Ecclesiastes

HEBREW BIBLE

Ecclesiastes

קֹהֶלֶת

Translated from the Hebrew with AI (Claude) and edited

FORAGE
forage.com

Ecclesiastes · Hebrew Bible

Translated from the Hebrew with AI (Claude) and edited. Parallel-text edition, Forage, October 2026. forage.com/bible/ecclesiastes

Hebrew text: the Westminster Leningrad Codex (WLC 4.20, J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research; public domain), a transcription of the Leningrad Codex (St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Firkovich B 19 A, copied AD 1008/9), the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, via the OpenScriptures Hebrew Bible (github.com/openscriptures/morphhb) (its morphology, CC BY 4.0, is not used). Spot-checked against Rudolf Kittel (1853–1929), ed., *Biblia Hebraica* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906). Vowel points are kept; the cantillation accents are omitted; where the Masoretes read a word differently from the written consonants (ketiv/qere), the form read aloud (qere) is printed. In the poetry, " / " marks the division of each verse into its lines (cola), following the main accents of the Masoretic text. English: translated from the Hebrew with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. Margin numbers are chapter and verse in the Hebrew numbering (in chapters 4–5 the English Bibles number 4:17 and 5:1–19 as 5:1–20).

The original text is in the public domain. This translation is free to share and adapt under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0): creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

Set in Source Serif 4, Noto Serif Hebrew.

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Ecclesiastes 1

Everything is breath 1
Qohelet's search for wisdom 2
The test of pleasure and great works 2
The wise and the fool die alike 3
A time for everything 4
Humans and animals share one fate 5
Oppression, envy and companionship 6
Words before God 7
The love of money 8
Better the day of death: proverbs 10
Do not be overly righteous 11
The king's command and the injustice of the world 12
One fate for all: enjoy your life 13
Time and chance 14
Wisdom and folly 15
Send your bread on the waters 16
Youth and old age 17
Epilogue: the words of the wise 18

INTRODUCTION

"Breath of breaths, says Qohelet, breath of breaths—everything is breath." The speaker of Ecclesiastes calls himself Qohelet, a title usually translated "the Teacher" or "the Preacher" (literally "one who assembles"), and presents himself as a son of David and king in Jerusalem. His key word, *hevel*, means breath or vapor: something fleeting, insubstantial, beyond grasping.

Qohelet sets out to find what is worth doing "under the sun." He tries pleasure, great works, wealth and wisdom, and finds that all of them pass, that the wise and the fool die alike, and that no one can know what comes after. Yet he keeps returning to simple goods: to eat and drink and enjoy one's work, to love, to act while there is time. The book includes the famous poem "For everything there is a season" and ends with an image of old age and death.

Its late Hebrew, with some Persian loanwords, leads most scholars to date it to the fourth or third century BC. Its candor about the limits of human knowledge has made it a favorite of readers well beyond religious tradition.

Ecclesiastes

Qohelet, "the Teacher," searches out what is worth doing under the sun and finds everything fleeting as breath.

