

GLOBAL HUMANITIES READER

VOLUME I

Engaging Ancient Worlds and Perspectives

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Instruction of Amenemope

Introduction

The sole complete copy of the *Teaching of Amenemope*²³ is on a **papyrus scroll** inscribed in the seventh century BCE, when Egypt was reunited under a single pharaoh after a period of disunity and anarchy. It was likely composed several centuries earlier in the New Kingdom, at the height of Egypt's political power and cultural influence. *Amenemope* is a collection of proverbial sayings or **maxims** for virtuous living that were clear in intent yet profound in meaning, deserving of rereading, memorization, and continual reflection. Egyptologists call works like this “instructional” or “wisdom literature.” Are there any cultural sources for virtuous living or wisdom that you use in your daily life?

We do not know *Amenemope*'s author, but the scroll we have was inscribed by Senu, son of Pemu. His name can be found in the **colophon**, a short label found at the ends of scrolls that confirm it was copied completely and identify the person who did it. Senu may have copied it for private use or for a local library. *Amenemope* could have been authored by the individual named Amenemope who speaks for the entirety of the text, but

SNAPSHOT BOX

LANGUAGE: Ancient Egyptian

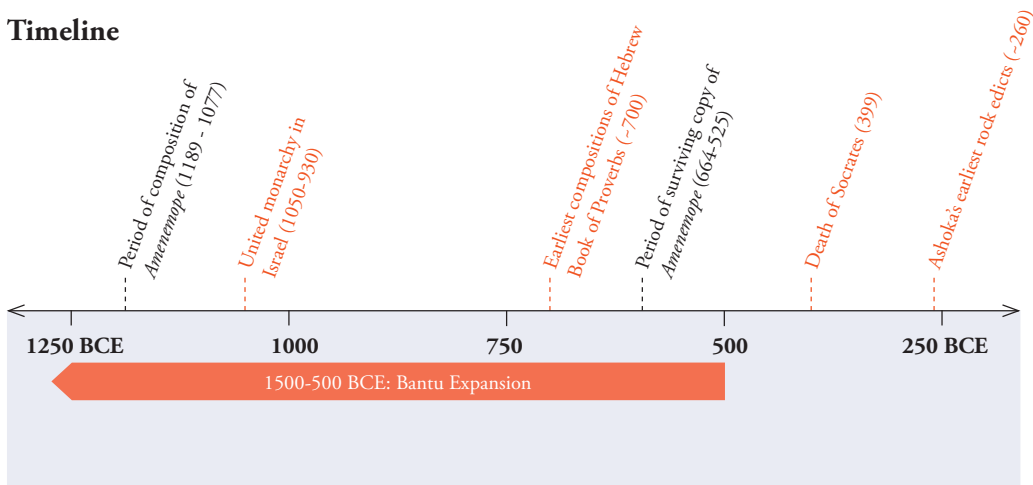
DATE: c. 7th century BCE

LOCATION: Egypt

GENRE: Wisdom literature

TAGS: Class and Wealth; Desire and Happiness; Education; Ethics and Morality; Family; Wisdom

Timeline



23. Because the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system recorded only consonants, not vowels, we are not always sure of the exact way any Egyptian word would have sounded. The popular Egyptian name “Amenemope” survives later in Greek texts, which allows us to be certain of its pronunciation: “Ah-men-em-OH-puh.”

he also may be purely literary. In the prologue, Amenemope identifies himself as a state official and says that the instructions that follow are for his son.

Amenemope's readership was quite small: approximately 1 percent of the population was literate. These individuals, called **scribes**, were trained from a young age to do the difficult task of learning the complex **hieroglyphic** writing system in which pictures stood for sounds, words, and concepts. Formal schools for scribes probably existed, but many were trained by their fathers or caregivers. Instructional literature like *Amenemope* was a cornerstone of advanced education: students would copy out passages by dictation or memory. In order to become a professional scribe, the student must not only be able to read and write hundreds of hieroglyphic signs but also create elegant and readable documents. This skill came not only through rote memorization but from a great deal of practice, hence the number of practice copies that have survived of texts like *Amenemope*. For this reason, it can rightly be called a **school text** as well as a work of literature. The result of knowing a work like *Amenemope* backward and forward is that the student becomes inculcated with attitudes considered important for participating in elite Egyptian society. *Amenemope* was likely popular as a school text because of the way it presents the ideal citizen as deferent to authority and careful in speech. Education was therefore not only a process of professionalization but also of inculturation. Do you think that your education has trained you to hold certain cultural values, or to question those values? Or do you think that education promotes values at all?

