

1:17 And so I set my mind to appraise wisdom and to appraise madness and folly.
And I learned—that this too was pursuit of wind:

1:18 For as wisdom grows, vexation grows; To increase learning is to increase
heartache.

2:1 I said to myself, “Come, I will treat you to merriment. Taste mirth!”
That too, I found, was futile.

2:2 Of revelry I said, “It’s mad!” Of merriment, “What good is that?”

2:3 I ventured to tempt my flesh with wine, and to grasp folly, while letting
my mind direct with wisdom, to the end that I might learn which of the two was
better for mortals to practice in their few days of life under heaven.

2:4 I multiplied my possessions. I built myself houses and I planted vineyards.

2:5 I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree.

2:6 I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with
trees.

2:7 I bought male and female slaves, and I acquired stewards. I also acquired
more cattle, both herds and flocks, than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

2:8 I further amassed silver and gold and treasures of kings and provinces; and
I got myself male and female singers, as well as the luxuries of
commoners—coffers. The Heb. shiddah occurs only here in the Bible; in
the Mishnah it designates a kind of chest. and coffers of them.

2:9 Thus, I gained more wealth than anyone before me in Jerusalem. In addition,
my wisdom remained with me:

2:10 I withheld from my eyes nothing they asked for, and denied myself no
enjoyment; rather, I got enjoyment out of about of Septuagint and a few Heb.
manuscripts have “(in exchange) for”; cf. 2.24; 3.13, 22; 5.17. all my
wealth. And that was all I got out of my wealth.

2:11 Then my thoughts turned to all the fortune my hands had built up, to the
wealth I had acquired and won—and oh, it was all futile and pursuit of wind;
there was no real value under the sun!

2:12 Sentences transposed for clarity. For what will the man be like who will
succeed the one who is ruling the one who is ruling Change of vocalization
yields “me, and who is to rule”; cf. vv. 18–19. over what was built up
long ago? My thoughts also turned to appraising wisdom and madness and folly.

2:13 I found that Wisdom is superior to folly As light is superior to darkness;

2:14 The wise have their eyes in their head, Whereas fools walk in darkness. But
I also realized that the same fate awaits them all.

2:15 So I reflected: “The fate of the fool is also destined for me; to what
advantage, then, have I been wise?” And I came to the conclusion that that
too was futile,

2:16 because the wise, just like like See note at 1.11. the foolish, are not
remembered forever; for, as the succeeding days roll by, both are forgotten.
Alas, the wise die, just like like See note at 1.11. the foolish!

2:17 And so I loathed life. For I was distressed by all that goes on under the
sun, because everything is futile and pursuit of wind.

2:18 So, too, I loathed all the wealth that I was gaining under the sun. For I
shall leave it to the man who will succeed me—

2:19 and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish?—and he will control

all the wealth that I gained by toil and wisdom under the sun. That too is futile.

2:20 And so I came to view with despair all the gains I had made under the sun.

2:21 For sometimes a person whose fortune was made with wisdom, knowledge, and skill must hand it on to be the portion of somebody who did not toil for it.

That too is futile, and a grave evil.

2:22 For what do mortals get for all the toiling and worrying they do under the sun?

2:23 All their days their thoughts are grief and heartache, and even at night their mind has no respite. That too is futile!

2:24 There is nothing worthwhile for mortals but to eat and drink and afford themselves enjoyment with their means. And even that, I noted, comes from God.

2:25 For who eats and who enjoys but myself?gmyself Some mss. and ancient versions read mimmennu, “by God’s doing.”

2:26 One, namely, who pleases [God] is given the wisdom and shrewdness for enjoyment;hthe wisdom and shrewdness for enjoyment Lit. “wisdom and knowledge and enjoyment.” while one who displeases is given the urge to gather and amass—only for handing on to someone who is pleasing to God. That too is futile and pursuit of wind.

3:1 A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:aI.e., all human experiences are preordained by God; see v. 11.

