

# Teaching of Ptahhotep

## The Introduction

The Teaching is set at court, with the highest official ('[vizier](#)' in Egyptological translation), a man named Ptahhotep, requesting retirement from the king. The official paints a bleak picture of old age, evidently to convince the king that retirement is necessary, and asks that he be replaced in office by his son as 'staff of old age', a term also found in a late Middle Kingdom legal document to denote a son taking the office of his father, presumably on condition that he continues to support the father ([UC 32037](#)). This term, the Middle Egyptian syntax and the late Middle Kingdom date of the two earliest surviving manuscript copies, point to a Twelfth Dynasty date of composition.

The king consents to the request of Ptahhotep, with the observation that the young cannot be born with wisdom - by implication they need the experience given by advanced age. The Teaching presents then both a positive and the dramatised negative aspects of [growing old](#) in ancient Egyptian society.

[Background information](#) for Middle Kingdom compositions

Transliteration after [Devaud 1916](#), using the copy on Papyrus Prisse as principal source. The section divisions here are those suggested by the red highlighting in Papyrus Prisse: after each section number are given the corresponding line-numbers in Papyrus Prisse.

Transliteration (using A, i, y, a, w, b, p, f, m, n, r, h, H, x, X, s, S, q, k, g, t, T, d, D) with translation red: part of the text written in red in Papyrus Prisse

1 (Papyrus Prisse, column 4, line 1 to column 5, line 4)

**sbAyt nt imy-r niwt TAty ptH-Htp**

xr Hm n nswt bity issi anx Dt r nHH

imy-r niwt TAty ptH-Htp Dd.f

ity nb.i

tni xpr iAw hAw

wgg iw iHw Hr mAw

sDr n.f Xdr ra nb

irty nDsw anxwy imrw

r gr n mdw n.f

ib tmw n sxA.n.f sf

qs mn n.f n Aww

bw nfr xpr m bw bin

dpt nbt Smt

irt iAw n rmT bin m xt nbt

fnd DbA n ssn.n.f

n tnw aHa Hmst

wD.t(w) n bAk im irt mdw iAw

ix Dd n.f mdw sDmyw

sxrw imyw-HAt pAw sDm.n nTrw

ix ir.t(w) n.k mitt

dr.tw Snw m rxyt

bAk n.k idbwy

**The teaching of the Overseer of the City and Vizier Ptahhotep**

before the power of the dual king Isesi living for ever and eternity.

The Overseer of the City and Vizier Ptahhotep declares:

O my sovereign,

Old age has struck, age has descended,  
 Feebleness has arrived, weakness is here again.  
 Sleep is upon him in discomfort all day.  
 Eyes are grown small, ears deaf,  
 Mouth silent, unable to speak,  
 Heart emptied, unable to recall yesterday.  
 Bones ache his whole length.  
 Goodness has turned to evil,  
 All taste is gone.  
 What old age does to people is evil in every way.  
 Nose is blocked, unable to breathe,  
 how old (it feels) standing or sitting.  
 Let a staff of old age be decreed to be made for this humble servant.  
 Let him be told the speech of those who assess,  
 the advice of the ancestors once heard by the gods.  
 Then the same may be done for you,  
 strife may be removed from the populace,  
 and the Two Shores may toil for you.

2 (Papyrus Prieis, column 5, lines 4-6)

**Dd.in Hm n nTr pn**  
 sbA r.k sw r mdt Xr HAt  
 ix ir.f biA n msw wrw  
 aq sDm im.f mtrt ib nb  
 Dd n.f nn msy siA

**Then the Power of this god said:**

Teach him then the speech from the past  
 that he may provide the example for the children of the great.  
 May hearing enter into him, the measure of every heart.  
 Speak to him. For no one can be born wise.

3 (Papyrus Prieis, column 5, lines 6-8)

**HAt-a m Tsw n mdt nfrt**  
**Ddt.n** iry-pat HAty-a  
 it-nTr mry nTr  
 sA nswt smsw n Xt.f  
 imy-r niwt TAty ptH-Htp  
 m sbA xmw r rx  
 r tp-Hsb n mdt nfrt  
 m Axt n sDm.ty.fy  
 m wgt n nty r tht st

**Beginning of the collection of fine words**

**Said by** the man of the elite, foremost of arm  
 god's father and beloved of the god  
 eldest son of the king of his body  
 overseer of the city, vizier Ptahhotep  
 in teaching the ignorant to be wise  
 according to the rules of fine words,  
 something useful to whoever heeds,  
 and something harmful to whoever transgresses it.

4 (Papyrus Prisse, column 5, lines 8-10)

**Dd.in.f xr sA.f**

m aA ib.k Hr rx.k  
nDnD r.k Hna xm mi rx  
n in.tw Drw Hmwt  
nn Hmww apr Axw.f  
dgA mdt nfrt r wAD  
iw gm st m-a Hmwt Hr bnwt

**Then he addressed his son:**

Do not be proud on account of your knowledge,  
but discuss with the ignorant as with the wise.  
The limits of art cannot be delivered;  
there is no artist whose talent is fulfilled.  
Fine words are more sought after than greenstone,  
but can be found with the women at the grindstone.

5 (Papyrus Prisse, column 5, lines 10-13)

**ir gm.k DAisw m At.f**

xrp ib m iqr r.k  
xAm awy.k XmsA.k  
m TA ib.k r.f  
nn mn.n.f n.k  
sand.k Dd bin  
m tm xsf sw m At.f  
nis.t(w).f m xm-xt pw  
rmn.n dAir ib.k aHa.f

**If you meet an opponent in his moment**

A director of heart who is superior to you,  
bend your arms and bow;  
do not take up your heart against him,  
for he will not be swayed for you.  
You can belittle bad speaking  
by not clashing with him in his moment;  
it will mean he is called a fool,  
when your self-restraint has subdued his excess.