A central theme of the work is the “heated” versus the “silent” person. In characterizing these types, the author is especially concerned with speaking, in both conversational and formal settings (for example, in court). A heated person will talk without deliberation and argue, causing anger and strife. The metaphor of “heat” to describe a person who cannot control himself and who harms others is carefully chosen. What colors, similes, and contexts do you associate with “heat”? Perhaps similar to some of our own ideas, Egyptians identified heat with the color red as well as with cheeks flushed in anger. Finally, they also associated heat with the poison of snakes and scorpions. The silent person, on the contrary, heeds the warning to “not separate your heart from your tongue” (ch. 10). For the Egyptians, controlling one’s tongue means allowing your heart, which they believed to be the seat of intellect and emotion, to guide your actions. Moreover, the heart is considered a place of divine intervention in human affairs: “The tongue of a person is the steering oar of a boat, / But the Lord of All is its pilot.” The silent person is therefore a channel for divine influence. In one of *Amenemope's* most forceful statements, we are told, “The heart of a man is the nose of god, / Beware of neglecting it” (ch. 24).²⁴ The odd equa-

24. The Egyptians, keen practitioners of medicine, also believed that the heart was the seat of a network of vessels that led throughout the body, pumping blood (and, they thought, water and air) through them in order to regulate and cool the body. In other words, they theorized something like the circulatory system, centuries before the Greek physician and

tion of the human heart with the god's nose is based on the belief that the nose, as the conduit of breath, is where the gods literally give life to humanity.²⁵

Amenemope expresses many other ethical obligations, giving insight into the everyday life of a scribe trained to lead and manage people. A strict hierarchy in society is affirmed, and one should always be deferential to superiors. Fairness in dealing with courts and in collecting revenue is urged. One must show constant concern for the poor. Our author also presents a theological and ethical corrective to ableism: In chapter 25, the reader is encouraged to remember the frail nature of human life, which is "clay and straw," and thus not consider themselves superior to disabled persons. All human affairs are finite, imperfect, and doomed to deterioration: "God is ever in his perfection / While man is ever in his failure" (ch. 18). What does this suggest about ideas of prosperity and progress?

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philosopher Galen did. The Egyptians believed that a circulatory system overloaded by heat would lead to general malaise.

25. An alternate ancient copy of *Amenemope* replaces "nose" with the similar-sounding "gift," perhaps to make the point more forceful, or to avoid the stark image!

PRE-READING PARS

1. Write down two examples of advice you were given before starting college.
2. Identify two ways you are most likely to respond to the world. What kind of impact does your approach have on yourself and others?

Instructions of Amenemope**Introduction**

The beginning of the instruction about life,
 The guide for well-being,
 All the principles of official procedure,
 The duties of the courtiers;
 To know how to refute the accusation of one who made it,
 And to send back a reply to the one who wrote;
 To set one straight on the paths of life,
 And make one prosper on earth;
 To let their heart settle down in its shrine,
 As one who steers him clear of evil;
 To save them from the talk of others,
 As one who is respected in the speech of humankind.
 Written by the superintendent of the land, experienced in his office,
 The offspring of a scribe of the Beloved Land,
 The superintendent of produce, who fixes the grain measure,
 Who sets the grain tax amount for his lord,
 Who registers the islands which appear as new land over the cartouche of
 His Majesty,²⁶
 And sets up the landmark at the boundary of the arable land,
 Who protects the king by his tax rolls,
 And makes the Register of the Black Land.²⁷
 The scribe who places the divine offerings for all the gods,
 The donor of land grants to the people,
 The superintendent of grain who administers the food offerings,
 Who supplies the storerooms with grain.
 A truly silent man in Tjeni in the Ta-wer nome,²⁸

²⁶ When the annual inundation of the lands subsided, the newly formed islands in the Nile were immediately designated as royal property.

²⁷ The usual name for Egypt.

²⁸ Tjeni in the Ta-wer nome (Abydos) was the great temple and cult site of the god Osiris, where many royal and private memorial buildings were dedicated. Ipu and Senut are in the Panopolite nome to the north of Abydos, the area of modern Akhmim, of which the patron god was Min-Kamutef.

