

WISDOM

1

An Appeal to the Rulers of the World

- 1** Love justice, you rulers of the world.
Consider that the Lord is good.
Be sincere in your search for him.
- 2** Those who don't test him will find him.
He will reveal himself to those who obey him.
- 3** Evil thoughts separate people from God.
When fools test God, his power exposes them for what they are.
- 4** Wisdom won't enter an evil person
or live in anyone involved in sinful behavior.
- 5** The Holy Spirit is a teacher who has nothing to do with deceit,
who doesn't take part in foolish thinking,
and who despises injustice.
- 6** Wisdom is a spirit that is kind to humans.
Yet, wisdom will hold slanderers accountable for what they say.
God is a witness to people's hidden feelings.
He has keen insight into what they think,
and he listens to what they say.
- 7** The Lord's Spirit fills the world.
The Spirit holds everything together
and understands everything people say.
- 8** So people won't get away with saying anything wicked.
Justice won't ignore them.
It will condemn them.
- 9** The schemes of people who don't worship the true God
will be closely examined.
Everything that those people say will be reported to the Lord
to convict them for their evil conduct.
- 10** The Lord listens to everything very closely.
He hears every complaint.
- 11** So stop complaining. It won't do any good.
Don't say things that destroy other people's reputations,
because everything said in private will have its consequences.
Telling lies will destroy a person's life.
- 12** Don't make this mistake and bring on your own death.
Don't destroy yourself by what you say.
- 13** God didn't create death.
He doesn't enjoy seeing anyone die.
- 14** He created everything to have life.
Whatever the world produces is beneficial.

It doesn't contain anything destructive.

Death doesn't even have its headquarters on earth.

15 Justice lives forever.

People Who Don't Worship the True God

16 People who don't worship the true God invite death
by what they say and do.
They long for death because they consider death their friend.
They have even made an agreement with death,
because they deserve to die.

2

- 1 People who don't worship the true God
are wrong when they think,
"Our lives are short and filled with trouble.
There's no cure for death.
No one has ever been known to come back from the dead.
- 2 We were born by chance.
When our lives are over, it will be as though we had never existed.
Our breath is like a puff of smoke.
Reason is only a spark in our minds.
- 3 When that spark goes out, our bodies will turn to ashes
and our breath will disappear into thin air.
- 4 In time, no one will remember anything we have done,
and people will forget our names.
Our lives will disappear like clouds
and evaporate like mist caught by the sun's rays
or exposed to the sun's heat.
- 5 Our lives are like passing shadows.
When life ends, no one can get it back.
Death is final. No one has ever come back from the dead.
- 6 "Come on! Let's enjoy the good things in life.
Let's get as much out of life as we did when we were young.
- 7 Let's drink as much as we want.
Let's take time to enjoy the spring flowers.
- 8 Let's decorate our hair with roses before they wither.
- 9 Let's do whatever we want.
Let's make sure people know we had a good time.
This is all that life has to offer.
- 10 "Let's oppress poor people who worship the true God.
Let's not take care of widows
or respect older people.
- 11 Let's take the law into our own hands.

- Weakness gets us nowhere.
- 12** Let's set an ambush for the man who worships the true God,
because he gets in our way.
He opposes everything we do.
He criticizes us for breaking Moses' laws,
and he accuses us of sinning against everything we were taught.
- 13** He claims that he knows God,
and he even calls himself the Lord's servant.
- 14** He exposes our thoughts.
It's even difficult for us to look at him.
- 15** His lifestyle isn't like other people's.
Everything he does is different from others.
- 16** He thinks we're dishonest.
He avoids everything we do as he would avoid something unclean.^a
He considers those who worship the true God to be blessed
when their lives end.
He even brags that God is his Father.
- 17** Let's see if what he says is true.
Let's test him and see how life turns out for him.
- 18** If this man is God's son, God will help him.
God will rescue him from his enemies.
- 19** Let's test him. Let's insult and torture him
to find out just how gentle he is and how much he can take.
- 20** Let's condemn him to a shameful death.
If what he says is true, God will take care of him."
- 21** That's the way people who don't worship the true God think,
but they're mistaken.
Their wickedness has blinded them.
- 22** They don't understand God's mysteries.
They don't believe that there is a reward for being holy.
They don't think that there is a prize for living an innocent life.
- 23** God created humans to live forever
and made them in his own eternal image.
- 24** But death entered the world because the devil was jealous,
and those who are under the devil's influence experience death.

3

People Who Worship the True God Will Be Treated Kindly

- 1** People who worship the true God are in God's hands.
Suffering will never affect them.
- 2** To a foolish person, they're dead.
Their deaths were considered tragic.
- 3** Their departure was devastating.

^a 2:16 "Unclean" refers to anything that Moses' Teachings say is not presentable to God.

- But in reality they're at peace [with God].
- 4** To a foolish person, it looks as though they were punished,
but they knew that they would live forever.
- 5** Although they were disciplined a little, they will be treated very kindly.
God has tested them and found that they deserved to be his own.
- 6** He tested them like gold is tested in a smelting furnace.
He accepted them like a burnt offering.
- 7** They will shoot up like flames when God judges them.
They will spread like sparks that ignite dry grass.
- 8** They will judge nations and rule many people.
The Lord will be their king forever.
- 9** Those who trust the Lord will understand what truth is.
Those who are faithful will live in a loving relationship with him,
because he is kind and merciful to the people he has chosen.^b

People Who Don't Worship the True God Will Be Punished

- 10** People who don't worship the true God
will receive the punishment they deserve for the way they think.
They rebel against the Lord and have no use
for people who worship the true God.
- 11** Those who despise wisdom and instruction are pathetic.
Everything they hope for is worthless.
Their efforts produce no results.
Their achievements have no value.
- 12** Their wives are foolish.
Their children are evil.
Their family is under a curse.

Having Integrity Is Better Than Having Children

- 13** Childless women who haven't committed any sexual sins are blessed.
God will reward them when he judges humanity.
- 14** Eunuchs who haven't broken Moses' laws
and who haven't made wicked plans against the Lord are blessed.
They will be given a special place in the Lord's temple.
That place will make them very happy
and will be a reward for their faithfulness.
- 15** A good reputation is the reward for a job well done,
and those who understand this will never fail.
- 16** But children of adulterers won't live long.
Children born as a result of sexual sins will die.
- 17** Even if they live a long time, they'll be thought of as nothing.
No one will honor them, even when they are old.
- 18** If they die young, they won't have any hope

^b 3:9 Some manuscripts add "and he cares for the people who are devoted to him."

or comfort on the day of judgment.
19 The lives of wicked people will come to a terrible end.

