

The Delphic Maxims

ΔΕΛΦΙΚΑ ΠΑΡΑΓΓΕΛΜΑΤΑ

Apollo

tr. as preserved by Stobaeus

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The Delphic Maxims

The moral precepts inscribed in golden letters at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Three famous sayings stood at the temple's entrance — know thyself, nothing in excess, and pledge a surety, and ruin is near. A further list of 147 aphorisms, attributed by the ancient world to the Seven Sages of Greece and preserved in the fifth-century anthology of Stobaeus, was inscribed elsewhere in the precinct; a fragment of the same list survives carved in stone at the Hellenistic Greek city of Ai-Khanoum in modern-day Afghanistan.

The Three Inscribed at the Entrance

Know thyself.

Nothing in excess.

Pledge a surety, and ruin is near.

The One Hundred Forty-Seven of the Seven Sages

Follow the gods.

Obey the law.

Revere the gods.

Respect your parents.

Be ruled by justice.

Know what you have learned.

Perceive what you have heard.

Be yourself.

Intend to marry.

Know the right moment.

Think mortal thoughts.

When a stranger, behave as one.

Honor the hearth.
Rule yourself.
Help your friends.
Master your temper.
Practice prudence.
Honor foresight.
Do not use an oath.
Love friendship.
Cling to discipline.
Pursue honor.
Long for wisdom.
Praise the good.
Find fault with no one.
Praise virtue.
Practice what is just.
Be kind to friends.
Ward off enemies.
Cultivate nobility of character.
Shun evil.
Be sociable.
Guard what is yours.
Keep off what belongs to others.
Listen to everyone.
Be reverent in speech.
Do a friend a favor.

Nothing in excess.
Spend time wisely.
Look to what is coming.
Despise insolence.
Respect the suppliant.
Suit yourself to all.
Educate your sons.
Give of what you have.
Beware of cunning.
Speak well of everyone.
Become a seeker of wisdom.
Discern what is holy.
Act once you know.
Refrain from killing.
Pray for what is possible.
Consult the wise.
Test the character.
Return what you have received.
Look down on no one.
Use your skill.
Do what you mean to do.
Honor a kindness.
Envy no one.
Stand on your guard.
Praise hope.

Despise a slanderer.
Acquire justly.
Honor the good.
Know the judge.
Master your wedding feasts.
Recognize fortune.
Flee from a pledge.
Speak plainly.
Keep company with your peers.
Govern your expenses.
Take pleasure in what you have.
Revere a sense of shame.
Carry out a favor.
Pray for happiness.
Be content with your lot.
Observe what you have heard.
Work for what is worth keeping.
Hate strife.
Detest disgrace.
Hold your tongue.
Guard against insolence.
Judge justly.
Use what you have.
Judge incorruptibly.
Accuse the one present.

Speak when you know.
Do not rely on force.
Live without grief.
Converse gently.
Finish the race without flinching.
Treat everyone kindly.
Do not curse your sons.
Rule your wife.
Do good to yourself.
Be approachable.
Answer in good time.
Toil for honor.
Act so as not to regret it.
When you err, repent.
Master the eye.
Take counsel in time.
Act decisively.
Guard your friendships.
Be grateful.
Pursue concord.
Keep secret what should be kept.
Fear the ruling power.
Hunt for what is profitable.
Wait for the right moment.
Dissolve enmities.

Accept old age.
Do not boast of your strength.
Practice reverent speech.
Flee from hatred.
Grow rich justly.
Do not abandon honor.
Hate evil.
Take risks prudently.
Never tire of learning.
Never cease to save.
Wonder at oracles.
Love those you rear.
Do not quarrel with the absent.
Respect the elder.
Teach the younger.
Mistrust wealth.
Have self-respect.
Do not be the first to insult.
Crown your ancestors.
Die for your country.
Do not be discontented with life.
Do not laugh at the dead.
Share the load of the unfortunate.
Give without harming.
Do not grieve for everything.

Beget from a noble line.
Make promises to no one.
Do not wrong the dead.
Endure well, as a mortal.
Do not trust fortune.
As a child, be well-behaved.
As a youth, be self-controlled.
In middle age, be just.
In old age, be reasonable.
At the end, be free from sorrow.