One whose verdict is “acquitted”²⁹ in Ipu,
 The owner of a pyramid tomb on the west of Senut,
 As well as the owner of a memorial chapel in Abydos,
 Amenemope, the son of Kanakht,
 Whose verdict is “acquitted” in the Ta-wer nome.
 For his son, the youngest of his children,³⁰
 The smallest of his family.
 [...]

Horemmaakheru is his true name,
 A child of an official of Ipu,
 The son of the sistrum player of Shu and Tefnut,
 The chief singer of Horus, the lady Tawosret.

He Says: Chapter 1

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

Chapter 2

Beware of stealing from one who is miserable
 And of raging against the weak.
 Do not stretch out your hand to strike the aged,
 Nor snip at the words of an elder.
 Don't let yourself be sent on a fraudulent business,
 Nor desire the carrying out of it;

29. The Egyptians believed that a deceased person would receive the verdict of “acquitted,” literally “true of voice,” in a court hearing before the god Osiris, so long as the person was pure of heart and gave truthful witness to having led a worthy life. The verdict allowed them to enjoy eternal life in the realm of the dead.

30. The addressee is the man's son, in this case Hor-em-maakheru, whose name means “Horus is vindicated,” the son of Amenemope and Tawosret.

Do not get tired because of being interfered with,³¹
 Nor return an answer on your own.
 The one who does evil, throw them <in> the canal,
 And 'they will bring back its slime.'
 The north wind comes down and ends its appointed hour,
 It is joined to the tempest;
 The clouds are high, the crocodiles are nasty,
 O heated one, what are you like?
 They cry out, and their voice (reaches) heaven.
 O Moon, make their crime manifest!³²
 Row that we may ferry evil away,
 For we will not act like one of his kind;
 Lift them up, give them your hand,
 And leave them <in> the hands of god;
 Fill their belly with your own food
 That they may be sated and weep.
 Something else of value in the heart of god
 Is to stop and think before speaking.

Chapter 3

Do not get into a quarrel with the hot-mouthed
 Nor incite them with words;
 Proceed cautiously before an opponent,
 And give way to an adversary;
 Sleep on it before speaking,
 For a storm come forth like fire in hay is
 The heated one in their appointed time.
 May you be restrained before them;
 Leave them to themselves,
 And god will know how to answer them.
 If you spend your life with these things in your heart,
 Your children shall observe them.

31. Or, "do not revile someone you have hurt," or "do not act the part of a tired one (be down-cast) toward the one you deceive."

32. The moon here stands for Thoth, who was the god of writing, accounting, and mathematics. The Egyptians believed that Thoth would deliver the verdict in the afterlife for whether one's soul was worthy to live forever in eternity.

Chapter 4

The heated one in the temple
 Is like a tree grown in an enclosed space;
 In a moment is its loss of foliage.
 It reaches its end in the carpentry shop;
 It is floated away far from its place,
 Or fire is its funeral pyre.
 The one who is truly temperate sets themselves apart,
 They are like a tree grown in a sunlit field,
 But it becomes verdant, it doubles its yield,
 It stands before its owner;
 Its fruit is something sweet, its shade is pleasant,
 And it reaches its end in a grove.

Chapter 5

Do not take by violence the shares of the temple,
 Do not be grasping, and you will find abundance;
 Do not take away a temple servant
 In order to do something profitable for another man.
 Do not say today is the same as tomorrow,
 Or how will matters come to pass?
 When tomorrow comes, today is past;
 The deep waters become a sandbank.³³
 Crocodiles are uncovered, the hippopotamuses are on dry land,
 And the fishes gasping for air;
 The wolves are fat, the wild fowl in festival,
 And the nets are 'drained.'
 Every temperate man in the temple says,
 "Great is the benevolence of Re."³⁴
 Adhere to the silent one, you will find life,
 And your body shall flourish upon earth.

Chapter 6

Do not displace the surveyor's marker on the boundaries of the arable land,
 Nor alter the position of the measuring line;
 Do not be covetous for a single cubit of land,
 Nor encroach upon the boundaries of a widow.

