention is needed in applying the glaze and at night he sees to the cleaning of the furnace.

³¹All these craftsmen depend on their hands for gaining skill in their different crafts. ³²Without them a city could not be built; no settlers or travelers would come to it.

³³But they are not to be found in the councils of people, nor do their words carry weight in an assembly. They do not occupy the judge's seat and they are not familiar with the Law.

³⁴They are not cultured people or skilled in judgment and they are not found among authors of proverbs.

They uphold creation and civilization, and their prayer is in their life's work.

Ps 1:2 **39** ¹Quite different is it with the person who spends his life reflecting on the Law of the Most High. He examines the wisdom of the sages in times past and in his free time he studies prophecies.

²He keeps in mind what people of renown have said and penetrates the mystery of parables. ³He searches for the inner meaning of proverbs and is interested in the secret of parables.

⁴He is at the service of the great and is seen in the company of leaders. He travels in

foreign lands and has experience of both the good and the evil in mankind.

⁵Early in the morning his heart is set on turning to the Lord, his Maker, and raising his being to the Most High. He opens his mouth in prayer and makes supplication because of his sins.

⁶If such is the will of the great Lord he will be filled with the spirit of discernment. He will then speak words of wisdom and celebrate the Lord in prayer. Is 11:2

⁷He will acquire just judgment and knowledge and reflect on the Lord's hidden mysteries.

⁸In his teaching he discloses what he has learned and glories in the law of the Lord's covenant.

⁹Many people praise his discernment and never will he be forgotten. His memory will not fade and his name will live on from generation to generation.

¹⁰Nations will proclaim his wisdom and the assembly will celebrate his praise.

¹¹As long as he lives his name will be more glorious than a thousand others, and when he dies that fame will be enough.

All creation is good

¹²I wish to share still more of my reflections; I am filled with them just as the moon is said to be full.

¹³Hear me, devoted people, and grow as a rose planted near a stream.

¹⁴Spread fragrance around you like incense; blossom and perfume the air like a lily; sing a hymn and bless Yahweh for all his works.

¹⁵Magnify his Name and proclaim his praise with song and lyre, expressing this with thanksgiving.

¹⁶How magnificent are the works of the Lord! All his commands are appropriately timed and satisfy every need.

No one should say: "What is this? Why is that?" All must be studied in its time.

¹⁷At his word the waters ceased to flow and piled up, his voice caused the reservoir of water to open; ¹⁸at his order his every wish is fulfilled, and no one hinders his work of salvation. Wis 1:7

¹⁹The deeds of all are before him, nothing is hidden from his eyes; ²⁰he sees all from eternity to eternity and nothing surprises him.

²¹No one must say: "What is that? Why is it so?" for everything is created for a purpose.

²²His blessing covers all things and like a river drenches the land as in a flood. ²³Similarly he may pour out his wrath on the nations, just as he has turned fresh water into salt. Gen 19:24
Ps 107:33

²⁴If his ways are smooth for holy people they are full of obstacles for the wicked. ²⁵From the beginning, good things have been

created for the good and likewise evil things for the wicked.

²⁶Most necessary for man's life are water, fire, iron and salt, wheaten flour, milk, honey, the juice of the grape, oil and clothing.

²⁷All these are good for those who are good, but for sinners they become evil.

²⁸Certain winds are created as a means of punishment and in their fury they are a scourge, unleashing their violence in the time of destruction and satisfying the wrath of their Creator.

²⁹Fire, hail, famine and death have all been created for punishment.

³⁰The fangs of wild beasts, scorpions, vipers and the avenging sword for the destruction of the wicked, ³¹all joyfully carry out his commands, all are ready when need arises and at a given moment they will not fail to obey his word.

³²For that reason I reflected and from the beginning I decided to write:

³³All the works of the Lord are good and he will satisfy every need in due time.

³⁴You must not say: This is less good than that, for in its time everything will serve a purpose.

³⁵So now, with all your heart and in full voice, sing and bless the Name of the Lord.

The misery of human life

40 ¹Painful is the lot of all humans, a heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam from the day they leave their mother's womb to the day they return to the mother of us all.

²What is on their mind, what they fear in their heart, is the day of their death. ³From the king, glorious on his throne, robed in purple and wearing a crown, ⁴to the lowliest person sitting in dust and ashes and covered with sackcloth, there is anger, envy, trouble and unrest, fear of death, rivalry and quarrels.

⁵And at night when we lie down we have fresh worries: ⁶scarcely are we at rest and asleep when we are troubled by dreams as vivid as if it were day and we were fleeing from a battle. ⁷When it is time to wake up, we feel surprised to find that there is nothing to fear.

⁸This is the fate of every living creature, man and beast, but for sinners it is seven times worse, ⁹in death, bloodshed, strife, sword, misfortune, famine, affliction and calamity.

¹⁰All these were created for the wicked, and the flood as well was sent on their account.

¹¹Everything that comes from the earth goes back to the earth, and what comes from the waters returns to the sea.

¹²All bribery, all injustice will disappear but good faith will last forever.

