

Introduction to the Apocrypha

Torah in Motion

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Class 6: Wisdom Literature: Mishlei (Proverbs) 8; Ben Sira 24; The Wisdom of Solomon 6–9.

1. Proverbs 8:

א הלא-חכמה תקרא; ותבונה, תתן קולה.
ב בראש-מַרְמִים עַל־דָּרָךְ; בֵּית נְתִיבוֹת נִצְבָּה.
ג לִיד-שְׁעָרִים לְפִי-קִרְת; מְבוֹא פְתָחִים תְּרַנֶּה.
ד אֲלֵיכֶם אִישִׁים אֶקְרָא; וְקוֹלִי, אֶל-בְּנֵי אָדָם.
ה הִבִּינוּ פְתָאִים עֲרֻמָּה; וְכִסְיִים, הִבִּינוּ לֵב.
ו שְׁמַעוּ, כִּי-נִגִּידִים אֲדַבֵּר; וּמִפֶּתַח שְׁפִתַי, מִיִּשְׂרָיִם.
ז כִּי-אַמֶּת, יִהְיֶה חֶכְמִי; וְתוֹעֵבַת שְׁפִתַי רָשָׁע.
ח בְּצַדִּיק כָּל-אֲמָרֵי-פִי; אִין בְּהֶם, נִפְתַּל וְעַקֵּשׁ.
ט כָּל־מַחְשָׁבִים, לְמַבִּינִי; וְיִשְׂרָיִם, לְמַצְאֵי דַעַת.
י קַחוּ-מוֹסְרֵי וְאֶל-פֶּסֶף; וְדַעַת, מִחֲרוֹץ נִבְחָר.
יא כִּי-טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה, מִפְּנִינִים; וְכָל-חֲפֻצִּים, לֹא יִשׁוּ-בָהּ.
יב אֲנִי-חֲכָמָה, שְׁכַנְתִּי עֲרֻמָּה; וְדַעַת מְזֻמּוֹת אֲמַצָּא.
יג יִרְאַת יְהוָה, שְׁנֹאת-רָע; וְגֵאָה וְגֵאוֹן וְדָרָךְ רָע, וְפִי תִהְיֶה כֹת שְׁנֹאתַי.
יד לִי-עֲצָה, וְתוֹשִׁיָה; אֲנִי בִינָה, לִי גְבוּרָה.
טו בִּי, מְלָכִים וְמַלְכוּ; וְרוֹזְנִים, יִחַקְקוּ צַדִּיק.
טז בִּי, שְׂרָיִם יִשְׂרָיִם; וְנִדְבִיבִים, כָּל-שֹׁפְטֵי צַדִּיק.
יז אֲנִי, אֶהְבִּיָה (אֶהְבִּי) אֶהְבִּי; וְיִמְשַׁחֲרֵי, יִמְצְאוּנִי.
יח עֲשֹׂר-וְכָבוֹד אֶתִי; הוּן עֲתִק, וְצַדִּיקָהּ.
יט טוֹב פְּרִיִי, מִחֲרוֹץ וּמִפֶּזֶז; וְתִבְוֹאֶתַי, מִכֶּסֶף נִבְחָר.
כ בְּאַרְח-צַדִּיקָהּ אֶהְלֵךְ; בְּתוֹךְ, נְתִיבוֹת מִשְׁפָּט.
כא לִהְנַחִיל אֶהְבִּי יֵשׁ; וְאַצְרַתִּיהֶם אֲמַלֵּא.
כב יְהוָה--קִנְנִי, רֵאשִׁית דְּרָכָיו: קָדָם מִפְּעֻלֵי מְאֹז.
כג מֵעוֹלָם, נִסְכַּתִּי מֵרֵאשִׁי-- מִקְדָּמִי-אַרְץ.
כד בְּאִין-תְּהַמּוֹת חוֹלְלֹתַי; בְּאִין מַעֲיָנוֹת, נִכְבְּדֵי-מַיִם.
כה בְּטָרְם הָרִים הִטְבְּעוּ; לִפְנֵי גְבוּעוֹת חוֹלְלֹתַי.
כו עַד-לֹא עָשָׂה, אֶרֶץ וְחֻצוֹת; וְרֵאשִׁי, עֲפָרוֹת תִּבַּל.
כז בְּהִכְיִנו שְׁמַיִם, שָׁם אֲנִי; בְּחַקּוֹ חוּג, עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם.
כח בְּאֲמָצוֹ שְׁחָקִים מִמַּעַל; בְּעֻזּוֹ, עֵינֹת תְהוֹם.
כט בְּשׁוּמוֹ לַיִם, חָקוֹ, וּמַיִם, לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ-פִיו; בְּחֻקּוֹ, מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ.
ל וְנֶאֱהָה אֲצִלוֹ, אֲמוֹן: וְנֶאֱהָה שְׁעִשׂוּעִים, יוֹם יוֹם; מִשְׁחַקֶּת לִפְנֵי כָל-עַת.
לא מִשְׁחַקֶּת, בְּתִבַל אֶרְצוּ; וְשִׁעֲשִׁיעֵי, אֶת-בְּנֵי אָדָם.
לב וְעַתָּה בְנִים, שְׁמַעוּ-לִי; וְאַשְׁרֵי, דָּרְכֵי יִשְׁמְרוּ.
לג שְׁמַעוּ מוֹסֵר וְחֻקִּמוּ; וְאֶל-תִּפְרְעוּ.
לד אֲשֶׁרֵי אָדָם, שְׁמַעוּ-לִי: לְשִׁקֵּד עַל-דַּלְתֹתַי, יוֹם יוֹם--לְשִׁמֹּר, מְזוּזוֹת פֶּתְחֵי.
לה כִּי מְצָאִי, מְצָאִי (מְצָא) חַיִּים; וְיִפְקֵר רְצוֹן, מִיְהוָה.
לו וְחֻטְאִי, חֲמִס נִפְשׁוֹ; כָּל-מִשְׁנָאִי, אֶהְבּוּ מְנַת.