33. Possibly meaning that the time for action is now past.

34. Re is the standard name for the sun god.

One who transgresses the furrow shortens a lifetime,
 One who seizes it for fields
 And acquires by deceptive attestations,
 Will be lassoed by the might of the Moon.
 To one who has done this on earth, pay attention,
 For they are an oppressor of the weak;
 They are an enemy worthy of your overthrowing;
 The taking of Life is in their eye;
 Their household is hostile to the community,
 Their storerooms are broken into,
 Their property is taken away from their children,
 And their possessions are given to someone else.
 Take care not to topple over the boundary marks of the fields,
 Not fearing that you will be brought to court;
 One pleases god with the might of the lord
 When they set straight the boundaries of the arable land.
 Desire, then, to make yourself prosper,
 And take care for the lord of all;
 Do not trample on the furrow of someone else,
 Their good order will be profitable for you.
 So plough the fields, and you will find whatever you need,
 And receive the bread from your own threshing floor:
 Better is a bushel which god gives you
 Than five thousand deceitfully gotten;
 They do not spend a day in the storehouse or warehouse,
 They are 'no use for dough for beer';
 Their stay in the granary is short-lived,
 When morning comes they will have vanished.
 Better, then, is poverty in the hand of god
 Than riches in the storehouse;
 Better is bread when the heart is at ease
 Than riches with anxiety.

Chapter 7

Do not set your heart upon seeking riches,
 For there is no one who can ignore Destiny and Fortune;
 Do not set your thoughts on superficial matters:
 For every man³⁵ there is his appointed time.

35. In this translation, "man" is used only when the specific gendered term is used in the original text. More often than not, *Amenmope* uses a generic word like our "person" or "human." With most epithets, such as the "hot-mouthed," a word like "man" or "person" is not specified.

Do not exert yourself to seek out excess
 And your allotment will prosper for you;
 If riches come to you by thievery
 They will not spend the night with you;
 As soon as day breaks they will not be in your household;
 Although their places can be seen, they are not there.
 When the earth opens up its mouth, it levels him and swallows him up,
 They will plunge in the deep;
 They will make for themselves a great hole which suits them.
 And they will sink themselves in the underworld;
 Or they will make themselves wings like geese,
 And fly up to the sky.
 Do not be pleased with yourself (because of) riches acquired through robbery,
 Neither be sorry about poverty.
 As for an officer who commands one who goes in front of him,
 His company leaves him;
 The boat of the covetous is abandoned <in> the mud,
 While the skiff of the truly temperate one 'sails on.'
 When he rises you shall offer to the Aten,³⁶
 Saying, "Grant me prosperity and health."
 And he will give you your necessities for life,
 And you will be safe from fear.

Chapter 8

Set your deeds throughout the world
 That everyone may greet you;
 They make rejoicing for the Uraeus,³⁷
 And spit against the Apophis.³⁸
 Keep your tongue safe from words of detraction,
 And you will be the loved one of the people,
 Then you will find your (proper) place within the temple
 And you will share in the offerings of the lord;
 You will be revered, when you are concealed <in> your grave,
 And be safe from the might of god.
 Do not accuse a person of a crime,
 When the circumstance of (their) flight is unknown.
 Whether you hear something good or bad,

36. The disk of the sun, Aten is a distinct aspect of the solar god Re.

37. The Uraeus is the protective cobra snake depicted on one of the pharaoh's crowns.

38. Apophis is a snake demon associated with Seth (god of the desert) and represents darkness. Apophis threatens the barge of the sun-god as it navigates through the night.

Put it outside, until they have been heard;
 Set a good report on your tongue,
 While the bad thing is concealed inside you.

Chapter 9

Do not fraternize with the heated one,
 Nor approach them to converse.
 Safeguard your tongue from talking back to your superior,
 And take care not to offend them.
 Do not allow them to cast words only to entrap you,
 And be not too free in your replies;
 With a man of your own station discuss the reply;
 And take care of 'speaking thoughtlessly';
 When one's heart is upset, words travel faster
 Than wind over water.
 One is ruined and created by their tongue,³⁹
 When they speak slander;
 One makes an answer deserving of a beating,
 For their freight is damaged.
 They sail among all the world,
 But their cargo is false words;
 They act the ferryman in twisting words:
 They go forth and come back arguing.
 But whether they eat or whether they drink inside,
 Their accusation (waits for them) outside.
 The day when their evil deed is brought to court
 Is a disaster for their children.
 Even Khnum will straightway come against them,⁴⁰
 The potter of the hot-mouthed,
 It is to knead and bake the hearts that he molds.
 They (the hot-mouthed) are like a wolf cub in the farmyard,
 And they turn one eye to the other (squinting),
 For they set families to argue.
 They go before all the winds like clouds,
 They change their hue in the sun;
 They crook their tail like a baby crocodile,
 They curl themselves up to inflict harm,

39. He makes and breaks reputations.

40. The ram-headed god Khnum was (according to one popular myth) the creator of gods, humans, and animals, and is depicted molding creatures using a potter's wheel.

