

The Instruction of Amenemope

The beginning of the instruction about life,
The guide for well-being,
All the principles of official procedure,
The duties of the courtiers;
To know how to refute the accusation of one who made it,
And to send back a reply to the one who wrote,
To set one straight on the paths of life,
And make him prosper on earth;
To let his heart settle down in its chapel,
As one who steers him clear of evil;
To save him from the talk of others,
As one who is respected in the speech of men.
Written by the superintendent of the land, experienced in his office,
The offspring of a scribe of the Beloved Land,
The Superintendent of produce, who fixes the grain measure,
Who sets the grain tax amount for his lord,
Who registers the islands which appear as new land over the cartouche of His Majesty,
And sets up the land mark at the boundary of the arable land,
Who protects the king by his tax rolls,
And makes the Register of the Black land.
The scribe who places the divine offerings for all the gods,
The donor of land grants to the people,
The superintendent of grain who administers the food offerings,
Who supplies the storerooms with grain
A truly silent man in Tjeni in the Ta-wer nome,
One whose verdict is "acquitted" in Ipu,
The owner of a pyramid tomb on the west of Senut,
As well as the owner of a memorial chapel in Abydos,
Amenemope, the son of Kanakht,
Whose verdict is "acquitted" in the Ta-wer nome.
For his son, the youngest of his children,
The least of his family,
Initiate of the mysteries of Min-Kamutef,
Libation pourer of Wennofre,
Who introduces Horus upon the throne of his father,
His stolist in his august chapel,

.....
The seer of the Mother of God,
The inspector of the black cattle of the terrace of Min,
Who protects Min in his chapel,
Hoermmaakheru is his true name,
A child of an official of Ipu,
The son of the sistrum player of Shu and Tefnut,
The chief singer of Horus, the Lady Tawosret.

He Says: Chapter 1

Give your years and hear what is said,
Give your mind over to their interpretation:
It is profitable to put them in your heart,
But woe to him that neglects them!
Let them rest in the shrine of your insides
That they may act as a lock in your heart;
Now when there comes a storm of words,
They will be a mooring post on your tongue.
If you spend a lifetime with these things in your heart,
You will find it good fortune;
You will discover my words to be a treasure house of life,
And your body will flourish upon earth.

Chapter 2

Beware of stealing from a miserable man
And of raging against the cripple.
Do not stretch out your hand to touch an old man,
Nor snip at the words of an elder.
Don't let yourself be involved in a fraudulent business,
Not desire the carrying out of it;
Do not get tired because of being interfered with,
Nor return an answer on your own.
The evildoer, throw him <in> the canal,
And he will bring back its slime.
The north wind comes down and ends his appointed hour,
It is joined to the tempest;
The thunder is high, the crocodiles are nasty,
O hot-headed man, what are you like?
he cries out, and his voice (reaches) heaven.
O Moon, make his crime manifest!
Row that we may ferry the evil man away,
For we will not act according to his evil nature;
Lift him up, give him your hand,
And leave him <in> the hands of god;
Fill his gut with your own food
That he may be sated and ashamed.
Something else of value in the heart of God
Is to stop and think before speaking.

Chapter 3

Do not get into a quarrel with the argumentative man
Nor incite him with words;
Proceed cautiously before an opponent,
And give way to an adversary;
Sleep on it before speaking,
For a storm come forth like fire in hay is
The hot-headed man in his appointed time.

May you be restrained before him;
Leave him to himself,
And God will know how to answer him.
If you spend your life with these things in your heart,
Your children shall behold them.

Chapter 4

The hot-headed man in the temple
Is like a tree grown indoors;
Only for a moment does it put forth roots.
It reaches its end in the carpentry shop,
It is floated away far from its place,
Or fire is its funeral pyre.
The truly temperate man sets himself apart,
He is like a tree grown in a sunlit field,
But it flourishes, it doubles its yield,
It stands before its owner;
Its fruit is something sweet, its shade is pleasant,
And it reaches its end as a statue.

Chapter 5

Do not take by violence the shares of the temple,
Do not be grasping, and you will find overabundance;
Do not take away a temple servant
In order to acquire the property of another man.
Do not say today is the same as tomorrow,
Or how will matters come to pass?
When tomorrow comes, today is past;
The deep waters sink from the canal bank,
Crocodiles are uncovered, the hippopotamuses are on dry land,
And the fishes gasping for air;
The wolves are fat, the wild fowl in festival,
And the nets are drained.
Every temperate man in the temple says,
"Great is the benevolence of Re."
Fill yourself with silence, you will find life,
And your body shall flourish upon earth.

