

of life which God has allotted to us. ¹ ¹⁹ [18H] Also, whenever a person is granted wealth by God, along with possessions, ² the power to enjoy and accept his lot (*or, portion*) for his labor --- this is a gift from God, to enjoy. ²⁰ [19H] For we dare not brood over the years of our lives because God keeps us occupied with enjoying ourselves (*or, God keeps us so busy enjoying what we have that we surely have little time to think about life*).

<CHAPTER 6>

<More issues and advice 6:1 - 8:15>

<A life without joy 6:1 - 9>

¹ I have observed an evil (*or, serious injustice*) in this world, ³ and it gravely affects ⁴ humanity: ² those to whom God grants wealth, possessions and honor, ⁵ so that they do not need to crave anything. Yet, God does not grant them the ability to enjoy ⁶ these abundant gifts. However, a stranger enjoys them. ⁷ This is futility! It is a turbulent problem! ³ Even if a man begets a hundred children ⁸ and lives many years, despite his long life he does not enjoy life's good things (*or, wealth*). ⁹ [*and he receives no burial.*] ¹⁰

I contend that a stillborn, unburied, ¹¹ is more fortunate than he.

⁴ Therefore it comes as mysteriously as futility
and in darkness its name is covered (*or, is invisible*).

⁵ Even though it has not experienced the sun (*or, a live birth*); yet it is better off than the person with wealth, possessions and honor. ¹² ⁶ Even though he should live two thousand years but has not had his fill of enjoyment, no matter how long we live we eventually die. ¹³

⁷ All the labor people do
is done for the sake of their mouths. ¹⁴
yet their appetite (*or, longing*) is not fully satisfied. ¹⁵

1 Literally: "our looking perishability."

2 The Hebrew word is borrowed from Aramaic and can also be translated as "reverence."

3 Literally: "under the sun."

4 Literally: "it is great (or heavy) upon mankind."

5 The Hebrew word used for honor gives the meaning of "respected reputation and / or a respected position in society." Wealth, possessions and honor are what Solomon received from God. II Chronicles 1:11 - 12. The NEB translates with "substance."

6 Hebrew: "eat."

7 Gordis aptly translates "Some stranger is destined to consume it."

8 Surely hyperbole. The word "children" is omitted in the Hebrew text.

9 Literally: "his being is not satisfied with good things."

10 The phrase in italics can either refer to the man who cannot enjoy life's good things or, as in the Zurich Bible it is taken to refer to the stillborn child. Either is grammatically acceptable in Hebrew. Normally in the days of Qoheleth a stillborn child would not have been buried. One of the greatest rejections of a person in society was that the person would not be buried. An alternative reading might be: "...does not enjoy good things and receiving no burial, like a stillborn child."

11 Cf. note 10, above.

12 Cf. verse 2. some scholars want the wealth, possessions and honor to refer to the stillborn which hardly seems possible, not only from a rational but also a grammatical standpoint.

13 Hebrew: "Do we not both go to one place?"

14 A few scholars feel this is a metaphor referring to "the mouth of Sheol" the abode of the dead.

15 Hebrew: "not filled."

8 What advantage does the wise man have over a fool?¹⁶
And what do the poor¹⁷ have who know
how to conduct themselves in public (*or, get on in life*)?
9 Enjoying what you have is better than yearning¹⁸ for what you don't have.
This also is vanity, like chasing (*or, tending, shepherding*) the wind.

<Human limitations 6:10 - 12>

10 Everything that already exists has a name;
we also know that you are unable to win an argument
against someone who is more skilled than you.
(*or, what has happened has long since been named
and known (or determined) what a man will be.*)¹⁹
11 The more you argue,²⁰ the more futile it becomes,
and what good results from the argument?