6 (Papyrus Prisse, column 5, lines 13-14)

**ir gm.k DAisw m At.f**

mitw.k nty m rmnwt.k  
dd.k xpr iqr.k r.f m gr  
iw.f Hr mdt bint  
wr wfA in sDmyw  
rn.k nfr m rx n srw

**If you meet an opponent in his moment**

Your equal, a man from your levels,

silence is how you establish your superiority over him,  
while he is bad mouthing,  
greatly to the disgust of the assessors,  
and your name is the good one in the mind of the officials.

7 (Papyrus Prisse column6, lines 1-3)

**ir gm.k DAisw m At.f**

m Hwrw n is mitw.k  
m Ad ib.k r.f xft Xss.f  
imi sw r tA xsf.f n.f Ds.f  
m wSd sw r isy ib.k  
m ia-ib n nty xft.k  
qsn pw HDDw Hwrwib  
tw r irt ntt m ib.k  
Hw.k sw m xsf n srw

**If you meet an opponent in his moment**

Who is a poor man, and not your equal,  
do not vent your hear on him by his wretchedness.  
Put him on land for him to oppose himself.  
Do not pour out your heart at the man facing you.  
The demolition of a wretched heart is a difficult matter.  
What you wish will be done;  
beat him with the hostility of the officials.

8 (Papyrus Prisse column6, lines 3-6)

**ir wnn.k m sSmyw**

Hr wD n sxr n aSA  
HH n.k sp nb mnx  
r wnt sxr.k nn iw im.f  
wr mAat wAH spdt  
n Xnn.t(w).s Dr rk wsir  
iw xsf.tw n swA Hr hpw  
swAt pw m Hr n awn-ib  
in nDyt iTt aHaw  
n pA DAyt mni sp.s  
iw.f Dd.f sxt.i r.i Ds.i  
n Dd n.f sxt.i Hr Hnt.i  
wn pHwy mAat wAH.s  
Ddw s w it.i pw

**If you are to be among leaders**

at a command for the condition of the multitude,  
seek out for yourself every effective moment,  
until your condition reaches faultlessness.  
What is right is great, and (its) keenness enduring.  
It has not been overturned since the time of Osiris.  
The one who overlooks laws is punished;  
that is what is overlooked in the sight of the greedy.  
It is the small-minded that seize riches,  
but crime never managed to land its rewards.  
Whoever says 'I snare for myself'  
does not say 'I snare for my needs'.  
The final part of what is right is its endurance;

of which a man says 'that is my father'

9 (Papyrus Prisse column 6, lines 8-10)

**im.k ir Hr m rmT**

xsf nTr m mitt

iw s Dd.f anx.i im

iw.f Sw m t n tp-r.f

iw s Dd.f wsr.i

iw.f Dd.f sxt.i r.i siAt.i

iw s Dd.f Hwt.f ky

iw.f pH.f rdi.t(w).f n xm.n.f

**Do not cause fear among people**

God punishes with the same.

Anyone who says 'I can live by it'  
will lack bread for his statement.

Anyone who says 'I can be powerful'  
will have to say 'I snare against myself by my cleverness'.

Anyone who says he will strike another,  
will end by being given to a stranger.

10 (Papyrus Prisse column 6, line 11- column 7, line 3)

**ir wnn.k m s n Hmsw**

r st Tt wr r.k

Ssp ddt.f diw r fnd.k

m dgA r nty m-bAH.f

m sti sw m gmH aSA

bwt kA pw wdt im.f

m mdw n.f r iASt.f

n rx.n.tw bint Hr ib

mdw.k xft wSd.f tw

iw Ddt.k r nfr Hr ib

ir wr wnn.f HA t

sxr xft wD kA.f

iw.f r rdit n Hssy.f

sxr pw n grH xpr

in xm anay.f Hr.s

**If you are a man at a sitting**

at the table place of one greater than you,  
take whatever he causes to be set before you,  
do not stare at what is before him,

do not pierce it with many glances

Pressing it is an offence to the ka.

Do not speak to him until he has requested:  
you never know what may displease.

Speak when he questions you,  
and your speech will please.

A great man, when he is at a meal,  
behaviour following the command of his ka,  
he will give to the one he favours,  
that is the night-time behaviour that happens  
- only a fool complains about it.

11 (Papyrus Prisse column 7, lines 3-5)

ir wnn.k m s n aq

hAbw wr n wr  
mty Hr qd hAb.ftw  
ir n.f wpwt mi Dd.f  
aHA t(w) m sDw m mdt  
skn.ti wr n wr  
n dr mAat m sn.s  
n wHm.tw is ia n ib  
m mdyw rmT nbt

**If you are a man of entry**

sent by official to official,  
be precise in the form he sent you  
carry out the mission for him as he says.  
Guard against harming with words,  
embroiling official with official.  
Grasp what is right by its likeness;  
an outburst of the heart is not repeated  
from the speech of all people.

