

SEVEN

THE PATH OF LIFE¹

I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life.²

In this Section I have collected passages containing summary rules of living. I have refrained from quoting some of the better known, and I have reserved the Ten Commandments for a Section (and 'commentary') of their own (8). One notes throughout the intense practicality of the demands made on man: even the divine ideal of Holiness is brought to earth by specific definition. At the same time the 'heart' is not forgotten. All action comes from disposition and purpose.

The constant call to 'righteousness' should not be misunderstood. The word itself seems to have gone out of modern usage and it has certainly lost its appeal. But the personal quality intended by it—it has been said to be 'the humanitarian virtue par excellence'—remains a primary requirement of morals. Righteousness is not to be confused with self-righteousness.

I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect.³

These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbour; execute the judgement of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.⁴

¹Ps. 16: 11.

²Deut. 30: 19.

³Gen. 17: 1.

⁴Zech. 8: 16-17.

Lord, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh truth in his heart.
He that slandereth not with his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his friend,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
In whose eyes a reprobate is despised;
But he honoureth them that fear the Lord.
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
He that putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.

He that doeth these things shall never be moved.¹

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.²

I delivered the poor that cried,
The fatherless also, that had none to help him.
The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:

And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:

My justice was as a robe and a diadem.

I was eyes to the blind,

And feet was I to the lame.

I was a father to the needy:

And the cause of him that I knew not I searched out.³

Thus hath the Lord of hosts spoken, saying, Execute true judgement, and shew mercy and compassion every

¹Ps. 15.

²Isa. 1: 16-17.

³Job 29: 12-16.

man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.¹

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

A perfect and just weight shalt thou have; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, even all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God.²

Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother.

Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.³

And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, we pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother.

Now the men observed diligently, and hasted to catch whether it were his mind; and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad.

Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up

¹Zech. 7: 9-10.

²Deut. 25: 13-16.

³Deut. 23: 7.

into the chariot. And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.

And I, said Ahab, will let thee go with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and let him go.¹

When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man, that it should be besieged of thee?²

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.³

And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them.

Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink.⁴

If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young.⁵

Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.⁶

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.⁷

¹1 Kings 20: 30-34.

²Deut. 20: 19.

³Prov. 25: 21.

⁴2 Kings 6: 21-22.

⁵Deut. 22: 6.

⁶Deut. 22: 10.

⁷Deut. 25: 4.

And ye shall be holy men unto me: therefore ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.¹

For I am the Lord that brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.²

Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle among thy weapons; and it shall be, when thou sittest down abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: for the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy.³

And thou shalt not defile the land which ye inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell: for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the children of Israel.⁴

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.

For [only] if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: [only] then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.⁵

¹Exod. 22: 31.
²Lev. 11: 45.

³Deut. 23: 12-14.
⁴Num. 35: 34.

⁵Jer. 7: 4-7.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.¹

Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy. Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and ye shall keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.

Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God. . . .

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God.

Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie to one another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, so that thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.

Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbour, nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord.

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgement: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the Lord.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbour, and not bear sin because of him. Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor

¹Isa. 65: 25.

bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.¹

When thou dost lend thy neighbour any manner of loan, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt stand without, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring forth the pledge without unto thee.

And if he be a poor man, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: thou shalt surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his garment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God.²

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it home to thine house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. And so shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his garment; and so shalt thou do with every lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found: thou mayest not hide thyself.

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.³

Thou shalt not take up a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to turn aside after a

¹Lev. 19: 2-4, 9-18.

²Deut. 24: 10-13.

³Exod. 22: 1-4.

multitude to wrest judgement: neither shalt thou favour a poor man in his cause.

If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

Thou shalt not wrest the judgement of thy poor in his cause. Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not.¹

If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant,

When they contended with me:

What then shall I do when God riseth up?

And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?

Did not he that made me in the womb make him?

And did not one fashion us in the womb?

If I have withheld the poor from their desire,

Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;

Or have eaten my morsel alone,

And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

(Nay, from my youth he grew up with me as with a father,

And I have been her guide from my mother's womb;)

If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,

Or that the needy had no covering;

If his loins have not blessed me,

And if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;

If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless,

Because I saw my help in the gate:

Then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade,

And mine arm be broken from the bone.

¹Exod. 23: 1-7.

For calamity from God was a terror to me,
And by reason of his excellency I could do nothing.

If I have made gold my hope,
And have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence;
If I rejoiced because my wealth was great,
And because mine hand had gotten much;
If I beheld the sun when it shined,
Or the moon walking in brightness;
And my heart hath been secretly enticed,
And my mouth hath kissed my hand:
This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judges:
For I should have lied to God that is above.

If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
Or lifted up myself when evil found him;
(Yea, I suffered not my mouth to sin
By asking his life with a curse;)
If the men of my tent said not,
Who can find one that hath not been satisfied with his
flesh?

The stranger did not lodge in the street;
But I opened my doors to the traveller.¹

Thou shalt not deliver unto his master a servant which
is escaped from his master unto thee.²

Hide the outcasts; bewray not the wanderer.³

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the
Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say.

Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgement
in the gate.⁴

Let judgement roll down as waters, and righteousness
as a mighty stream.⁵

¹Job 31: 13-32.

²Deut. 23: 15

³Isa. 16: 3.

⁴Amos 5: 14-15.

⁵Amos 5: 24.

What man is he that desireth life,
And loveth many days, that he may see good?
Keep thy tongue from evil,
And thy lips from speaking guile.¹

Amend your ways and your doings.²

Seek righteousness, seek meekness.³

Rend your heart, and not your garments.⁴

Consider your ways.⁵

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy
might.⁶

Open thy mouth for the dumb,
In the cause of all such as are left desolate.
Open thy mouth, judge righteously,
And minister judgement to the poor and needy.⁷

Love truth and peace.⁸

Seek peace, and pursue it.⁹

Thou shalt not revile the gods [of other people].¹⁰

Two things have I asked of thee;
Deny me them not before I die:
Remove far from me vanity and lies:
Give me neither poverty nor riches.¹¹

¹Ps. 34: 12-13.

²Jer. 7: 3.

³Zeph. 2: 3.

⁴Joel 2: 13.

⁵Hag. 1: 5.

⁶Eccles. 9: 10.

⁷Prov. 31: 8-9.

⁸Zech. 8: 19.

⁹Ps. 34: 14.

¹⁰Exod. 22: 28 (A)—
an early rendering.

¹¹Prov. 30: 7-8.

In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great kindness unto David my father, and hast made me king in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?

And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of them that hate thee, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour.¹

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.²

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and declare unto my people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways: as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God, they ask of me righteous ordinances, they delight to draw near unto God.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find your own pleasure, and exact all your labours.

¹2 Chron. 1: 7-12.

²Eccles. 9: 7.

Behold, ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye fast not this day so as to make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I have chosen? the day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.¹

The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.²

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
And hath not sworn deceitfully.³

¹Isa. 58: 1-9.

²Chron. 15: 2.

³Ps. 24: 3-4.

He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly;
he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh
his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears
from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from
looking upon evil; he shall dwell on high.¹

¹Isa. 33: 15-16.