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Religious Fear

*Translated for the first time from the Hebrew*

BY

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## DEDICATED

in profound Admiration and Sympathy  
to the heroic Spirit of proud Belgium  
breathing specially in her centres of culture,  
the Universities of Louvain and Liège,  
the heart of which, tho' sleeping yet waketh,  
and, tho' for the hour laid low in the dust  
by the ruthless hand of force,  
looking forward in hope to the awakening  
of a new and bright day,  
rich in the blessings of resurrection—  
Peace, Progress and Prosperity.

**2117637**





## NOTE.

THE original of the mediæval poem published in this volume is in Hebrew. Its authorship is as yet undetermined, and it is now translated for the first time.

It is presented here in popular form as an *avant courier*, to be incorporated in a larger volume in connection with a critical work which the author has in hand, including and dealing with R. Joseph Kimḥi's *Shekel Hakodesh* ('The Holy Shekel'), still in MS. at the Bodleian and other libraries.

Of the 18 Chapters contained in the present volume, there are several which must make a strong appeal to such as are in trouble ; and the troubled spirit of the brave little people which is now undergoing a national martyrdom may derive comfort and strength from the wisdom of its lofty directions. Hence the terms of the dedication.

H. G.

*In the Spring of the year, 1915.*



## CONTENTS OF CHAPTERS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	9
CHAPTER I.—ON FEAR . . . . .	11
„ II.—ON PRAYER AND SERVICE . . . . .	13
„ III.—ON THE LAW AND WISDOM . . . . .	15
„ IV.—ON APPRECIATION . . . . .	20
„ V.—ON SHAME AND SHAMELESSNESS . . . . .	22
„ VI.—ON PRIDE AND MEEKNESS . . . . .	23
„ VII.—ON ENDURANCE . . . . .	25
„ VIII.—ON HUMILITY . . . . .	26
„ IX.—ON CHASTITY . . . . .	28
„ X.—ON DESIRE . . . . .	30
„ XI.—ON CONTENTMENT . . . . .	32
„ XII.—ON INDUSTRY . . . . .	35
„ XIII.—ON SILENCE AND SPEECH . . . . .	38
„ XIV.—ON COUNSEL AND SECRETS . . . . .	40
„ XV.—ON DIGNITY AND DOMINION . . . . .	42
„ XVI.—ON DELIBERATION AND HASTE . . . . .	44
„ XVII.—ON VISITING AND ITS ABUSE . . . . .	45
„ XVIII.—ON LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP . . . . .	47



## BOOK ON THE FOUNDATION OF RELIGIOUS FEAR.

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HAVE I not written for thee a number of times counsels regarding knowledge, how to acquire wisdom and instruction, and to comprehend words of understanding? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; there is good success to everyone that exerciseth himself in these pursuits; his praise endureth for ever.

Men of understanding have asked me to teach them the ways of instruction and wisdom, to give them rules whereby they might find life for their bodies while they are upon the earth, and help them towards the life of the soul on the day when they shall be called to ascend on high.

I was much astonished at their request; it seemed, indeed, strange in my sight, considering that the matter is closed and concealed, nay hidden from the eye of all creatures; no mortal knowing and estimating the way; —'tis but found by those who fear God.

I then turned to inquire, and to search in the law of God, and I attuned my thoughts; I tested in the refining vessel the opinions of experts who went before me, and I realised that all is nought and vanity beside the fear of the Lord.

Therefore, why shall I remain silent? Is it not well that I rouse the slumberers, and build up a habitation firm and exalted upon the mountain top whither my goal shall be? Indeed, as for the Foundation of Fear, I will establish it upon its true basis, and set it forth in chapters and stanzas.

Hearken unto me, and incline thine ears, attend with thy heart, and open thy eyes ; rebel not against the words of my mouth and against my voice when I speak ; accept my instruction, and I will argue and order my subject with the help of direct proverbs, clear and transparent.

Take advice, and harden not your hearts ; for why shall it be unto you as a snare ? Try to understand that all my words are honestly meant ; there is nothing perverse or crooked in them. They are intended to flow upon the human heart with the fertilising effect of the former and latter rain.

CHAPTER I.  
O N F E A R .

I.

FEAR the Lord ! This is the first and beginning of all wisdom ; yea, its end and aim. In the first place it ensures physical repose, wherein you forget sorrow and labour ; and ultimately man is assured thereby of spiritual peace, a good name and reputation.

2.

Fear God, and humankind thou needst not fear, though they mount even the royal throne. Will not the fear of God be thy fortress, if thou art low and humble ? Confide in it, and none will make thee afraid, for it is an attribute chosen above all attributes.

3.

Fear God, and men will fear thee, though they be stronger and mightier than thee. For when thou opposeth them with the strength of thy fear of God, they in their terror will tremble in their hearts like women ; while the sense of confidence, security, and tranquillity will suffer thee to draw thy foot out of the snare of the fowler.

4.

Fear God out of love, and be thou perfect, and thy fear will then be whole ; 'tis meet that it should be so, for He formed thee out of nothing, and from nothingness He brought thee to stand before Him continually, and fashioned thee into a beautiful form.

5.

Fear and tremble for the measure of thy works, and let them all be pursued in the uncertainties of existence. Trust not in thy riches with daring : thou hast an eye, yet how blind mayest thou be, for who knoweth whether to-morrow will be as to-day, whether man may not become like unto the beasts that perish.

## 6.

Fear God, and place Him before thee in thy actions, so wilt thou never sin ; and when the remembrance of His Holy Name shall be upon thy lips in all things, then shalt thou be whole. Therefore close not thine eye like the blind, and muzzle not thy mouth and be dumb.

## 7.

Fear God, and be concerned to perform that which He hath commanded thee in the precepts of His law ; and shouldst thou sin, regard the error done in ignorance as equal to the presumptuous sin in point of regret and repentance ; then mayest thou hope for His bountiful mercies, and He will reckon unto thee thy wilful guilt as nothing more than slight errors, when thou returnest to swell the ranks of those who cleave unto Him.



CHAPTER II.  
ON PRAYER AND SERVICE.

8.

FEAR God, and cleave unto Him, to serve Him with a perfect heart, then hope for his goodness and mercies ; let thy heart exult for all His bounties and bless His glorious Name. Do nought without Him : is He not God, and none beside Him ?

9.

Be it thy soul's desire to render service unto God ; for without such, thou servest strange gods. What profits it thee in all the labour which thou performest, to leave possessions unto others ? and what doth He require of thee but to fear Him, to love mercy, justice, and uprightness ?

10.

Fear God, and pray unto Him, and thou wilt find favour and good success in His eyes. And when thou askest a request from Him, fear and tremble, lest He be angry ; guard the opening of thy lips ; then will He be gracious unto thee, and grant thee of His favours.