4

1 Having integrity is better than having children.
 God and mortals both recognize integrity,
 and people will remember it forever.

2 When integrity is present, people imitate it.
 When it's absent, people miss it.
 Integrity marches triumphantly through time.
 It wins an honorable victory in every contest.

3 The large crowd of people who don't worship the true God
 won't amount to anything.
 None of their illegitimate children will ever become well-established
 or have a place in society.

4 Even if they look like they might succeed for a while,
 they will fail because they have no foundation.
 Their problems will destroy them.

5 Nothing they attempt will amount to anything.
 Everything they do in life will fail.
 None of these things will have any value or benefit.

6 Children born as a result of sexual sins
 will be used as witnesses against their parents' evil
 when God examines their parents.

A Short, Virtuous Life Is Better Than a Long, Wicked Life

7 People who worship the true God will rest [with God],
 even if they die young.

8 Old age is honorable, but not because a person lives a long time.
 Old age isn't measured by the number of years a person lives.

9 Having insight is like being an older person,
 and living a virtuous life is like living a long, full life.

10 Once there was a person who pleased God, and God loved him.
 Since he was living among sinners, God took him [to heaven].

11 He was taken so that evil wouldn't change the way he thought
 or deceive him.

12 (People who are fascinated by evil can't recognize what is good,
 and people who don't have control of their desires
 corrupt innocent minds.)

13 Although this person lived a short time,
 he lived a full life.

14 His life was pleasing to the Lord.
 So the Lord quickly took him from the evil that surrounded him.

- People saw this, but they didn't understand it.
They couldn't accept this fact:
- 15** God is kind and merciful to the people he has chosen,
and he cares for the people who are devoted to him.^c
- 16** People who worship the true God, even after they have died,
will condemn all living people who don't worship him.
Young people whose lives were cut short
will condemn wicked people who lived a long time.
- 17** People who don't worship the true God will see a wise person die.
But they won't understand that this was the Lord's plan for him.
They won't understand that the Lord has taken him to a safe place.
- 18** When they see this person die, they will think nothing of it.
But the Lord will laugh at them.
- 19** Later on, when these people die, their corpses will be dishonored.
They will be insulted forever by those who are dead.
God will smash them on the ground. They won't be able to say a thing.
He will shake them off their foundations.
They will become like a dry, barren land.
They will suffer pain,
and no one will remember them anymore.

Judgment Day

- 20** People who don't worship the true God will come as cowards
(to the place) where their sins are counted.
Then the sinful things they have done will convict them.

5

- 1** Then a person who worships the true God will stand confidently.
He will confront those who have oppressed him
and made fun of his suffering.
- 2** They will become terrified and upset when they see him.
They will be shocked because they didn't expect him to be rescued.
- 3** Then they will regret what they did.
In distress, they will groan and say to each other:
- 4** "This is the person we used to insult and treat as a joke.
We were fools!
We thought that he was crazy to live the way he did
and that he died without any honor.
- 5** How can he be one of God's children?
How can he have a place among God's holy people?
- 6** We were the ones who wandered from the right way of living.
We didn't let justice light our way.

^c 4:15 Some manuscripts omit verse 15.

- We didn't let the sun guide us with its light.
- 7** We explored every path that led to wickedness and disaster.
We traveled through deserts that had no roads,
but we never took the road that the Lord wanted us to travel.
- 8** What did our arrogance get us?
What good came from the wealth that we bragged about?
- 9** All those things have vanished
like a shadow,
like a rumor that no one pays attention to,
- 10** like a ship that sails through raging water.
(When a ship sails by, it leaves no trace.
Its waves disappear.)
- 11** All those things have vanished
like a bird flying through the air.
(When a bird flies through the air, it leaves no trace.
It passes through the air by flapping its wings.
But afterward, no one can tell where it flew.)
- 12** All those things have vanished
like an arrow shot at a target.
(When an arrow is shot at a target, it flies through the air.
But no one can tell the path that the arrow took.)
- 13** "The same is true for us. We're born, and then we fade away.
We don't have anything worthwhile to show for our lives.
Rather, we've completely wasted our lives doing wicked things."
- 14** Everything that people who don't worship the true God hope for is
like dust blown by the wind,
like sleet driven by a violent storm,
like smoke carried in different directions by the wind,
like a person's memory of a guest who stayed only a day.
- 15** But people who worship the true God will live forever.
The Lord will reward them.
The Most High will take care of them.
- 16** So the Lord will give them a majestic kingdom and a beautiful crown.
His power will shelter them,
and his strength will defend them.
- 17** The Lord will use honor as his armor.
He will use creation as a weapon to take revenge on his enemies.
- 18** He will put on justice as his breastplate
and wear impartial judgment as his helmet.
- 19** He will take holiness as his invincible shield.
- 20** Also, he will turn his fierce anger into a sword.
The universe will join him in an all-out war
against those who are crazy enough to oppose him.
- 21** Bolts of lightning will streak from the clouds
like well-aimed arrows that are shot from bows.
Each bolt will hit its target.

- 22** Hailstones filled with God's fury will be hurled
like rocks from a catapult.
The sea will rage against the Lord's enemies.
Rivers will violently sweep them away.
- 23** A strong wind will attack them.
It will blow them away like a violent storm.
Wickedness will ruin the whole world,
and criminal activity will overthrow governments.

6

Rulers Must Have Wisdom

- 1** So listen, you kings, and understand.
Take note, you judges of the earth's farthest regions.
- 2** Pay attention, you rulers who govern large populations
and who brag about the number of nations (you rule).
- 3** Your right to govern came from the Lord.
Your power to rule came from the Most High.
He will closely examine what you've done
and investigate what you plan to do
- 4** because you, as servants of his kingdom,
didn't make the right decisions.
You didn't uphold the law or live the way God wanted you to.
- 5** The Lord will quickly and fiercely confront you
because he judges people who are in authority more severely.
- 6** Unimportant people will be shown mercy,
but those who are in power will be closely examined.
- 7** The Lord, who rules all people, isn't afraid of anyone.
He doesn't stand in awe of greatness,
because he made all people—important and unimportant alike—
and he takes care of them in the same way.
- 8** But a thorough investigation is in store for those who are in power.
- 9** What I say is directed at you rulers
so that you will learn what wisdom is and won't go astray.
- 10** Rulers who uphold divine laws
will be considered divinely appointed rulers.
The rulers who have been taught these laws
will discover how to defend themselves (on Judgment Day).
- 11** So eagerly do everything that I've said.
Concentrate on what I've told you, and you will become educated.
- 12** Wisdom shines brightly and never fades away.
Those who love wisdom easily see it.
Those who search for wisdom easily find it.
- 13** Wisdom comes to those who desire it
by making itself known to them first.
- 14** Whoever gets up early in the morning to look for wisdom

- won't grow tired [looking for it],
because he will find it at his door.
- 15** To think deeply about wisdom is to show perfect insight.
Whoever is on the lookout for wisdom
will soon have no worries.
- 16** because wisdom searches for deserving people.
Wisdom, like a friend, appears to them wherever they are
and meets them in their every thought.
- 17** Wisdom begins with a sincere desire to learn.
- 18** To pay attention to instruction is to love wisdom.
To love wisdom is to follow its guiding principles.
To follow its guiding principles
guarantees that a person will live forever,
and a person who lives forever will be in God's presence.
- 19**
- 20** The desire for wisdom prepares a person to rule a kingdom.
- 21** So, you rulers of nations,
if you like your thrones and scepters,
honor wisdom so that you can rule forever.