12 (Papyrus Prisse column 7, lines 5-7)

ir skA.k rwd m sxt

di st nTr wr m-a.k  
m sA r.k r-gs hAw.k  
wr irt Hryt nt gr  
ir nb qd m nb xt  
iT.f mi msH m qnbt  
m twA n iwty msw.f  
m Hwr m aba im  
iw wn wr it m Ahw  
mwt mst Htp kt r.s  
in wa sxprw nTr  
iw nb wHyt nH sSmsf

**If you plough for plants on the margins,**

the god grants it to be great by your hand  
Do not inflate your mouth beside your neighbours;  
to inspire awe by being silent is greater.  
A master of character who is master of wealth,  
he seizes like a crocodile in the council.  
Do not scorn the childless man,  
do not bemean by boasting over it.  
Even a father can have his plenty of grief;  
a mother who has given birth may be less happy than a maid.  
It is the lone man that the god fosters,  
while the lord of a clan may beg to be followed.

13 (Papyrus Prisse column 7, lines 7-9)

ir Xs.k Sms s iqr

nfr sSm.k nb xr nTr  
m rx.n.k nDsw xntw  
im.k aA ib.k r.f  
Hr rxt.n.k im.f xntw  
snd n.f xft xprt.n.f

n iy is xt Ds  
hp.sn pw n mrrw.sn  
ir Ttf iw sAq.n.fDs  
in nTr ir iqr.f  
xsf.f Hr.f iw.f sDr

**If you are weak, follow a man of excellence**

and all your conduct will be good before god.  
When you have known lesser men before,  
do not be proud against him,  
from what you knew of him before.  
Respect him according to what he has become,  
for goods do not come of their own accord.  
This is their law for their desire.  
An overflow - he has assembled it of himself.  
It is the god who makes him excellent,  
and protects him while he sleeps.

14 (Papyrus Prisse column 7, lines 9-10)

**Sms ib.k tr n wnn.k**

m ir HAw Hr mddwt  
m xb tr n Sms ib  
bwt kA pw HDt At.f  
m HAw n grg-pr  
xpr xt Sms ib  
nn km n xt iw sfA.f

**Follow your heart as long as you live.**

Do not make a loss on what is said,  
do not subtract time from following the heart.  
Harming its time is an offence to the ka.  
Do not deflect the moment of every day  
beyond establishing your heart.  
As things happen, follow (your) heart.  
There is no profit in things if it is stifled.

15 (Papyrus Prisse column 7, line 10 to column 8, line 2)

**ir wnn.k m s iqr**

ir.k sA n simA nTr  
ir mty.f pXr.f n qd.k  
nw.f xt.k r st iry  
ir n.f bw nb nfr  
sA.k is pw nsw sti kA.k  
im.k iwd ib.k r.f  
iw mtwt ir.s Snty  
ir nnm.f th.f sxr.k  
btn.n.f Ddt nbt  
Sm r.f m mdt Xst  
bAk.k sw r r.f mi qd.f  
wd r.k m xbd.n.sn  
wdd sdb n.fpw m Xt  
n nnm.n sSm.sn  
n gm.n iww.sn DAt

**If you are a man of excellence**

and produce a son in the favour of god,

if he follows precisely the outline of your character,  
 and ties your things to their proper place,  
 do everything good for him,  
 for he is your son, he belongs to the shooting of your ka  
 Do not separate your heart from him.  
 Seed may make a disputant;  
 if he wanders, and breaks your advice,  
 and has rebelled against all that is said,  
 and his mouth wanders into evil speech,  
 battle him in all his words.  
 He who attacks you is the one they have condemned.  
 It means it was decreed that he be smitten (from the time he was) in the womb.  
 Their guidance does not stray  
 their stranded never find a ferry.

16 (Papyrus Prisse column 8, lines 2-6)

ir wnn.k m rwryt  
 aHa Hms r nmmt nbt  
 wdd n.k hrw tpy  
 m swA xpr Snat.k  
 spd Hr n aq smi  
 wsx st nt iAS.n.f  
 iw rwryt r tp-Hsb  
 sxr nb xft xAy  
 in nTr sxnt st  
 n ir.tw rdiw qaH

**If you are in the approach hall**  
**stand and sit** at every step  
 as was ordered to you on the first day  
 Do not waver - that causes your expulsion  
 The sight of the one who enters to report is keen,  
 the space of the one he has summoned is broad.  
 The approach hall follows regulations,  
 every move according to the measure.  
 It is the god who promotes a place  
 Those who push forward are not made.

17 (Papyrus Prisse column 8, lines 6-11)

ir wnn.k Hna rmT  
 ir n.k mrt n kfA-ib  
 kfA ib  
 iwty pXr.f Dd m Xt.f  
 xpr.f m Tsw Ds.f  
 nb xt m-m sxr.f  
 rn.k nfr nn mdwy.k  
 Haw.k DfAw Hr.k r hAw.k  
 ab.tw n.k m xmt.n.k  
 wnn ib sDm n Xt.f  
 di.f knt.f m st mrwt.f  
 ib.f Akw Haw.f XsA  
 iw wr ib rdiw nTr  
 iw sDm n Xt.f nsw xfty

**If you are to be with people**

appoint for yourself people you can trust,  
 and be trustworthy.  
 The man without speech running through his body  
 is the one who becomes a commander himself.  
 A master of goods - what is he like?  
 Your good name is that you do not speak.  
 Your body is fattened for you more than your contemporaries.  
 You receive praise from those you do not know.  
 When a heart heeds only its belly,  
 it puts resentment of it in place of love of it.  
 His heart is afflicted, his body unkempt.  
 The great of heart is the gift of god,  
 the one who obeys his body belongs to the enemy.