11.

Fear God, meet Him with thanksgiving before thou settest forth to do aught for thyself. Lift up the standard of thy feet in His Holy Name, then there need be no trembling in all thy ways ; and direct thy lips and heart to the One God, and thou shalt not be moved in slipping.

12.

Fear God, and when thou orderest thy prayer before Him, fear, and stand in dread ; close thine eyes, and fold thy hands, lest thy heart turn to strange thoughts. Wouldst thou in seeking the presence of an earthly king, flesh and blood like thyself, turn thy thoughts to labour or merchandise ?

## 13.

Have a fixed place where thou standest before Him in prayer, for why shouldst thou move about hither and thither? Seek only that from Him which is necessary to supply thy wants at all times; beware against seeking that which is superfluous. Then will He have compassion with thee, and grant thee His grace.

## 14.

Arrange the order of thy prayer, and afterwards cry unto Him, and seek His presence; and when thou comest unto His dwelling, bring with thee in thy hand thy gift as an offering. Is it becoming to draw out a lengthy prayer before Him, when deceit and lying are in thy right hand?

## 15.

When thou standest before the Supreme King of kings to beg from Him thy wants, remember who thou art, and what thy acts are, whether they be straight or the reverse, and who the God is before whom thou standest, who seeth into the darkest secret places.

## 16.

When thou seekest the face of thy fellow-man, thy friend, hast thou not some shame, and art thou not covered with confusion, doubting whether it will be in his power to grant thee thy request, and considering how much thou wilt gain from him? And why then shouldst thou not be clothed with fear, when thou seekest Him who anticipates all the bounties which thou wouldst have bestowed upon thee?

## 17.

Then thanks for all the bountiful mercies and kindnesses with which He has anticipated thy wishes; and due reflection be in the case of the petitions with which thou wouldst supplicate Him as regards the coming time! This is what is meant by the *Ordering of Prayer*; this it is which was the essential characteristic of the methods adopted by the early Pious ones when they prayed.

CHAPTER III.  
ON THE LAW AND WISDOM.

18.

FEAR God ; fear His wise men who teach thee the right way ; and consider how to follow them, and to learn knowledge and law from their mouths. Know that thy soul is in their hands, and might be bound up in the bundle of everlasting life.

19.

Fear God ; fear His Holy Law, and dearer than precious stones let it be unto thee ; then shall thy lines fall in pleasant places, when thou shalt direct thy actions according to its norm ; it will, indeed, prove the treasure of thy soul, and at the same time add days and years to thy life.

20.

Acquire understanding, acquire the instruction of the Law and the Commandment, then shall thy hand be strong through them. Is this not the direct path leading to the fear of God, though it may appear the more distant ? How often does that man transgress who is wanting in understanding, who knoweth not the secret of the deep Service of Heaven ?

21.

Acquire a knowledge of the Law ; acquire books ; they are more precious than fine gold and precious stones ; for should scepticism arise within thee in consequence of thy speculation, consult them as the *Urim and Thummim*. The hero who goes into battle girded with strength need not lift up the sword which is in his right hand.

22.

Acquire wisdom and instruction and meditate thereon, until they be written upon the tablet of thy heart. And if thou continue to meditate upon them day by day, then shall their light appear as new fruit in its springing forth ; or as in the case of a man who opens and turns over the soil, the more he ploughs, the more he gathers produce.

23.

See how beautiful is the Law, how pleasant the fear of Heaven ! they are like as unto a beautiful and comely woman, decked in golden ornaments, clothed in scarlet, having adorned herself with the help of the mirror, one to be commended for her good taste, bearing all the evidence of pleasantness and grace.

24.

Learning without religious fear is as a woman of contradictions, disobedient, and lacking in manners, one who makes her eyes look large by the use of rouge and eye-paint, and adorns herself with necklaces and ear-rings. What is the use of all her beauty and splendour, when her clothing is untidy, and her true nature is disclosed ?

25.

See how religious instruction, based upon religious fear, finds itself a very stronghold, and as a tower of strength built upon a height, whose foundation is laid broad and not narrow ! For ever does it stand, strong and mighty in face of the enemy, though he press with all his strength

26.

But learning without fear is as a house and a high tower which have no proper foundation. To-day it is high and lofty as the heavens, as a row of hewn stone forming a citadel and fortress, but of what avail is it ? To-morrow the satyrs and children of destruction may dance upon its mounds.

27.

Acquire wisdom and understanding by study, and see that thou keep and cultivate it ; remember that study without practice is considered nought and void, and becomes unreal. This was the motive in the scheme of the Creator when He gave to man alone of all His creatures the power of speech.

28.

He who has learnt in order to teach others, while his own soul loathes instruction and wisdom, will find that his intelligence and reasoning will be unto him as the snare of the fowler, and will avail him nought ; his lessons will be but mists of empty wind, and showers of dust and earth upon the ground.

29.

Obtain knowledge of the Law, and say not : ' It is an inheritance bequeathed unto me from my fathers.' Meditate upon it, and study it by day and by night, and thy reward for the labour will consist in the wisdom gained. Sow thy land, and reap its produce, even though thou dost experience thorns and thistles in its cultivation.

30.

See, in all mortal bequests, the heritage becomes the property of the living, whilst it slips from the dying; whereas in the case of one who bequeaths unto his children the inheritance of religious knowledge, wisdom, and the Holy Law, the possession, while being transmitted to his children, is not altogether alienated from him after death.

31.

Obtain the knowledge of the Torah for thyself, and regret not though its price be high; for thou hast made the much better bargain in exchange for what thou hast given for it. It will stand thee in good stead in the hour in which all the great substance which thou possessest will be powerless to be retained.

32.

Obtain instruction, wisdom, and discipline, and say not, 'I am a prince and ruler'; for whom beseemeth it to be discreet, if not a person of noble birth, and of good name, and princely station? What is the use of an exalted tree if it be dry and produce no fruit, when even its shade disappears?

33.

Obtain wisdom, and care not in whose hands it may be found, and how it will be regarded. Is the clay vessel reckoned according to its maker? Is it not the thought of what is placed within the vessel? There are weeds which flourish like the lily, and through their flourishing men suffer them to rise at the very head of the garden.

34.

Acquire knowledge, and with it acquire humility and a winning discipline; and then thou wilt not be overbearing in pride. Among all enduring qualities, thou wilt find none to equal humility, which is pleasant and becoming; besides, the effect of humility is abundance of peace, and the end and aim of true knowledge is security and restfulness.

35.

Darest thou to boast thyself of thy superior knowledge or wisdom, and allow thy heart to be exalted because thou hast acquired it, and to become proud on account of the acquisition in relation to thy friends and relatives, who have not had the sense to make its acquaintance for themselves? Understand, such possessions gain no footing; for by thine own pride dost thou destroy them.