Chapter 6

Do not displace the surveyor's marker on the boundaries of the arable land,
Nor alter the position of the measuring line;
Do not be greedy for a plot of land,
Nor overturn the boundaries of a widow.
As for the road in the field worn down by time,
He who takes it violently for fields,
If he traps by deceptive attestations,
Will be lassoed by the might of the moon.
To one who has done this on earth, pay attention,
For he is a weak enemy;

He is an enemy overturned inside himself;
Life is taken from his eye;
His household is hostile to the community,
His storerooms are toppled over,
His property taken from his children,
And to someone else his possessions given.
Take care not to topple over the boundary marks of the arable land,
Not fearing that you will be brought to court;
Man propitiates God by the might of the Lord
When he sets straight the boundaries of the arable land.
Desire, then, to make yourself prosper,
And take care for the Lord of All;
Do not trample on the furrow of someone else,
Their good order will be profitable for you.
So plough the fields, and you will find whatever you need,
And receive the bread from your own threshing floor:
Better is the bushel which God gives you
Than five thousand deceitfully gotten;
They do not spend a day in the storehouse or warehouse,
They are no use for dough for beer;
Their stay in the granary is short-lived,
When morning comes they will be swept away.
Better, then, is poverty in the hand of God
Than riches in the storehouse;
Better is bread when the mind is at ease
Than riches with anxiety.

Chapter 7

Do not set your heart upon seeking riches,
For there is no one who can ignore Destiny and Fortune;
Do not set your thoughts on external matters:
For every man there is his appointed time.
Do not exert yourself to seek out excess
And your wealth will prosper for you;
If riches come to you by theft
They will not spend the night with you;
As soon as day breaks they will not be in your household;
Although their places can be seen, they are not there.
When the earth opens up its mouth, it levels him and swallows him up,
And it drowns him in the deep;
They have made for themselves a great hole which suites them.
And they have sunk themselves in the tomb;
Or they have made themselves wings like geese,
And they fly up to the sky.
Do not be pleased with yourself (because of) riches acquired through robbery,
Neither complain about poverty.
If an officer commands one who goes in front of him,

His company leaves him;
The boat of the covetous is abandoned <in> the mud,
While the skiff of the truly temperate man sails on.
When he rises you shall offer to the Aten,
Saying, "Grant me prosperity and health."
And he will give you your necessities for life,
And you will be safe from fear.

Chapter 8

Set your good deeds throughout the world
That you may greet everyone;
They make rejoicing for the Uraeus,
And spit against the Apophis.
Keep your tongue safe from words of detraction,
And you will be the loved one of the people,
Then you will find your place within the temple
And your offerings among the bread deliveries of your lord;
You will be revered, when you are concealed <in> your grave,
And be safe from the might of God.
Do not accuse a man,
When the news of an escape is concealed.
If you hear something good or bad,
Say it outside, where it is not heard;
Set a good report on your tongue,
While the bad thing is covered up inside you.

Chapter 9

Do not fraternize with the hot-tempered man,
Nor approach him to converse.
Safeguard your tongue from answering your superior,
And take care not to speak against him.
Do not allow him to cast words only to entrap you,
And be not too free in your reply;
With a man of your own station discuss the reply;
And take care of speaking thoughtlessly;
When a man's heart is upset, words travel faster
Than wind and rain.
He is ruined and created by his tongue,
And yet he speaks slander;
He makes an answer deserving of a beating,
For its work is evil;
He sails among all the world,
But his cargo is false words;
He acts the ferryman in knitting words:
He goes forth and comes back arguing.
But whether he eats or whether he drinks inside,
His accusation (waits for him) without.
They day when his evil deed is brought to court

Is a disaster for his children.
Even Khnum will straightway come, even Khnum will straightway come,
The creator of the ill-tempered man
Whom he molds and fires....;
He is like a wolf cub in the farmyard,
And he turns one eye to the other (squinting),
For he sets families to argue.
He goes before all the wind like clouds,
He darkens his color in the sun;
He crocks his tail like a baby crocodile,
He curls himself up to inflict harm,
His lips are sweet, but his tongue is bitter,
And fire burns inside him.
Do not fly up to join that man
Not fearing you will be brought to account.

