

# The Prophet

Khalil Gibran

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For Amie-Louise and Joseph

## Table of Contents

The Coming of the ShiP.....	7
On Love .....	15
On Marriage.....	19
On Children .....	21
On Giving .....	23
On Eating and Drinking.....	27
On Work.....	29
On Joy and Sorrow .....	33
On Houses.....	35
On Cloths .....	38
On Buying and Selling .....	40
On Crime and Punishment.....	42
On Laws.....	47
On Freedom .....	50
On Reason and Passion.....	53
On Pain .....	55

On Self-Knowledge .....	57
On Teaching.....	59
On Friendship .....	61
On Talking .....	63
On Time .....	65
On Good and Evil .....	67
On Prayer .....	70
On Pleasure.....	73
On Beauty .....	77
On Religion.....	80
On Death.....	83
On Farewell .....	85
About the author .....	99



## *The Coming of the Ship*



**ALMUSTAFA**, the chosen and the beloved, who was a dawn unto his own day, had waited twelve years in the city of Orphalese for his ship that was to return and bear him back to the isle of his birth.

And in the twelfth year, on the seventh day of Ielool, the month of reaping, he climbed the hill

without the city walls and looked seaward; and he beheld his ship coming with the mist.

Then the gates of his heart were flung open, and his joy flew far over the sea. And he closed his eyes and prayed in the silences of his soul.

But as he descended the hill, a sadness came upon him, and he thought in his heart:

How shall I go in peace and without sorrow? Nay, not without a wound in the spirit shall I leave this city.

Long were the days of pain I have spent within its walls, and long were the nights of aloneness;

and who can depart from his pain and his aloneness without regret?

Too many fragments of the spirit have I scattered in these streets, and too many are the children of my longing that walk naked among these hills, and I cannot withdraw from them without a burden and an ache.

It is not a garment I cast off this day, but a skin that I tear with my own hands.

Nor is it a thought I leave behind me, but a heart made sweet with hunger and with thirst.

Yet I cannot tarry longer.



The sea that calls all things unto her calls me,  
and I must embark.

For to stay, though the hours burn in the night,  
is to freeze and crystallize and be bound in a mould.

Fain would I take with me all that is here. But  
how shall I?

A voice cannot carry the tongue and the lips  
that gave it wings. Alone must it seek the ether.

And alone and without his nest shall the eagle  
fly across the sun.

Now when he reached the foot of the hill, he  
turned again towards the sea, and he saw his ship  
approaching the harbour, and upon her prow the  
mariners, the men of his own land.

And his soul cried out to them, and he said:

Sons of my ancient mother, you riders of  
the tides,

How often have you sailed in my dreams. And  
now you come in my awakening, which is my  
deeper dream.

Ready am I to go, and my eagerness with sails  
full set awaits the wind.

Only another breath will I breathe in this still  
air, only another loving look cast backward,

And then I shall stand among you, a seafarer  
among seafarers.

And you, vast sea, sleepless mother, who alone  
are peace and freedom to the river and the stream,

Only another winding will this stream make,  
only another murmur in this glade,

And then I shall come to you, a boundless drop  
to a boundless ocean.

And as he walked he saw from afar men and  
women leaving their fields and their vineyards and  
hastening towards the city gates.

And he heard their voices calling his name, and  
shouting from field to field telling one another of  
the coming of his ship.

And he said to himself:

Shall the day of parting be the day of gathering?

And shall it be said that my eve was in truth  
my dawn?

And what shall I give unto him who has left his  
plough in mid furrow, or to him who has stopped  
the wheel of his winepress?

Shall my heart become a tree heavy-laden with  
fruit that I may gather and give unto them?