36.

Behold, wisdom is planted upon religious fear, just as a tree that is planted by streams of water; its shoots and stems it sends forth far and wide, and it produces branches; and, as for its fruit, it is ever renewed and fresh, ripening with sweet fragrance with its spikenard and cypress-flowers.

37.

Wisdom without fear may be likened to a shrub springing up and flourishing in a wilderness; and if, while it be yet moist and its shoots green, its boughs and branches multiply, on the morrow its stem and root will dry up; how can it then produce fruit for food?

38.

Behold, wisdom is as the sun in the heavens, giving light to those far and near. And so there is value in a man's understanding and intelligence, if they help him in his own case to fulfil the commandments and statutes; for they who are strangers (to such wisdom) will walk by its light, keeping to law and equity, it being sweet to them as the droppings of the honeycomb.

39.

Acquire wisdom, and do thy work by help of it; do nothing without it. Place it at the head of all thy pursuits; for if thy actions come before discretion, thou wilt have to tremble with fear, as in the case of the chariot, when its wheels are caught in the traces, there will be an accident, and the vehicle will come to pieces.

40.

Know whether thy wisdom is sufficiently great that thou art able to discharge thy duties in an efficient manner, and how thy actions may be regulated in the right way in accordance with thy knowledge. Wilt thou burden thy heart with that which it hath not borne? Can a fly carry the burden borne by foals?

41.

Ask for knowledge, and study that which thou hast not learnt; and to him who asks, make reply according to his question. If thou knowest, say, 'Truly, I know it'; for wherefore shouldst thou deny him the truth? what boots it when clouds rise, if there be neither the former rain nor the latter rain in its due season?

42.

Ask for information ; why shouldst thou be ashamed ? Surely it is more shame for thee that thou dost not know. Say not, ' My own heart will teach me ; I am quite sufficient in myself as regards counsel ' ; for then when others will load thee, thou shalt be able to carry things which thou hast not before carried.

43.

The human frame without knowledge may be compared to a majestic vessel in the midst of the deep sea, moved and tossed about as a reed at every light or strong breeze ; how can it possibly stand, if there be no one to handle the rudder, no sailor to spread the sail upward ?

44.

Frequent the haunts of the wise, and learn wisdom, but keep thy mouth closed, and open thine eyes and ears. See and hear, and take to heart their words, weighing and balancing them well ; incline thou whither they incline, and it will be well with thee ; say not, ' I am a prince and ruler.'

45.

Learn wisdom and teach it unto others, but only when they appreciate it. Why shouldst thou teach the foolish and wicked, when they desire it not ? Wouldst thou sow thy seed among the clefts of the rock ? Do things grow in the waste as on the plain ?

46.

Follow after wisdom even across the distant sea, until thou findest the man perfect in his thoughts ; so that all the nobles and wealthy among the people may come from the corners of the land to listen to thee. There are twigs which are transplanted from their natural soil, and become stronger than their original stem.

47.

Has thy heart ever whispered to thee, ' What have the wise of all their wisdom, even though they gain their living thereby ; and what advantage have they over the fools, who have a pleasant time of it both in life and in death ? ' Reflect, the wild ass in the forest also finds its fodder, sufficient to keep it alive.

48.

Acquire wisdom, and thou shalt not want any good thing ; thou shalt find all that thou desirest to have. Without it, acquire everything, and be thy wealth ever so great and stupendous, it will be considered of little account. Wisdom it is which is more precious than pearls ; it equals, indeed, every priceless article and possession.

CHAPTER IV.  
ON APPRECIATION.

49.

FEAR God, and appreciate the bounties and kindnesses which He bestows upon His creatures ; understand that He does not require their help, while He is able to supply their every want. And shouldst thou inquire and say, ' Wherefore did He create them ? ' It was in order to demonstrate to them the strength and height of His power.

50.

Open the eye of thy heart, that thou mayest appreciate what thou seest with thy physical eye ; for how many mortals are there who have their eyes open and look, yet see not ; while many a closed eye sees all, and even that which is concealed is revealed to it !

51.

A man should be sensible in recognising his position, and regulate all the works of his hand by personal experience. Surely when a man walks in his integrity, he will be at ease, and find that in this world all's well in the end ; but as soon as he turns either to the right or to the left, the scent and flavour of his character has faded and evaporated.

52.

But what profits it if a man recognise the right thing, and yet does not regulate his actions accordingly ? Will a man, fleet on his legs, escape among the rocks which abound in stumbling-blocks ? As for the man who cannot distinguish what is best, He who keeps the simple will preserve him on his path.

53.

If a man is anxious to give a false estimate of himself (*lit.* to obtrude his qualities for the recognition of that which he does not possess) so as to be great, shun him, and have nothing to do with him ; turn from him, and fly from him. It is as though a man would leave the straight path, and find a way for himself by breaking through a flinty rock.



54.

Be wise in learning to estimate the future by the experience of the past, so thou wilt understand to deal with it; and thou wilt attain that which has not yet come to thy hand by means of that which has fallen to thy lot with its worries, just as a fowler gains experience from the birds he trapped into his net on a former occasion.

55.

Judge things, too, before thou hast committed thyself, whether it be in speech or action; for what is the use of recognising the true nature of a thing when it is already done, and what is the value of regret? Can the eye of mortal recover its sight when it has once been blinded by total darkness?

56.

As for the man who sees and recognises in another's eye the thread of a hair that may be in it, and does not realise and makes nothing of that in himself which is quite open to his own eyes, would it not be better if he closed his eyes, and lightened from himself the yoke of others which he carries without necessity?

## CHAPTER V.

### ON SHAME AND SHAMELESSNESS.

57.

FEAR God, and have shame for thyself rather than sin ; do well, and act straight ; for when thou clothest thyself in the garb and veil of shame, thou wilt be God-fearing, and shalt be happy for ever ; thereby shalt thou be able to cover up human failing, and thereby is man considered righteous and upright.

58.

Is it good for thee that thou sufferest others to put thee to shame, whilst thou thyself findest thy actions blameworthy and reproachful ? Would it not be better if thou wert to set the eyes of thy heart as a watch-tower over all thy paths ? Why shouldst thou close thine eyes as the blind, and not be ashamed of thy open nakedness ?

59.

Wouldst thou oppose thy forehead firm as brass, whilst thou art despicable in the eyes of all, and carry thy shame upon thy brow to thine own disgrace as thy fiercest foe ? Having no sense of shame, art thou willing to become changed into a fool and insolent one ?

60.

Yet thou needst have no fear of shame, when with the wise thou dost consort, to inquire of them what thou knowest not, though they be junior to thee in age ; for they will teach thee what is truly right. Great indeed would be thy shame, should they once question thee, and thou wouldst have to say, ' I've heard it not ' ; ' I've forgotten it.'