12 For: who knows what is best for people during their lives which are as fleeting as a shadow:²¹ Who can tell what a person's future holds in this world.²²

<CHAPTER 7>

<A collection of proverbs>

<Reflecting on death is better than just having fun 7:1 - 4>

1 A good reputation²³ is better than expensive ointment (*or, perfume*),²⁴
and the day of death (*or, the day you die*) is better than the day of birth.
2 It is better to go to a place²⁵ where there is mourning,
than to go to a place where there is feasting (*or, partying*);
(*or, It is better to be visiting a family in mourning
than to go to a family that is having a party*);
for death is the end for everyone;
and those who are alive should keep this in mind.
3 The wise person thinks about death,
but the fools think only about a good time (*or, happiness, having fun*).

16 Literally: "to the wise man more than to a fool."

17 Some scholars feel the reference is to "reserved persons" or "those who are humble." The MT is difficult to understand, as is also the case with the other early translations.

18 Literally: "than the [out] going of desire." The first portion of this verse in Hebrew is most uncertain.

19 In the MT there might be a play on words with the name Adam which means "man" along with the name of a person.

20 With the idea of litigation.

21 LXX translates the thought that people are spending their remaining days of empty existence in the shade.

22 Literally: "under the sun."

23 Literally: "name."

24 Literally: "good oil." There is a play on words: name = /U ointment = -/U.

25 Literally: "house."

<The wise and the fools 7:5 - 7>

5 It is better to listen to the constructive criticism of the wise,
than to listen to the song (*or, praise*) sung by fools,
6 for the levity (*or, cackling*)²⁶ of fools
is like the crackling of burning thorns (*or, nettles*)
under the pot (*or, kettle*).²⁷
This also is perishable (*or, futile*).

7 Even though you are wise, if you oppress²⁸ someone
your actions are those of a fool,
and a bribe corrupts honest judgment.

<Advice on how to be wise 7:8 - 10>

8 The conclusion of the matter is better than the beginning;
and patience is better than pride.
9 Do not have a short temper,
for anger is nursed by fools.²⁹

10 Do not say, "Why was the past better than the present?"
This is not the question to be asked by the wise..

<The advantage of wisdom 7:11 - 12>

11 Wisdom is as good as is an inheritance,
and even better for those who seek longevity.³⁰
12 The shelter of wisdom is like the security of money;³¹
and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves
the life of those who possess it.

<Call to reflection 7:13 - 14>

13 Ponder the work of God:
who can straighten out what God has made crooked?
14 Be joyful in the day of prosperity, and reflect (*or, meditate*) in the day of misfortune; God has

26 A suggested emendation: "praise."

27 There is a play on words: thorns = 9b2b2 pot = 9b2.

28 Hebrew unclear. The Hebrew word can also mean "gain by extortion" or "cheating." This is the thought translated by the early versions, i.e. Syriac, LXX & Vulgate.

29 There is a possible play on words: The word translated "nursed" in Hebrew, literally is "lodge" = b(wb) Literally the word translated "patience" is "patient in spirit." The word used here for spirit in Hebrew is (b9).

30 Literally: "see the sun."

31 A difficult Hebrew text. MT: "In the shadow of wisdom [a man is] in the shadow of money." The ancient versions are of no help. Many emendations have been suggested. As an example, one emendation says: "for the possessor of wisdom becomes a possessor of wealth." Another suggests: "For wisdom offers the same security as does wealth."

made the one as well as the other, so mortals may not find out anything that will come after death (*or, not know what the future holds*).

<Avoid extremes 7:15 - 18>

15 In my brief span of life I have seen everything: there are righteous people who perish in spite of their righteousness, and there are corrupt people who live long lives in spite of their evil deeds.

16 Therefore don't overdo self righteousness
and don't make yourself excessively wise.

Do you want to destroy yourself?

17 Do not do wickedness,
nor be a fool,

for why should you want to die before your time? 18 It is best that you avoid both extremes, because whoever is in awe of (*or, reveres*) God will succeed with both. ³²

<Righteousness and unrighteousness 7:19 - 24>

19 Wisdom provides a greater stronghold to the wise than do ten rulers who are governing the city. ³³

20 Surely there is not a righteous person on earth, that is, one who never makes any mistake whatsoever.

21 Do not pay attention to everything that is said, lest you hear your servant (*or, slave*) cursing you; 22 for you know that you, yourself, have often cursed others.