3:2 A time for birthing and a time for dying,A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;

3:3 A time for slaying and a time for healing,bslaying...healing Emendation yields “wrecking...repairing”; cf. 1 Kings 18.30. A time for tearing down and a time for building up;

3:4 A time for weeping and a time for laughing,A time for wailing and a time for dancing;

3:5 A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;

3:6 A time for seeking and a time for losing,A time for keeping and a time for discarding;

3:7 A time for ripping and a time for sewing,A time for silence and a time for speaking;

3:8 A time for loving and a time for hating;A time for war and a time for peace.

3:9 What value, then, can those who labor get from what they earn?

3:10 I have observed the business that God gave humankind to be concerned with:

3:11 [God] brings everything to pass precisely at its time; [God] also puts eternity in their mind,cputs eternity in their mind I.e., God preoccupies humankind with the attempt to discover the times of future events; cf. 8.17. but without people ever guessing, from first to last, all the things that God brings to pass.

3:12 Thus I realized that the only worthwhile thing there is for them is to enjoy themselves and do what is gooddwhat is good I.e., what the author has already concluded (2.24) is good. in their lifetime;

3:13 also, that whenever people do eat and drink and get enjoyment out of all

their wealth, it is a gift of God.

3:14 I realized, too, that whatever God has brought to pass will recur evermore: Nothing can be added to it And nothing taken from it—and God has brought to pass that mortals feel reverence.

3:15 e Meaning of parts of verse uncertain. What is occurring occurred long since, And what is to occur occurred long since: and God seeks the pursued.

3:16 And, indeed, I have observed under the sun: Alongside justice there is wickedness, Alongside righteousness there is wickedness.

3:17 I mused: “God will doom both righteous and wicked, for there is there is Shift of a diacritical point yields “[God] has set.” a time for every experience and for every happening.”

3:18 g Meaning of parts of verse uncertain. So I decided, as regards human beings, to dissociate them [from] the divine beings and to face the fact that they are animals. h Contrast Ps. 8.5–6.

3:19 For in respect of the fate of humans and the fate of animals, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same lifebreath; humans have no superiority over animals, since both amount to nothing.

3:20 Both go to the same place; both came from dust and both return to dust.

3:21 Who knows if the lifebreath of humans does rise upward and if the breath of animals does sink down into the earth?

3:22 I saw that there is nothing better for people than to enjoy their possessions, since that is their portion. For who can enable them to see what will happen afterward?

4:1 I further observed a further observed Cf. 3.16. all the oppression that goes on under the sun: the tears of the oppressed, with none to comfort them; and their oppressors’ power, with none to comfort them.

4:2 Then I accounted those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living;

4:3 and happier than either are those who have not yet come into being and have never witnessed the miseries that go on under the sun.

4:4 I have also noted that all labor and skillful enterprise come from people’s envy of one another—another futility and pursuit of wind!

4:5 [True,] Fools fold their hands together b fold their hands together I.e., do not work; cf. Prov. 6.10; 24.33. And have to eat their own flesh.

4:6 [But no less truly,] Better is a handful of gratification Than two fistfuls of labor that is pursuit of wind.

4:7 And I have noted this further futility under the sun:

4:8 the case of a man who is alone, with no companion, who has neither son nor brother; yet he amasses wealth without limit, and his eye is never sated with riches. For whom, now, is he amassing it while denying himself c is he amassing it while denying himself Lit. “am I amassing ... myself.” enjoyment? That too is a futility and an unhappy business.

4:9 d This section consists of a series of observations, each of which is introduced by some slight association with what precedes. The theme of 4.4–8 is resumed with 5.9. Two are better off than one, in that they have greater benefit from benefit from Emendation yields “hope for”; cf. 2.20. their

earnings.

4:10 For should they fall, one can raise the other; but woe to someone who is alone and falls with no companion to assist!

4:11 Further, when two lie together they are warm; but how can someone who is alone get warm?

4:12 Also, if someone attacks, two can withstand it. A threefold cord is not readily broken!