¹³The unjust riches will vanish like a stream that dries up; they will crash like a clap of thunder during a downpour.

¹⁴A generous man has reason to rejoice, whereas sinners go to their ruin.

¹⁵The children of the ungodly will not be blessed with large families; they are like plants taking root on sheer rock, ¹⁶like reeds in water and along the river bank, withering sooner than other plants.

¹⁷Kindness is like a garden of blessings and charity endures forever.

¹⁸Life is pleasant both for an independent person and a self-reliant worker, but still better off is the one who finds a treasure.

¹⁹The name of a man who has children or who has established a town will live on, but to have found wisdom is a greater good.

Owning cattle and plantations brings fame, but a perfect wife is a richer blessing.

²⁰Wine and music gladden the heart, but better still is the love of wisdom.

²¹The flute and harp make fine music, but even more appreciated is a pleasant voice.

²²Gracefulness and beauty delight the eye, but not as much as the fresh growth of fields.

²³It is always good for friends and companions to meet, better still for husband and wife.

²⁴Brothers and protectors are useful in hard times, but it will be of greater help to have been a giver of alms.

²⁵Gold and silver make for security but good advice is better.

²⁶Wealth and strength give confidence, but good counsel is more esteemed than either.

You cannot suffer loss when you fear the Lord, with it you have all the support you need.

²⁷The fear of the Lord is like a garden of blessings; it clothes a person better than any glory.

²⁸My son, do not live the life of a beggar; it would be better to die than to beg.

²⁹When a man is always eyeing another's table, it cannot be said that he is really living, for he is defiling himself with another's food; an intelligent and educated man will avoid this.

³⁰That for which a shameless man begs may seem sweet to his mouth but his inner being is burning.

Death

41 ¹Death! What a bitter thought for someone who lives happily

Job
7:1
14:1-
2

Job
7:4
Ecl
2:23
8:16

Ecl
1:7

among his possessions, a prosperous and successful man who is still able to enjoy his food!

²Your sentence, Death, is welcome to a needy person whose strength is failing, who is old, worn out, and full of worries; to one who is angry and without hope!

³Do not be afraid of Death's sentence; think of those who have gone before you and those who will follow.

⁴The Lord has decreed it for every living creature; why should you rebel against the good pleasure of the Most High?

Whether you live for ten, a hundred or a thousand years, no one in the netherworld is concerned.

⁵Abominable people, such are the children of sinners who gather in the houses of the ungodly.

⁶The inheritance of sinners will perish; their prosperity will be a lasting reproach.

⁷An ungodly father will be insulted by his children, for they hold him responsible for their disgrace.

⁸Woe to you, wicked people who have forsaken the law of the Most High!

⁹At birth you are born to be cursed and you will be cursed at death.

¹⁰All that comes from the earth returns to the earth, and the ungodly go from curse to ruin.

¹¹People grieve because their bodies will perish, but even the evil names of sinners will be blotted out.

¹²Have regard for your reputation, for it will live on, of greater value than a thousand hoards of gold. ¹³Few perhaps are the days of the just man's life but an honored name endures forever.

True and false shame

¹⁴My children, keep my teaching and live in peace. Of what use is hidden wisdom and unseen treasure?

¹⁵It is better for a man to hide his foolishness than to hide his wisdom.

¹⁶Therefore, feel shame according to what

I say. It is not always fitting to feel shame, but this is not understood by everyone.

¹⁷Be ashamed of licentiousness before your father and mother, and of a lie before a ruler or an important person.

¹⁸Be ashamed of criminal behavior before a judge, and of iniquity before an assembly of people.

¹⁹Feel ashamed of dishonesty before your partner or friend, and of a theft in the place where you live.

²⁰Be ashamed before the truth of God and his covenant. Be ashamed of keeping the loaves for yourself, ²¹of being unable to give and to receive, of not returning a greeting,

²²of staring at a prostitute,

of rejecting a compatriot,

²³of depriving someone of what is his,

of gazing at another man's wife,

²⁴of being too familiar with your maid-servant – keep away from her bed!

²⁵of insulting words to a friend –

do not follow up a gift with a reproach!

²⁶of repeating what you have heard and betraying secrets.

²⁷On these occasions feel genuine shame and you will be respected by all.

42 ¹But do not let yourself be led astray by any of the things that follow. ²Do not be ashamed

of the law of the Most High and his covenant,

of judging even the wicked fairly,

³of keeping accounts with a traveling companion,

and of sharing your inheritance with friends,

⁴of checking weights and scales, ⁵of making a profit whether small or great,

of bargaining with traders, and of being strict with children,

of severe corporal punishment for a servant who deserves it.

⁶With a prying wife or when many people are around, it is wise to make use of seal and lock!

⁷For deposits it is essential to reckon by number and weight and keep a written record of what you give and receive.

⁸Do not be ashamed of correcting someone who is foolish or stupid or an old man who has become childish.

Doing that, you prove that you are a well-educated person and you will be generally respected.