61.

Fear God, and be ashamed in His presence, and be afraid of His fierce anger. How canst thou be ashamed of the verdict which man will pass upon thy actions, lest thou be lightly esteemed in his sight, and not be ashamed before God, before Whom all thy secret acts are revealed ?

CHAPTER VI.  
ON PRIDE AND MEEKNESS.

62.

FEAR God in righteousness and meekness, and let thy fear be whole and beautiful : and should thy heart beguile thee to mount on high, raising and exalting itself in pride, remember the steps of its birth whereby it came into existence, to reverse which availeth not.

63.

Should man, calling to mind the way of his entry into the world at birth, boast himself? Surely when he realises the days of his life, and remembers his toil therein, will not his heart grow weary when he remembereth that in the end his couch will be of worms, even though he may soar and mount on high?

64.

Know that meekness conquers the wrath of man, which rises to overwhelm him; it stills a king's anger, making his will like the dew upon the herb. How soon the cold stream will still the seething kettle, even though its smoke has risen!

65.

Wouldst thou boast thyself, would thy heart be exalted, on the day when thou clothest thyself in the change of the raiment of power and pride; wouldst thou glory in thy stupid pride, so that thou shalt have a greater measure of glory and conceit? Then call to mind the day in which naked and bare thou shalt lie upon the dust, and become the object of lament.

66.

Wouldst thou raise up thy head to carry the crown and diadem of pride with a name of praise, understand, that the God who alone is clothed in the garment of excellency, unto whom alone greatness belongeth, bringeth low unto dust the high, and raiseth on high those who are low.

67.

Know that by meekness thou shalt stand upon the strong fort, upon the rocky crag and cliff; and if thy heart dwell in lowliness within thee, thy dwelling shall be in the topmost station without. See how oil, smooth in itself, rises to the surface, and is used for the anointing of kings and princes!

68.

Is that man wise who sees his heart ascending in the heights of pride? He will not bear with the disposition of meaner men, how then will they endure his senseless folly? Will he not dwell alone as the leper without friends, covered up to the upper lip?

69.

Will the man of pride escape by his greatness, by the boldness of his heart which is exalted on high? Verily he breaks the upper beam of the door of his house, when he lifts up his head, and draws himself up straight. Will the citadel and high tower stand firm, which is built in dust or unburnt brick?

70.

Be lowly in thine own sight, and thou shalt be high in the sight of others, and there will be hope when thou art in distress (*or*, and there will be no hope to thine enemy). As for the reviling curse of a man, bear it with meekness and lowliness; in its passing, it will not come upon thee. Thou wilt bend low thy head in face of sling-stones; and as for dart and spear, they will miss their mark.

71.

Know, too, that meekness will aid thee, even though they who fight against thee increase in strength; therefore humble thyself, rather than be humbled at the hand of those who rise up against thee. By its merit shall thy horn be exalted in glory, and thy step shall never slip.

CHAPTER VII.  
ON ENDURANCE.

72.  
FEAR God, and endure His judgments, believing He judges truthfully and righteously; and even though their taste be bitter to thy palate, are they not sweet and pleasant to thy soul? Canst thou ever heal the disease of a man's heart except by strong potions?

73.  
Fear and endure God's decrees and judgments, and answer them not with arrogance and boldness; and then, being long-suffering, will He bear with thee in thy actions, and He will not suffer His anger to rise. Lift up prayer, if thou hast not prayed, and understand that this matter is not determined by thee.

74.  
Bear with men, and God will bear with thee; in His mercies He will be long-suffering with thee. Bear with men, and they will bear with thee, and God will give thee strength from on high. Be like the ass crouching under its burden, even though it break its back and bones.

75.  
Wouldst thou endure thy great men, and fearing them clothe thyself in terror at their exalted power, and not bear with thy smaller ones, and be afraid lest thou be found wanting and become rejected? Couldst thou throw off thy supports as mountain chaff? Would not their removal be hard as a weighty stone?

76.  
Endure things; muzzle yourself and be silent; for if you answer a fool, you will hear more things. 'Tis better that you should yourself in privacy tolerate unpleasantness than that others should hear it; your reply might only have the effect of disclosing some shady spot in your own career, which had hitherto been kept secret.

77.  
Is it not better to endure that which you have neither strength nor the power to remove? What is better calculated to remove the worries and sorrows of a man than the power of endurance which comes to his aid? Herein lies the panacea for all mourning and grief, the healing of all the ills of the flesh.

CHAPTER VIII.  
O N H U M I L I T Y .

78.

FEAR God both in public and in private, and walk in humility before Him. Do thy public work in a modest manner, and have concern for the mass and multitudes of men ; and as for thy private affairs, do them with openness, knowing that God seeth thee from His habitation.

79.

Dost thou now inquire concerning the quality of humility, since thou desirest to understand it, so that thou mayest pursue thy secret matters in a manner that it may be well with thee in the end ; so that thou mayest be held in esteem by anyone finding thee to be possessed of it, and thou mayest be lauded on account of this beautiful quality ?

80.

Wouldst thou hide and conceal thy deeds from mankind who understand them not, and be ashamed and confused on their account, being afraid lest they might think lightly of thee ? And shouldst thou not feel shame and fear before thy God, who understandeth thy secret actions and their obligations ?

81.

Have fear, and do thy work in secret humility ; why should man know it ? Shouldst thou, however, find satisfaction in its publicity, surely thou canst reveal what is hidden. Why shouldst thou make things public, which thou canst not afterwards hide ?

82.

Lo, how precious is the quality of humility to ensure peace of body and mind ! Thereby is even the wise of heart rescued, when he falls into the hands of the godless ; by its means he goes forth free. Does a slice of pomegranate become soiled, if it drop into thick mud and mire ?

83.

Understand that humility is a delightful attribute, without stain or spot in its trail. Every noble man, every man of fame, rulers and princes, might be glorified, if they had but sufficient wisdom to do their work in secret.

84.

Ask him who runs after the approval of the crowd of men to regard the lily (*sic*) which is encased between thorns. Would the prickly thorn approach to hinder it, while its bud and leaf are yet hid in lowliness? Nevertheless, on the day that it appears in all the glory of its beauty, it nips it, and its splendid appearance vanishes.

85.

Be lowly, and conceal thy actions, for outsiders are able to gauge their worth; why be expected to disclose their meanings, and to discover their origin? Be firm, and thou shalt find grace, favour, and good understanding in the eyes of God and man.

CHAPTER IX.  
ON CHASTITY.

86.