Chapter 10

Do not address your intemperate friend in your unrighteousness,
Nor destroy your own mind;
Do not say to him, "May you be praised,": not meaning it
When there is fear within you.
Do not converse falsely with a man,
For it is the abomination of God.
Do not separate your mind from your tongue,
All your plans will succeed.
You will be important before others,
While you will be secure in the hand of God.
God hates one who falsified words,
His great abomination is duplicity.

Chapter 11

Do not covet the property of the dependent
Nor hunger for his bread;
The property of a dependent blocks the throat,
It is vomit for the gullet.
If he has engendered it by false oaths,
His heart slips back inside him.
It is through the disaffected that success is lost,
Bad and good elude.
If you are at a loss before your superior,
And are confused in your speeches,
Your flattering are turned back with curses,
And your humble action by beatings.
Whoever fills the mouth with too much bread swallows it and spits up,
So he is emptied of his good.
To the examination of a dependant give thought
While the sticks touch him,
And while all his people are fettered with manacles:

Who is to have the execution?

When you are too free before your superior,
Then you are in bad favor with your subordinates,
So steer away from the poor man on the road,
That you may see him but keep clear of his property.

Chapter 12

Do not covet the property of an official,
And do not fill (your) mouth with too much food extravagantly;
If he sets you to manage his property,
Respect his, and yours will prosper.
Do not deal with the intemperate man,
Nor associate yourself to a disloyal party.
If you are sent to transport straw,
Respect its account;
If a man is detected in a dishonest transaction,
Never again will he be employed.

Chapter 13

Do not lead a man astray <with> reed pen or papyrus document:
It is the abomination of God.
Do not witness a false statement,
Nor remove a man (from the list) by your order;
Do not enroll someone who has nothing,
Nor make your pen be false.
If you find a large debt against a poor man,
Make it into three parts;
Release two of them and let one remain:
You will find it a path of life;
You will pass the night in sound sleep; in the morning
You will find it like good news.
Better it is to be praised as one loved by men
Than wealth in the storehouse;
Better is bread when the mind is at ease
Than riches with troubles.

Chapter 14

Do not pay attention to a person,
Nor exert yourself to seek out his hand,
If he says to you, "take a bribe,"
It is not an insignificant matter to heed him;
Do not avert your glance from him, nor bend down your head,
Nor turn aside your gaze.
Address him with your words and say to him greetings;
When he stops, your chance will come;
Do not repel him at his first approach,
Another time he will be brought (to judgment).

Chapter 15

Do well, and you will attain influence.
Do not dip (your) reed against the one who sins.
The beak of the Ibis is the finger of the scribe;
Take care not to disturb it;
The Ape (Thoth) rests (in) the temple of Khmun,
While his eye travels around the Two Lands;
If he sees one who sins with his finger (that is, a false scribe),
he takes away his provisions by the flood.
As for a scribe who sins with his finger,
His son shall not be enrolled.
If you spend your life with these things in your heart,
Your children shall see them.

Chapter 16

Do not unbalance the scale nor make the weights false,
Nor diminish the fractions of the grain measure;
Do not wish for the grain measures of the fields
And then cast aside those of the treasury.
The Ape sits by the balance,
While his heart is the plummet.
Where is a god as great as Thoth
The one who discovered these things, to create them?
Do not get for yourself short weights;
They are plentiful, yea, an army by the might of God.
If you see someone cheating,
At a distance you must pass him by.
Do not be avaricious for copper,
And abjure fine clothes;
What good is one cloaked in fine linen woven as mek,
When he cheats before God.
When gold is heaped upon gold,
At daybreak it turns to lead.

Chapter 17

Beware of robbing the grain measure
To falsify its fractions;
Do not act wrongfully through force,
Although it is empty inside;
May you have it measure exactly as to its size,
Your hand stretching out with precision.
Make not for yourself a measure of two capacities,
For then it is toward the depths that you will go.
The measure is the eye of Re,
Its abomination is the one who takes.
As for a grain measurer who multiplies and subtracts,
His eye will seal up against him.
Do not receive the harvest tax of a cultivator,
Nor bind up a papyrus against him to lead him astray.

Do not enter into collusion with the grain measurer,
Nor play with the seed allotment,
More important is the threshing floor for barley
Than swearing by the Great Throne.