• ⁹A daughter causes her father hidden worries; anxiety on her account keeps him awake:

• **42.9** Sirach's original text, written in Hebrew, was much longer in verse 9 and said: "Her room should have no windows and she should

not be able to see the entrances to the house." Such advice is one more proof of the male domination in Hebrew culture which the Greek

Ecl
6:6
9:10

Ecl
7:1

20:30-
31
Mt
5:14-
16

Dt
24:1

Is she young? She may not marry. Is she married? She may be disliked;

¹⁰Is she a virgin? She may be seduced and become pregnant in her father's house!

Is she married? She may be unfaithful or unable to have children!

¹¹Your daughter is unruly? Watch her well, or she may make you a laughingstock to your

enemies, the talk of the town and a public disgrace.

¹²Do not be taken by human beauty and do not sit down in the company of women; ¹³for just as a moth comes out of a garment, woman's wickedness comes out of a woman.

¹⁴Better a man's wickedness than a woman's kindness; women bring shame and disgrace.

Ecl
7:26-
28

SECOND PART: GOD'S WISDOM IN HISTORY

Wonders of nature

Gen 1:3 • ¹⁵Now I shall remind you of the works of the Lord and relate what I have seen.

The Lord's works depend on his word, and creation obeys his will.

¹⁶The sun shines on everything and the work of the Lord is filled with his glory.

¹⁷Not even to his holy ones has the Lord given full knowledge of all his marvelous works.

The Lord, Master of the universe, has ordained that all should stand firm in his glory.

¹⁸He penetrates both the depth of the abyss and the human heart and knows their secrets.

For the Most High has full knowledge and ordains the signs of the heavens.

¹⁹He knows the past and foretells the future and reveals the traces of the world's mysteries.

Ps 139:1-4 ²⁰No thought escapes him, no word is hidden from him.

Ecl 3:14 ²¹He has ordered the marvelous works of his wisdom, from ever and for ever. Nothing can be added, nothing can be taken away and he has no need of counsel.

²²All his works are beautiful, even to the smallest spark of light.

²³All this lives and endures forever: all is useful and obedient to his will.

Ecl 3:1-8 ²⁴All things are in pairs, one opposite the other, and nothing he makes is in any way deficient.

²⁵One thing emphasizes the excellence of the other; who could ever weary of admiring his glory?

43 ¹The pride of the heights above is the clear firmament. How glorious is the spectacle of the heavens!

²When the sun rises and appears, it proclaims: "I am your marvelous work, Most High!"

³At noon, it dries up the land; who can bear its burning heat?

⁴You may stoke a furnace to produce heat, but three times greater is the heat of the sun burning the mountains, and sending out fiery vapors, blinding the eyes with its rays.

⁵How great is the Lord who made it and whose word directs its rapid course!

⁶He also made the moon, exact in marking the months and the passage of time.

⁷With its full light gradually decreasing, the moon determines and rules over the feast days. ⁸The month also takes its name from the moon. How marvelously does it increase in its phases, providing a signal for the heavenly hosts, brightly shining in the expanse of the sky!

⁹The bright radiance of the stars accounts for the beauty of the sky. What a brilliant ornament they are for the heights of the Lord!

¹⁰At the command of the All Holy they stand as appointed and never fail to keep watch.

¹¹Look at the rainbow and praise the One who made it. How magnificent it is in splendor!

¹²It forms a circle of glory in the sky, a bow that is bent by the hands of its Maker.

¹³At his order the snow falls and lightning strikes according to his decrees.

Ps
19:1-
6

Ps
8:4

Gen
1:14-
18

Ps
89:38
104:
19

Bar
3:35

Gen
9:13
Ezk
1:28

Job
38:22

translator did not dare show his readers who were more liberal-minded. However inspired the authors of the Bible were, God did not miraculously free them from the limitations of their culture.

• 15. Modern civilization separates people from nature. In their work, many people see fluorescent lights more often than they see the sun. Many do not know either the silence or the sounds of nature, because noise has invaded everything. However, as soon as we know something about science, we think we know the

mysteries of the universe. In our cities, it is increasingly more difficult for us to experience the mystery and the beauty of the universe.

God speaks to us through his creation as authentically as he does in the words of Christ. The languages are different, in the same sense that music tells us something in a way that is different from words. Those who know how to see God in the universe are also able to discover him in great human achievements: dams, electronic computers, buildings, new materials, etc. What emerges from human hands also belongs to God's creation.

¹⁴The storerooms of heaven are opened and clouds fly away like birds.

¹⁵It is his power that thickens the clouds, making them freeze and break into hailstones.

^{16a}He has only to look and the mountains are shaken; ^{17a}the voice of his thunder terrifies the earth.

^{16b}At his will the south wind blows, ^{17b}as do cyclones and hurricanes from the north.

¹⁸The snow flutters down like birds and alights on the ground like locusts.

The eye marvels at the beauty of its whiteness and the mind is amazed to see it fall.

^{Ps} ^{147:} ¹⁶⁻ ¹⁸ ¹⁹He sprinkles frost on the earth like salt; it freezes and becomes like thorny spikes.