FEAR God who formed thee as His servant, and incline not thy heart from His ways; and if thy evil nature entice thee to draw thee away with much smoothness of persuasion, then close thine ear and listen not to its voice, and thou wilt never know any lapse from God's paths.

87.

Drink from thine own well flowing water, and wander not about after deep waters. Rejoice in the wife of thy youth, and err not through strange and senseless beauty. Give not unto strangers thy strength, nor in folly (or credulity) spend thy earnings in an unknown house.

88.

The attractive woman adorns herself in fine apparel, so that she may be showy in her beauty, and she is as buoyant as a horse harnessed. You might think that in her love there is relief; but set your heart to understand her end, and you will find that the end is shame and reproach.

89.

Are you dazzled by beautiful appearances and show, by embroideries, by fine linen and purple garments? Why not consider whether she is 'the well undefiled,' or whether her chastity has been destroyed, and her vileness exposed? Think of the earthenware pot in the garden; it may be gilded over, indeed, but in reality there is the bad earthy odour clinging to it still.

90.

Lay bare to thyself the folly of thy inclination and its consequences before thou exposest thyself to the danger; and having weighed its scandal, depart from it; for why shouldst thou hug it, if it be to thy shame? \* \* \*



91.

See the strange woman who flatters with the words of her mouth ; these are as drawn swords, to win over the simple and wanting in heart, who know not the right way ; their feet are suddenly entangled, and caught in the net and snare, and they have no rest.

92.

The simple one goes after her as a lamb brought to the slaughter ; and while sinners fall by her, the man good and righteous before God will always escape. Cleave, therefore, to thine own wife, rejoicing in her beauty, and revelling in her love.

93.

How much better it is to caress a lioness than a senseless woman ! Better to kiss the lips of an adder or scorpion than foolishly to kiss her lips ! You may think it pleasant to have her company to your heart's content ; but understand, you'll have a full share of shame and disgrace to follow.

94.

In living with the wife of thy youth, see to attach thyself to men of principle ; and let not senseless beauty entice thee, nor the thought of money or substance lead thee astray, remembering that according to the root and stem the tree will produce its fruit—even a revolting growth.

95.

Love life's companion with a constant love, and then you may be assured of her love ; and when you thrust her aside, thrust her aside with your left, but draw her near to you with your right hand ; otherwise your heart will flit about hither and thither. And while you are strict with her, be so with gentle caution, for then you shall have peace at all hours and times.

96.

Be glad, rejoice in the charms of the love (*lit.* 'hind') destined for thee by Heaven, so she for ever will find her fullest joy, and delight with gladness in thee. Understand, too, there are times to embrace ; but there is also a time when it is better to be alone than to caress.

CHAPTER X.  
ON DESIRE.

97.

FEAR God, and do His will, and desist from doing thine own pleasure; for then thou shalt find thy wish in carrying out God's will, either as regards thy life or thy possessions. Know also that the more thou strengthenest and fortifiest thyself in the exercise of His wishes, the greater shall He make thy power and strength.

98.

Take heed unto thyself, lest two companions which are ever agitating within thee mislead thee by their blandishments, namely, the organ of sight and the emotion of the heart, which two conspire in thee to cause thee pain. Would the axe and the hatchet be present to cut down, if there were no wood among the trees of the forest or in the thicket?

99.

Listen unto me, and hearken not unto the desires of thy heart, gaping inordinately; and should it be willing to turn either to the right or to the left, then turn thou far aside from her ways, remembering that what at first might appear to thee glorious, ends in loss and mockery.

100.

Grasp the knowledge that desire in thee is a sickness, affecting thee just as decay and the moth affect garments, tearing them; and if you think that thereby you will obtain those objects which you have not as yet obtained, you give evidence that your commonsense and natural ability have already taken leave of you.

101.

Guard against Desire which wages a hard and heavy battle with thee. Fight against her, and have no wish to live on terms of peace with her; rather brandish in her face shield and buckler; for in warring with her, will be thy peace; and in being at peace with her, will mean war to thee.

## 102.

A man will think himself sharp enough both to obtain his desires and to find wisdom, and he may think that he has found it; but he does not clearly understand that in the keen search for his desires he has hindered it (*i.e.*, the search for wisdom), just as a child in search of some fire takes hold of it, and places it in a fire-pan full of water.

## 103.

Conquer thy heart's desire before it conquers thee, and breaks thee; for if thou dost not rule over thine own spirit, how canst thou rule over others? Why suffer thy soul to be sullied, when, being choice, she has a place in the house of the King of kings?

## 104.

Forsake thy desire before it forsakes thee, and thou shalt be at rest. Have no longing for that which has not been allotted to thee, and thou wilt not procure for thyself trouble and labour. Rise and take unto thyself the balm of wisdom to heal thy inclinations, though they be of long standing, and deeply-rooted as the plague.

## 105.

Rejoice and be glad in thine own lot; then sorrows and sighing will flee from thee. Despair of ever attaining that which is beyond thy lot, and thou wilt find ease. Will not thy grief, on the morrow after the loss of a thing, be in proportion to the joy which thou didst experience in obtaining it?

## 106.

See, if the fire of thy desires enflame the chambers of thy heart, overstepping as it were its banks, and burn within thee as a fire raging in a forest and as a flame consuming the fields; then let the cloud of renunciation, distilling its dews within thy heart, tend to extinguish its flames.

## 107.

Take advice, and make thy desire subservient to the Fear of God; and beware lest the thickness of its bonds, acting in concert, prevent thee; for why shouldst thou ever be afraid of her injuries, even though chains and iron bars be in her hand?

CHAPTER XI.  
ON CONTENTMENT.

108.

FEAR God, who openeth the windows of heaven's favour and pours forth a blessing upon thee, and rest content with that which He hath prepared for thee, whether much or little be found in thy pocket ; then shalt thou bear thy poverty when it cometh as a traveller, and thy want as an armed man, being supported.

109.

Find thy contentment in that which thou possessest, and weary not thyself to increase desirable things ; and if thou rejoicest in thy lot as it is, even though thou hast little, thou wilt have indeed a pleasant life ; God will accept thy deeds, what matters it if they be but few, so long as they be cleanly.

110.

Eat thy bread as far as thou requirest it, in order to live and to satisfy thy wants, but do not overfeed ; for what is the use of indulging to excess, if thou must give it up in pain, and suffer burning in thy palate and throat ; or what is the use of filling thyself with loathsomeness, if thou canst stop, and not waste thy foodstuff ?

111.

Understand that food nourishes the body just as rain does the ground ; it gives sap and fat to the bones, and goes towards the growth and development of the human frame. Is it not a fact, however, that when there is too much rain, the seed becomes rotten in consequence, and you lose the whole advantage ?

112.