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?
² On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
³ beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
⁴ ‘To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.

⁵ O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
⁶ Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;
⁷ for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
⁸ All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
⁹ They are all straight to one who understands
and right to those who find knowledge.
¹⁰ Take my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than choice gold;
¹¹ for wisdom is better than jewels,
and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.
¹² I, wisdom, live with prudence,
and I attain knowledge and discretion.
¹³ The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
and perverted speech I hate.
¹⁴ I have good advice and sound wisdom;
I have insight, I have strength.
¹⁵ By me kings reign,
and rulers decree what is just;
¹⁶ by me rulers rule,
and nobles, all who govern rightly.
¹⁷ I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently find me.
¹⁸ Riches and honour are with me,
enduring wealth and prosperity.
¹⁹ My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
²⁰ I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,
²¹ endowing with wealth those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.

²² The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.

²³ Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped,

before the hills, I was brought forth—
²⁶ when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
²⁸ when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.
³² 'And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.
³³ Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
³⁴ Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favour from the Lord;
³⁶ but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death.'

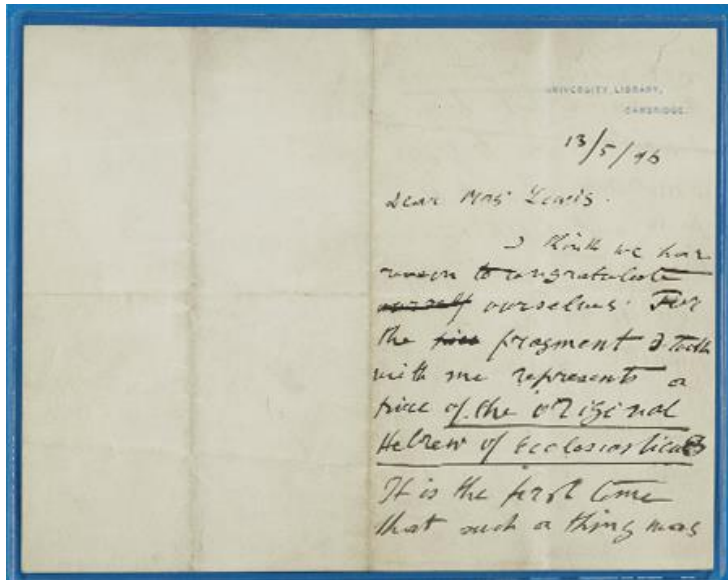
2. Ben Sira 24

Fragment of a papyrus scroll with two columns of ancient Greek text. The text is written in a cursive hand and is significantly damaged, with large irregular holes and missing sections, particularly on the right side. The ink is dark and the papyrus is aged and browned.

