

## The Message

### Proverbs 1

These are the wise sayings of Solomon,  
David's son, Israel's king--  
Written down so we'll know how to live well and right,  
to understand what life means and where it's going;  
A manual for living,  
for learning what's right and just and fair;  
To teach the inexperienced the ropes  
and give our young people a grasp on reality.  
There's something here also for seasoned men and women,  
still a thing or two for the experienced to learn--  
Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate,  
the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women.  
Start with God  
Start with GOD--the first step in learning is bowing down to GOD;  
only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.  
Pay close attention, friend, to what your father tells you;  
never forget what you learned at your mother's knee.  
Wear their counsel like flowers in your hair,  
like rings on your fingers.  
Dear friend, if bad companions tempt you,  
don't go along with them.  
If they say--"Let's go out and raise some hell.  
Let's beat up some old man, mug some old woman.  
Let's pick them clean  
and get them ready for their funerals.  
We'll load up on top-quality loot.  
We'll haul it home by the truckload.  
Join us for the time of your life!  
With us, it's share and share alike!"-  
Oh, friend, don't give them a second look;  
don't listen to them for a minute.  
They're racing to a very bad end,  
hurrying to ruin everything they lay hands on.  
Nobody robs a bank  
with everyone watching,  
Yet that's what these people are doing--  
they're doing themselves in.  
**When you grab all you can get, that's what happens:  
the more you get, the less you are.**

#### *Lady Wisdom*

Lady Wisdom goes out in the street and shouts.  
At the town center she makes her speech.  
In the middle of the traffic she takes her stand.  
At the busiest corner she calls out:  
"Simpletons! How long will you wallow in ignorance?  
Cynics! How long will you feed your cynicism?  
Idiots! How long will you refuse to learn?  
About face! I can revise your life.

Look, I'm ready to pour out my spirit on you;  
I'm ready to tell you all I know.  
As it is, I've called, but you've turned a deaf ear;  
I've reached out to you, but you've ignored me.  
"Since you laugh at my counsel  
and make a joke of my advice,  
How can I take you seriously?  
I'll turn the tables and joke about your troubles!  
What if the roof falls in,  
and your whole life goes to pieces?  
What if catastrophe strikes and there's nothing  
to show for your life but rubble and ashes?  
You'll need me then. You'll call for me, but don't expect an  
answer.  
No matter how hard you look, you won't find me.  
"Because you hated Knowledge  
and had nothing to do with the Fear-of-GOD,  
Because you wouldn't take my advice  
and brushed aside all my offers to train you,  
Well, you've made your bed--now lie in it;  
you wanted your own way--now, how do you like it?  
Don't you see what happens, you simpletons, you idiots?  
Carelessness kills; complacency is murder.  
First pay attention to me, and then relax.  
Now you can take it easy--you're in good hands."

## Amos 5

[...]  
Now again, my Master's Message, GOD, God-of-the-Angel-Armies:  
"Go out into the streets and lament loudly!  
Fill the malls and shops with cries of doom!  
Weep loudly, "Not me! Not us, Not now!"  
Empty offices, stores, factories, workplaces.  
Enlist everyone in the general lament.  
I want to hear it loud and clear when I make my visit."  
GOD's Decree.  
Time to Face Hard Reality, Not Fantasy  
Woe to all of you who want GOD's Judgment Day!  
Why would you want to see GOD, want him to come?  
When GOD comes, it will be bad news before it's good news,  
the worst of times, not the best of times.  
Here's what it's like: A man runs from a lion  
right into the jaws of a bear.  
A woman goes home after a hard day's work  
and is raped by a neighbor.  
At GOD's coming we face hard reality, not fantasy--  
a black cloud with no silver lining.  
"I can't stand your religious meetings.  
I'm fed up with your conferences and conventions.  
I want nothing to do with your religion projects,  
your pretentious slogans and goals."

I'm sick of your fund-raising schemes,  
your public relations and image making.  
I've had all I can take of your noisy ego-music.  
When was the last time you sang to me?  
Do you know what I want?  
I want justice--oceans of it.  
I want fairness--rivers of it.  
That's what I want. That's all I want.

"Didn't you, dear family of Israel, worship me faithfully for  
forty years in the wilderness, bringing the sacrifices and  
offerings I commanded? How is it you've stooped to dragging  
gimcrack statues of your so-called rulers around, hauling the  
cheap images of all your star-gods here and there? Since you  
like them so much, you can take them with you when I drive you  
into exile beyond Damascus." GOD's Message,  
God-of-the-Angel-Armies.