Solomon's Reason for Talking About Wisdom

- 22** I'll tell you what wisdom is and how it came into existence.
I won't keep any secrets from you.
I'll trace wisdom's history from the beginning of creation.
I'll make clear everything that can be known about wisdom.
I won't avoid the truth.
- 23** I won't keep information to myself out of petty jealousy,
because jealousy doesn't have anything in common with wisdom.
- 24** The world would be a safer place if there were more wise people in it.
Kingdoms would be more stable if their kings had common sense.
- 25** So learn from what I say.
It will be to your advantage.

7

Solomon's Reasons for Wanting Wisdom

- 1** I, too, am mortal like everyone else.
I'm a descendant of the first man, who was formed from the earth.
I was conceived from the semen of a man^d
- 2** during the pleasure of marital relations.
Within a ten-month period, I was formed in my mother's womb.
- 3** When I was born,
I began to breathe the same air that everyone else does.

^d 7:1 The first part of verse 2 has been placed in verse 1 to express the complex Greek sentence structure more clearly in English.

- When I came into the world,
my first sound was a cry, just like everyone else.
- 4** I was nursed, wrapped in strips of cloth, and cared for.
- 5** No king ever began life in any other way.
- 6** People have only one way into life and only one way out.
- 7** So I prayed, and I was given insight.
I called to God, and I received spiritual wisdom.
- 8** I preferred wisdom to scepters and thrones.
I realized that wealth was nothing compared to wisdom
- 9** and that priceless gems couldn't be compared to wisdom.
All the gold in the world looks like a few grains of sand by comparison,
and silver looks like mud next to wisdom.
- 10** I loved wisdom more than health and good looks.
I chose wisdom rather than daylight,
because wisdom's brightness never fades.
- 11** Besides, every good thing came to me along with wisdom.
Wisdom has immeasurable wealth to offer.
- 12** I was happy with all these things, because wisdom brought them.
But I didn't realize that wisdom was the source of them all.
- 13** I'm now willing to share what I learned with proper motivation.
I won't keep wisdom's wealth a secret.
- 14** Wisdom is a treasure that people can never use up.
Those who acquire wisdom have become God's friends
because of the gifts they received from [wisdom's] instruction.
- 15** May God allow me to speak intelligently.
May he allow me to think in ways that honor the gifts I've received,
because he leads people to wisdom and directs those who are wise.
- 16** We are under God's control—
our words, our thoughts, and our skills.
- 17** He has given me knowledge about everything that exists.
I now know
- 18** how the universe was made and how its different parts function,
how eras begin, continue, and end,
how days and seasons change,
- 19** how one year changes to the next
and how stars change their positions,
- 20** how domestic animals live and how wild animals act,
how spiritual forces^e work and how people think,
how plants are classified
and how medicine can be taken from their roots.
- 21** I've learned about things that are hidden
and about things that are revealed.
Wisdom, who built everything, was my teacher.

^e 7:20 Or "winds."

- 22 Wisdom has a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, diverse, refined,
graceful, clear, pure, distinct, harmless, good, sharp,
- 23 irresistible, kind, humane, safe, sure, carefree,
all-powerful, and all-seeing.
Wisdom's spirit spreads throughout everything
that is intelligent, pure, and refined.
- 24 Wisdom moves faster than any motion.
It spreads throughout and fills everything because it is pure.
- 25 Wisdom is only a small sign of God's power.
It is a pure stream that comes from the glory of the Almighty.
So nothing impure can find its way into wisdom.
- 26 Wisdom is a reflection of eternal light.
It is a perfect mirror in which God's work is seen.
It is an image of his goodness.
- 27 Although wisdom acts alone, it can do everything.
Although wisdom always stays the same, it renews everything.
In every generation wisdom enters the souls of devout people
and makes these people God's friends and prophets.
- 28 God loves, more than anything, the person who lives with wisdom.
- 29 Wisdom is more beautiful than the sun.
It surpasses the stars in the sky.
Wisdom shines brighter than light itself.
- 30 Daylight gives way to darkness,
but wisdom is never overpowered by evil.

8

- 1 Wisdom's influence is strongly felt from one end of the earth to the other.
She manages everything well.

Solomon's Love for Wisdom

- 2 I loved Wisdom and looked for her ever since I was young.
I wanted her to be my bride.
I fell in love with her beauty.
- 3 Wisdom honors her noble birth because she lives with God.
The Lord, who rules everything, loves Wisdom.
- 4 In fact, Wisdom knows God's mysteries firsthand,
and she decides what he will do.
- 5 If wealth is a desired possession in this life,
who has more wealth than Wisdom, since Wisdom made everything?
- 6 If insight is productive,
who is more productive than Wisdom, since Wisdom built everything?
- 7 Even if anyone loves justice,
remember that Wisdom, not justice, produces virtues.
In fact, Wisdom teaches self-control, understanding, justice, and courage.
Nothing in this life is more useful for people than these virtues.
- 8 But if anyone wants to expand their knowledge,