²⁰The cold north wind blows and turns the water into ice.

Ice forms on all stagnant water giving it a freezing coat of armor.

²¹He wears down the mountains and scorches the desert, withering the green grass as if by fire.

²²A mist is a timely remedy, and dew after the heat restores it all to life.

^{Ps} ^{104:} ²⁵ ²³According to his plan he stilled the great deep and planted islands in it.

²⁴Those who cross the seas tell of its dangers, and we listen in astonishment to what they relate:

^{Ps} ^{104:} ²⁵ ^{107:} ²³ ²⁵It is all about strange and marvelous adventures with marine animals and monsters of all kinds.

²⁶Thanks be to God, all turns out well and everything is held together by his word.

²⁷We shall not give further examples; one last word: He is everything.

²⁸Where shall we find the strength to glorify him? For he is the Mighty One, greater than all his works.

²⁹The Lord is awesome and sovereignly great, and admirable in his power.

³⁰Let your praise exalt the Lord as best you can, he is greater than you could even express.

Honor him with all your strength and do not tire, for you can never praise him enough.

³¹Who has seen him and can describe what he has seen? Who can glorify him as he merits?

³²Many mysteries greater than these still

remain, for we have only seen a fraction of his works.

³³The Lord has created all things and to the godly he has given wisdom.

In praise of ancestors

44 • ¹Let us now glorify illustrious men, the ancestors of our people.

²The Lord gave them great glory according to his own greatness from the beginning.

³Some ruled kingdoms and were renowned for their achievements, others were wise and able to counsel, or spoke as prophets.

⁴They led the people with their warnings or with their knowledge of the popular writings.

⁵Some cultivated music and poetry, ⁶others were rich and powerful men living peacefully in their homes.

⁷All were highly respected in their days and honored by the people they lived with.

⁸The names of some lived on and people still praise them today; ⁹others are not remembered and have disappeared as if they never existed. It is the same for their children.

¹⁰But now consider the godly men whose good deeds have not been forgotten. ¹¹Those who came after them benefited from the rich legacy they left; ¹²their race remained faithful to the Covenant, their children followed their example. ¹³Their family will endure forever and never will its glory be tarnished. ¹⁴Their bodies were buried in peace but their memory lives through generations. ¹⁵People will speak of their wisdom and the assembly will celebrate their praise.

¹⁶Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken up, calling future generations to repentance.

¹⁷Noah was found to be perfectly just; at the time of divine anger he was the ransom; through him a remnant was left on earth after the flood. ¹⁸Eternal covenants were made with him to ensure that never again would life be destroyed by flood.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

• ¹⁹No one has been found to equal Abraham in glory, the great ancestor of many nations. ²⁰He was faithful to the Law of the Most High who made a covenant with him, a

^{1Mac}
^{2:51-}
⁶⁴
^{Heb}
¹¹

^{Gen}
^{5:24}
^{Heb}
^{11:5}

^{Gen}
^{6:9}
^{9:9}
^{1P}
^{3:20}
^{2P}
^{2:5}

^{Gen}
^{12:2}
^{Rom}
^{4:1,}
¹³⁻
¹⁸

• **44.1** After the hymn to God whose glory is revealed through his creation, the author will present to us God's work in his chosen people, Israel.

In his poem of praise of the ancestors, we have a glimpse of all the famous people of Israel: kings, liberators, prophets, sages, poets. The author notes that there are many courageous and just people who died and whose deeds and virtues will not be recorded after them. He knows that even if all the descendants of a famous man disappear, as in the case of Moses, the people of

Israel hold on to the promises of eternity. In this book there is still no sign of faith in a resurrection of persons (except possibly in 48:11 and all hope is fixed on the future of the chosen people).

• **44.19** In what follows, Ben Sira remembers the most prominent people of sacred history. He attributes to them according to the ideas of his days. He was living in an age when priests had the most important role and the entire life of the Jews revolved around the Temple. So, he gives the priority to the priests, to Aaron, Phine-

covenant that was marked on his flesh, and on the day he was tested he was found faithful. ²¹ That is why God promised by oath to bless all the nations through his descendants, that he would make them as numerous as the dust of the earth and exalt his posterity like the stars. He promised that their land would stretch from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.

²² The Lord renewed his Covenant with Isaac for the sake of his father, Abraham. ²³ This Covenant and the blessing of humanity he made to rest on the head of Jacob.

He assured Jacob of his blessing, giving him the land that would be his and determining the portions to be shared among the twelve tribes.

Moses, Aaron

45 ¹ From Jacob's descendants the Lord brought forth an upright man who won the favor of everyone and was loved by God and men – Moses. Blessed be his memory! ² The Lord gave him glory equal to his holy angels and power that terrified his enemies. ³ At Moses' word he halted disaster; the Lord exalted him in the presence of kings. He gave him commandments for his people and let him glimpse something of his glory.

⁴ He chose him from among the living to become holy by being faithful and humble. ⁵ God let him hear his voice and led him into darkness, where face to face he gave him the commandments, the law of life and knowledge, to teach Jacob the covenant and make his decrees known to Israel.