4:13 Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer has the sense to heed warnings.

4:14 For the former can emerge from a dungeon to become king; while the latter, even if born to kingship, can become a pauper. fbecome a pauper Taking rash as a verb; cf. Ps. 34.11.

4:15 [However,] I reflected about all the living who walk under the sun with who walk under the sun with I.e., are contemporaries of. that youthful successor that youthful successor Or: “the next youngster,” i.e., whoever comes in line to displace the youth mentioned in v. 13. who steps into his place.

4:16 Unnumbered are the multitudes of all those who preceded them; those who preceded them And so never heard of the gifted youth. and later generations will not acclaim him either. jlater generations will not acclaim him either For despite his wisdom, he too will be forgotten; cf. 2.16. For that that Namely, the advantage of wisdom over folly. too is futile and pursuit of wind.

4:17 Be not overeager to go Be not overeager to go Lit. “Guard your foot when it [or, you] would go.” to the House of God: more acceptable is obedience than the offering of fools, for they know nothing [but] to do wrong.

5:1 Keep your mouth from being rash, and let not your throat a throat Heb. leb, lit. “heart,” sometimes designates the organ of speech; cf. Isa. 33.18;

59.13; Ps. 19.15; 49.4; Job 8.10. be quick to bring forth speech before God.

For God is in heaven and you are on earth; that is why your words should be few.

5:2 Just as dreams come with much brooding, so does foolish utterance come with much speech.

5:3 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. For [God] has no pleasure in fools; what you vow, fulfill.

5:4 It is better not to vow at all than to vow and not fulfill.

5:5 Don't let your mouth bring you into disfavor, and don't plead before the messenger the messenger Some ancient versions read “God.” that it was an error, but fear God; cbut fear God Moved up from v. 6 for clarity. else God may be angered by your talk and destroy your possessions.

5:6 dMeaning of verse uncertain. Emendation yields “Much brooding results in dreams; and much talk in futilities”; cf. v. 2. For much dreaming leads to futility and to superfluous talk.

5:7 If you see in a province oppression of the poor and suppression of right and justice, don't wonder at the fact; for one high official is protected by a higher one, and both of them by still higher ones.

5:8 Thus the greatest advantage in all the land is his: he controls a field that is cultivated. eI.e., the high official profits from the labor of others;

but meaning of verse uncertain.

5:9 A lover of money is never satisfied with money, nor a lover of wealth, with income. That too is futile.

5:10 As one's substance increases, so do those who consume it; what, then, does the success of its owner amount to but feasting the eyes?

5:11 Workers' fworkers' Some ancient versions have "slaves'." sleep is sweet, whether they have much or little to eat; but the abundance of the rich doesn't let them sleep.

5:12 Here is a grave evil I have observed under the sun: riches hoarded to the detriment of the owners,

5:13 in that those riches are lost in some unlucky venture; and if they produce children, they have nothing in hand.

5:14 Another grave evil is this: The richgThe rich Heb. "He." must depart just as they came.hAnother grave evil is this: The rich must depart just as they came Moved up from v. 15 for clarity. As they came out of their mother's womb, so must they depart at last, naked as they came. They can take nothing of their wealth to carry with them.

5:15 So what is the good of their toiling for the wind?

5:16 Besides, all their days they eat in darkness,they eat in darkness Septuagint reads "are [spent] in darkness and mourning." with much vexation and grief and anger.

5:17 Only this, I have found, is a real good: to eat and drink and get pleasure with all the gains you make under the sun, during the numbered days of life that God has given you; for that is your portion.

5:18 Also, whenever people are given riches and property by God, and they are also permitted to enjoy them and to take their portion and get pleasure for their gains—that is a gift of God.

5:19 For [such people] will not brood much over the days of their life,jthe days of their life The thought of which is depressing; see v. 16. because God keeps them busy enjoying themselves.