Chapter 18

Do not go to bed fearing tomorrow,
For when day breaks what is tomorrow?
Man knows not what tomorrow is!
God is success,
Man is failure.
The words which men say pass on one side,
The things which God does pass on another side.
Do not say, "I am without fault,"
Nor try to seek out trouble.
Fault is the business of God,
It is locked up with his seal.
There is no success in the hand of God,
Nor is there failure before Him;
If he turns himself about to seek out success,
In a moment He destroys him.
Be strong in your heart, make your mind firm,
Do not steer with your tongue;
The tongue of a man is the steering oar of a boat,
And the Lord of All is its pilot.

Chapter 19

Do not enter the council chamber in the presence of a magistrate
And then falsify your speech.
Do not go up and down with your accusation
When your witnesses stand readied.
Do not overstate <through> oaths in the name of your lord,
<Through> pleas <in> the place of questioning.
Tell the truth before the magistrate,
lest he gain power over your body;
If you come before him the next day,
He will concur with all you say;
He will present your case <in> court before the Council of the Thirty,
And it will be lenient another time as well.

Chapter 20

Do not corrupt the people of the law court,
Nor put aside the just man,
Do not agree because of garments of white,
Nor accept one in rags.
Take not the gift of the strong man,
Nor repress the weak for him.
Justice is a wonderful gift of God,
And He will render it to whomever he wishes.

The strength of one like him
Saves a poor wretch from his beatings.
Do not make false enrollment lists,
For they are a serious affair deserving death;
They are serious oaths of the kind promising not to misuse an office,
And they are to be investigated by an informer.
Do not falsify the oracles on a papyrus
And (thereby) alter the designs of God.
Do not arrogate to yourself the might of God
As if Destiny and Fortune did not exist.
Hand property over to its (rightful) owners,
And seek out life for yourself;
Let not your heart build in their house,
for then your neck will be on the execution block.

Chapter 21

Do not say, I have found a strong protector
And now I can challenge a man in my town.
Do not say, I have found an active intercessor,
And now I can challenge him whom I hate.
Indeed, you cannot know the plans of God;
You cannot perceive tomorrow.
Sit yourself at the hands of God:
Your tranquility will cause them to open.
As for the crocodile deprived of his tongue,
the fear of him is negligible.
Empty not your soul to everybody
And do not diminish thereby your importance;
Do not circulate your words to others,
Nor fraternize with one who is too candid.
Better is a man whose knowledge is inside him
Than one who talks to disadvantage.
One cannot run to attain perfection;
One cannot create (only) to destroy it.

Chapter 22

Do not castigate your companion in a dispute,
And do not <let> him say his innermost thoughts;
Do not fly up to greet him
When you do not see how he acts.
May you first comprehend his accusation
And cool down your opponent.
Leave it to him and he will empty his soul;
Sleep knows how to find him out;
Take his feet, do not bother him;
Fear him, do not underestimate him.
Indeed, you cannot know the plans of God,
You cannot perceive tomorrow.

Sit yourself at the hands of God;
Your tranquility will cause them to open.

Chapter 23

Do not eat a meal in the presence of a magistrate,
Nor set to speaking first.

If you are satisfied with false words,
Enjoy yourself with your spittle.

Look at the cup in front of you,
And let it suffice your need.

Even as a noble is important in his office,
He is like the abundance of a well when it is drawn.

Chapter 24

Do not listen to the accusation of an official indoors,
And then repeat it to another outside.

Do not allow your discussions to be brought outside
So that your heart will not be grieved.

the heart of a man is the beak of the God,
So take care not to slight it;

A man who stands <at> the side of an official
Should not have his name known (in the street).

Chapter 25

Do not jeer at a blind man nor tease a dwarf,
Neither interfere with the condition of a cripple;
Do not taunt a man who is in the hand of God,
Nor scowl at him if he errs.

Man is clay and straw,
And God is his potter;

He overthrows and he builds daily,
He impoverishes a thousand if He wishes.

He makes a thousand into examiners,
When He is in His hour of life.

How fortunate is he who reaches the West,
When he is safe in the hand of God.

Chapter 26

Do not stay in the tavern
And join someone greater than you,
Whether he be high or low in his station,
An old man or a youth;

But take as a friend for yourself someone compatible:
He is helpful though he is far away.

When you see someone greater than you outside,
And attendants following him, respect (him).

And give a hand to an old man filled with beer:
Respect him as his children would.

The strong arm is not weakened when it is uncovered,
The back is not broken when one bends it;

Better is the poor man who speaks sweet words,
Than the rich man who speaks harshly.
A pilot who sees into the distance
Will not let his ship capsize.