⁶ He raised up Aaron, the brother of Moses, a holy man like Moses, of the tribe of Levi. ⁷ He made an eternal covenant with him and conferred on him the priesthood of the people.

He honored him by giving him majesty and putting a glorious robe upon him. ⁸ His vestments and ornaments were splendid in their perfection – breeches, cloak and ephod. ⁹ As a fringe to his vestment he gave him pomegranates and many golden bells to tinkle as he walked and to be heard in the Temple as a reminder to his people.

¹⁰ The Lord gave Aaron sacred vestments of gold, blue and purple, the work of artists, the pectoral of judgment, the Urim and Thummim, scarlet yarn spun by a craftsman,

¹¹ precious stones with engravings in a setting of gold, the work of a jeweler, to serve as a memorial with their graven inscriptions of the tribes of Israel. ¹² He gave him the turban with a golden diadem engraved with the words of

his consecration, a superb ornament, expertly crafted and a delight to the eyes.

¹³ Such things had never been seen before Aaron's time; no outsider ever put them on or ever will, only his children and descendants.

¹⁴ His sacrifices were to be completely burned twice daily, in perpetuity.

¹⁵ It was Moses who consecrated him and anointed him with holy oil. It was for him an eternal covenant and for his descendants, for as long as the heavens would last, to serve the Lord as his priests and bless the people in his name. ¹⁶ He chose him from among all the living to offer sacrifice to the Lord and sweet smelling incense as a memorial, to make atonement for the people.

¹⁷ The Lord gave him authority to interpret his commandments and utter decisions, to teach Jacob the divine words and enlighten Israel with his Law. ¹⁸ Outsiders conspired against him and were jealous of him in the desert – Dathan, Abiram and their followers and the supporters of Korah, all violent men full of hate. ¹⁹ The Lord saw it and was angry; in his wrath he destroyed them. He wrought wonders against them, consuming them in the flames of fire.

²⁰ He increased Aaron's glory by giving him a heritage. He allotted to him the first fruits and to begin with, bread in abundance. ²¹ For their food is the sacrifice offered to the Lord, which he gave to Aaron and his descendants.

²² But he was to inherit no land as patrimony, no special portion was to be his own, for the Lord himself is his portion and inheritance.

Phinehas

²³ As for Phinehas, son of Eleazar, he is the third in glory, for he was full of zeal in the fear of the Lord when he stood firm among a rebellious people with noble courage and made atonement for Israel.

²⁴ Consequently, a covenant of peace was concluded with him, making him the leader of the sanctuary and of his people. He and his descendants were to have the dignity of high priesthood forever. ²⁵ It is not like the covenant established with David, the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, for the kingship passes only from father to one of his sons, but the heritage of Aaron passes to all his descendants.

²⁶ May the Lord give them wisdom of heart to judge his people with justice, so that their prosperity may not dwindle and their glory may live on in their descendants!

has and Simon II, whom he had known personally.

In 48:11, as in Malachi 3:23, we find the Jewish belief that Elijah would return in the days

of the Messiah. For the Jews, Elijah was the man who raised the dead and who had been preserved from death by God. Ben Sira hopes to regain life to see the happy days of salvation.

Joshua and the judges

46 ¹Joshua, son of Nun, was a valiant warrior and as a prophet he was the successor of Moses. He lived up to his name, proving himself to be a savior of God's chosen people, punishing the enemies that attacked them and leading Israel to claim their land.

²How magnificent to see him, arm raised and with sword ready to attack the cities!

³Who before him had such staying power? ⁴He was, indeed, Yahweh's warrior. ⁵Was it not he who held back the sun, making one day as long as two? ⁶He called on the Most High when the enemy pressed on every side, and the Mighty Lord responded with hailstones of exceptional size. ⁷He attacked the enemy nation and destroyed the assailants at the pass of Beth-horan, so that the nations might know the strength of Joshua and that they were fighting against the Lord.

⁸Joshua was loyal and devoted to the Almighty in the time of Moses, he and Caleb, son of Jephunneh. They stood firm against the assembly and tried to keep them from sinning by silencing their wicked murmuring.

⁹Because of this, they were the only two spared out of six hundred thousand people on foot. And they took possession of their inheritance in a land flowing with milk and honey.

¹⁰The Lord gifted Caleb with strength; this he enjoyed to the end of his days, and he went into the hill country that was given to his children in heritage. ¹¹With this it was clear to all Israel that it is good to follow the Lord. ¹²After that came the judges. Although each of them won his own renown, all were men of faithful heart who did not turn away from the Lord. Blessed be their memory! ¹³May their bones spring to life from the tomb and the names of these illustrious men live on in their children!

Samuel

¹⁴Samuel was a prophet and beloved of the Lord. He established the kingdom and anointed rulers to govern his people.

¹⁵He judged the assembly according to the Law of the Lord and the Lord protected Jacob. ¹⁶He was accepted as prophet because of his faithfulness, and proved that his words were of a trustworthy seer.

