

may be bitten by a snake.

9 Whoever quarries stones may be hurt by them,
and whoever splits logs may be harmed by them. ¹

10 If the ax ² has become dull and the edge has not been sharpened more force must be exerted, but wisdom helps one to succeed (*or, it is smarter to plan ahead*). 11 If the snake bites before it is charmed ³ (*or, before it is under the charmer's spell*), there is no advantage gained by a charmer.

4

<7. *Wise and foolish talk 10:12 - 15*>

12 Words spoken by the wise bring favor,
but the words of fools are their undoing. ⁵

13 The first things that are said by a fool are foolishness, and their talk ends in disastrous madness. 14 The fools talk incessantly, though no one knows what it is about, and who can tell what the future holds. 15 The exertion caused by labor tires out fools because they do not even know how to find their way to the city. ⁶

<8. *Wise and foolish leaders 10:16 - 20*>

16 Alas for you, O country, when your king is a child, ⁷ and your chosen leaders already begin their gluttony in the morning. 17 Happy are you, O country, when your king is a nobleman ⁸ and your prince feasts at the proper time, eating to remain strong rather than to be drunken.

18 When you are too lazy to repair the roof
it will sag (*or, fall in*);
and if you, through laziness make no repairs,
the house will leak. ⁹

19 Feasts ¹⁰ are made for revelry: and wine makes life pleasant, but money pays for everything (*or, both*). ¹¹

20 Do not criticize the king, even in your thoughts,
or curse the rich in the privacy of your bed room,

1 Vindictiveness has its own problems.

2 Literally: "the iron."

3 Literally: "without enchantment,"

4 Cf. Wisdom of Sirach 12:13. There is no pity for a charmer.

5 Literally: "swallowed up" or "consumed."

6 Literally: "a fool multiplies words: fools labor wears them out, for they do not know how to go to town."

7 The Hebrew word 93/ is interpreted by some to mean "slave" or "low born."

8 Literally: "is the son of a free man." An Aramaic expression denoting noble birth.

9 An alternate possible translation is: "it will cave in."

10 Literally: "bread."

11 Some scholars feel this verse is perhaps a gloss on verse 16.

for a bird of the air ¹² will carry your voice,
or some winged creature ¹³ will reveal the matter.

<CHAPTER 11>

<Limits of human knowledge 11:1 - 6>

- 1 Send out ¹⁴ your bread upon the waters,
yet you will get it back after ¹⁵ many days. ¹⁶
- 2 Distribute portions to seven, or even to eight (*people*) ¹⁷
(*or, diversify your investments*),
for you do not know what catastrophes
might occur on earth.
- 3 When the clouds are full they will empty themselves;
by pouring rain on the ground, ¹⁸
and whether a tree ¹⁹ falls to the south or to the north,
it will stay in the place where it falls. ²⁰
- 4 Whoever watches ²¹ the wind will never sow;
and whoever observes ²² the clouds will never reap.

5 Just as you do not know how new life forms (*or, life breath, spirit enters*) ²³ in the embryo within a pregnant woman, ²⁴ so also you are unable to comprehend the actions of God who creates (*or, causes*) everything.

6 Sow your seed in the morning and do not hold back in the evening (*or, do not refrain from planting in the evening*) for you cannot predict which will grow successfully, ²⁵ this or that, ²⁶ or whether both will be equally good. ²⁷

12 Literally: "of the sky."

13 MT literally: "master of the wings." Cf. Aristophanes "The Birds" and the Hittite "Tales of Elkuhirsu."

14 The Hebrew word implies total commitment. TEV: "Invest your money in foreign trade." The Hebrew word form is an imperative.

15 Literally: "within."

16 There is a possible play on words in Hebrew: /b/1 "waters" /b/b1 "days." There is an ancient Arab proverb: "Do good, cast your bread upon the waters and one day you will be rewarded." Many attempts have been made to explain this verse: 1. A reference to maritime trade. Cf. TEV. 2. Sowing rice in sodden ground (as was done in Egypt). 3. The expression refers to being generous. 4. Be charitable even though rewards may come much later. 5. The Hebrew word **b**, = "yet", thus: "yet you will find [though it is highly unlikely]."