- Wisdom knows the past and can predict the future.
She understands subtle twists of logic
and can solve difficult problems.
She knows in advance what miracles and wonderful things will happen
and how the course of history will turn out.
- 9** So I decided to take Wisdom home to live with me.
I knew that she would give me good advice
and would comfort me when I'm worried and upset.
- 10** [I thought,] "Because of her, I'll be popular among crowds of people.
I'll be honored by older leaders, even though I'm young.
- 11** People will find that I make brilliant decisions.
Rulers will admire me.
- 12** When I'm silent, they'll wait for me to speak.
When I speak, they'll pay attention.
Even if I talk for a long time,
they'll be quiet and listen.
- 13** Because of Wisdom, I'll live forever.
I'll always be remembered by those who come after me.
- 14** I'll govern many people.
Nations will be under my control.
- 15** Even cruel rulers will be afraid when they hear about me.
People will see that I handle myself well in public
and am courageous in battle.
- 16** When I come home, Wisdom will help me unwind.
Life isn't bitter when living with Wisdom.
Living with her brings no pain, only joy and happiness."
- 17** After I thought about these things, this is what I concluded:
With Wisdom as my companion, I'll live forever.
- 18** With Wisdom as my friend, I'll be perfectly happy.
With Wisdom working for me, I'll have immeasurable wealth.
With Wisdom as my trainer, I'll have insight.
With Wisdom as my partner, I'll have a good reputation.
So I started looking for a way to get Wisdom.
- 19** I was a naturally gifted child.
I was fortunate to receive a good soul.
- 20** Better yet, since I was good, I was given a pure body.
- 21** But I realized that I could never possess Wisdom
unless God gave her to me.
(Even to know where the gift of wisdom comes from
is a sign of insight.)

Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom

So I talked with the Lord and begged him.
I prayed hard about this.

9

- 1 [I prayed,] “Merciful Lord, God of my ancestors,
you spoke, and everything was created.
- 2 Through your wisdom you have enabled humans
to rule everything you created,
- 3 to manage the world with divine justice,
and to judge with integrity.
- 4 Give me wisdom, your assistant who sits by your throne.
Don’t refuse to give me a place among those who are loyal to you,
- 5 because I’m loyal to you, and so was my mother.
I’m a weak man who won’t live long.
I have little knowledge about judgments and laws.
- 6 Even if someone perfect were to exist,
that person, without the wisdom that comes from you,
would be thought of as nothing.
- 7 “You have chosen me to rule your people
and to judge them.
- 8 You told me to build a temple on your holy mountain
and to build an altar in the city where you’ve placed your tent.
Your tent is a copy of the holy tent,
which you’ve set up [in heaven] from the beginning.
- 9 Wisdom knows everything you do because it is with you.
It was present with you when you created the universe.
Wisdom understands what pleases you
and what agrees with your commands.
- 10 Send wisdom from heaven, your holy place.
Send it from your glorious throne
so that it may help me in my work
and I may recognize what pleases you.
- 11 Certainly, wisdom knows and understands everything.
It will give me sound advice in everything I do,
and its glory will protect me.
- 12 Then everything I do will be acceptable.
I will judge your people fairly
and show that I deserve my father’s throne.
- 13 “God, who can figure out what you plan to do?
Lord, who can know what you want to do?
- 14 The way we mortals think is worthless,
and our thoughts are dangerous.
- 15 (A body that decays weighs down the soul.
The body, like a tent made of clay, weighs down a mind
that is already loaded with thoughts.)
- 16 We can barely explain the things on earth.
We discover with difficulty the things that are right in front of us.
So who could ever understand the things in heaven?

- 17 Lord, no one has ever figured out what you plan to do,
 unless you gave him wisdom
 and sent your Holy Spirit from the highest heaven.
- 18 So wisdom and the Holy Spirit corrected the way people live on earth.
 People were taught what pleases you
 and were saved by wisdom."

10

Wisdom's Role From Creation to the Exodus

- 1 Wisdom protected the world's father, the first man formed,
 when he alone had been created.
 Wisdom rescued him from his failure
- 2 and gave him strength to rule everything.
- 3 But when a wicked man became angry, he rebelled against wisdom.
 He destroyed himself by killing his brother in a fit of rage.
- 4 When the earth was flooded because of that wicked man,
 wisdom saved it again.
 Wisdom steered a simple wooden ship
 for a man who worshiped the true God.
- 5 When the nations were mixed up in wicked plans,
 wisdom found a man who worshiped the true God
 and helped him remain innocent in God's sight.
 Wisdom kept that man's faith strong,
 even while he was grieving for his dear child.
- 6 When people who didn't worship the true God were dying,
 wisdom rescued a man who did worship him.
 He escaped from the fire that rained down on the Five Cities.^f
- 7 Evidence of their evil still remains.
 Their cities are a smoldering wasteland.
 Plants bear fruits that never ripen,
 and a column of salt still stands there
 as a monument to a woman who wouldn't believe.
- 8 Those people ignored wisdom.
 They were hurt for not recognizing what is good,
 and they left behind a reminder of the foolish way they lived.
 As a result, no one will ever forget why they were destroyed.
- 9 Wisdom rescued those who honored it.
- 10 When a man who worshiped the true God
 ran away from his brother's anger,
 wisdom guided him in the right direction.

^f 10:6 The Five Cities are Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar.

- It showed him God's kingdom
and gave him knowledge about holy things.
- It made his work prosper
and made him successful in everything he did.
- 11** When greedy people tried to take advantage of him,
wisdom helped him and made him rich.
- 12** It protected him from his enemies
and kept him safe from the traps they set for him.
Wisdom gave him victory in his difficult struggle
so that he would realize that a life devoted to God
is more powerful than anything else.
- 13** When a man who worshiped the true God was sold as a slave,
wisdom didn't abandon him.
It rescued him from sinning [with another man's wife].
- 14** Wisdom went into prison with him.
It didn't leave him there, but made him ruler of a kingdom
and gave him authority over those who oppressed him.
Wisdom proved that his accusers were wrong,
and it gave him honor that would last forever.
- 15** Wisdom rescued a group of holy people, an innocent race,
from a nation that oppressed them.
- 16** It entered the soul of one of the Lord's servants
and stood up to cruel kings
by doing amazing things and performing miracles.
- 17** Wisdom gave a reward to these holy people for their work.
It guided them on their journey, which was filled with miracles.
It was their shelter during the day and their starlight during the night.
- 18** Wisdom brought them through the Red Sea
and led them through deep water.
- 19** But wisdom drowned their enemies.
It washed the bodies up [on the shore] from the bottom of the sea.
- 20** Then people who worshiped the true God
were able to loot their enemies.
They sang hymns in honor of your holy name, Lord.
Together they praised you for defending them.
- 21** Wisdom enabled those who couldn't talk to speak
and made infants speak clearly.