6:1 There is an evil I have observed under the sun, and a grave one it is for mortals:

6:2 that God sometimes grants a man riches, property, and wealth, so that he does not want for anything his appetite may crave, but God does not permit him to enjoy it; instead, a stranger will enjoy it. That is futility and a grievous ill.

6:3 Even if a man should beget a hundred children and live many years—no matter how many the days of his years may come to, if his gullet is not sated through his wealth, I say: The stillbirth, though it was not even accorded a burial,anot even accorded a burial Stillbirths were cast into pits or hidden in the ground in no recognizable graves; cf. v. 4 end. is more fortunate than he.

6:4 Though it comes into futility and departs into darkness, and its very name is covered with darkness,

6:5 though it has never seen or experienced the sun, it is better off than he—

6:6 yes, even if the other lived a thousand years twice over but never had his fill of enjoyment! For are not both of them bound for the same place?

6:7 bCf. Prov. 16.26. All of a person's earning is for [filling] the mouth, yet the gullet is not sated.

6:8 What advantage then have the wise over the foolish, what advantage have paupers who know how to get on in life? yet the gullet is not sated. What advantage then have the wise over the foolish, what advantage have paupers who know how to get on in life? Meaning of Heb. uncertain; emendation yields "And if the gullet is not sated, what advantage have the wise over fools, those who know how to get on in life over paupers?"

6:9 dMeaning of first half of verse uncertain. Is the feasting of the eyes more important than the pursuit of desire? That, too, is futility and pursuit of wind.

6:10 Whatever happens, it was designated long ago and it was known that it would happen; as for humankind, they cannot contend with the One who is stronger than they are.

6:11 Often, much talk means much futility. How does it benefit a person?

6:12 Who can possibly know what is best for people to do in life—the few days of this fleeting life? For Lit. "according to the shadow that"; cf.

Qumran Aramaic betel and Syriac mettol; and see 8.13. who can tell what the future holds for them under the sun?

7:1 aThe author now offers a number of practical maxims, which, however, he concludes (vv. 23–24) are of limited value. A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death than the day of birth. bUntil the moment of death, people risk forfeiting their good name.

7:2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting; for that is the end of every mortal, and the living should take it to heart.

7:3 Vexation is better than revelry; cFor empty revelry precludes real happiness; cf. 2.2. for though the face be sad, the heart may be glad.

7:4 The wise are drawn to a house of mourning, and the foolish to a house of merrymaking.

7:5 It is better to listen to the reproof of someone wise than to listen to the praise of fools.

7:6 For the levity dlevity Emendation yields "praise" (shbh). of the fool is like the crackling of nettles under a kettle. eThis section, to end of v. 7, is apparently a continuation of the thought in vv. 11–12 and 19. But that too is illusory;

7:7 for cheating fcheating Emendation yields "riches." may rob the wise of reason and destroy the prudence of the cautious. gthe cautious Lit. "caution"; cf. postbiblical mathun "cautious."

7:8 The end of a matter is better than the beginning of it. Better a patient spirit than a haughty spirit.

7:9 Don't let your spirit be quickly vexed, for vexation abides in the breasts of fools.

7:10 Don't say, "How has it happened that former times were better than these?" For it is not wise of you to ask that question.

7:11 Wisdom is as good as a patrimony, and even better, for those who behold the sun.

7:12 For to be in the shelter of wisdom is to be also in the shelter of

money,^hFor to be in the shelter of wisdom is to be also in the shelter of money
Emendation yields “For the possessor of wisdom becomes a possessor of
money.” and the advantage of intelligence is that wisdom preserves the life
of the one who possesses it.

7:13 ⁱThese verses continue the thought of v. 10. Consider God’s doing! Who
can straighten what has been twisted?

7:14 So in a time of good fortune enjoy the good fortune; and in a time of
misfortune, reflect: The one no less than the other was God’s doing;
consequently, mortals may find no fault with [God].^jThe one no less than the
other ... find no fault with [God] So Rashi; cf. the same thought in Job 1.22;
2.10.