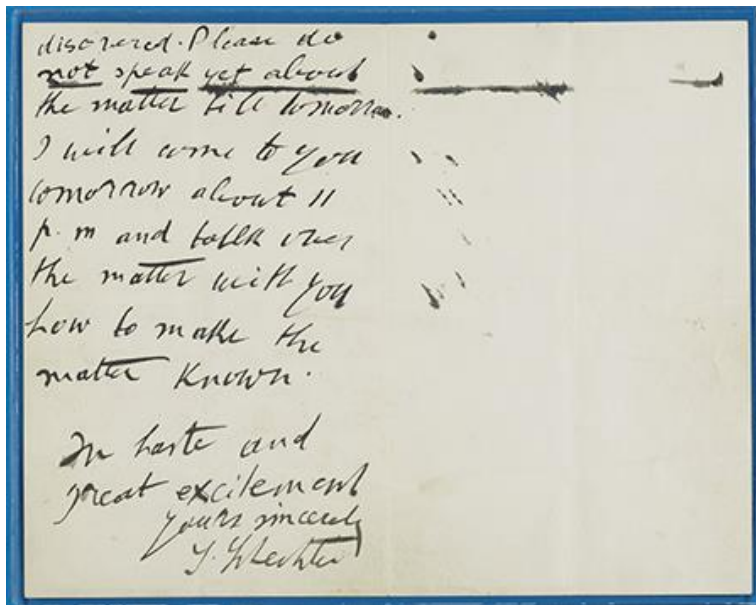
OC.1102

Fragment of a papyrus scroll with two columns of ancient Greek text. The text is written in a cursive hand and is significantly damaged, with large irregular holes and missing sections, particularly on the left side. The ink is dark and the papyrus is aged and browned.

OC.1102



1



<https://www.bensira.org/navigator.php>

Wisdom praises herself,

and tells of her glory in the midst of her people.

² In the assembly of the Most High she opens her mouth,

¹ Images from https://www.bensira.org/schechter_letters.html.

and in the presence of his hosts she tells of her glory:

- ³ 'I came forth from the mouth of the Most High,
and covered the earth like a mist.
- ⁴ I dwelt in the highest heavens,
and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.
- ⁵ Alone I compassed the vault of heaven
and traversed the depths of the abyss.
- ⁶ Over waves of the sea, over all the earth,
and over every people and nation I have held sway.
- ⁷ Among all these I sought a resting-place;
in whose territory should I abide?
- ⁸ 'Then the Creator of all things gave me a command,
and my Creator chose the place for my tent.
He said, "Make your dwelling in Jacob,
and in Israel receive your inheritance."
- ⁹ Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me,
and for all the ages I shall not cease to be.
- ¹⁰ In the holy tent I ministered before him,
and so I was established in Zion.
- ¹¹ Thus in the beloved city he gave me a resting-place,
and in Jerusalem was my domain.
- ¹² I took root in an honoured people,
in the portion of the Lord, his heritage.
- ¹³ 'I grew tall like a cedar in Lebanon,
and like a cypress on the heights of Hermon.
- ¹⁴ I grew tall like a palm tree in En-gedi,
and like rose-bushes in Jericho;
like a fair olive tree in the field,
and like a plane tree beside water I grew tall.
- ¹⁵ Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth perfume,
and like choice myrrh I spread my fragrance,
like galbanum, onycha, and stacte,
and like the odour of incense in the tent.
- ¹⁶ Like a terebinth I spread out my branches,
and my branches are glorious and graceful.
- ¹⁷ Like the vine I bud forth delights,
and my blossoms become glorious and abundant fruit.
- ¹⁹ 'Come to me, you who desire me,
and eat your fill of my fruits.
- ²⁰ For the memory of me is sweeter than honey,
and the possession of me sweeter than the honeycomb.
- ²¹ Those who eat of me will hunger for more,
and those who drink of me will thirst for more.
- ²² Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame,
and those who work with me will not sin.'

²³ All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God,
the law that Moses commanded us
as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.

²⁵ It overflows, like the Pishon, with wisdom,
and like the Tigris at the time of the first fruits.

²⁶ It runs over, like the Euphrates, with understanding,
and like the Jordan at harvest time.

²⁷ It pours forth instruction like the Nile,
like the Gihon at the time of vintage.

²⁸ The first man did not know wisdom fully,
nor will the last one fathom her.

²⁹ For her thoughts are more abundant than the sea,
and her counsel deeper than the great abyss.

³⁰ As for me, I was like a canal from a river,
like a water channel into a garden.

³¹ I said, 'I will water my garden
and drench my flower-beds.'

And lo, my canal became a river,
and my river a sea.

³² I will again make instruction shine forth like the dawn,
and I will make it clear from far away.