11

The Lord Gives Water to Israel but Pollutes Egypt's Water

- 1** Through the guidance of a holy prophet,
wisdom made everything that the people of Israel did successful.
- 2** They traveled through a desert where no one lived

- and pitched their tents in places that had no roads.
- 3** They stood up to their opponents
and defended themselves against their enemies.
- 4** When they were thirsty, they prayed to you, Lord,
and you gave them water that came out of solid rock.
You gave them something to drink from a hard stone.
- 5** So the same thing that was used to punish their enemies
was used to show kindness to your people in their time of need.
- 6** The Egyptians issued a decree to kill your people's infants.
So you punished the Egyptians by mixing their river,
their everflowing source of water, with blood and filth.
- 7** Later, you let your people go thirsty
to let them experience how their enemies were punished.
- 8** Then you gave your people plenty of water unexpectedly.^g
- 9** When you tested your people,
even though you disciplined them mercifully,
they realized how you became angry, judged,
and tormented the Egyptians.
- 10** You warned your people as a father warns his children.
But you condemned the Egyptians
as a ruthless king condemns his people.
- 11** In addition, all the Egyptians suffered in the same way,
whether they were near or far away.
- 12** Certainly, they suffered twice as much pain,
and they groaned when they remembered what had happened.
- 13** When they heard that the same thing which was used to punish them
was used to show kindness to your people,
they realized that you had done this, Lord.
- 14** The Egyptians had mocked and refused [to listen to] Moses,
who had been abandoned as a baby a long time ago and left to die.
But in the end, they admired him for the way things turned out.
The thirst that the Egyptians had was much worse than
the thirst that your people had.

The Lord's Patience With the Egyptians

- 15** The Egyptians' foolish and wicked thoughts led them astray
so that they worshiped dumb snakes and animals.
For that reason, you sent many dumb animals to punish them.
- 16** You did this so that the Egyptians would realize
that those who sin are punished by the very sins they commit.
- 17** Your almighty power created the universe
out of material that had no form.
You could have sent many bears or ferocious lions to attack them.
- 18** You could have created new, vicious animals that no one has heard of:

^g 11:8 The sentences in verses 6-8 have been rearranged to express the complex Greek paragraph structure more clearly in English.

- animals that breathe out fire, blow out smoke,
or shoot terrifying sparks from their eyes.
- 19** These animals wouldn't have had to harm the Egyptians to kill them.
The Egyptians would have been scared to death
just from looking at these animals.
- 20** Even without these animals, you could have killed these people
with one breath when you pursued them with justice.
You could have blown them away with the slightest show of your power.
But you decided to consider every detail of everything you do.
- 21** You are always able to use your great power.
Who can stand up to your might?
- 22** To you, the entire universe is like dust on a scale
and like a drop of morning dew on the ground.
- 23** You show mercy to everyone, even though you can do anything you want.
You overlook the sins that people commit
so that people can change the way they think and act.
- 24** You love everything that exists.
You don't despise anything that you've made.
If there was something you hated, you wouldn't have made it.
- 25** How could anything last if you didn't want it to?
How could anything survive if you didn't allow it?
- 26** You spare everything, because everything is yours, Lord,
and you love every living thing.

12

- 1** Your eternal spirit is in everything.
- 2** That's why, little by little, you correct people who go astray.
You remind them about what they have done wrong,
and you warn them so that they'll free themselves
from their evil ways and trust you, Lord.

The Lord's Patience With the Canaanites

3 You hated the Canaanites, the people who lived long ago in your holy land, **4** because you hated what they did. They practiced magic, celebrated unholy ceremonies, **5** murdered their children without mercy, and ate human flesh and blood at their religious festivals. These people had been initiated into wild cults **6** in which parents murdered helpless children. You wanted our ancestors to destroy these people **7** so that the land you like best of all would be a good place for your people to settle. **8** But you showed mercy even to these Canaanites, since they, too, were human. You sent hornets ahead of your army to destroy them little by little. **9** You could have allowed your people to destroy in battle those who don't worship you. You also could have destroyed them immediately with terrifying animals or with one harsh command. **10** But you carried out your sentence against them little by little and gave them an opportunity to change the way they think and act. You knew that they were evil from the beginning, that they were wicked from birth, and that they would never change their way of thinking. **11** Their whole race was cursed from the beginning.

You offered them forgiveness for the sins they had committed, but not because you were afraid of anyone. **12** So who can question you about what you've done? Who can challenge your decision? Who can bring a charge against you for

destroying nations that you made? Who can come to you and defend wicked people? ¹³ No god exists except you. You care for everyone. You don't have to prove that you've made the right decision. ¹⁴ No king or ruler can confront you about the way you have punished people. ¹⁵ You always do what is right, and you manage everything in the right way. You would never think of using your power to condemn anyone who doesn't deserve to be punished. ¹⁶ Your strength is the source of justice. You show mercy to all people because you rule all people. ¹⁷ You show your strength when someone doubts that your power is perfect, and you treat with contempt those who show disrespect for your power. ¹⁸ Although you are a powerful ruler, you are a lenient judge. You are very merciful to us when you govern us, even though you have the power to do whatever you want.

The Israelites Learn from God's Patience

¹⁹ By what you have done, you have taught your people that those who worship you must be kind. Also, you have given your people hope by allowing them to change the way they think and act when they have committed a sin. ²⁰ You were very careful and deliberate when you punished your people's enemies. They deserved to die, yet you gave them the time and opportunity to free themselves from their evil ways. ²¹ But you were strict when you judged your own people, because you swore oaths to their ancestors and promised them good things. ²² That's why you discipline us, but you punish our enemies ten thousand times more. You do this so that we will think about your goodness when we judge others and will expect your mercy when we are judged.

People Will Receive the Punishment They Deserve

²³ You tormented those who foolishly lived wicked lives. You tormented them by using the disgusting things they worshiped. ²⁴ They strayed far beyond the paths of error. They treated as gods ugly animals that people despised. They were deceived like thoughtless children. ²⁵ So you mocked them by punishing them as though they were children who couldn't reason. ²⁶ Those who paid no attention to your warning experienced the punishment they deserved. ²⁷ When they suffered, they became angry with those animals that they thought were gods, because these were the same animals by which they were punished. Then they realized that you are the true God, the one whom they had refused to acknowledge in the past. That's why they received this final punishment.

13

The Foolishness of Worshiping Nature

¹ All people who don't know God are foolish by nature. From the good things they see, they aren't able to learn anything about the God who exists. Even while studying the things he has made, they don't recognize the one who made them. ² Instead, they think that fire, wind, breezes, stars, raging water, and the sun and moon are the gods that rule the world. ³ People are fascinated by the beauty of these things and accept them as gods. But these people need to realize that the Lord is far better than these things. After all, he is the creator of beauty, and he created them. ⁴ So if people are amazed by the power these things display, they need to understand that the one who made them is much more powerful. ⁵ People can see the creator in the spectacular beauty of these things.