17 Such numerical heightening was common in Hebrew, Ugaritic, Egyptian and Mesopotamian writings.

18 Literally: "If they are full the clouds rain upon the earth they pour."

19 The Hebrew word /! = "tree" or "stick" (as in a divining rod). Cf. Hosea 4:12. Some scholars translate this as stick, i.e. divining rod since a person can alter the position of a fallen tree but no one can determine the desirable direction of a divining rod. Other scholars feel it is a way of saying that it cannot be predicted in what direction a tree will fall in a violent storm.

20 Literally: "and there it is."

21 The Hebrew word comes from a root word meaning "to obey" or "to keep."

22 Literally: "to see (by close observation)."

23 Possibly the original text said: "You do not know the way of the spirit in the womb."

24 The word translated here as "embryo" in Hebrew might literally be translated "to the bone." LXX: ος οστα. Vulgate: qua ratione ossia. Thus both support the MT. This is deemed by many to be a later explanatory gloss. It might also be translated as: "as you do not know the way of the wind" or "How the bone forms in the womb."

25 Literally: "or if the second like the first will prosper."

26 I. e. the morning or evening sowing of seed.

27 Literally: "the two of them [will be] like the one."

<Rejoice and remember 11:7 - 12:8>
<1. Qoheleth's advice: Enjoy life 11:7 - 8>

7 Light is sweet and it is delightful to be able to see the sun.²⁸

8 Even though people live many years, let them enjoy all those years; but they must be aware that there will be many days of darkness.²⁹ All that takes place remains a mystery.

<2. Rejoice while you are young 11:9 - 10>

9 O young people, enjoy your youth, and seek to be cheerful³⁰ in the days of your youth (*or, prime*): follow your desires³¹ and keep your goals in mind. [However do not forget that God will pass judgment, based on how you live.]³²

10 Banish anxiety (*or, vexation*)³³ from your mind, and rid your mind of what troubles you,³⁴ for being young and having dark hair³⁵ are transitory (*or, fleeting*).

<CHAPTER 12>

<3. Remember your Creator before it is too late 12:1 - 8>

1 Remember your Creator³⁶ while you are still young; before the distressing days (*or, times of trouble*) come and the years draw near in which you say, "There is no pleasure in them for me"; 2 before the sun and light give place to the stars, moon and darkness, (*or, before the time of death approaches*) and the clouds return with (*or, after*) the rain;³⁷ 3 in the day when the guardians of the house³⁸ become shaky, and the strong men³⁹ are stooped, and the grinders⁴⁰ cease because they are few, and those who peer through the windows⁴¹ are dim, 4 and the doors⁴² to the street are shut; when the noise of the grinding mill is low,⁴³ and one rises up with the singing of a bird, and singing has become quite feeble; 5 and they are afraid also of heights (*or, climbing up a hillside*), and the way is filled with terrors.

28 Similar words are found in ancient writings by Euripides, the Gilgamesh Epic, etc.

29 Some scholars feel this is a euphemism for "death is permanent."

30 Literally: "and let your heart be good."

31 Literally: "the ways of your heart."

32 No doubt the addition of a pious glossator.

33 The Hebrew word 23, = "that which angers, grieves or irritates."

34 Literally: "pains." I. e. physical or mental pain.

35 The Hebrew word is only used here. LXX: αἰνοῦσα = folly, ignorance. Peshitta: "ignorance." Vulgate: voluptas = "desire." Targum: "the days of the blackness of hair." Most modern Hebrew scholars seem to accept the word, based on its root word to mean "blackness" referring to either the hair or the dawn. Traditional translation was "the dawn of life."