Their lips are sweet, but their tongue is bitter,
 And fire burns inside them.
 Do not fly up to join that one
 Not fearing you will be brought to account.

Chapter 10

Do not force yourself to greet the heated one
 Nor destroy your own heart;
 Do not say to them, "May you be praised," not meaning it
 When there is fear within you.
 Do not converse falsely with a person,
 For it is the abomination of god.
 Do not separate your heart from your tongue,
 All your plans will succeed.
 You will be important before others,
 While you will be secure in the hand of god.
 God hates one who falsifies words,
 His great abomination is duplicity.

Chapter 11

Do not covet the property of the poor
 Nor hunger for their bread;
 The property of the poor is an obstruction to the throat,
 It makes the gullet throw it back.⁴¹
 It is by false oaths that one has brought themselves up,
 While their heart slips back inside them.
 Do not let disaffection wear away success,
 Or else evil will topple good.
 If you are 'at a loss' before your superior,
 And are confused in your speeches,
 Your flatterings are turned back with curses,
 And your prostrations by beatings.
 Whoever fills the mouth with too much bread swallows it and spits up,
 So you are emptied of your good.
 To the overseer of the poor pay attention
 While the sticks touch them,
 And while all their people are bound in chains:

41. Perhaps meaning that the limited property of a poor man is barely enough to keep him alive, like moisture in his throat.

And they are led to the executioner.
 When you are too free before your superior,
 Then you are in bad favor with your subordinates.
 So steer away from the poor on the road,
 That you may see them but keep clear of their property.

Chapter 12

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

Chapter 13

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

Chapter 14

Do not ingratiate yourself with a person,
 Nor exert yourself to seek out their hand,

If they say to you, “take a bribe,”
 There is no need to respect them.
 Do not be afraid of them, nor bend down your head,
 Nor turn aside your gaze.
 Address them with your words and say to them greetings;
 When they stop, your chance will come;
 Do not repel them at his first approach,
 Another time they will be apprehended.

Chapter 15

Do well, and you will attain influence.
 Do not dip your pen against a transgressor.
 The beak of the Ibis is the finger of the scribe;⁴²
 Take care not to disturb it;
 Thoth dwells (in) the temple of Khmun,
 While his eye travels around the Two Lands⁴³;
 If he sees one who cheats with his finger (that is, a false scribe),
 He takes away his provisions by the flood.
 As for a scribe who cheats with his finger,
 Their son shall not be enrolled.
 If you spend your life with these (words) in your heart,
 Your children shall observe them.

Chapter 16

Do not tilt the scale nor falsify the weights,⁴⁴
 Nor diminish the fractions of the grain measures;
 Do not wish for the grain measures of the fields
 To cast aside those of the treasury.⁴⁵
 The Ape⁴⁶ sits by the balance,
 While his heart is the plummet.
 Who is a god as great as Thoth,
 The one who discovered these things, in order to create them?

42. The Ibis here is Thoth, patron god of the scribe. An Ibis is a marsh bird common in Lower Egypt. Thoth invented writing and is the scribe of the gods. Thoth is also depicted as an ape.

43. A name for Egypt, whose two parts were the Nile Delta in the north (Lower Egypt) and the Nile Valley in the south (Upper Egypt).

44. Absent coinage, which was invented in the seventh century BCE in Lydia (modern-day Turkey), an accurate scale was the only way to record and assess the economic value of goods.

45. Do not use different measures to your own benefit.

46. The ape was one of the forms of the god Thoth, along with the ibis bird.

Do not get for yourself short weights;
 They are plentiful, yea, an army by the might of god.
 If you see someone cheating,
 At a distance you must pass him by.
 Do not be avaricious for copper,
 And desire fine clothes;
 What good is one cloaked in fine linen,
 When he cheats before god.
 When faience are heaped upon gold,⁴⁷
 At daybreak they turn to lead.