18 (Papyrus Prisse column 8, lines 11-14)

smi sSm.k nn am-ib  
 di sXr.k m sH n nb.k  
 ir Ttf r.f xft Dd.f  
 nn qsn r wpwty smi  
 nn wSb.tw m A rx st  
 in wr r xt.f nnm  
 ir kA.f r xsf.f Hr.s  
 iw.f gr.f Hr iw Dd.n.i

### Report your matters without hesitating

give your advice in the council of your master.  
 Anyone fully fluent in speaking,  
 will find no difficulty in being a messenger in reporting.  
 No one will contest 'but who can know it?'  
 It is the one who exceeds his field who comes unstuck -  
 if he intends to prevail by it,  
 he has to be silent at the words 'I said so'.

19 (Papyrus Prisse column 8, line 14 to column 9, line 3)

ir wnn.k m sSmy  
 wstn sXrw m wdt n.k  
 irr.k xt tnw  
 sxA n.f hrw ii Hr-sA  
 n iy mdt m qAb Hswt  
 bss kApw xpr sfAt

### If you are a leader

with broad scope in what is commanded to you,  
 you should do outstanding things,  
 so as to be remembered in days to come.  
 A (legal) case does not arise out of the midst of praises.  
 The hidden beast intrudes - and then there is resistance.

20 (Papyrus Prisse column 9, lines 3-7)

ir wnn.k m sSmy  
 hr sDm.k mdw sprw  
 gfn sw r skt Xt.f  
 m kAt.n.f Dd.n.f st  
 mr Hr iw iat ib.f  
 r irt iit.n.f Hr.s

ir ir gnw sprt  
iw Dd.tw iw tr r-m th.f st  
nn sprt.n.f nbt Hr.s m xpirt.sn  
snaa ib pw sDm nfr

**If you are to be a leader**

be patient in your hearing when the petitioner speaks,  
do not halt him until his belly is emptied  
of what he had planned to have said.  
The victim loves to sate his heart  
even more than accomplishing what he came for -  
if a petition is halted,  
people say 'but why did he break that rule?'.  
Not everything for which he petitions can come to be,  
but a good hearing is soothing for the heart.

21 (Papyrus Prisse column 9, lines 7-13)

**ir mr.k swAH xnms**

m Xnw pr aq.k r.f  
m nb m sn m xnms r-pw  
r bw nb aq.k im  
aHA tw m tkn m Hmt  
n nfr n bw irw st im  
n spd n Hr Hr pxA st  
iw ngb.tw s xAr Axt n.f  
At kitt mitt rswt  
iw pH.tw mwt Hr rx st  
Ts pw Xs sti xfty  
pr.tw Hr irt.f ib Hr win.f  
ir whh m snk Hr.s  
n mar.n sxr nb m-a.f

**If you wish friendship to last**

within a house you may enter,  
as master, as brother, or as friend,  
anywhere you may enter,  
resist approaching the wife.  
It is not good for the place where it is done,  
It is not clever to open it up,  
A thousand men are tied against what is good for them;  
a little moment is like a dream,  
but death is reached by knowing it.  
It is a vile twist to shoot the enemy,  
it comes out on his doing, the heart restraining him.  
The one who fails by lusting for her,  
no plan succeeds by his hand.

22 (Papyrus Prisse column 9, line 13 to column 10, line 5)

**ir mr.k nfr sSm.k**  
nHm tw m-a Dwt nbt  
aHA tw Hr sp n awn ib  
xAt pw mrt nt btw  
n xpr.n aq im.s

iw.s sibt itw mwtw  
Hna snw Hr mwt  
iw nS.s Hmt TAY  
TAwt pw bint nbt  
arf pw n xbdn nbt  
wAH s aqA.f mAat  
Sm r nmmt.f  
iw.f ir.f imt-pr im  
nn wn is awn ib

**If you wish your conduct to be good**

and to save yourself from all evil,  
resist the opportunity of greed.  
It is a sore disease of the worm,  
no advance can come of it.  
It embroils fathers and mothers,  
with mother's brothers.  
It entangles the wife and the man,  
it is a levy of all evils,  
a bundle of all hatefulness.  
The man endures whose guideline is Right,  
who proceeds according to his paces.  
He can draw up a will by it.  
There is no tomb for the greedy hearted.

23 (Papyrus Prisse column 10, lines 5-8)

**m awn ib.k Hr psSt**

m Hnt n is r Xrt.k  
m awn ib.k r hAw.k  
wr twA n sfA r nrt  
and pw prr Xr hAw.f  
Sw m int n mdt  
in nhw n awnt Hrs  
sxpr Snty m qb Xt

**Do not be greedy over a share,**

do not be jealous of what is not your due,  
do not be greedy against your kin.  
The mild man receives more respect than the strong.  
The one who goes out under his kin is a miserable man,  
deprived of the profit of speech.  
A fraction of the object of greed  
creates a quarreler out of a cool temperament.

24 (Papyrus Prisse column 10, lines 8-12)

**ir iqr.k grg.k pr.k**

mr.k Hmt.k m-Xn Hsb  
mH Xt.s Hbs sA.s  
pXrt pw nt Haw.s mrHt  
sAw ib.s tr n wnnt.k  
AHt pw Axt n nb.s  
im.k wDa.s ryt  
sHr.s r sxm dAir.s  
Da.s pw irt.s mAA.s  
swAH.s pw m pr.k  
Snay.k s mw pw

kAt dit.s n awy.s  
Snnt.s ir n.s mr

If you are excellent, found your household,  
love your wife within reckoning.  
Fill her belly, clothe her back,  
ointment is the remedy for her body.  
Gladden her heart as long as you live.  
It is a field of benefit for its lord.  
Do not impose her in affairs.  
Distance her from power, restrain her.  
Her eye is her storm when it sees.  
This is what keeps her in your house.  
Your quelling her, is water.  
The womb puts her in her arms.  
In her turmoil a canal is made for her.