¹⁷He called on the Almighty Lord when the enemy pressed from all directions and he offered a sucking lamb.

¹⁸Then with a mighty roar the Lord thundered from heaven and destroyed all the enemy's leaders and the tyrants of Philistia.

¹⁹Before his time came for eternal rest, Samuel called men to witness before the Lord and his anointed: "I have not taken anyone's belongings, not even his sandals," and there was no one to accuse him.

²⁰Even after he died, he prophesied and revealed to the king his death. From the grave he spoke as a prophet to blot out the wickedness of his people.

David

47 ¹After him the Lord raised Nathan to prophesy in the time of David.

²As fat is selected from the peace offering, so David was chosen from among the Israelites.

³He played with lions and bears as if they were lambs or young goats.

⁴He was still young when he slew a giant to restore the honor of his people; with a sling he aimed a stone that killed the arrogant Goliath.

⁵He invoked the Lord Most High, who gave him strength to slay a mighty warrior, and so exalt the power of his people.

⁶So they glorified him for his ten thousands and praised him as a blessing from the Lord when he was chosen king.

⁷For he wiped out his enemies on all sides and annihilated his adversaries, the Philistines, crushing their power forever.

⁸In all that he did he gave thanks to the Most High, and showed his love for his Maker by singing with all his heart.

⁹He placed singers accompanied by harps before the altar to make beautiful music; ¹⁰he gave splendor to feasts and even greater magnificence to the more solemn occasions, exalting the holy Name of the Lord and having the sanctuary ring with his praises from early morning.

¹¹The Lord forgave David's sins and established his power forever; he made a covenant with him for the benefit of the kings and gave him a glorious throne in Israel.

Solomon

¹²A wise son succeeded him and fared well because of him.

¹³Solomon reigned during times of peace, and God gave him rest from war to enable him to build a house for his Name, a sanctuary that would stand forever.

¹⁴How wise you were in your youth, Solomon! as full of understanding as a river. ¹⁵Your spirit covered the earth, you filled it with proverbs and parables. ¹⁶Your reputation reached distant islands and you were loved for your peace. ¹⁷Your songs, proverbs, parables and interpretation drew the admiration of the world.

¹⁸In the name of the Lord God, called the God of Israel, you accumulated gold like tin and gathered silver like lead.

¹⁹But you gave your body to women and became the slave of your senses; ²⁰you stained your reputation and defiled your de-

scendants, bringing wrath and disaster upon your children because of your foolishness.

^{1K}¹² ²¹ So the nation was divided; from Ephraim came a kingdom in revolt.

²² But God's mercy never fails nor does he forget his promises; he did not deprive his chosen one of descendants nor destroy the race of the one he loved. So to Jacob he gave a remnant and allowed David's family to survive.

²³ Solomon rested with his forefathers and left one of his sons to rule after him, the most foolish of men and without intelligence; this was Rehoboam who drove the people to rebellion.

^{1K}^{12:26}^{2K}^{17:21-}²³ ²⁴ As for Jeroboam, son of Nebat, it was he who caused Israel to sin and taught Ephraim the way of evil.

From then on their sins increased and later brought about their exile, ²⁵ for they were intent on doing every sort of evil until vengeance fell on them.

Elijah and Elisha

^{1K}^{17:1} **48** ¹ Then came the prophet Elijah like a fire, his words a burning torch.

² He brought a famine on the people and in his zealous love had them reduced in number.

^{1K}^{18:36} ³ Speaking in the name of the Lord he closed the heavens, and on three occasions called down fire.

⁴ How marvelous you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Who could ever boast of being your equal? ⁵ By the word of the Most High you brought a dead man back to life; ⁶ you brought kings to destruction and thrust famous men from their beds.

⁷ You heard a rebuke at Sinai and sentences of punishment at Horeb; ⁸ you anointed kings to be avengers and prophets to succeed you.

^{2K}^{2:11} ⁹ You were taken up by a whirlwind of flames in a chariot drawn by fiery horses.

^{Mal}^{3:24} ¹⁰ It was written that you should be the one to calm God's anger in the future before it broke out in fury, to turn the hearts of fathers to their sons and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

¹¹ Happy are those who will see you and those who die in love, for we too shall live.

^{2K}^{2:9} ¹² Such was Elijah, taken up in a whirlwind, and Elisha was filled with his spirit.

During his life no leader could shake him, no one dominated him. ¹³ Nothing was too difficult for him and even in death his body prophesied. ¹⁴ In life he worked wonders, in death his deeds were amazing.

¹⁵ Despite all this, the people were not converted and did not turn away from sin; not until they were deported far from their country and scattered over the earth.

¹⁶ The people were greatly reduced in number but they still had a ruler from the line of David. Some of them were upright people, others became sinful.

¹⁷ Hezekiah fortified his city and brought water within its walls, tunneling the rock with iron tools to construct cisterns.

¹⁸ During his reign Sennacherib began his campaigns and sent off Rabshakeh, and insolent and arrogant as he was, he raised his arm against Zion.