23 I have tested all this with wisdom; I said, "I will be wise"; but wisdom eluded me. 24 True wisdom is very elusive, and beyond our understanding (*or, most profound*); who can discover (*or, understand*) everything?

<Pure wisdom cannot be found 7:25 - 29>

25 I devoted my thoughts to learn and study, to seek wisdom and a logical explanation, and to know more about the foolishness of evil and the stupidity of a fool. ³⁴ 26 I found that what is more bitter than death is a woman (*or, notorious seductress*) whose heart entraps and captivates and whose arms are like chains. The person who is pleasing to God will be able to escape but the sinner will be captured. 27 "You see this is what I found," says Qoheleth, adding over and over and little by little to discover the reason for things 28 which I desired to know but I have not found.

I found that one man among a thousand
but never a woman had those qualities. ³⁵

29 However, the only thing I learned is that God made humanity upright, but instead it has willfully

32 Hebrew unclear. MT: "shall come forth with them all." Mishna: "will fulfill an obligation." Several emendations have been suggested but none is generally favored.

33 Some scholars feel that verses 18 & 19 are a later addition. In the Hellenistic age ten chief men, the δεκα πρωτοι, formed the city government. A few scholars use this as an argument for a late date for the writing of Ecclesiastes.

34 Literally: "wickedness is foolishness and folly is madness."

35 I. e. to be pleasing to God. Gordis suggests that men are deemed by Qoheleth to be one tenth of one percent better than women. Other scholars say that the Hebrew word "men" refers to all of humanity.

sought out many ways to live that were not upright.³⁶

<CHAPTER 8>
<Who can be wise 8:1-9>

1 Who is like a wise person?³⁷
and who knows the meaning of things³⁸ (*or, interpretation*)?
(*or, and who can rally explain what things mean*).
Wisdom causes a person to glow;
their stern appearance disappears.³⁹

2 Obey⁴⁰ the king's orders,⁴¹ for the sake of your sacred oath (*or, solemn promise*).⁴² Do not be terrified.⁴³ 3 Go from his presence (*or, leave him*);⁴⁴ do not delay when matters are unpleasant;⁴⁵ for he does whatever he pleases. 4 The word of the king is all powerful (*or, authoritative*)⁴⁶ and who can challenge (*or, question*) him, saying: "What are you doing?"

5 Whoever obeys⁴⁷ the king's command
will not be in a dangerous situation,⁴⁸
and a wise person will keep in mind
the reason for everything.
(*or, Because he knows there is a time of judgment
he will remember when and how to live
in the presence of the king.*)

6 There is a correct time and way of doing everything.⁴⁹ although people have more pressing problems (*or painful situations*). 7 No one knows what future events will occur, for who can foresee what the future will bring?⁵⁰ 8 No one has the power to keep from dying,⁵¹ or the power to delay the

36 A difficult Hebrew text. There is a play on words in the MT. The words are: %1%wU% and 1wU%.

37 LXX has: τις οιδεν σοφους. A number of versions have "who here is wise?"

38 The Hebrew word 9U5 is an Aramaic loan word which can also mean "solution" or "meaning of an adage."

39 NAB: "an impudent look disappears." 8:1 forms a fitting conclusion for chapter 7. Chapter 8 would appropriately begin with 8:2.

40 Hebrew inserts "I."

41 Literally: "mouth of king."

42 Hebrew unclear. Literally: "the oath of God." In the Hebrew text verse 3 begins at this point.

43 The Hebrew word translated "terrified" can also mean "rash" or "hasty."

44 LXX places a period here. "Do not delay..." is a new sentence, making this the conclusion of verse 2. The Hebrew word translated "delay" can also mean "stand" or "persist." This is the word choice for the Peshitta.