25 (Papyrus Prisse column 11, lines 1-4)

sHtp aqw.k m xprr n.k  
xpr n Hssw nTr|  
ir whh m sHtp aqw.f  
iw Dd.tw ka pw aAb  
n rx.n.tw xprr siA.f dwA  
kA pw kA n mty Htpw im.f  
ir xpr spw nw Hswt  
in aq Dd iywy  
n in.tw Htpt r dmi  
iw in.tw aqw wn Aq

Make your staff happy with what has come to you,  
it has come to one whom the god favours.  
Anyone neglecting the happiness of his staff  
is called a spirit of hoarding.  
No one know what is coming, when planning tomorrow.  
The spirit of the correct man is the spirit that brings happiness.  
If moments of praising arise,  
it is the staff who would cheer.  
Food cannot be brought to town  
staff are fetched when there is shortage.

26 (Papyrus Prisse column 11, lines 5-8)

im.k wHm msk n mdt  
n sDm.k sw  
prw pw n tA-Xt  
wHm mdt mA  
n sDm.n st r-tA rsst  
mk xft Hr.k rx iqr  
iw wD.tw TAwrt irt.s  
sxprw r iTt.s msdt mi hp  
iw mski mi sp n rswt  
mk ssw n rswt pw  
Hbs.tw Hr.s

**Do not repeat slander**

and do not listen to it.

It is the result of the hot-headed.

Repeat a word after seeing,  
not heard entirely skewed.

See, what is before you is fine knowledge.

When a levy is decreed to take place,  
the one made to exact it is hated, by law.

Slander is like a moment of dreaming,  
See what is the remedy for the dream -  
concealment.

27 (Papyrus Prisse column 11, lines 8-11)

**ir wnn.k m s iqr**

Hms m sH n nb.f

sAq ib nb r bw iqr

gr.k Ax st r tftf

mdy.k rx.n.k wHa.k

in Hmww mdw m sH

qsn mdt r kAt nbt

in wHa.s dd.s r xt

**If you are as a man** of excellence,  
sitting in the council of his master,  
rally every heart to excellence.

Your silence is more benefit than creeping talk.

You should say what you know how to explain.

There are artists of words in the council,  
speaking is more difficult than any labour.

The one who can explain is the one who makes it work.

28 (Papyrus Prisse column 11, line 12 to column 12, line 6)

**ir wsr.k dd.k snd.k**

m rx m hrt Dd

m wD tp n is r sSm

iw Stm aq.f r iwt

m qA ib.k tm.f dHi

m gr sAw xn.k

wSb.k mdt n nsr

shr Hr.k Hn tw

iw nswt nt tA-ib sXr.f

an xndw qd mtn.f

mnS n hrw r Aw.f

nn ir n.f At nfrt

wnf ib n hrw r Aw.f

nn grg n.f pr

stw mH mi Hmw sp r tA

ky nDrw

iw sDm.n ib.f r Hn A

**If you are powerful in causing respect** for you,  
by knowledge, by calming in speech,  
do not order people, except by the guidelines.  
The aggressive man ends up in trouble.

Do not have your heart too high, or it will be brought down.  
 Do not stay silent if it makes you stumble.  
 When you answer the speech of a fiery man,  
 distance your sight, restrain yourself.  
 The spear of a hothead flies past,  
 but a fine mover has his path smoothed.  
 A man who worries all day long  
 will never be allowed a good moment.  
 A man who lazes all day long  
 will never have a solid house.  
 A shot filled is like an oar abandoned on the ground,  
 when another is taken,  
 his heart has obeyed the wish 'if only I had...'

29 (Papyrus Prisse column 12, lines 6-9)

**m xsf tw m At wr**

m sHnw ib n nty Atpw  
 xpr sdb.f r Snt sw  
 sfx kA m mrr sw  
 dd kAw pw Hna nTr  
 mrrt.f irt n.f  
 sqd r.k Hr m-xt nSn  
 iw Htp xr kA.f  
 iw sdb xr xfty  
 kAw pw srwd mrwt

**Do not block the moment of a great man**

do not constrain the desire of one who is laden down.  
 Barriers from him arise against the one who disputes with him,  
 there is release for the ka with the one who shows love for him.  
 This is the gift of sustenance, this and the god.  
 What he loves is action for him.  
 When the face is turned back to you, after a storm,  
 there follows peace before his ka,  
 and barriers before the enemy.  
 Planting love brings sustenance.

30 (Papyrus Prisse column 12, lines 9-13)

**sbA wr r Axt n.f**

sxpr Ssp.f m Hr rmT  
 di.k xr sAA.f Hr nb.f  
 wnn DfA n.k xr kA.f  
 iw Xt nt mrwt r Htpw  
 iw sA.k r Hbs Xr.s  
 wn Ssp.f Hr.k r anx n pr.k  
 xr saH.k mrr.k  
 anx sw Xr.s  
 ir.f qaH nfr im.k gr  
 wAH grt mrwt.k pw m Xt nt mrrwt tw  
 mk kA pw mrr sDm

**Instruct the great in what is useful for him**

Foster his image in the sight of people,  
 cause his wisdom to fall in front of his lord,  
 and there may be rewards for you too before his ka.  
 The stomach of the loved will be content,

your back will be clothed by it,  
his image will be over you for the life of your house,  
Your noble, the one you love,  
he is alive by it.  
When he makes a good gesture, do not be silent.  
This is indeed the guarantee of your love in the body of those who love you.  
See, it is the ka that loves to listen.