³³ I will again pour out teaching like prophecy,
and leave it to all future generations.

³⁴ Observe that I have not laboured for myself alone,
but for all who seek wisdom

3. The Wisdom of Solomon 6

Listen therefore, O kings, and understand;
learn, O judges of the ends of the earth.

² Give ear, you that rule over multitudes,
and boast of many nations.

³ For your dominion was given you from the Lord,
and your sovereignty from the Most High;
he will search out your works and inquire into your plans.

⁴ Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly,
or keep the law,

or walk according to the purpose of God,

⁵ he will come upon you terribly and swiftly,
because severe judgement falls on those in high places.

⁶ For the lowliest may be pardoned in mercy,
but the mighty will be mightily tested.

⁷ For the Lord of all will not stand in awe of anyone,
or show deference to greatness;

because he himself made both small and great,
and he takes thought for all alike.

⁸ But a strict inquiry is in store for the mighty.

⁹ To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed,
so that you may learn wisdom and not transgress.

¹⁰ For they will be made holy who observe holy things in holiness,
and those who have been taught them will find a defence.

¹¹ Therefore set your desire on my words;
long for them, and you will be instructed.

¹² Wisdom is radiant and unfading,
and she is easily discerned by those who love her,
and is found by those who seek her.

¹³ She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.

¹⁴ One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty,
for she will be found sitting at the gate.

¹⁵ To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding,
and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care,

¹⁶ because she goes about seeking those worthy of her,
and she graciously appears to them in their paths,
and meets them in every thought.

¹⁷ The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction,
and concern for instruction is love of her,

¹⁸ and love of her is the keeping of her laws,
and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality,

¹⁹ and immortality brings one near to God;

²⁰ so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom.

²¹ Therefore if you delight in thrones and sceptres, O monarchs over the peoples,
honour wisdom, so that you may reign for ever.

²² I will tell you what wisdom is and how she came to be,
and I will hide no secrets from you,
but I will trace her course from the beginning of creation,
and make knowledge of her clear,
and I will not pass by the truth;

²³ nor will I travel in the company of sickly envy,
for envy does not associate with wisdom.

²⁴ The multitude of the wise is the salvation of the world,
and a sensible king is the stability of any people.

²⁵ Therefore be instructed by my words, and you will profit.

4. 4 Maccabees

1:1–2: The subject that I am about to discuss is most philosophical, that is, whether devout reason is sovereign over the emotions. So it is right for me to advise you to pay earnest attention to philosophy. ²For the subject is essential to everyone who is seeking knowledge, and in addition it includes the praise of the highest virtue—I mean, of course, rational judgement. ³If, then, it is evident that reason rules over those emotions that hinder self-control, namely gluttony and lust, ⁴it is also clear that it masters

the emotions that hinder one from justice, such as malice, and those that stand in the way of courage, namely anger, fear, and pain. ⁵Some might perhaps ask, ‘If reason rules the emotions, why is it not sovereign over forgetfulness and ignorance?’ Their attempt at argument is ridiculous! ⁶For reason does not rule its own emotions, but those that are opposed to justice, courage, and self-control; and it is not for the purpose of destroying them, but so that one may not give way to them.

⁷ I could prove to you from many and various examples that reason is dominant over the emotions, ⁸but I can demonstrate it best from the noble bravery of those who died for the sake of virtue, Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother. ⁹All of these, by despising sufferings that bring death, demonstrated that reason controls the emotions. ¹⁰On this anniversary it is fitting for me to praise for their virtues those who, with their mother, died for the sake of nobility and goodness, but I would also call them blessed for the honour in which they are held. ¹¹All people, even their torturers, marvelled at their courage and endurance, and they became the cause of the downfall of tyranny over their nation. By their endurance they conquered the tyrant, and thus their native land was purified through them. ¹²I shall shortly have an opportunity to speak of this; but, as my custom is, I shall begin by stating my main principle, and then I shall turn to their story, giving glory to the all-wise God.