¹⁹ Then their courage was shaken, their hands trembled, they felt anguish like women in labor. ²⁰ They stretched out their hands and called on the merciful Lord.

From heaven the Holy One quickly heard them and saved them by the hand of Isaiah. ²¹ The Lord struck the Assyrian camp and his angel wiped them out.

²² For Hezekiah did what was pleasing to the Lord and was firm in following the ways of David, his father, as the great and faithful prophet Isaiah ordered, a man of trustworthy vision.

²³ In his time the sun went back and he lengthened the life of the king.

²⁴ In the power of the spirit he foresaw the last things and consoled the afflicted people of Zion. ²⁵ He revealed what would happen until the end of time and made hidden events known before they occurred.

Other kings and prophets

49 ¹ The memory of Josiah is like blended incense carefully prepared by the perfumer; it is like delicious honey to every mouth, like music during a banquet.

² He followed the right way in converting the people and removing the horror of idolatry. ³ He set his heart on the Lord and succeeded in having godliness prevail over wickedness.

⁴ With the exception of David, Hezekiah and Josiah, the kings were very sinful men. They abandoned the Law of the Most High bringing an end to the kings of Judah.

⁵ They surrendered their power and their honor to foreign nations. ⁶ Their enemies set fire to the holy city, making its streets desolate ⁷ as Jeremiah had foretold.

⁸ It was Ezekiel who saw the vision of Glory when the Lord showed it to him above the chariot of the cherubim. ⁹ He also remembered Job, the one who always followed the way of justice.

¹⁰ As for the twelve prophets, may their bones spring to life from the tomb, for they comforted the people of Jacob and saved them with confident hope.

¹¹ Can we ever adequately praise Zerubabel who was like a ring at the finger of God, and ¹² likewise Joshua, son of Jozadak? They were men who, in their days, built the Temple

^{2K}
^{20:20}
^{2Chr}
^{32:5}
^{Is}
^{22:11}
^{2K}
^{18:13}

^{Is}
^{40:1}

^{Ezk}
¹⁻³
⁹⁻¹⁰

^{Hg}
^{2:23}

to the Lord, a sanctuary destined for everlasting glory. ¹³Lasting too is the memory of Nehemiah, who rebuilt our ruined walls, provided gates and bars and rebuilt our homes.

^{44:16} ¹⁴No one on earth was created to equal Enoch for he was taken up from the earth.

¹⁵And never was there a man like Joseph, the greatest among his brothers, the leader of his people; his bones were honored.

• ¹⁶Shem and Seth were exalted among men, but Adam's glory was greater than any other living being.

Simon the priest

50 ¹The High Priest Simon, son of Onias, repaired the sanctuary and fortified the Temple during his lifetime.

²He laid the foundations for the high double wall and for the fortifications surrounding the Temple.

³In his days a reservoir for water, a cistern as great as a sea, was excavated.

⁴Anxious lest his people might perish, he fortified the city against a siege.

Lev
16:13

• ⁵How magnificent he was when, surrounded by his people, he emerged from the inner sanctuary ⁶like the morning star amidst the clouds, like the full moon, ⁷like the sun shining on the Temple of the Most High or a rainbow in a glory of clouds!

⁸He was like a rose in spring, a lily beside a stream, a green shoot on a summer day, ⁹or incense burning in the censer.

He could be likened to a massive, golden vase adorned with every kind of precious stone, ¹⁰to an olive tree heavy with fruit, or to a cypress rising to the clouds, ¹¹when, robed in ceremonial garb and in perfect splendor, he went to the sacred altar filling the court of the sanctuary with glory.

• **49.16** Suddenly, before praising the high priest Simon, his contemporary, Ben Sira remembers origins. In the beginning, the first man. Surpassing the current ideas of the Jews who, until then, did not look much further than their own history, Ben Sira thinks about the first human, the father of all humanity. Adam represents all sinful humanity, called to salvation. He is the first human also, who bears in himself the destiny of all the rest. In Romans 5:12-20, Paul will speak of Christ as the New Adam. Of him one can say: "Adam is above every living being."

¹²There he would receive from the hand of the priests the portions of the sacrifice, as he stood by the hearth of the altar encircled by his brethren like a young cedar on Lebanon.

¹³It was as if he was surrounded by palm trees when all the sons of Aaron in their splendor, with the offerings to the Lord in their hands, stood before the assembly of Israel.

¹⁴When he had completed the service at the altar and presented with dignity the offering to the Almighty and Most High, ¹⁵he took the cup in his hand and poured out a libation of the juice of the grape at the foot of the altar, a pleasing aroma to the Most High, King of the world.

Num
10:2-
10

¹⁶Then the sons of Aaron shouted; they blew their trumpets of solid silver, making a great noise as a memorial before the Most high.

¹⁷Then suddenly all the people bowed down with their faces to the ground and adored the Lord, the Almighty and most High God.

¹⁸The choir as well sang his praises, making beautiful music. ¹⁹And the people made supplication to the Most High and prayed to their merciful Lord, until the ceremony was over and the service of the Lord completed.