7:15 In my own brief span of life, I have seen both these things: sometimes
someone good perishes despite their goodness, and sometimes someone wicked
endures despite their wickedness.

7:16 So don’t overdo goodness and don’t act too wise, or you may be
dumfounded.

7:17 Don’t overdo wickedness and don’t be a fool, or you may die before
your time.

7:18 It is best that you grasp the one without letting go of the other, for
those who fear God will do their duty^kdo their duty Cf. postbiblical yasa’
yede. by both.

7:19 Wisdom is more of a stronghold to someone wise than ten magnates^lten
magnates Emendation yields “the riches of the magnates”; cf. Prov. 18.11.
that a city may contain.

7:20 ^mApparently continuing the thought of v. 16. For there is not one good
person on earth who does what is bestⁿdoes what is best Refers back to 6.12.
and doesn’t err.

7:21 Finally, don’t pay attention to everything that is said, so that you may
not hear your slave reviling you;

7:22 for well you remember^owell you remember Lit. “your heart knows”; the
same idiom occurs again in 8.5. the many times that you yourself have reviled
others.

7:23 All this I tested with wisdom. I thought I could fathom it,^pit Refers back
to 6.12. but it eludes me.

7:24 [The secret of] what happens is elusive and deep, deep down; who can
discover it?

7:25 I put my mind to studying, exploring, and seeking wisdom and the reason of
things, and to studying wickedness, stupidity, madness, and folly.

7:26 Now, I find more bitter than death the woman who is all traps, whose hands
are fetters, and whose heart^qI find more bitter than death the woman
who...whose hands...whose heart Or “I find woman more bitter than death;
she...her hands...her heart.” Force of Heb. uncertain. is snares. He who is
pleasing to God escapes her, and he who is displeasing is caught by her.

7:27 See, this is what I found, said Koheleth, item by item in my search for
the reason of things.

7:28 As for what I sought further but did not find: I found only one [true]
human being in a thousand, and among all these I did not find a [truly

compatible] woman.

7:29 But, see, this I did find: among all these ... this I did find Force of Heb. uncertain. God made human beings plain, but they have engaged in too much reasoning.

8:1 Who is like the sage, a Who is like the sage Some ancient versions read “Who here is wise.” and who knows the meaning of the adage: “Wisdom lights up a person’s face, So that deep discontent b discontent Lit. “face”; cf. 1 Sam. 1.18; Job 9.27. is dissembled”?

8:2 I do! “Obey the king’s orders—and don’t rush c don’t rush Moved up from v. 3 for English word order. into uttering an oath by God.” d The answer to the inquiry about the implications of the proverb in v. 1 is given in the form of another proverb, of which only the first half is relevant and is enlarged upon.

8:3 Leave his presence; do not tarry e Leave his presence; do not tarry Or “Give ground before him; do not resist.” in a dangerous situation, for he can do anything he pleases;

8:4 inasmuch as a king’s command is authoritative, and none can say to him, “What are you doing?”

8:5 One who obeys orders will not suffer from the dangerous situation. Someone wise, however, will bear in mind f bear in mind The same idiom as in 7.22. that there is a time of doom. g time of doom Lit. “time and doom”; cf. the synonymous “time of misfortune,” lit. “time and misfortune,” 9.11.

8:6 For there is a time for every experience, including the doom; for calamity h calamity Still another term for death; cf. “the time of calamity” for “the hour of death,” 9.12. overwhelms.

8:7 Indeed, what is to happen is unknown; even when it is on the point of happening, who can tell?

8:8 No one has authority over the life breath—to hold back the life breath; i hold back the life breath From leaving the body when the time comes; see 12.7; cf. Ps. 104.29; 146.4. there is no authority over the day of death. There is no mustering out from that war; wickedness j wickedness Emendation yields “riches.” is powerless to save its owner.

8:9 All these things I observed; I noted all that went on under the sun, while people still had authority over others to treat them unjustly.