Enjoy of bread and water thy proper ration, and eat not more than to satiety ; for you will find that the body derives satisfaction and benefit from the little, whilst superfluity breeds discomfort. Some salt in your cooking gives it a pleasant taste ; but if you salt it too much, what's the good of swallowing it ?

113.

Have prepared a dish of greens and vegetables, as long as it's ready at meal-time. For what is the good of even fat lamb, if you have to wait for it when you're dying of hunger, and it's not forthcoming. There is a blessing in the rain that comes in its proper season; but what is the use of the rain-cloud out of season?

114.

Eat, indeed, your regular fare, and hanker not after the table of kings; for why should you bother to look for that which you will not find at the time you want it? Why lose the enjoyment of that which you can have, in searching with difficulty in the dark amid the haunts of others?

115.

Eat to your satisfaction in the house of a friend, and be glad to partake of whatever he has prepared for his own meal; for know, how much better it is to have merely a dry morsel with ease in the house of a kind and good-hearted fellow, than to have a repast of meats, fat and juicy, together with the growl of a stingy miser.

116.

Eat what you can afford to eat, and fix your ration, eating and leaving somewhat. Beware against defiling yourself with that which is prohibited, finding sufficient in that which is allowed. Let thy soul abhor the hot stench of foods which may even be more agreeable.

117.

Have thy drink mixed, diluted with water, though thou mayest have by thee new wine and musk. Say not, 'Drinkers like to have the pleasure of the strong taste, and the bright colour, so delightful to the eye'; to-morrow thou mayest be in want of it to quench thy thirst, and thou wilt not have any of it.

118.

'Tis better thou shouldst rule over thy bread and wine according to thy appetite, than that they should rule over thee; for know, that unwittingly much wine will reveal and lay bare thy heart's secret, exposing thy blemishes, with the result that they will rise against thee to thy shame,—those that were stored away and concealed within thee.

## 119.

Keep thy mouth closed, and neither eat nor drink aught until thou hast pronounced the blessing to God, thy Creator; unto Him who hath provided for thee even before He created thee, and ordained all necessaries to supply thy wants; and when thou hast eaten to satisfaction, it behoves thee a second time to bless His Name—Blessed be He.

## 120.

Make thy dwelling as firm and fixed as a house of stone, and in it be thy hand open wide; then when thou sittest therein both in summer and winter, thou shalt have rest and security under the shade of thy roof; just as the bird of freedom dwelleth in her nest; and though the tempest be great, she findeth her rest.

## 121.

Have several changes of raiment wherewith to clothe thyself decently, according to thy means; neither walk about half-dressed or in tatters, nor dress thyself in purple or embroideries; prepare thy supplies all in appropriate measure, and then things will be to thy honour and not to thy shame.

## 122.

In whatever you do, act with a plan, and arrange your outgoing methodically. Let your garments always be clean (*lit.* 'white'), and the bread of your table sufficient; and neither deck yourself in the splendour of gold and fancy-work, nor accustom yourself to partake of foods which are rich and sweet.

CHAPTER XII.  
ON INDUSTRY.

123.

FEAR God, and cast thy burden upon Him, and put not thy strength in thy substance ; for why shouldst thou be anxious to acquire worry and much toil in consequence of thy wealth ? Remember, there comes a day when thou must leave it, however much it may be—the day when ‘ the wind passeth over thee, and thou art gone.’

124.

Acquire according to what you require, and honestly too ; for why weary and worry yourself with that which is beyond your requirements ? For this you are so keen ; it is not your allotment ; why should you break into it ? All the share that you get is the labour ; the remainder is left to him who is a stranger to it.

125.

Wouldst thou be confident because thy wealth is great, even though thou didst not obtain it honestly ? Why not rather think of the day at thy latter end, when thou shalt have to give to strangers that which thou hast gotten ? Thus shalt thou be ‘ like a partridge which hatcheth, but bringeth not forth in pain.’

126.

A man who is busy labouring and toiling to gather riches, and to gain possessions, and is not satisfied the greater and richer he becomes—this one desire of his heart engrossing his whole being, is like a thirsty man who drinks salted things, thus increasing his thirst to his own discomfort.

127.

Do you stare at fools who mount on high, and marvel when they triumph with their wealth ? Does your heart mislead you, as you regard what seems their permanent power and influence, and their prosperous state ? Then open your eyes, and see ahead the thick clouds gathering, and the storm passing over them, and they are no more.

128.

The fool, when he dresses in fine style, thinks to himself that he is sure to win favour, and presumes in his passion to enter high society, being devoid of prudence; but he is as the peacock, glorying in its beautiful feathers, while revealing its shame and reproach.

129.

If a man be clever, and his knowledge burn as a fire within him, why should you lay stress on his beautiful apparel? For when night cometh, he divests himself thereof, and you would not be ashamed to have respect for his frame. Choose of the nut the kernel, and cast away the husk and shell.

130.

See the superiority of the wise over fools, even though the treasures of the latter increase and multiply! The wise possess honour in their life-time, and leave a good name as a memorial at their death; while, when their end comes, both the remembrance and the glory of fools are the same as their beasts.

131.

See, when the wise man disputes and contends with a fool, he has annoyance and disturbed peace, and is made the object of scorn. The discussions of the wise are conducted quietly and pleasantly, whilst the shameful noise of the fool is heard from afar. Would that one could write down in a book and cut out and engrave on a rock for ever (the words of the wise)!

132.

The fool exclaims in his impudent folly: 'Thanks to my intelligence, knowledge, and common-sense; thanks also to my own powers and abilities, I have been able to amass a fine amount of riches and every desirable object; I am able to obtain every wish of my heart by means of my wealth; and as for myself, pocket and knowledge are synonymous terms.'

133.

The wise man speaks: 'Hearken unto the Law and the Commandment, so that thou mayest find discipline and wisdom; for by these means thou wilt be able to fulfil thy desires, and wilt not be in want of anything. Where is there wealth comparable in worth to that of Wisdom, and what object is as desirable as Prudence?'



134.

The fool clothes himself in garments of every dye and texture. When persons in high stations, kings and princes, see him, they rise, and bow down low before him. Must not the wise man feel abashed, when he sitteth, clothed in rags, deliberating in the assembly ?

135.

The fool carries all his greatness in the clothes on his back ; and when he takes them off, he at the same time divests himself of all his glory. If then he be like an ass carrying burdens, will the name of ass be ever taken off from him ? But the wise, being precise as to his clothing, never while he lives loses the respect due to him.

136.

The fool will have dainty dishes and rich drinks, the choicest of fare ; whatever is in season is prepared for him, one meal after another, day by day ; but as for the man of knowledge, can he satisfy his hunger and dine off his knowledge, without bread and meat ?

137.

Fools eat their bread in wickedness, perfectly at ease, and drink the wine of violence, opening their mouth wide as the grave, while they are never full, hungry for more cupboards ; but as for wisdom, it keeps its professors alive without choice foods and wines.