36 Some scholars feel the Hebrew word translated Creator: +b;9&(w is an alteration of what they deem to have been the original: +9bw = "your cistern," or +9!w = "your well." Other scholars believe the original text read: \$rwb = "grave" or "pit." Some of these same scholars feel the words "well, cistern, pit" are a symbolic way of saying "wife." Other scholars interpret the Hebrew word in the MT to mean "vigour." Cf. NJB.

37 I. e. life in old age is compared to winter, for joy, energy, warmth and sunshine are gone.

38 I. e. the arms and hands.

39 I. e. perhaps the legs.

40 Literally: "the grinding women." i.e. the teeth.

41 Literally: "the holes" i.e. the eyes.

42 Hebrew has a dual form, thus, double doors. i.e. possibly jaws, lips or ears.

43 I. e. hearing loss.

The almond tree blossoms,⁴⁴ the grasshopper⁴⁵ drags itself along (*or, is a burden*),⁴⁶ and one is no longer aroused (*or, desire fails*);⁴⁷ because⁴⁸ we go to our eternal home,⁴⁹ and the mourners go about the street. ⁶ The silver cord is snapped,⁵⁰ and the golden bowl crashes,⁵¹ or the jar (*or, pitcher*) is shattered at the fountain (*or, spring*), and the pulley (*or, wheel*)⁵² is broken at the cistern.⁵³ ⁷ The body returns to the ground from which it came, and the spirit returns to God who [*originally*] gave it.

⁸ "Oh, most perishable of perishabilities," says Qoheleth, "all is perishable!"⁵⁴

<Concluding remarks [by the editor] 12:9 - 14>

<The first concluding note 12:9 - 11>

⁹ In addition to being a sage, Qoheleth also⁵⁵ imparted⁵⁶ knowledge to the people through writing, scholarship and carefully editing (*or, arranging*) many maxims (*or, proverbs*). ¹⁰ Qoheleth endeavored to find words of comfort⁵⁷ and he plainly wrote words that were honestly true.

¹¹ The adages (*or, sayings*) of the wise are sharp as goads, like stakes that have been firmly pounded⁵⁸ into the ground. So also are the collected sayings which are taught by one shepherd.

<The second concluding note 12:12 - 14>

¹² My child, beware of something else: there is no end to the making of many books,⁵⁹ and the search for wisdom is exhausting.

¹³ Thus the final word, when all has been said:⁶⁰ have reverence for God and keep his commandments; for this is what every person should do. ¹⁴ God will judge all our deeds, yes, even the secret things are included, whether good or evil.⁶¹

44 The blossoms of the almond tree are snow white, i.e. white hair.

45 LXX: "the locust's paunch is swollen."

46 Expressions of feebleness.

47 An alternative possible translation is "caper berry" which in those days was considered to be an aphrodisiac. If desire fails, or the caper berry fails, it can readily be understood that the grasshopper is a euphemism for impotency. NEB: "when the caper buds have no more zest."

48 Hebrew: **b**, = because or when.

49 Literally: "house of eternity." Found only here. It is a common Egyptian expression used also for "the tomb." Hebrew: **et** ;**et**

50 The Hebrew is virtually unintelligible. So: Syriac, Vulgate, and some LXX. Hebrew: "is removed." Some scholars interpret this as a necklace, others as a counter weight for a well mechanism. It is generally thought of as the cord that held the bowl in the next phrase.

51 The bowl breaks after the cord that held it snapped. The "bowl" might possibly imply a reservoir. cf. Zech. 4:2-3.

52 Some translate this as "jug."

53 The jug or pitcher is smashed when the pulley breaks causing the jug to drop to the bottom of the well or cistern.

54 TOL translates: "absurdity of absurdities, says the Qoheleth, everything is absurd."

55 Hebrew: **et** = moreover, beside, also, continually.

56 The Hebrew word **et** describes a professional teacher of wisdom.

57 Literally: "words of delight."

58 Literally: "planted."

59 With different vowel points it could read: "making of many scribes."

60 A form of Colophon to remind the reader or scribe that this is the final summary.

61 The Masoretes repeated verse 13 following verse 14 so that the book might end on a positive note. Cf. TJB.