8:10 And then I saw scoundrels coming from the Holy Site and being brought to burial, k coming from the Holy Site and being brought to burial Meaning uncertain; emendation yields “approaching [to minister]. They would come and profane the Holy Site.” while such as had acted righteously were forgotten in the city. And here is another frustration:

8:11 the fact that the sentence imposed for evil deeds is not executed swiftly, which is why people are emboldened to do evil—

8:12 the fact that sinners may do evil a hundred times and their [punishment] still be delayed. For although I am aware that “It will be well with those who revere God since they show reverence,

8:13 and it will not be well with scoundrels, and they will not live long, because l because See note at 6.12. they do not revere God”—

8:14 here is a frustration that occurs in the world: sometimes someone upright

is requited according to the conduct of the scoundrel; and sometimes the scoundrel is requited according to the conduct of the upright. I say all that is frustration.

8:15 I therefore praised enjoyment. For the only good people can have under the sun is to eat and drink and enjoy themselves. That much can accompany them, in exchange for their wealth, through the days of life that God has granted them under the sun.

8:16 For I have set my mind to learn wisdom and to observe the business that goes on in the world—even to the extent of going without sleep day and night—

8:17 and I have observed all that God brings to pass. Indeed, human beings cannot guess the events that occur under the sun. For humans try strenuously, but fail to guess them; and even if those who are wise should think to discover them they would not be able to guess them.

9:1 For all this I noted, and I ascertained^aascertained Meaning of verb uncertain; construction as in Hos. 12.3; Ezra 3.12. all this: that the actions of even the righteous and the wise are determined by God. Even love! Even hate! Humankind knows none of these in advance—

9:2 none!^bEven love! Even hate! Humankind knows none of these in advance—none! Emendation yields “Even love, even hate, no one can know in advance. All ²are insignificant.” For the same fate is in store for all: for the righteous, and for the wicked; for the good and pure,^cthe good and pure I.e., those who observe the laws of ritual purity. and for the impure; for one who sacrifices, and for one who does not;^dCf. 4.17. for one who is pleasing,^epleasing To God; cf. 2.26; 7.26. and for one who is displeasing; and for one who swears, and for one who shuns oaths.^fCf. 8.2.

9:3 That is the sad thing about all that goes on under the sun: that the same fate is in store for all. (Not only that, but people’s hearts are full of sadness, and their minds of madness, while they live; and then—to the dead!)

9:4 For one who is reckoned among^greckoned among Lit. “joined to all.” the living has something to look forward to—even a live dog is better than a dead lion—

9:5 since the living know they will die. But the dead know nothing; they have no more recompense,^hrecompense Emendation yields “hope.” for even the memory of them has died.

9:6 Their loves, their hates, their jealousies have long since perished; and they have no more share till the end of time in all that goes on under the sun.

9:7 Go, [my son,] eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for your action was long ago approved by God.ⁱapproved by God Cf. 2.24–25; 3.13; 5.18.

9:8 Let your clothes always be freshly washed, and your head never lack ointment.

9:9 Enjoy happiness with a woman you love all the fleeting days of life that have been granted to you under the sun—all your fleeting days. For that alone is what you can get out of life and out of the means you acquire under the sun.

9:10 Whatever it is in your power to do, do with all your might. For there is no action, no reasoning, no learning, no wisdom in Sheol, where you are going.

9:11 I have further observed under the sun thatThe race is not won by the swift,Nor the battle by the valiant;Nor is bread won by the wise,Nor wealth by the intelligent,Nor favor by the learned.For the time of mischancejtime of mischance Euphemism for death. comes to all.kI.e., the insignificant duration of life renders all successes illusory; cf. 4.15–16.

9:12 And human beings cannot even know their time. As fishes are enmeshed in a fatal net, and as birds are trapped in a snare, so humans are caught at the time of calamity,ltime of calamity Euphemism for death. when it comes upon them without warning.

9:13 This thing too I observed under the sun about wisdom, and it affected me profoundly.