45 Literally: "in an evil thing." This could imply a conspiracy if the Hebrew letters are divided differently. It can be: "do not join any rebellion against the king" or "Don't be too quick to walk out on the king or to join in a rebellion against him. He can do anything he wants."

46 This Hebrew word is used only here and in verse 8.

47 Literally: "the one who keeps."

48 Literally: "He will not know any evil thing (or, painful matter)."

49 NJV: "For there is a time for every experience, including the doom, for a man's calamity overwhelms him."

50 Literally: "how it will be." The Peshitta & Targums expand the text, adding: "What will happen in the end" or as Lamsa translates: "what will be after him?"

51 Literally: "No man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit." The Hebrew word for "spirit" can also be translated "wind."

day of death; there is no mustering out⁵² from that war, nor will a person be saved by doing evil (*or, wickedness. Or: evil will not be able to free its perpetrator.*).

9 I observed all this while I carefully pondered all that occurs in this world.⁵³ While one person exercises authority over another then harming the other.

<Bad examples lead astray 8:10 - 14>

10 Then I saw the wicked people who were given a public burial.⁵⁴ They were taken from the holy place and buried;⁵⁵ being praised⁵⁶ by people in the city; the place where their evil deeds had been done. This defies understanding. 11 Since sentencing is not immediate for evil deeds, it is not immediately carried out. This is without a doubt the reason why people readily do evil. 12 Though sinners may often commit crimes⁵⁷ and still enjoy life (*or, and punishment is still delayed*), yet I know that it will be well with those who revere God, simply because they revere him.⁵⁸ 13 However it will not be well with the evildoers (*or, wicked*); nor will they live long; for their lives, being a brief shadow,⁵⁹ have no respect (*or, reverence*) for God.

14 There is an absurdity which takes place on earth; that there are righteous persons who at times are treated as the evil doers (*or, wicked*), and there are evil doers (*or, wicked*) who at times are treated as the righteous should be treated. All I can say is that this is absurd (*or, incomprehensible*).

<Qoheleth's advice: Enjoy life 8:15>

15 Because of this I am convinced that we should enjoy ourselves, for the only good thing in life⁶⁰ is eating and drinking and enjoying ourselves for these pleasures should be a part of our lives along with our labors during this life which has been granted us by God.

<Limits of human wisdom 8:16 - 9:10>
<I. God's ways cannot be found 8:16 - 17>

16 When I determined to gain deeper understanding and discover all the activities of people in this world, even to the extent of being without sleep;⁶¹ 17 I observed all the activities of God, and that people cannot comprehend all that God does on earth. No matter how strenuously one tries to

52 Hebrew: /2(-U/ discharge (as in the military). A possible emendation is htvxlm = amulet. I. e. there is no amulet against war.

53 Literally: "under the sun."

54 Hebrew text difficult. Literally: "And then I saw the wicked buried and they came out from the place of a holy [one] they went out and were forgotten in the city where they had done so (i.e. such things). LXX has: ἀσεβεις εις ταφους εισαχθη the wicked being carried to the tomb. A variant translation by Driver: "approaching and entering..."

55 MFT translates: "the pious had to leave the sanctuary and were forgotten in the city.."

56 A slight emendation would read: "they were forgotten" i.e. their evil deeds were forgotten. The ancient versions support the emendation. One letter is changed. Both letters have a similar appearance: w and ,.

57 Literally: "a hundred crimes."

58 Some scholars feel that verses 11 & 12 are a later addition.

59 MT: "like a shadow." LXX: εν σκια "in a shadow."

60 Literally: "under the sun."

61 Hebrew obscure. Literally: "although even [or, for also] by day and by night he does not sleep with his eyes."

gain detailed knowledge, one fails, and if a wise man claims to know God's ways, this is beyond human power to discover their full meaning.