138.

Behold, all ye inhabitants of the world, hearken, and judge in righteousness and equity, to interpret (justice) with much wisdom, which is better than rubies, great riches and substance. A man may obtain wealth by wisdom, but he cannot obtain wisdom by wealth ?

139.

Obtain money, but honestly and uprightly, in order to supply the necessaries of life. Investigate and find out what are the limits of thy household requirements ; for why shouldst thou labour for thousands and tens of thousands (of pounds) ? Of thy surplus give a portion to thy soul (*i.e.*, to spiritual needs), and await the mercies and bounties of the Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.  
ON SILENCE AND SPEECH.

140.

FEAR God with an upright heart, and sustain thy words in justice, wisdom, and sound sense. Remove from thyself frowardness of speech, and a heart devising and planning iniquity. Why shouldst thou be continually at variance, and disputing in all things like a slanderer and tale-bearer?

141.

Fear God, and place a muzzle upon thy mouth, uttering nothing deceitful before Him, thinking thereby to obtain His praise, and to find favour in His sight in thy lauding Him. Be, therefore, continually in fear and dread, trembling at His majesty and wrath.

142.

Stop thy mouth, and close its opening with the handle of a lock exceeding strong and firm, strenghtening its bolts for thy soul's sake as with an iron edge on doors of brass, which no winged bird with its light breath can easily undo.

143.

Realise that regret and remorse are of no avail in the case of three things:—A maiden when she has once lost her maidenhood; a stone when it has once been flung from the sling; and a dart when it has been shot from the bow. Thus also is it with the word of man, it cannot be recalled when it is once spoken.

144.

Open the gates of thy heart before thou openest the floodgates of thy mouth, and reflect concerning matters what their effect may be, viewing the end of a thing at the beginning. For remember, that in the power of the tongue are bound up the instruments of either death, or life and health.

145.

Rule over the words of thy mouth, and they will not rule over thee, but thou wilt be the stronger and wilt prevail. Only speak after due silence, and do not repeat what has once been said. How good and pleasant is the word spoken in its season, as the former and the latter rain which cover the cornfield !

146.

When thou sittest in the company of the wise and elders, be silent and say not much. Incline thine ear unto their words, and it will be well with thee, if these be hidden in the recesses of thy heart. Know that thy best share will be in what thy ear doth catch up, but in thy speech there will be a share that will go to others.

CHAPTER XIV.  
ON COUNSEL AND SECRETS.

147.

FEAR God, and strengthen thyself to serve Him, so that thy resolutions shall establish His Glory. Take for thy counsellors and advisers only men who are God-fearing and men of understanding, as it is said 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,' to make known unto them the counsel of wisdom and His secret.

148.

Take thy friend into thy most secret counsel, but of a thousand choose one. Then turn from thine own unto his advice, provided thy intellect be as clear and serene as his; for thou possibly wilt see only that which meets the eye, whilst he will see the matter from all sides.

149.

Choose of thy fellows men of reliance, whose hearts will be closed by the bars thou'lt place upon them, and whose lips will be sealed by thy bolts, so that thou be not moved nor slip, by reason of any flaw in the construction of thy plans. Before thou dost store thy produce, dost thou not construct round about it a building, and plaister it with plaister?

150.

See to it that before thou revealest thy secret to any man, he render his heart as closed as a grave in thy behalf. And if thou dost not settle this matter on mutual terms, why shouldst thou charge thy friend and fellow with guilt? With whom wouldst thou be angry, if thou placest thy oil in a broken and shattered vessel with a hole in it?

151.

Dost thou desire the reward of thy labour, to be sure of it, so that thy projects result in success? Then beware lest thou introduce thy baser desires into thy secret plans, and that thou frettest not thyself on account of the evil. Thus shalt thou ensure success to thy counsels, and mountains (of difficulties) shalt thou render level as the plain and the vale

## 152.

Guard the entrances of thy heart, and reveal not unto a woman dear to thee the secret which thou hast; for in the day that she becomes sullen she will tell it, and then thy blood will come upon thine own head. But if her heart have but small cause to rejoice (in secrets), what proceeds from her lips will be heard as a defence to thy joy (*i.e.*, she will not disturb it).

## 153.

When thou openest thy heart unto a man unto whom thou shouldst not reveal things, understand that thou hast thereby made him thy lord and master; thou hast become a slave after having been a freeman, having been entrapped in his net. Beware lest thou send away thy gift into the desert; thou hast no longer power over it to claim it.

## 154.

See, if others entrust thee with their greatest secrets, why shouldst thou expose thy heart's defects by foolishly betraying such profound and hidden things. Better suffer the pangs of vomiting in the case of the morsel which thou hast swallowed, than help to bring to light the victim bound in the prison-house.

## 155.

See, when thy friend consults thee and asks thy advice owing to his confidence in thee, give him the most loyal and upright counsel possible, as a true Israelite should; this is the kindness and consideration expected of thee. Furthermore, why shouldst thou play the hypocrite with thy tongue? Art thou able to conceal from God what is deep down in thy heart?

## 156.

Fix a suitable spot under the heavens for disclosing thy secret; for why wouldst thou destroy men of uprightness? Understand, that the stones cry out of the wall, and the rafter speaks forth what is in the innermost recesses. Lower, therefore, thy voice when thou givest counsel at even-tide, and look about at thy surroundings when thou givest it at morning-dawn.

CHAPTER XV.  
ON DIGNITY AND DOMINION.

157.

FEAR God, and strengthen thyself to serve Him, for He formed thee to do Him honour. Think little of thy honour in comparison with His, and lower thine eyes in His presence. Understand that he who honours his Master will be honoured, and receive glory before Him.

158.

Flee from dominion, yea, even if it pursue thee to lay hold of thee, and fly from it when it does follow after thee; for her race is swift, when thou fleest from her, until she overtake thee. But if thou shouldst follow and run after her, yea, while in thy flight thou hast her by the heel, she will thrust thee off.

159.

Find thine honour in delightful actions; why try to find it in haughtiness of heart? Understand that a man's pride is his shame, and leads him on to follow as a dog; whilst the lowly in spirit is oft placed at the head of a people, however despised he may be in his own sight, however much the derision in which he may be held.

160.

One who is boastful of his learning, and anxious to rejoice in a great name like that of men of renown, and is continually mounting higher in the flights of his proud imagination, flitting and hovering over the habitations of the great—as regards such a one, have nothing to do with him, and measure not thyself according to his intelligence and learning, for his learning is that of fools.

161.

Should thy heart be exalted on account of the position and honour which fall to thy lot, and shouldst thou imagine in the greatness of thy thoughts that all that befalls thee is in consequence of thine own strength; understand, that in proportion to thy ascent on high will be the down-grade resulting in thy destruction.