9:14 There was a little city, with few menmmen I.e., potential defenders. in it; and to it came a great king, who invested it and built mighty siege works against it.

9:15 Present in the city was a poor wise man who might have savednwho might have saved Or “and it was he who saved.” it with his wisdom, but nobody thought ofthought of Or “remembered.” that poor man.

9:16 So I observed: Wisdom is better than valor; butThe wisdom of the poor is scorned,And their words are not heeded.

9:17 pThese verses constitute a group of loosely connected aphorisms. Words spoken softly by wise men are heeded sooner than those shouted by a lord in folly.qsooner than those shouted by a lord in folly Lit. “than the scream of a lord in [the manner of] the fools.”

9:18 Wisdom is more valuable than weapons of war,rweapons of war Emendation yields “everything precious.” but a single error destroys much of value.

10:1 Dead flies turn the perfumer’s ointment fetid and putrid;aputrid Meaning of Heb. uncertain. so a little folly outweighs massive wisdom.

10:2 A sage’s mind tends toward the right hand, a fool’s toward the left.bI.e., a sage’s mind brings good luck; a fool’s brings bad luck.

10:3 The mind of a fool is wanting also when traveling—which lets everybody know who is a fool.

10:4 If the wrath of a lord flares up against you, don’t give up your post;cpost Emendation yields “hope.” for when wrath abates, grave offenses are pardoned.dwhen wrath abates, grave offenses are pardoned Lit. “abatement (2 Chron. 36.16) remits grave offenses.” For hinniah “to remit,” cf.

Abodah Zarah 13a; cf. hanahah “remission of taxes,” Esth. 2.18.

10:5 Here is an evil I have seen under the sun as great as an error committed by a ruler:

10:6 Folly was placed on lofty heights, while the rich sat in low estate.

10:7 I have seen slaves on horseback, and nobles walking on the ground like slaves.

10:8 One who digs a pit will fall into it; one who breaches a stone fence will be bitten by a snake.

10:9 One who quarries stones will be hurt by them; one who splits wood will be harmed byebe hurt by them; one who splits wood will be harmed by Emendation yields “profit ... shall make use of.” it.

10:10 fMeaning of verse uncertain. If the ax has become dull and the edge has

not been whetted, then more strength must be exerted. Thus the advantage of a skill [depends on the exercise of] prudence.

10:11 If the snake bites because no spell was uttered, no advantage is gained by the trained charmer.

10:12 Sages' talk brings them favor, but fools' lips are their undoing.

10:13 Their talk begins as silliness and ends as disastrous madness.

10:14 Yet fools talk and talk!^gThe thought of this sentence is resumed at v.

20. Humans cannot know what will happen; who can tell them what the future holds?

10:15 ^hThis verse continues the thought of v. 3. The exertions of fools tire them out, for they don't know how to get to a town.

10:16 Alas for you, O land whose king is a lackey and whose ministers dine in the morning!

10:17 Happy are you, O land whose king is a master and whose ministers dine at the proper time—with restraint, not with guzzling!

10:18 Through slothfulness the ceiling sags, Through lazy hands the house caves in.

10:19 TheyⁱThey The ministers of v. 16. make a banquet for revelry; wine makes life merry, and money answers every need.

10:20 Don't revile a king even among your intimates.^jintimates In contrast to others "thoughts"; meaning of Heb. uncertain. Don't revile someone who is rich even in your bedchamber; For a bird of the air may carry the utterance, And a winged creature may report the word.

11:1 Send your bread forth upon the waters; for after many days you will find it.

11:2 Distribute portions to seven or even to eight, for you cannot know what misfortune may occur on earth.

11:3 If the clouds are filled, they will pour down rain on the earth; and if a

tree falls to the south or to the north, the tree will stay where it falls.^{aif}

a tree falls to the south or to the north, the tree will stay where it falls

Emendation yields, "if a thunderbolt (lit. arrow, cf., e.g., 2 Sam. 22.15)

falls ... where the thunderbolt falls, only there will it strike."