<CHAPTER 9>

<2. *One fate for all 9:1 - 6*>

¹ I have diligently examined ⁶² all ⁶³ this and understand how the deeds of the righteous and those who are wise are controlled (*or, are determined*) by God. Is it love or hate? One does not know! Everything humanity does is perishable (*or, vanity*), ⁶⁴ ² since the same fate ⁶⁵ befalls all (*or, every living thing*), for the righteous (*or, just*) and the wicked (*or, unjust*), for the good [and the evil,] ⁶⁶ for the clean and the unclean, for those who sacrifice and those who do not sacrifice. As for the good, so is the sinner also; and those who make a vow and those who refuse to promise ⁶⁷ anything. ³ This is the common fate of all who live on this earth: this common fate comes to everyone. Also, the hearts of all are filled with grief. ⁶⁸ Mental anguish ⁶⁹ is in their lives while they live (*or, all people's lives are filled with grief and distressing situations*), and after that they die. ⁷⁰ ⁴ But whoever is alive ⁷¹ still has hope, for

'a live dog is better than a dead lion;' ⁷²

⁵ since the living know (*or, are aware*) that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and there is nothing additional for them to gain recompense; ⁷³ since in the future no one will remember them.

⁷⁴ ⁶ Their love and their hate and their envy ⁷⁵ have already perished (*or, even all their feelings have ceased*), and never again will they experience anything that takes place in this world.

<3. *Qoheleth' advice: Enjoy life 9:7 - 10*>

⁷ So then, enjoy your food
and quench your thirst with gladness
for long ago God had already given approval. ⁷⁶

⁸ Always wear white (*or, freshly washed*) festive clothing;

62 So emended: 9&;- = explore; 9&w- = to explain or prove. LXX: "my heart saw all this that the righteous..."

63 The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain.

64 So: Syriac. LXX: μεταοιστης εν τοις πασιν. MT: "Everything before them is everything." NJV: "Even love! Even hate! Man knows none of these in advance --- none!" Emended: "even love, even hate, no person knows in advance. All is insignificant." TC suggests "Now, I have taken all this to heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the care of God. Man does not know whether it will be love or hated. Everything awaits him."

65 I. e. death.

66 So LXX, Syriac & Vulgate. Hebrew lacks "and the evil."

67 Literally: "fears an oath."

68 Literally: "evil" with the concept of an accompanying sadness.

69 Hebrew: "madness is in their minds."

70 In Hebrew the sentence breaks off. "while they live --- then off to the death."

71 Literally: "joined to all." ²⁰ Hebrew manuscripts, LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate & Targum have: "whoever is associated with the living still has hope."

72 No doubt an aphorism. Some feel the reference is to an evil person (dog) and royalty (lion).

73 A suggested emendation is "hope."

74 There is a play on words in Hebrew: rkf and mrkz.

75 NEV: "ambition."

76 Many scholars feel Qoheleth was acquainted with the Epic of Gilgamesh. Cf. Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. p. 90.

have your head anointed with oil (*or, be well groomed*).

⁹ Enjoy life with the spouse (*or, companion*) ⁷⁷ whom you love, through out all the days of this fleeting life which God has allotted you, for that is God's gift to you because of your hard labor on the earth. ⁷⁸ ¹⁰ Do whatever is within your power, ⁷⁹ do it with all your might; for in Sheol (*or, the abode of the dead*) there is no work, nor thought, nor knowledge, nor wisdom but that is where you are going.

<Wisdom and folly 9:11 - 11:6>

<1. Death comes unexpectedly 9:11 - 12>

¹¹ Additionally, I discovered that in this world
the race is not always won by the swiftest,
nor is the strongest (*or, most valiant*) army
always the winner,
nor does wisdom always provide bread,
nor are riches guaranteed to the intelligent,
nor special treatment for those who have skill;

because what happens and when it happens (*or, time and adverse fate; time appointed fate*) is determined for everyone. ¹² You have no more insight into your future than does a fish that is enmeshed in a fatal trap (*or, net*), or birds trapped in a snare. Thus, like those, mortals also are caught at a time of calamity, ⁸⁰ when it unexpectedly befalls them.