31 (Papyrus Prisse column 13, lines 1-4)

ir ir.k sA s n qnbt  
wpwty n hrt aSA  
Sd mAdw nw a  
mdy.k m rdi Hr gs  
sAw Dd.f sxr.f  
srw rdi.f mdt Hr gs iry  
wdb sp.k r wDat

**If you play the son of a man of a council,**  
a messenger for pleasing the multitude,  
select the fringes of action.  
In speaking do not take sides,  
in case he speaks his opinion:  
'officials, he sets the case on that side',  
and your mistake is turned into judgement.

32 (Papyrus Prisse column 13, lines 4-6)

ir sf.k Hr sp xprw  
gsA.k n s Hr aqA.f  
swA Hr.f m sxA sw  
Dr gr.f n.k hrw tpy

**If you show mercy on a past failure,**  
incline to a man for his virtue.  
Pass over him, do not recall it,  
since he might stay silent for you on day one.

33 (Papyrus Prisse column 13, lines 6-9)

ir aA.k m-xt nDsw.k  
ir.k xt m-xt gAt tp im  
m niwt rxt.n.k  
m sSAw xprrt n.k xntw  
m kfA ib.k Hr aHaw.k  
xpr n.k m rdiw nTr  
nn tw HA ky mitw.k  
xprw n.f mitt iry

**If you are rich after your impoverishment,**  
and acquire property after lack of it,  
in the city that you have known,  
with awareness of what happened to you before,  
do not place your trust in your wealth.  
It came to you by the gifts of the god,  
so you will not be behind another like you,  
but the same could happen to him

34 (Papyrus Prisse column 13, line 9 to column 14, line 4)

**Xms sA.k n Hry-tp.k**

imy-r.k n pr nswt  
wnn pr.k mn Hr xt.f  
DbAw.k m st iry  
qsn pw itnw m Hry-tp  
anx.tw tr n sft.f  
n xA.n qaH n kftf  
m TAwy pr sAHw  
m dAir xt tkn im.k  
nn st Ax n st  
im.f siw r.k r sDmt.k  
im pw n ib bqbq  
ir rx st iw.f r Sny  
qsn pw n itnw m st tknt

**Bend your back to your superior**

your overseer of the king's domain,  
and your house will be fixed on its goods,  
your rewards in their place.  
The man who struggles with the superior is an irritant.  
You live as long as the superior is pleased with you.  
The shoulder is not injured by being exposed.  
Do not seize the house of neighbours,  
do not suppress anything close to you,  
it gives no results in anything.  
Let him not speak ill of you before you have heard.  
A troublemaker is a man with no mind.  
Whoever is known as a quarreller,  
there is trouble for the struggler in places near to him.

35 (Papyrus Prisse column 14, lines 4-6)

**im.k nk Hmt Xrd**

rx.n.k xsfwt r mw HAty.f  
nn qb n ntt m Xt.f  
im.f swxA r irt xsfwt  
qb.f m-xt HD.f ib.f

**Do not have sex with a child woman**

when you knew the approach to the water of its chest.  
There is no cooling what is in his body.  
Do not go mad on making the approach.  
He is cool after damaging his heart.

36 (Papyrus Prisse column 14, lines 6-12)

**ir Dar.k qd n xnms**  
m Snn r.k tkn im.f  
ir sp Hna.f waw  
r tmt.k mn xrt.f  
DAis Hna.f m-xt aHaw  
wSm ib.f m sp n mdt

ir pr mAt.n.f m-a.f  
ir.f sp Spt.k Hr.f  
xnms sw r-pw  
m iTw Hr  
sAq m wbA n.f mdt  
m wSb m sp n shA  
m wi tw r.f m hbw sw  
n pA sp.f tm iw  
n wh.n.tw m SA sw

**If you seek out** the character of a friend,  
do not make your own enquiries, go direct to him,  
make the case with him alone  
to avoid suffering in his matter.  
Debate with him after a period of time,  
and try his heart in the matter of the case.  
If what he has seen come out through him,  
and he does the matter that angers you about him,  
or that makes him a friend,  
do not seize the sight,  
be collected, do not deluge him with words,  
do not reply with a slight,  
do not react against him by destroying him.  
His moment cannot fail to come.  
Noone can escape from what is fated for him.

37 (Papyrus Prisse column 14, line 12 to column 15, line 2)

**HD Hr.k tr n wnn.k**  
ir pr m mXr n aq.n  
in t n psSt Hnty Hr.f  
srxy pw Sw m Xt.f  
xpr itnw m sAhhw  
m ir sw r tkn im.k  
sxA pw s iAmt  
n rnpwt imt-xt wAs

**Let your face be bright as long as you live.**  
Whoever leaves the store cannot enter.  
It is the bread of sharing that causes envy.  
A man with an empty stomach is a man to complain;  
the opponent is born out of impoverishment.  
Do not make him into someone to approach you.  
Favour is the memory of a man  
in the years after ruin.