11:4 Whoever watches the wind will never sow; and whoever observes the clouds will never reap.

11:5 Just as you do not know how the lifebreath passes into ^{binto} So many mss.

and Targum; Tiberian Masoretic mss. read "like." the limbs within the womb

of the pregnant woman, so you cannot foresee the actions of God, who causes all things to happen.

11:6 Sow your seed in the morning, and don't hold back your hand in the

evening, since you don't know which is going to succeed, the one or the

other, or if both are equally good.

11:7 How sweet is the light, what a delight for the eyes to behold the sun!

11:8 Even someone who lives many years should rejoice during all of them,

remembering how many the days of darkness are going to be. The only future is nothingness!

11:9 O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth. Follow the desires of your heart and the

glances of your eyes—but know well that God will call you to account for all such things—

11:10 and banish care from your mind, and pluck sorrow out of your flesh! For youth and black hair are fleeting.

12:1 So appreciate your vigor So appreciate your vigor Cf. postbiblical bori; in contrast to others “Remember your Creator.” in the days of your youth, before those days of sorrow come and those years arrive of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”;

12:2 before sun and light and moon and stars grow dark, and the clouds come back again after the rain:

12:3 When the guards of the house guards of the house I.e., the arms. become shaky, And the soldiers soldiers I.e., the legs. are bent, And the maids that grind, maids that grind I.e., the teeth. grown few, are idle, And the ladies that peer through the windows ladies that peer through the windows I.e., the eyes. grow dim,

12:4 And the doors to the street doors to the street I.e., the ears. are shut—With the noise of the hand mill growing fainter, And the song of the bird growing feebler, growing feebler Exact meaning of Heb. uncertain. And all the strains of music dying down; strains of music dying down Cf. 2 Sam. 19.36.

12:5 When one is afraid of heights And there is terror on the road.—For the almond tree may blossom, The grasshopper be burdened, The grasshopper be burdened Emendation yields “The squill (postbiblical Heb. hasab) resume its burden,” i.e., its blossom stalk and its leaves. And the caper bush may bud again; caper bush may bud again These plants, after seeming dead for part of the year, revive, unlike human beings; cf. Job 14.7–10. But mortals set out for their eternal abode, With mourners all around in the street.—

12:6 Before the silver cord snaps And the golden bowl crashes, The jar is shattered at the spring, And the jug jug So in Punic; in contrast to others “wheel.” is smashed at the cistern. Smashed at the cistern Poetic figure for the end of life.

12:7 And the dust returns to the ground As it was, And the life breath returns to God Who bestowed it.

12:8 Utter futility—said Koheleth—All is futile!

12:9 A further word: Because Koheleth was a sage, he continued to instruct the people. He listened to and tested the soundness soundness A noun, like dibber (Jer. 5.13), which occurs in such postbiblical phrases as shanim ke-thiq(qe)nan “normal years” (lit. “years according to their propriety”). of many maxims.

12:10 Koheleth sought to discover useful sayings and recorded recorded Heb. we-khathub is equivalent to we-khathob, an infinitive employed as in Esth. 9.16 and elsewhere. genuinely truthful sayings.

12:11 The sayings of the wise are like goads, like nails fixed in prodding sticks. in prodding sticks Meaning of Heb. uncertain. They were given by one Shepherd. p They were given by one Shepherd Meaning of Heb. uncertain. Emendation yields “They are accounted as a sharp ox goad” (post-biblical mardea’).

12:12 A further word: Against them, q Against them Emendation yields “Slow, there!” Cf. Arabic mah and mah mah; so also mah (meh) in Prov. 31.2. my son,

be warned!The making of many books is without limitAnd much studyrstudy Meaning
of Heb. uncertain. is a wearying of the flesh.

12:13 The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe
the commandments! For this applies to all humankind:

12:14 that God will call every creature to account for everything
unknown,severything unknown Emendation yields “all their conduct.” be it
good or bad.The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and
observe the commandments! For this applies to all humankind.

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