<2. Wisdom's power 9:13 - 16>

¹³ I have observed yet another example of wisdom in this world. It seemed profound ⁸¹ to me. ¹⁴ There was a little city with a few people dwelling in it. A powerful king came against it, besieging (*or, investing*) it and building great siege works against it. ¹⁵ Now, in the city a poor wise man was discovered, and he, by his wisdom saved the city, ⁸² but despite that no one thought about (*or, remembered*) ⁸³ that poor man. ⁸⁴ ¹⁶ But I have always said:

'Wisdom is better than might
even though the poor man's wisdom
was never appreciated,
and his advice was not heeded.'

77 Literally: "a woman." There is another Hebrew word for "wife". This usage, however, which implies "wife" appears elsewhere in Hebrew in the Old Testament.

78 The Hebrew sounds a note of resignation and sadness.

79 With a different division of consonants it becomes: "Whatever you are able to do in your strength, do it." The Vulgate & Targum have: "enjoying the woman as long as possible and do zealously whatever you can."

80 A euphemism for death.

81 Literally: "great it was to me."

82 The Hebrew word)-/& can also be read "he could have." Based on the verb 9,' = one who in an emergency was forgotten even though what he did was needed. Thus translators choose between these possible translations. The Hebrew words do not clarify the situation.

83 I. e. commended.

84 Possibly because he was poor no one considered his advice as being worthy of attention.

<3. *Folly can destroy wisdom 9:17 - 18*>

17 The words of the wise are better
than the shouts of rulers⁸⁵ at a council of fools.
18 Heeding wisdom is more valuable
than weapons of war,
but one foolish action
can undo much of value.

<CHAPTER 10>

<4. *The power of wisdom and folly 10:1 - 4*>

1 Dead flies⁸⁶ turn the perfumer's ointment into a fetid and putrid odor; so also a small indiscretion can destroy (*or, annul*)⁸⁷ wisdom and honor.

2 The mind of the wise inclines toward the right,⁸⁸
but a fool's heart inclines toward the left.⁸⁹

3 Fools lack sense⁹⁰ even when walking along the road, and everyone becomes clearly aware that they are fools⁹¹ (*or, and he calls everyone else a fool*).⁹² 4 If the rulers' anger⁹³ flares up against you, do not leave your post⁹⁴ (*or, stay where you are*), for submission (*or, calmness*)⁹⁵ will make amends for great wrongs.⁹⁶

<5. *Fools in high places 10:5 - 7*>

5 I have seen an evil in this world that is as great as if it were perpetrated by a ruler: 6 foolish people are placed in many positions of authority, while the rich must often take lowly (*or, humble*) posts. 7 I have seen slaves on horseback and nobles walking on foot like slaves.

<6. *Risks to the worker 10:8 - 11*>

8 Whoever digs a pit may fall into it,
and whoever breaks through (*or, destroys*) a stone wall

85 Literally: "than the scream of a lord in [the manner of] fools."

86 The contents of this verse is felt by some scholars to belong to chapter 9. Literally: "the flies of death." The MT is felt by some scholars to be corrupt and a suggested emendation is ;&/b w&w' "A fly dies and makes the perfumer's ointment give off an evil odor." Another possible emendation is: "flies about to die" i.e. they are sickly, as in winter.

87 Literally: "a little folly is heavier than wisdom, than honor." An emendation: \$w!/ = "destroys."

88 Literally: "to his right."

89 Implying that wisdom brings good luck, folly brings bad luck.

90 Literally: "his heart is lacking."

91 Literally: "and one says to all."

92 Either translation is grammatically possible. Literally: "He says to all what a fool he is."

93 Literally: "in spirit."

94 A possible emendation is "hope."

95 Hebrew unclear. !59/ = equanimity or composure. Vulgate: "curatio."

96 Literally: "abatement remains grave offenses." NJV: "for when wrath abates great offenses are pardoned."