38 (Papyrus Prisse column 15, lines 2-5)

**rx Swt.k wnn xt.k**  
m Xs biAt.k r xnmsw.k  
wdb.f pw mH.f wr sw r Spssw.f  
sw xt ky n ky  
Ax biAt nt sA s n.f  
iw qd nfr r sxAw

**Know your plumage** and your property will last.  
Do not be mean in your character towards your friends.

They are his river field when it floods, more important than his riches.  
They are the property of one for another.  
The quality of a son of a someone is good for him;  
good character will be remembered.

39 (Papyrus Prisse column 15, lines 5-6)

**xsf Hr tp sbA Hr qd**

iw nDrt xw r mnt biA  
ir sp n is Hr iyt  
rdi xpr anay pw m itnw

**Punish from the head, teach by character.**

The force against a criminal will be a model example.  
Any instance except for results  
is what makes a moaner turn into an active opponert.

40 (Papyrus Prisse column 15, lines 6-8)

**ir ir.k Hmt m Spnt**

wnft ib rxt.n niwt.s  
iw.s m hpwy  
an n.s nw  
m nS.s imi r.k wnm.s  
iw wnft ib sip.s aqAA

**If you marry a good-time girl**

A joyful woman known to her town,  
If she is wayward,  
and revels in the moment,  
do not reject her, but instead let her enjoy;  
joyfulness is what marks calm water.

41 (Papyrus Prisse column 15, line 8 to column 16, line 2)

**ir sDm.k nn Dd.n.i n.k**

wnn sxr.k nb r HAt  
ir sp n mAat iry Spss.sn pw  
rwi sxA.sn m r n rmT  
m-a nfr n Tsw.sn  
in.n.tw mdt nbt  
n sk.n m tA pn Dt  
irt.s Ssrt r nfr  
mdw srw r.s  
sbA s pw r Dd n m-xt  
sDm.f st xpr m Hmww sDmw  
nfr Dd n m-xt ntf sDm.f st  
ir xpr sp nfr m-a wnn m Hry-tp  
wnn.f mnx n nHH  
iw sAA.f nb r Dt  
in rx sm bA.f  
m smnt nfr.f im.f tp tA  
sA.tw rx Hr rxt.n.f  
in sr Hr sp.f nfr  
m-a n ib.f nst.f  
aqA spty.fy iw.f Hr Dd

irty.fy Hr mAA  
anxwy.f twt Hr sDm Axt n sA.f  
ir mAat Sw m grg

If you heed these things that I have told you  
all your conduct will move forward.  
Their holding true, that is their wealth.  
The memory of them moves in the mouth of people  
from the excellence of their phrasing.  
When every saying has been brought,  
it does not perish in this land forever.  
Doing it is a matter for goodness,  
the words of the officials follow it.  
This is the teaching of a man to speak to posterity,  
hearing it he becomes an attentive craftsman.  
It is good to speak to posterity, for it will hear it.  
If there good cases arise from the one who is the superior,  
he will be eternally effective,  
all his wisdom will last forever.  
The wise man nourishes his soul  
by establishing his goodness with it on earth.  
The wise man is famed for what he has learned,  
it is the official who is after good conduct.  
from the action of his heart and his tongue,  
his lips are reliable when he is speaking,  
and his eyes in seeing,  
his ears intent in hearing what is useful for his son.  
Who does what is right, is free from falsehood.

42 (Papyrus Prisse column 16, lines 3-13)

Ax sDm n sA sDmw  
aq sDm m sDmw  
xpr sDmw m sDmi  
nfr sDm nfr mdt  
sDmw nb Axt  
Ax sDm n sDmw  
nfr sDm r ntt nbt  
pr mrwt nfrt  
nfr-wy Ssp sA Dd it.f  
xpr n.f iAwt Xr.s  
mrrw nTr pw sDm  
n sDm.n msddw nTr  
in ib sxpr nb.f  
m sDm m tm sDm  
anx wDA snb n s ib.f  
in sDmw sDm Dd  
mrr sDm pw ir r Ddt  
nfr-wy sDm sA n it.f  
rS-wy Dddy n.fnn  
sA an.f m nb sDm  
sDmw Ddw n.f st mnx.f m XtimAxy xr it.f  
iw sxA.f m r n anxw  
ntyw tp tA wnnt.sn

Hearing is good for a son who hears,  
hearing enters into the hearer.

The hearer becomes one who is heard.  
Hearing is good, as speech is good.  
The hearer is the master of what is useful.  
Hearing is good for the hearer,  
hearing is better than any other thing;  
love of good comes into being.  
How beautiful it is when a son receives what his father says.  
Old age is achieved for him by it.  
The hearer is one whom the god loves.  
The one whom god hates does not hear  
The heart is the creator of its master.  
Do not hear from the one who does not hear  
A man's heart is his life, prosperity and health.  
It is the hearer who hears the speaker,  
the one who acts according to what is said is the one who loves hearing.  
How good when a son listens to his father.  
How joyful is the one to whom this is said.  
A son who is handsome is a hearing lord.  
The hearer to whom it is said is effective in the body.  
Memory of him is in the mouth of the people,  
Those who are on earth, and those who will be.

43 (Papyrus Prisse column 16, line 13 to column 17, line 4)

ir Ssp sA s Ddt it.f

nn nm n sxr.f nb  
sbA.k m sA.k sDmw  
iqr.ty.fy Hr ib n srw  
sSm r.f r Dddt n.f  
mAw m sDmw  
sA iqr.f nm.t.f tnw  
nnm bs n tm sDm  
dwA rx r smnt.f  
iw wxA mDd.f

If the son of a someone receives what his father says,

There can be no wavering for any of his plans.  
Instruct your son to be a good hearer,  
who will be excellent in the hearts of the officials,  
guiding his mouth according to what he has been told,  
seen as a hearer.  
The son who excels, his steps are distinguished,  
but there is no straight way in for the one who fails to hear.  
The morning of the wise man will be his security,  
while the fool is pressed down.