Chapter 27

Do not reproach someone older than you,
For he has seen the Sun before you;
Do not let yourself be reported to the Aten when he rises,
With the words, "Another young man has reproached an elder."
Very sick in the sight of Re
Is a young man who reproaches an elder.
Let him beat you with your hands folded,
Let him reproach you while you keep quiet.
Then when you come before him in the morning
He will give you bread freely.
As for bread, he who has it becomes a dog,
He barks to the one who gives it.

Chapter 28

Do not expose a widow if you have caught her in the fields,
Nor fail to give way if she is accused.
Do not turn a stranger away <from> your oil jar
That it may be made double for your family.
God loves him who cares for the poor,
More than him who respects the wealthy.

Chapter 29

Do not turn people away from crossing the river
When you have room in your ferryboat;
If a steering oar is given you in the midst of the deep waters,
So bend back your hands <to> take it up.
It is not an abomination in the hand of God
If the passenger is not cared for.
Do not acquire a ferryboat on the river,
And then attempt to seek out its fares;
Take the are from the man of means,
But (also) accept the destitute (without charge).

Chapter 30

Mark for your self these thirty chapters:
They please, they instruct,
They are the foremost of all books;
They teach the ignorant.
If they are read to an ignorant man,
He will be purified through them.
Seize them; put them in your mind
And have men interpret them, explaining as a teacher.
As to a scribe who is experienced in his position,
He will find himself worthy of being a courtier.

[Colophon]

It is finished.

By the writing of Senu, son of the god's father Pamiu.

Comparison of texts [\[edit\]](#)

A number of passages in the *Instruction of Amenemope* have been compared with the *Book of Proverbs*, including:

(Proverbs 22:17-18): "*Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, And apply thine heart to my doctrine; For it is pleasant if thou keep them in thy belly, that they may be established together upon thy lips*"

(Amenemope, ch. 1): "Give thine ear, and hear what I say, And apply thine heart to apprehend; It is good for thee to place them in thine heart, let them rest in the casket of thy belly; That they may act as a peg upon thy tongue" [\[49\]](#)

(Proverbs 22:22): "*Rob not the poor, for he is poor, neither oppress (or crush) the lowly in the gate.*"

(Amenemope, ch. 2): "Beware of robbing the poor, and oppressing the afflicted." [\[49\]](#)

(Proverbs 22:24-5): "*Do not befriend the man of anger, Nor go with a wrathful man, Lest thou learn his ways and take a snare for thy soul.*"

(Amenemope, ch. 10): "Associate not with a passionate man, Nor approach him for conversation; Leap not to cleave to such an one; That terror carry thee not away." [\[49\]](#)

(Proverbs 22:29): "*[if you] You see a man quick in his work, before kings will he stand, before cravens, he will not stand.*"

(Amenemope, ch. 30): "A scribe who is skillful in his business findeth worthy to be a courtier" [\[49\]](#)

(Proverbs 23:1): "*When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, Consider diligently what is before thee; And put a knife to thy throat, If thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties, for they are breads of falsehood.*"

(Amenemope, ch. 23): "Eat not bread in the presence of a ruler, And lunge not forward(?) with thy mouth before a governor(?). When thou art replenished with that to which thou has no right, It is only a delight to thy spittle. Look upon the dish that is before thee, And let that (alone) supply thy need." [\[49\]](#) (see above)

(Proverbs 23:4-5): "*Toil not to become rich, And cease from dishonest gain; For wealth maketh to itself wings, Like an eagle that flieth heavenwards*"

(Amenemope, ch. 7): "Toil not after riches; If stolen goods are brought to thee, they remain not over night with thee. They have made themselves wings like geese. And have flown into the heavens." [\[49\]](#)

(Proverbs 14:7): *"Speak not in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words"*

(Amenemope, ch. 21): "Empty not thine inmost soul to everyone, nor spoil (thereby) thine influence"^[49]

(Proverbs 23:10): *"Remove not the widows landmark; And enter not into the field of the fatherless."*

(Amenemope, ch. 6): "Remove not the landmark from the bounds of the field...and violate not the widows boundary"^[49]

(Proverbs 23:12): *"Apply thine heart unto instruction and thine ears to the words of knowledge"*

(Amenemope, ch. 1): "Give thine ears, hear the words that are said, give thine heart to interpret them."^[49]