⁶ Maybe we're blaming these people too much. Maybe they really want to find God, but they become deceived while searching for him. ⁷ They're deeply involved in studying everything that God has made. So they continue to investigate until they are convinced that the things they see are gods, because these things are so beautiful. ⁸ Yet, even these people have no excuse. ⁹ If they were able to understand things that were created, why couldn't they quickly discover the creator of these things?

The Hopelessness of Worshiping Idols

¹⁰ People who put their hope in dead things are pathetic. They call things that humans have made gods. But these things are only copies of animals made out of gold and silver by some artist, or else they are useless stones that someone had worked on long ago.

¹¹ For example, some carpenter cuts down a tree that he can easily handle. He carefully strips off all its bark and skillfully makes an object that can serve a useful purpose. ¹² Then he burns the scraps of wood left from his work to cook his food and eats until he is full. ¹³ But he takes one useless scrap, a crooked piece full of knots, and carefully whittles it in his spare time. With skill he shapes it into something that looks human ¹⁴ or into some kind of dumb animal. Then he paints it red, covering every blemish, and puts makeup on its face. ¹⁵ Next, he makes a special shelf for it on a wall [in his house], sets it there, and nails it to the shelf. ¹⁶ He handles it very carefully so that it won't fall, because he knows that it can't help itself. After all, it's only an idol, and it needs to be helped. ¹⁷ Yet, when he prays about his possessions, his marriage, and his children, he's not ashamed to pray to a thing that has no life. For health, he appeals to something that's sick. ¹⁸ For life, he prays to something that's dead. For help, he goes to something that can't help anyone. For a safe journey, he turns to something that can't even walk. ¹⁹ For employment, money, and success, he looks to something that has absolutely nothing to offer.

14

¹ Here's another example of idolatry. A person who is planning to board a ship that will sail on the stormy seas will pray for help to a piece of wood that's more helpless than the ship he's traveling on. ² Someone who wanted to earn a living designed that ship, but wisdom was the one who built it. ³ However, it's your care that steers the ship, Father. You make a highway through the sea and a safe pathway through the waves. ⁴ You have shown that you can save people from every danger. So anyone can travel by sea, even a person who doesn't have any sailing skills. ⁵ You want everything that your wisdom has made to be put to use. That's why people who trust their lives to the smallest piece of wood can pass through rough water in a boat and reach land safely.

⁶ Even in the beginning, when arrogant giants were being destroyed, Noah, the world's only hope for survival, took refuge in a boat. Because your hands steered the boat, Noah provided the world with a family to carry on the human race. ⁷ This kind of wood, through which justice comes, is blessed. ⁸ But an idol, which someone made, is cursed, and so is the person who made it. The person is cursed because he made it, and the object which decays is cursed because people call it a god. ⁹ God hates people who don't worship him the same way he hates the sinful way they live. ¹⁰ So the object that was made will be punished together with the person who offers sacrifices to it. ¹¹ That's why God will punish the idols of every nation. They have become disgusting things in God's creation. Idols are traps that catch humans, snares that capture foolish people.

The Origin and Consequences of Idol Worship

¹² The idea of making idols is the beginning of sexual sin. When they were invented, life was ruined. ¹³ Idols didn't exist in the beginning, and they won't last forever. ¹⁴ They came into the world through the imagination of conceited humans. For that reason, a quick end has been planned for them.

¹⁵ Consider the following example. A father was overcome with grief over the unexpected death of his child. So he made a statue of his child and honored a dead human being as a god. He handed down secret rituals and ceremonies to his family. ¹⁶ In time, this sinful tradition grew strong and was observed as a custom.

In addition, rulers began to command people to worship carved statues. ¹⁷ This is why it happened. People who lived far away from their rulers couldn't honor them in person. So they made a statue of the king whom they honored and pretended that he was present, even though he was far away. By doing this, they would flatter their king by showing him that they were devoted to him, even though he was absent.

18 Eventually, ambitious artists caused this kind of worship to spread, even among people who didn't know the king. **19** An artist, wishing to please his ruler, would skillfully make a statue of him that looked better than the ruler actually looked. **20** Then crowds were attracted by his artistic work. So the ruler whom they honored became an object of worship. Earlier, they had honored him only as a human being. **21** This became a trap in people's lives. People living in slavery, whether because of a disaster or a tyrant, gave to sticks and stones a name that belongs only to the true God. **22** It wasn't enough for them to be wrong about their knowledge of the true God. Their lives were a constant struggle due to ignorance, yet they wrongly thought their wicked lives were peaceful. **23** They offered children as sacrifices, held secret ceremonies, and had wild orgies that involved strange rituals. **24** They no longer kept their lives or their marriages free from sexual sins. They murdered each other or caused each other suffering by committing adultery. **25** Everything they did was mixed up with bloodshed and murder, fraud, corruption, treachery, disorder, perjury, **26** harassment, ingratitude, perversion, homosexuality, irregular marriages, adultery, and promiscuity. **27** Clearly, the worship of false gods is the beginning, cause, and end of every evil. Their names should never be mentioned. **28** People who worship them are raving lunatics, and they love it. They prophesy lies, live wicked lives, and are quick to commit perjury. **29** They lie under oath and expect that nothing bad will happen to them because they trust false gods, which are not alive. **30** But justice will punish them on two counts: One, they devoted themselves to false gods because they thought about God in the wrong way. And two, they were wicked and lied under oath because they despised everything that is holy. **31** The false gods that people swear oaths to have no power. But justice will always punish sinners because of the wicked things they've done.

15

God's People Reject Idolatry

1 God, you are kind, true, and patient, and you govern everything mercifully. **2** Even if we sin, we're still yours because we know your power. But we won't sin, because we know that you consider us to be your people. **3** To know you is to know justice, and to know your power is to know the source of immortality. **4** Certainly, we haven't been deceived by human artists and their evil ideas or by some useless pictures made by painters, who sketch figures and paint them with different colors. **5** These pictures get foolish people excited so that they desire a lifeless figure of an image. **6** Some people love these evil pictures. They sacrifice to them, desire them, and worship them. They get what they deserve when they put their confidence in these pictures.

People Should Know Not to Make and Worship Idols

7 A potter works very hard with soft clay to make different objects. He decides how each object will be used. He uses the same clay and the same technique to make some objects that are honored and some that are not. **8** So this wicked potter makes a useless god from the same clay that the potter himself originally came from not long ago. After a little while, when his life is demanded back, he will return to the earth from which he was taken. **9** He doesn't care that he's destined to die or that his life is short. He competes with people who work with gold and silver, and he copies the objects that people who work in copper make. He considers it an honor to make phony gods. **10** His brain is fried, and everything he hopes for is worth less than dirt. His life has less honor than the clay he uses **11** because he has never known the one who made him, the one who breathed into him creativity and a living spirit. **12** So he thinks that human existence is simply a game and that life is a carnival where he can make money. He thinks that people should make money any way they can, even if they know it's wrong. **13** Clearly, the potter knows better than anyone else that he is sinning when he takes material from the earth and makes statues of gods which will break.