¹³ Our inquiry, accordingly, is whether reason is sovereign over the emotions. ¹⁴We shall decide just what reason is and what emotion is, how many kinds of emotions there are, and whether reason rules over all of these. ¹⁵Now reason is the mind that with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom. ¹⁶Wisdom, next, is the knowledge of divine and human matters and the causes of these. ¹⁷This, in turn, is education in the law, by which we learn divine matters reverently and human affairs to our advantage. ¹⁸Now the kinds of wisdom are rational judgement, justice, courage, and self-control. ¹⁹Rational judgement is supreme over all of these, since by means of it reason rules over the emotions. ²⁰The two most comprehensive types of the emotions are pleasure and pain; and each of these is by nature concerned with both body and soul. ²¹The emotions of both pleasure and pain have many consequences. ²²Thus desire precedes pleasure and delight follows it. ²³Fear precedes pain and sorrow comes after. ²⁴Anger, as a person will see by reflecting on this experience, is an emotion embracing pleasure and pain. ²⁵In pleasure there exists even a malevolent tendency, which is the most complex of all the emotions. ²⁶In the soul it is boastfulness, covetousness, thirst for honour, rivalry, and malice; ²⁷in the body, indiscriminate eating, gluttony, and solitary gormandizing.

²⁸ Just as pleasure and pain are two plants growing from the body and the soul, so there are many offshoots of these plants, ²⁹each of which the master cultivator, reason, weeds and prunes and ties up and waters and thoroughly irrigates, and so tames the jungle of habits and emotions. ³⁰For reason is the guide of the virtues, but over the emotions it is sovereign.

Observe now, first of all, that rational judgement is sovereign over the emotions by virtue of the restraining power of self-control. ³¹Self-control, then, is dominance over the desires. ³²Some desires are mental, others are physical, and reason obviously rules over both. ³³Otherwise how is it that when we are attracted to forbidden foods we abstain from the pleasure to be had from them? Is it not because reason is able to rule over appetites? I for one think so. ³⁴Therefore when we crave seafood and fowl and animals and all sorts of foods that are forbidden to us by the law, we abstain because of domination by reason. ³⁵For the emotions of the appetites are restrained, checked by the temperate mind, and all the impulses of the body are bridled by reason.

And why is it amazing that the desires of the mind for the enjoyment of beauty are rendered powerless? ²It is for this reason, certainly, that the temperate Joseph is praised, because by mental effort he overcame sexual desire. ³For when he was young and in his prime for intercourse, by his reason he nullified the frenzy of the passions. ⁴Not only is reason proved to rule over the frenzied urge of sexual desire, but also over every desire. ⁵Thus the law says, ‘You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife or

anything that is your neighbour's.' ⁶In fact, since the law has told us not to covet, I could prove to you all the more that reason is able to control desires.

Just so it is with the emotions that hinder one from justice. ⁷Otherwise how could it be that someone who is habitually a solitary gormandizer, a glutton, or even a drunkard can learn a better way, unless reason is clearly lord of the emotions? ⁸Thus, as soon as one adopts a way of life in accordance with the law, even though a lover of money, one is forced to act contrary to natural ways and to lend without interest to the needy and to cancel the debt when the seventh year arrives. ⁹If one is greedy, one is ruled by the law through reason so that one neither gleans the harvest nor gathers the last grapes from the vineyard.

In all other matters we can recognize that reason rules the emotions. ¹⁰For the law prevails even over affection for parents, so that virtue is not abandoned for their sakes. ¹¹It is superior to love for one's wife, so that one rebukes her when she breaks the law. ¹²It takes precedence over love for children, so that one punishes them for misdeeds. ¹³It is sovereign over the relationship of friends, so that one rebukes friends when they act wickedly. ¹⁴Do not consider it paradoxical when reason, through the law, can prevail even over enmity. The fruit trees of the enemy are not cut down, but one preserves the property of enemies from marauders and helps raise up what has fallen.

¹⁵ It is evident that reason rules even the more violent emotions: lust for power, vainglory, boasting, arrogance, and malice. ¹⁶For the temperate mind repels all these malicious emotions, just as it repels anger—for it is sovereign over even this. ¹⁷When Moses was angry with Dathan and Abiram, he did nothing against them in anger, but controlled his anger by reason. ¹⁸For, as I have said, the temperate mind is able to get the better of the emotions, to correct some, and to render others powerless. ¹⁹Why else did Jacob, our most wise father, censure the households of Simeon and Levi for their irrational slaughter of the entire tribe of the Shechemites, saying, 'Cursed be their anger'? ²⁰For if reason could not control anger, he would not have spoken thus. ²¹Now when God fashioned human beings, he planted in them emotions and inclinations, ²²but at the same time he enthroned the mind among the senses as a sacred governor over them all. ²³To the mind he gave the law; and one who lives subject to this will rule a kingdom that is temperate, just, good, and courageous.

²⁴ How is it then, one might say, that if reason is master of the emotions, it does not control forgetfulness and ignorance?