Chapter 17

Beware of tampering with the grain measure
 To falsify its fractions;
 Do not act wrongfully through force,
 Cause it not to be empty inside,
 May you have it measured exactly as it arrived,
 Your hand stretching out with precision.
 Make not for yourself a measure of two capacities,⁴⁸
 For then it is toward the depths that you will go.
 The measure is the eye of Re,⁴⁹
 Its abomination is the thief.
 As for a grain measurer who multiplies and subtracts,
 Their eye will seal up against him.
 Do not receive the harvest tax of a cultivator,
 Nor set a papyrus against them to harm them.
 Do not enter into collusion with the grain measurer,
 Nor defraud the share of the Residence,⁵⁰
 More important is the threshing floor for barley
 Than swearing by the Great Throne.

Chapter 18

Do not go to bed fearing tomorrow,
 For when day breaks how will tomorrow be?
 Man knows not what tomorrow will be!

47. Faience is glazed earthenware. Egypt is known for vivid blue faience.

48. A measure that can be read two ways.

49. The most common name for the sun god.

50. A name for the palace where the pharaoh resided.

God is ever in his perfection,
 While man is ever in his failure.
 The words which people say pass on one side,
 The things which God does pass on another side.
 Do not say, "I am' without fault,"
 Nor try to seek out trouble.
 Fault is the business of god,
 It is sealed with his finger.
 There is no success in the hand of god,
 Nor is there failure before them;
 If one turns oneself about to seek out success,
 In a moment he (the god) destroys them.
 Be strong in your heart, make your inmost firm,
 Do not steer with your tongue;
 The tongue of a person is the steering oar of a boat,
 But the lord of all is its pilot.

Chapter 19

Do not enter the council chamber in the presence of a magistrate
 And then falsify your speech.
 Do not go up and down with your accusation
 When your witnesses stand readied.
 Do not 'overstate' <through> oaths in the name of your lord,
 (Through) pleas (in) the place of interrogation.
 Tell the truth before the magistrate,
 Lest he gain power over your body;
 If you petition before him the next day,
 He will concur with all you say;
 He will present your case <in> court before the Council of the Thirty,⁵¹
 And it will be 'decided' another time as well.

Chapter 20

Do not defraud a person in the law court
 Nor put aside the one who is just.
 Do not pay attention to garments of white.
 Nor scorn one in rags.
 Take not the bribe of the strong,
 Nor repress the weak for them.

51. The name of a standard judicial body made up of thirty men.

As for the just who bears the greatness of god,
 They will render himself as he wishes.
 The strength of one like them
 Saves a poor wretch from their beatings.
 Do not make for yourself false 'enrollment' lists,
 For they are punishable offenses (deserving) death;
 They are serious oaths which promote respect;
 And they are to be investigated by a reporter.
 Do not falsify the oracles on a papyrus
 And (thereby) alter the designs of god.
 Do not arrogate to yourself the might of god
 As if Destiny and Fortune did not exist.
 Hand property over to its (rightful) owners,
 And seek out life for yourself;
 Let not your heart build in their house,
 For then your neck will be on the execution block.

Chapter 21

Do not say, find for me a strong patron,
 For a man in your town has afflicted me.
 Do not say, find for me an active intercessor,
 For one who hates (me) has afflicted me.
 Indeed, you cannot know the plans of god;
 You cannot perceive tomorrow.
 Sit yourself at the hands of god:
 Your tranquility will overthrow them (the adversaries).
 As for a crocodile deprived of 'his tongue,'
 His significance is negligible.
 Empty not your soul to everybody
 And do not diminish thereby your importance;
 Do not pour out your words to others,
 Nor fraternize with one who is too rash.
 Better is a man whose report is inside him
 Than one who tells it to disadvantage.
 One cannot run to attain perfection;
 One cannot create (only) to destroy it.

Chapter 22

Do not provoke your adversary,
 And do not <let> them say their innermost thoughts;
 Do not fly up to greet them
 When you cannot see 'how they act.'
 May you first comprehend their accusation;
 Be calm and your chance will come.
 Leave it to them and they will empty their soul;
 'Sleep knows how to find them out';
 Touch their feet, do not disrespect them;
 Fear them, do not underestimate them.
 Indeed, you cannot know the plans of god,
 You cannot perceive tomorrow.
 Sit yourself at the hands of god;
 Your tranquility will overthrow them.

Chapter 23

Do not eat a meal in the presence of a magistrate,
 Nor set to speaking first.
 If you are sated, pretend to chew,
 Enjoy yourself with your saliva.
 Look at the cup in front of you,
 And let it suffice your need.
 Even as a noble is important in his office,
 So they are like the abundance of a flooded well.

