

## Egyptian Proverbs

The Old Testament wisdom authors sometimes borrowed from ancient Egyptian sources. One such source was the Teachings of Ptah-Hotep (2575–2134 BC). Read some of Ptah-Hotep's teachings here and compare them with the Book of Proverbs. How are they the same? How are they different? How does the advice apply to people today?

50–60 (Compare with Proverbs 2:1–5 and 19:20)	85–95 (Compare with Proverbs 11:21 and 17:13)
<p>My students, in all things, be intelligent, not arrogant, Be wise, not overconfident.            Seek advice from the powerless, As well as from the powerful.                No one ever reaches one's full potential.                There is always more to learn.                Wisdom hides like emeralds,                But it can always be uncovered . . .                . . . in a poor man,                . . . in a young woman grinding grain.</p>	<p>If you become a ruler, do what is right, Stay above reproach.            Be just in your decisions, Never ignoring the law.            Injustice brings punishment,            Injustice brings all your work to nothing.            Injustice brings success for a moment,            Justice brings success for two generations.</p>
120–142 (Compare with Proverbs 23:1–3)	147–160 (Compare with Proverbs 25:13)
<p>If you work for someone else, Take what your master offers.                Do not look about with envy,                Do not always hope for more.            Stand humbly until your master speaks to you,            Speak only when spoken to.                Laugh when your master laughs,                Try to please your master in everything.                But remember this,                No one knows what is in another's heart.                When masters are at the table,                They may seem to dispense favors as they see fit,                . . . to favor those who are useful,                . . . to favor those who think as they do.            The wise soul is guided by the divine assembly,            Therefore, do not complain about their choices.</p>	<p>If you become a messenger for the powerful,            Be completely reliable on every assignment.            Carry out your orders to the letter.            Withhold nothing. Forget nothing.            Forge nothing. Repeat nothing. Embellish nothing.            Do not make harsh language worse.            Vulgarity turns the mighty into enemies.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>278–296</b>  <b>(Compare with Proverbs 6:23–29 and 7:24–27)</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>328–334</b>  <b>(Compare with Proverbs 12:4 and 31:1–31)</b></p>
<p>If you become the father of a household or are a houseguest,              Stay away from the women of the house.          Keep your mind on business, your eyes off pretty faces.              Foolish dreams become casualties of unwise actions.              Escape love sickness and lust,              And succeed in everything else you do</p>	<p>If you become a landowner, establish a household, Be faithful to your wife.              Feed her, clothe her, make her happy.              And she will provide you with an heir.              Do not sue her in court,              But do not let her dominate you.              To judge a woman’s moods              Is to read a woman’s eyes.              A wife who shares her husband’s wealth              Is a wife who is faithful to her husband.</p>

From Victor Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 266–69 passim.