162.

For three things men are honoured in life, but two of them have slippery edges. Men are honoured either for their wealth or for their station, commanding strong positions. But does not such honour turn at the turn of Fortune? And what remains of it all but a stumbling-block?

163.

The third heritage of honour, however, is given to thee of God; this is the real honour; thou canst acquire it by God's service and by a lowly disposition, if thou ledest it on gently. But in the day on which thy heart becometh proud, it vanisheth and departeth as the traveller at his opportunity.

164.

Modesty, which is the heritage of birth, will never leave thee unto the finish; but if thou hastenest to show thyself in the perfume-house (of fame), in the sight of man it will disappear on that very day. It may be likened to good wine which has settled on its lees, but which, on being poured out, loses its scent and flavour.

165.

Fear God, and honour thy parents, for in their honour thou wilt ever find thine own honour. Realise and call to mind the toil which they have endured on thy account, and consider when thou wilt be able to help them in their labours. He who dispenseth rewards will surely repay thee the kindness and consideration which thou showest to those who have loaded thee with their bounties.

166.

Canst thou forget her who did nurse thee and gave thee suck, though she be grown old? Wouldst thou mock at thy father now grown grey? Who knoweth even whether thou wilt inherit their gold, or whether, in the whirligig of Time, they may not inherit that which is thine? Maybe old age will be thy lot, and thou wilt find thy reward both in this world and in the next.

167.

Show thyself great in giving every man the respect due to him, and then thou wilt receive honour and respect accordingly; for when thou dost esteem thyself lightly, thou wilt raise thyself in their estimation and win a good prize. So think little of thine own honour in the presence of thy King, and be humble and subservient to Him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### ON DELIBERATION AND HASTE.

168.

FEAR God, and await His mercies, and hope for His continuous help. Hope deferred, 'tis true, maketh a man sick; but there is healing in hoping unto Him, for it is in His power to bring the thing to pass, which is ordered and held in reserve by Him.

169.

Have fear, and do thy work with deliberation, and ride not upon the cloud of haste. Will that man be ensnared who directs his steps aright in accord with perfect equity, walking uprightly? But a man who is in haste to have the tip of his ear bored, can he escape? Will he go forth to his freedom?

170.

Do with deliberation that which thou hast not yet attempted; for why wilt thou tear down the height of what has been built already? If thou be in a hurry to begin some undertaking, always look to the end at its beginning; plough violently the furrows of thy thoughts and ideas, and then thou wilt be able to produce timely and seasonable fruit.

171.

See what an advantage it is to be deliberate, for in this case the end of a thing brings not its regret with it. It is right to think a matter well out, and to give it full consideration, whether it be a case of doing or speaking; for how good a thing it is when the conception be perfect; whilst hurried action may be compared to a birth that goes prematurely to the oblivion of the grave.

172.

Two made a start from their resting-place, and betook themselves on the way. The one who proceeded cautiously reached the goal, whilst he who ran felt his feet slipping. Before the winged bird has mounted on high, the hawk without wing soars aloft, and is destroyed.



CHAPTER XVII.  
ON VISITING AND ITS ABUSE.

173.

FEAR God, and visit His Temple morning and evening, to seek His mercies; accustom thyself, too, to visit the god-fearing in sincerity and truth, and not in a false manner. As regards thy friend's house, weigh thy steps and regulate them judiciously, paying thy visits but rarely.

174.

When thou visitest the king and princes, remain silent rather than multiply words. Make thy call at the opportune moment, and with no light gait. Make thy step firm as brass; whilst in returning, be as quick as the eagle.

175.

Understand that he who pays daily visits will be regarded as of no account, nay, he will be considered a bore. How much better is it not to pay frequent and continuous visits! Let this be your guide and motto: 'The rain which comes continuously makes people tired of it, whilst they welcome it with gratitude as soon as it is kept back.'

176.

How good it is to pay your calls (at intervals) for a few moments, for then you will become neither a bore nor a burden; but if you are sure that your company is agreeable, then have the courage to enjoy more of the honey according to the full limit. At New-Moon it is customary to pronounce the benediction, because for a couple of days the moon has been hidden from view.

177.

How good and pleasant it is for friends to visit each other in times of joy and sorrow, and to be prepared constantly to share each other's burdens and troubles, though it may cost a sacrifice, and mean stooping down. But keep strange, and do not be in a hurry to call and face a man, when he has fallen into disgrace.

178.

Visit thy own confidential friend, and do not make too many calls on your intimate's household, that is, if you be instructed in the fear of Heaven, and your instruction be supported by practical rules. For generally foolish talk will deal falsely with the generous one, and impugn his truthfulness with a taint of falsehood.

179.

Pay an occasional visit to a man when sick, for in such visit there is relief; put, however, a muzzle over your mouth and walk in gently; and if you remain any length of time, it will be resented. Should he, however, be seriously ill, refrain from visiting him, and rather offer up prayer for his recovery.

180.

Realise that words when they ascend in the balance are weighty; so do not think to lighten thine own heart and soul by letting them come glibly out of thy mouth. Why shouldst thou bother others with the weight of thy words, when thou canst not bear them thyself?

181.

When men ask thy opinion concerning a difficult question which is being raised and weighed in the balance, give them a direct reply, even if it be heavy for the heart of man to bear; and even though the question be light as mountain chaff, let it be like a bar of iron and lead (*i.e.*, as though it were a matter of weight); give it thy proper attention.

CHAPTER XVIII.  
ON LOVE AND COMPANIONSHIP.

182.

FEAR God, and place His love and fear in thy heart firmly planted ; also love those who fear Him, and their companionship choose thou in thy friendship ; for can the man of fear be found who would kick at the love of truth, fixed in his breast ?

183.

Love the friend who is true to thee, and let his companionship be kept by thee. Devote thyself to him with might and main when he stands in need of thy help ; for this is the most generous form of love ; it is the most glorious kind of affection, resulting from companionship.

184.

As for him who is thy friend for the purpose of getting at times what he wants from thee all to his own advantage, but who when thou requirest him lies hidden and concealed, give him up and stop thy friendship, for what benefit dost thou derive from words smooth as butter ?

185.

The acquisition of friends constant and true is a good thing, and their love is worth keeping ; thou shouldst even close thine eyes and pretend not to see their faults, wilful or otherwise. Can the potter join the fragments of earthenware once broken asunder, and can they be renewed when once destroyed ?

186.

When thou obtainest servants to minister to thy wants, think that as long as they remain in thy possession, they remain but as servants ; then why not obtain and attach to thyself freemen, those of noble and exalted station, gaining them by suavity of speech and winning language, by constant attentions and kindness of action ?

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