Chapter 24

Do not listen to the proposition of an official indoors,
 And then repeat it to another outside.
 Do not allow your discussions to be brought outside
 Lest your heart be grieved.
 The heart of a person is the nose of god,
 So take care not to slight it;
 A person who stands <at> the side of an official
 Should not have their name known (in the street).

Chapter 25

Do not laugh at the blind nor taunt a little person,
 Neither interfere with the condition of the disabled;
 Do not taunt a man who is in the hand of god,⁵²
 Nor scowl at him if he errs.
 A person is clay and straw,
 And god is their potter;
 They (the god) overthrow and build daily,
 Impoverish a thousand if they wish,
 But make a thousand people into officials
 When they are in their hour of life.
 How fortunate is the one who reaches the West,⁵³
 When they are safe in the hand of god.

Chapter 26

Do not sit in the beer hall
 Nor join someone greater than you,
 Whether they be low or high in their station,
 An old or a young person;
 But take as a friend for yourself someone compatible:
 Re is helpful though he is far away.
 When you see someone greater than you outside,
 Follow them, respect (them).
 And give a hand to an old person filled with beer:
 Respect them as their children would.
 The strong arm is not 'weakened' when it is uncovered,
 The back is not broken when one bends it;
 A man is not denigrated when he speaks sweet words,
 More so than a rich man whose words are straw.
 A pilot who sees into the distance
 Will not let their ship capsize.

Chapter 27

Do not reproach someone greater than you,
 For they have seen the Sun before you;

52. This may refer to what we would today diagnose medically as epilepsy, or to a religious experience like ecstasy.

53. The common euphemism for the realm of the afterlife, associated with the place of the setting sun as well as with the uninhabitable desert which lay west of the Nile.

Do not let yourself be reported to the Aten when it rises,
 With the words, "Again a young man has reproached an elder."
 Very painful in the sight of Re
 Is a young person who reproaches an elder.
 Let them beat you with your hands folded,
 Let them reproach you while you keep quiet.
 Then when you come before them in the morning
 They will give you bread freely.
 As for bread, the dog of his master
 Barks to the one who gives it.

Chapter 28

Do not identify a widow if you have caught her in the fields,
 Nor fail to give way if she is accused.
 Do not turn a stranger away from your oil jar
 Double it (more than) for your (own) family.
 God loves the one who cares for the poor,
 More than the one who respects the wealthy.

Chapter 29

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

Chapter 30

Mark for yourself these thirty chapters:
 They please, they instruct,
 They are the foremost of all books;
 They teach the ignorant.
 If they are read before the ignorant,
 They will be purified (of their ignorance) through them.
 Fill yourself with them; put them in your heart

And get people to interpret them.
As for a scribe who is experienced in his position,
They will find themselves worthy of being a courtier.
It is finished.
By the writing of Senu, son of the god's father Pamiu.

Simpson, W. K., and R. K. Ritner. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, 223–43. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.

POST-READING PARS

1. Did you find any advice in *Amenemope* that rings true in your experience or could be useful today? Is any of the advice similar to what you received?
2. Identify two conceptions about the human body or human nature that are reflected in the reading. How are they different from what you think?

Inquiry Corner

<p>Content Question(s):</p> <p>What metaphors and imagery are used to describe the heated versus the silent person?</p> <p>What role does the divine play in ethical life?</p>	<p>Critical Question(s):</p> <p>What effect does the framing of <i>Amenemope</i>'s teaching as from a father to a son have?</p> <p>What could be the purposes of <i>Amenemope</i> given its critical perspective on success and wealth?</p>
<p>Comparative Question(s):</p> <p>Would the ideal person envisioned by <i>Amenemope</i> follow the ideals of <i>ren</i> ("human-heartedness" or kindness) and of being a gentleman (<i>junzi</i>) in the <i>Analects</i>?</p>	<p>Connection Question(s):</p> <p>Do you think that you can have a successful career and also be a good person? What are the challenges involved?</p> <p>What role does codified advice play in the contemporary world? (e.g., identifying which academic majors lead to financial security). Can such advice restrict freedom?</p>

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- » What are some specific ways you would deal with a colleague or boss whose communication style was consistently caustic, abrasive, or disrespectful?
- » Much of the morality described here could be seen as self-serving, from the perspective of power. It was written by “the divine” and demands subservience to those with wealth and position. Do you agree with the moral tenets prescribed here, even though there is a power dynamic at play?