Num
6:23-
27

²⁰The High Priest then came down and raised his hands towards the whole assembly of the people of Israel to give them in a loud voice the blessing of the Lord and to have the honor of pronouncing his name.

²¹Then for a second time the people

• **50.5** Let us underline this lengthy portrait of Simon, the high priest. Ben Sira, who carried out responsibilities and knew life, feels no shame in expressing his great admiration for the Temple rituals. As for any Jewish believer, the sacred vestments, the music and the solemn ceremonies reveal something to him about the world of God which is splendor, happiness, celebration and praise.

The last paragraph serves as the conclusion of this part of the book (chaps. 44-50). Ben Sira blesses his readers using the same words that Simon addressed to the people on their knees.

bowed in worship to receive the blessing of the Most High:

²²“And now, bless the Lord of the universe who everywhere does great things, who exalts our days from birth and is merciful to us.

²³May he give us happiness and grant peace to Israel in our days and forever!

²⁴May he continue to give us his blessings and be a savior to us in our days.”

²⁵There are two nations I greatly dislike, the third is not a nation: ²⁶they are the inhabitants of Mount Seir, the Philistines and the foolish people who live in Shechem.

²⁷Instruction in understanding and knowledge, that is what Jesus the son of Sira, the son of Eleazar of Jerusalem, has written in this book as he poured out the wisdom of his heart.

²⁸Happy the one who pays attention to this teaching and gains wisdom by taking it to heart.

²⁹Doing that, he will be strong in all circumstances, for the light of the Lord is his path.

Prayer of Jesus, son of Sirach

Ex 15:2 **51** • ¹I will give thanks to you, O Lord and King; I praise you, my God and Savior, I give thanks to your Name.

²For you are my protector and helper, you have delivered my body from destruction, from the snare of the wicked tongue and from lips that speak lies.

In the presence of those who stood against me, you were my helper, my deliverer.

³In the fullness of mercy and the glory of your Name, you delivered me from the teeth of those ready to devour me, from the hand of those wanting to take my life and from my many trials.

⁴You rescued me from choking fire on every side; you saved me from a fire I had not kindled.

⁵You delivered me from the depths of the netherworld, from an impure tongue and lying words, ⁶from vicious slander reported to the king. I was near to death, I was already at the gates of the netherworld.

⁷They surrounded me on every side with no one to help me. I looked for human comfort and there was none.

⁸Then, Lord, I remembered your mercy and your deeds from all eternity, knowing that you deliver those who hope in you and save them from the hands of their enemies.

⁹I sent up my prayer from the earth, begging to be delivered from death.

¹⁰I called on the Lord, the Father of my Lord: “Do not forsake me in the day of my affliction, when I am helpless against arrogant enemies; I will praise your name continually and sing to you my thanksgiving.”

¹¹And my prayer was heard, you saved me from destruction and delivered me from an evil plight.

¹²That is why I will give you thanks and praise and bless the Name of the Lord.

¹³In my youth, before I set out on my travels, I openly sought wisdom in prayer; ¹⁴before the Temple I asked for her and I will pursue her to the end of my days.

¹⁵While she blossomed like a ripening cluster, my heart was delighted in her; my feet followed the right path, because from my youth I searched for her.

¹⁶As soon as I began listening to her she was given to me, and with her, much instruction.

¹⁷With her help I made progress and I will glorify him who gives me wisdom, ¹⁸for I decided to put it into practice and ardently seek what is good. I shall not regret it.

¹⁹My soul has struggled to possess her. I have been attentive to observe

• **51.1** This thanksgiving for liberation is a complement to the book of Ben Sira. The listing of the dangers from which God can free people, recalls for us the heroes of the Old Testament: Daniel in the lions' den, Daniel and his friends in the furnace, Joseph imprisoned, Susanna, David.

This is used for the feasts of martyrs in the liturgy of the Church. Their death (see Wis 3:1) was liberation from evil. Like Jesus, martyrs did not escape from evil and death, but they conquered both, overcoming natural fear and forgiving their enemies.

the Law, and after my faults I have stretched out my hands to heaven and lamented my ignorance of her.

²⁰My love of her increased and I found her in repentance. It was through her from the beginning that I learned to possess my heart. She will not forsake me.

²¹With my whole being I sought her; that is why I won what is best.

²²In return for this, the Lord has given me words to praise him.

²³Come near, you who are without understanding and join her school.

^{Am}^{8:11} ²⁴Why do you say you are deprived of all this and that your souls are thirsty?

²⁵This is what I say: Buy this without money; ²⁶put your neck under her yoke and let your minds receive instruction; it is very near and within your reach. Is
55:11
Mt
11:29

²⁷See for yourselves: my toil has been slight and I found deep rest.

²⁸Be instructed, whatever the cost, and you will gain what is better than gold. Mt
13:44-
46

²⁹Let your soul find joy in the mercy of the Lord, and do not be ashamed to praise him.

³⁰Do your work within the appointed time, and the Lord in his time will give you your reward.