44 (Papyrus Prisse column 17, lines 4-9)

ir wxA iwty sDm.f

nn ir n.f xt nbt  
mA.f rx m xm

Axt m mnt  
ir.f xbdn nbt  
r Tsst im.f ra nb  
anx.f m mwtt Xr.s  
aqw.f pw xbn Dd  
biAt.f im m rx n srw  
Hr mwt anx ra nb  
swA.t(w) Hr spw.f  
m-a aSA n iyt Hr.f ra nb

**As for the fool unable to hear,**

nothing can ever be done for him.

He sees wisdom as ignorance,  
and what is good as what is painful.

He commits every error,  
to be accused of it each day.

He lives on what one dies of,  
corrupt speech is his food.

His character in this is well-known to the officials,  
saying 'living death' each day.

His faults are passed over  
from the sheer number of faults on him each day.

45 (Papyrus Prisse column 17, line 10 to column 18, line 12)

**sA sDmw m Sms Hr**

nfr n.f m-xt sDm.f  
iAww.f pH.f imAx  
sDd.f m mitt n Xrdw.f  
m smAw sbAw it.f  
s nb sbA mi ir.f  
sDd.f xr msw  
ix Dd.n.sn Xrdw.sn  
ir biA m rdi anDt.k  
srwd mAat anx msw.k  
ir tpi iy Xr isft  
ix Dd mT mAAt.sn  
mitt is pfA pw  
Dd n sDm.ty.sn  
mitt is pfA pw gr  
mAA bw nb sn sgrH aSAat  
nn km.n Spss m xmt.sn  
m iT mdt m in.s  
m rdi kt m st kt  
aHA tw m wn ini im.k  
sAw tw r Dd rx xt  
sDm r.k mr.k smnt.k  
m r n sDmyw  
mdwy.k aq.n.k m sp n Hmww  
mdw.k r sp n qn  
wnn sxr.k nb r st.f

**A son who hears is a follower of Horus**

It is good for him after he hears.

In his old age he achieves revered status.

He can tell the same to his children,  
 renewing the teaching of his father.  
 Every man teaches by his deeds.  
 He tells on to the children,  
 and they can tell their children.  
 Show character, do not pass on your weaknesses.  
 Securing what is right, is the life of your children  
 As for the principal who arrives with wrongdoing,  
 people say what they see  
 'that is exactly how that man is'  
 to say to those who will hear  
 'that is exactly how that man is' too.  
 Their everyone sees, and the multitude is pacified.  
 There is no profit in riches without them.  
 Do not remove a word, do not add it.  
 Do not put one in place of another.  
 Fight against opening up the bonds on you.  
 Guard against a man of experience saying  
 'listen up, if you wish to be secure  
 in the mouth of those who hear;  
 speak up when you have penetrated the case of the craftsman'.  
 You speak at the case of closure,  
 and all your plans will fall into place.

46 (Papyrus Prisse column 18, line 12 to column 19, line 3)

hrp ib.k Hn r.k  
 ix sxr.k m-m srw  
 mtr Hr qd xr nb.k  
 ir r Dd.n.f sA pfA pw  
 r Dd n sDm.ty.sn st  
 Hs grt msy.n.f sw  
 Dd.k xt tnw  
 ix Dd srw sDm.ty.sn  
 nfr wy prw n r.f

**Flood your heart, restrain your mouth**  
 then your plans will be among the officials.  
 Be straight in character before your lord.  
 Do as he has said, that is the son,  
 so those who hear it say  
 'indeed favour gave birth to him'.  
 Say things of distinction,  
 so the officials who hear may say  
 'how perfect is the issue of his mouth'.

47 (Papyrus Prisse column 19, lines 3-8)

ir r Ddt nb.k r.k  
 nfr wy sbA.n it.f  
 pr.n.f im.f xnt Haw.f  
 Dd.n.f n.f iw.f m Xt r-Aw  
 wr irt.n.f r Dddt n.f  
 mk sA nfr n dd nTr

rdi HAw Hr Dddt n.f xr nb.f  
ir.f mAat  
ir.n ib.f r nmtt.f  
mi pH.k wi Haw.k wDA  
nswt Htp m xprr nbt  
iT.k rnpwt m anx  
nn Sr irt.n.i tp tA  
iT.n.i rnpt Snt mD m anx  
n dd n.i nswt  
Hswt xnt tpyw-a  
m-a irt mAat n nswt r st imAx

**Do as your master has said for you.**

How good is one instructed by his father  
when he emerged from him out of his body,  
and he told him, while he was in the body, entirely,  
May what he has done be greater than what he was told.  
See, a good son, by the gift of the god,  
surpassing what he was told before his lord.  
He does what is right.  
His heart has acted according to his set steps.  
As you reach me, your body intact,  
the king content with everything,  
take years of life.  
What I have done on earth is not little.  
I took 110 years of life  
by the grant of the king to me,  
favour ahead of the ancestors,  
from doing what is right for the king until the stage of revered status.

There follows an end-note confirming the unity of the composition (Papyrus Prisse, column 19, line 9):

iw.f pw HAt.fr pHwy.fy mi gmyt m sS

'this is its completion, from beginning to end as found in writing'.

---

Copyright © 2003 University College London. All rights reserved.

Forrás: <http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/literature/ptahhotep.html>