14 The most foolish people of all are the enemies who oppressed your people. They're more helpless than an infant **15** because they thought that all the idols of the nations were really gods. Yet, these idols have eyes that can't see, noses that can't breathe, ears that can't hear, fingers that can't feel, and feet that can't walk. **16** After all, a human being made these idols. Yet, his own spirit is on loan from God. Certainly, no human can make a god that is equal to a human being. **17** Potters

are going to die, and everything they make with their evil hands is dead. But they are better than the objects they make [for people] to worship. At least potters are alive, but idols never were and never will be.

Animals Torment Egypt but Serve as Food for Israel

18 Furthermore, some people worship even the animals that people hate most. When compared to other creatures, these animals are worse because they're dumber. **19** So no one wants these animals because they're ugly. They don't have God's praise or his blessing.

16

1 The Egyptians received the punishment they deserved through similar creatures, and they were tormented by swarms of them. **2** But instead of punishing your people, you treated them with kindness. You gave them food in an unusual way to satisfy their appetites. You gave them quails to eat. **3** When the Egyptians wanted food, they lost their appetites because the creatures you sent them were so disgusting. By contrast, your people were in need of food for only a short time. Then they ate the food that you gave them. **4** The Egyptians had to experience something that they couldn't avoid, but your people merely had to see how their enemies were being tormented.

Israelites Saved From Snakes; Egyptians Die From Insects

5 When fierce snakes attacked your people and the bites of these coiled serpents were killing them, you didn't stay angry with your people for very long. **6** Your people were terrified for only a little while. Then you gave them the bronze snake. It was a symbol of how you would save them, and it reminded them of what your laws demand. **7** The people who turned for help to that symbol were saved, not by what they saw, but by you, the savior of all people. **8** Also, by this event, you convinced our enemies that you are the one who rescues people from every evil. **9** Our enemies died from the bites of locusts and flies. No one could find a way to cure them, because they deserved to be punished by such things. **10** By contrast, your people were not defeated even by the bites of poisonous snakes, because, in your mercy, you came to help them and cure them. **11** They were bitten so that they would remember what you had told them. But they were quickly saved so that they wouldn't forget and fail to respond to your kindness. **12** They weren't cured by any medicine or ointment, Lord. Your word healed them. **13** You have power over life and death. You can lead people to the gates of death and back again. **14** An evil person can kill someone, but he can't breathe life into that person again or free that person from death.

Food for Israel; No Food for Egypt

15 It is impossible to escape from your power. **16** You used your strength to punish people who refused to acknowledge you. They were pursued by rains, hail, and storms that they couldn't avoid, and they were burned up by fire. **17** The most remarkable thing was that the fire burned better in water, which normally puts fire out. The universe defends people who worship you. **18** At one time, the flames died down so that they wouldn't burn up the creatures sent to attack the people who don't worship you. This happened so that these people could see that God's judgment was pursuing them. **19** At another time, even in the rain, the flames burned more intensely than ever and destroyed the crops in the land where those wicked people lived.

20 Instead of punishing your people, you gave them the food that angels eat. You didn't get tired when you supplied them with bread from heaven that was ready to eat. The bread that you provided satisfied every person, and it tasted good to everyone. **21** This showed how good you are to your children. You served all those who took the bread by satisfying their sinful desire, because the bread changed itself to taste the way every person wanted. **22** But this bread, which looked like snow and ice, didn't melt in the fire. Then your people realized that the fire, which was accompanied by hail, lightning, and

rain, was destroying their enemies' crops. **23** In addition, this fire even held back its own power so that your people could be fed.

24 Certainly, creation serves you, because you made it. Creation works hard to punish wicked people, but it relaxes to show kindness to those who trust you. **25** So even at that time, creation changed in many ways. It did so to show how you freely and fully served each person the food he needed and wanted. **26** Lord, you did this so that your children, whom you loved, would learn that crops are not what keep people alive. Instead, your word is what keeps those who trust you alive. **27** The food that wasn't destroyed by the fire melted immediately when warmed by one ray of the sun. **28** This happened so that your people would learn to get up before sunrise to give you thanks and pray to you. **29** Whatever an ungrateful person hopes for will melt like frost and will disappear like water down a drain.

17

Darkness for Egypt; Light for Israel

1 Lord, your judgments are difficult to understand and hard to explain. That's why people who haven't been taught them go astray. **2** The Egyptians, who didn't have your teachings, thought that they had gained control of our holy nation. When this happened, the darkness captured them and imprisoned them in a long night. They lay imprisoned in their own houses because they had run away from your eternal care. **3** They were scattered, frightened, and upset because they were seeing things. They thought their sins would remain secret and unnoticed if they simply forgot about them. **4** They couldn't find protection from their fears, even when they were inside their houses. They heard frightening noises all around them. Gloomy ghosts with grim faces appeared to them. **5** Not even a blazing fire could give them light, and the bright shining stars weren't able to light up that dreadful night. **6** Their only light was a fire that flashed here and there and filled them with fear. In their terror, they thought that the fire they saw was worse than the things they could no longer see. **7** So this made their belief in magic seem foolish. The wisdom that they had bragged about turned out to be completely ridiculous. **8** These people, who had promised to treat the fears and mental illnesses of sick people, were themselves sick with irrational fears. **9** Nothing frightening was there to terrify them, but they were scared by prowling wild animals and hissing snakes. **10** They even refused to look around the room, although it couldn't be avoided. So they were very afraid when they died.

11 Evil is a cowardly thing and condemns itself. Evil, because of its guilty conscience, always exaggerates its difficulties. **12** Clearly, fear is nothing but the refusal to accept the help that reason offers. **13** When people fail to rely on reason because of their fears, they think that it's better to be ignorant than to know what is tormenting them.

14 The Egyptians slept through the night, which really had no power over them. They slept through the night like those who are in the powerless depths of hell. **15** Still, they were haunted by frightening ghosts and were paralyzed because they surrendered themselves to an unexpected fear that suddenly overwhelmed them. **16** So those who fell down were confined to the place where they fell as though they were in a prison without bars. **17** Whether they were farmers, shepherds, or people who worked in the desert, they waited for their inescapable fate, **18** because the chain of darkness had bound all of them. They were paralyzed with fear by the whistling of the wind, the singing of birds in a tree, the roaring of rushing water, **19** the crashing of falling rocks, the rustling of animals that they couldn't see, the howling of wild animals, or a recurring echo from the mountains. **20** Yet the whole world had the full light of day and went about its work without any problems. **21** But this heavy night affected only those people. It was a symbol of the darkness that waited for them. However, they were more of a burden to themselves than the darkness was.

18

¹ Lord, your holy people had all the light they needed. The Egyptians heard your people, but they couldn't see them. They thought that your holy people were fortunate not to have suffered. ² Also, the Egyptians were thankful that your people had not harmed them for the evil things they had done. So they continued to beg your people to do them a favor and leave [their country].

³ While you gave the Egyptians darkness, you provided your people with a blazing column of fire to guide them as they traveled through unfamiliar territories. That column was like the sun, but it didn't hurt them as they made their difficult trip. ⁴ The Egyptians certainly deserved to be without light and to be imprisoned in darkness. They had imprisoned your people, the people through whom the eternal light of your teachings would be given to the world.

Egypt's Children Are Killed; God's Children Are Rescued

⁵ The Egyptians planned to kill the infants of your holy people. So after one of your children, Moses, had been left outside to die and was rescued, you took away a large number of their children to punish them for their evil plan. You also punished them by drowning their army in deep water. ⁶ Our ancestors were told in advance about that night so that they could confidently and joyfully trust your promises and believe that these promises would come true. ⁷ So your people expected that they would be rescued and that their enemies would be destroyed. ⁸ You used the same power to call us to yourself and to honor us that you used to punish our enemies. ⁹ Your holy children had been secretly offering sacrifices to you. They agreed to follow your teachings and to share both blessings and dangers alike. Even at that time they were singing the hymns of praise that their ancestors had sung.

¹⁰ But their enemies' sad cries echoed all around, and the pitiful sound of parents crying for their children could be heard everywhere. ¹¹ Slaves suffered the same punishment as their masters. Common people suffered the same loss as the king. ¹² There were so many people who died that the bodies couldn't be counted. There weren't enough people left alive to bury them all, because their most precious children had been destroyed instantly. ¹³ The Egyptians didn't believe anything you said because they trusted the magic they practiced. Yet, when the first male child born in every family was destroyed, they admitted that Israel was God's son.

¹⁴ When everything was peaceful and quiet and midnight had come quickly, ¹⁵ your all-powerful word came down to earth from your royal throne in heaven. Like a fierce warrior with a sharp sword, ^h your word came into a doomed land ¹⁶ and carried out your strict order. Your word stood like a warrior with its feet on the earth and its head in the sky. It filled every place with death. ¹⁷ Immediately, nightmares terrified the children who were going to die, and unexpected fears overwhelmed them. ¹⁸ Wherever they were dying, these children told others why they were being punished. ¹⁹ Their terrifying dreams revealed to them in advance why they were suffering so that they wouldn't die without knowing the reason.

Prayer Rescues the People of Israel From Death

²⁰ Those who worshiped you also experienced death. A large number of them were slaughtered in the desert. However, your anger didn't last very long. ²¹ Aaron, an innocent man, rushed to their defense. He used the armor of his priestly ministry—the prayers and incense offered for forgiveness—to withstand your fury, put an end to the disaster, and show that he was your servant. ²² He didn't overcome your bitter anger with his own strength or with weapons. Instead, his prayers stopped you from punishing them by reminding you of the pledges and promises ⁱ you made to our ancestors. ²³ When dead bodies were piled on top of each other, he interceded, stopped your anger, and prevented it from killing those who were still living. ²⁴ The designs on his long robe were symbols of the entire universe. The glorious names of our

^h 18:15 Part of verse 16 has been placed in verse 15 to express the complex Greek sentence structure more clearly in English.

ⁱ 18:22 Or "covenants."

ancestors were engraved on the four rows of precious stones fastened on his breastplate. Your majestic name was written on the crown that was on his head. **25** The angel of death was afraid of these things and backed down. This single experience of your anger was enough for your people.

19

The Lord Protects Israel but Punishes Egypt

1 Lord, you showed no mercy to the Egyptians. Your anger toward them never ended. You knew in advance what they were going to do. **2** You knew that they would allow your people to go and that they would help your people to leave quickly. But you also knew that they would change their minds and eventually chase after your people. **3** So while the Egyptians were still mourning beside the graves of their dead, they foolishly thought that your people were runaway slaves. So even though the Egyptians had just begged and forced them to leave, they chased after them. **4** You made the Egyptians forget what had happened and led them to do this. As a result, they received their final punishment with its torments. They deserved this fate. **5** At the Red Sea, they died in an unusual way, but your people experienced a remarkable journey.

6 The entire creation obeyed your commands and acted in a way that kept your people from harm. **7** Your people saw the cloud that overshadowed their camp and dry land appearing where water had once been. They saw a clear way out of the Red Sea through a grassy plain that led out of the pounding waves. **8** Your people were a nation protected by your power. After they had seen the wonderful things you had done, they passed through those pounding waves. **9** They were like horses in a pasture and like lambs jumping around, as they praised you, Lord, for rescuing them. **10** They still remembered what had happened in Egypt, the land where they had been slaves. They remembered how the land became filled with gnats instead of cattle and how the river swarmed with large numbers of frogs instead of fish. **11** Later, when they wanted more appetizing food and asked for it, they saw a kind of bird that was new to them. **12** Quails came inland from the sea to satisfy their hunger.

13 Severe thunderstorms served as warnings to the Egyptians that they were about to be punished. Those sinners received a fair punishment for the evil things they had done. They had certainly shown a vicious hatred toward their guests. **14** Other nations had refused to welcome unknown people when they came to them. But these Egyptians made slaves of their own guests, who were their friends. **15** But that's not all. You will punish them in some way because they didn't welcome foreigners with kindness. **16** After the Egyptians had given your people a warm welcome and treated them as equals, they abused them with terrible kinds of work. **17** They were struck with blindness just like the people from Sodom who were at the door of Lot, a man who worshiped you. When they were in complete darkness, each person tried to find the way to his own door.

The Lord Uses Nature to Help His People

18 Nature changed its arrangement in the same way that the rhythm of notes on a harp changes the beat of a tune, even though each note remains the same. A person can arrive at this conclusion by taking a close look at what happened. **19** People, who live on dry land, went through water like fish, and frogs, which live in water, moved onto the land. **20** Fire burned in water, and water didn't put the fire out. **21** On land, the flames didn't burn up animals, even though the animals walked through them. Flames didn't even melt the heavenly food, which looked like ice, food that would have ordinarily melted.

22 Lord, you have praised and honored your people in every way. You have never failed to help them at any time or in any place.