EVERYTHING IS BREATH

Qohelet asks what gain there is in toil and describes the endless round of nature.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 1:1	דִּבְרֵי קֹהֶלֶת בֶּן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלָם׃ הֲבֵל הֲבָלִים אָמַר קֹהֶלֶת הֲבֵל הֲבָלִים הַכֹּל הָבֶל׃ מַה־יִּתְרוֹן לָאָדָם בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ שֶׁיַּעֲמֹל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃ דּוֹר הֹלֵךְ וְדוֹר בָּא וְהָאָרֶץ לְעוֹלָם עֹמָדֶת׃	The words of Qohelet, son of David, king in Jerusalem. Breath of breaths, says Qohelet, breath of breaths —everything is breath. What gain does a human have from all his toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth stands forever.[1]
Eccl 1:5	וְזָרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּבָא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְאֶל־מְקוֹמוֹ שׁוֹאֵף זוֹרֵחַ הוּא שָׁם׃ הוֹלֵךְ אֶל־דָּרוֹם וְסוֹבֵב אֶל־צָפוֹן סוֹבֵב סֹבֵב הוֹלֵךְ הָרוּחַ וְעַל־סְבִיבֹתָיו שָׁב הָרוּחַ׃ כָּל־הַנְּחָלִים הֹלְכִים אֶל־הַיָּם וְהַיָּם אֵינֶנּוּ מָלֵא אֶל־מְקוֹם שֶׁהַנְּחָלִים הֹלְכִים שָׁם הֵם שָׁבִים לָלֶכֶת׃	The sun rises and the sun goes down, and it pants back to its place, where it rises again. Going to the south and circling to the north, round and round goes the wind, and on its rounds the wind returns. All the streams go to the sea, and the sea is not full; to the place where the streams go, there they go again.
Eccl 1:8	כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים יְגֵעִים לֹא־יוּכַל אִישׁ לְדַבֵּר לֹא־תִשְׂבַּע עַיִן לִרְאוֹת וְלֹא־תִמָּלֵא אֹזֶן מִשְּׁמֹעַ׃ מַה־שֶּׁהָיָה הוּא שֶׁיִּהְיֶה וּמַה־שֶּׁנַּעֲשָׂה הוּא שֶׁיֵּעָשֶׂה וְאֵין כָּל־חָדָשׁ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃	All things are wearisome, more than anyone can say. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun.
Eccl 1:10	יֵשׁ דָּבָר שֶׁיֹּאמַר רְאֵה־זֶה חָדָשׁ הוּא כְּבָר הָיָה לְעֹלָמִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה מִלְּפָנֵנוּ׃ אֵין זִכְרוֹן לָרִאשֹׁנִים וְגַם לָאַחֲרֹנִים שֶׁיִּהְיוּ לֹא־יִהְיֶה לָהֶם זִכָּרוֹן עִם שֶׁיִּהְיוּ לָאַחֲרֹנָה׃	Is there a thing of which someone says, "Look, this is new"? It has already been, in the ages that were before us. There is no remembrance of those who came first, and of those yet to come there will be no remembrance either, among those who come after them.

1 *Qohelet* is a title, perhaps "one who assembles," traditionally "the Teacher" or "the Preacher" (Greek *Ecclesiastes*). "Breath" (*hevel*) means vapor, something fleeting and insubstantial; it is traditionally rendered "vanity."

QOHELET'S SEARCH FOR WISDOM

As king in Jerusalem, Qohelet explores everything by wisdom and finds only vexation.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 1:12	אֲנִי קֹהֶלֶת הָיִיתִי מֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּירוּשָׁלִָם: וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־לִבִּי לִדְרוֹשׁ וְלָתוּר בַּחָכְמָה עַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמָיִם הוּא עִנְיַן רָע נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לִבְנֵי הָאָדָם לַעֲנוֹת בּוֹ:	I, Qohelet, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. I set my heart to seek and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given human beings to be busy with.
Eccl 1:14	רָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְהִנֵּה הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ: מְעֻוָּת לֹא־יוּכַל לִתְקֹן וְחֶסְרוֹן לֹא־יוּכַל לְהִמָּנוֹת:	I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun, and look, everything is breath and chasing the wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is missing cannot be counted.
Eccl 1:16	דִּבַּרְתִּי אֲנִי עִם־לִבִּי לֵאמֹר אֲנִי הִנֵּה הִגְדַּלְתִּי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי חָכְמָה עַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה לְפָנַי עַל־יְרוּשָׁלִָם וְלִבִּי רָאָה הַרְבֵּה חָכְמָה וָדָעַת:	I spoke with my own heart and said, "Look, I have grown great and gained more wisdom than all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge."
Eccl 1:17	וָאֶתְּנָה לִבִּי לָדַעַת חָכְמָה וְדַעַת הוֹלֵלוֹת וְשִׂכְלוּת יָדַעְתִּי שֶׁגַּם־זֶה הוּא רַעְיוֹן רוּחַ: כִּי בְּרֹב חָכְמָה רַב־כָּעַס וְיוֹסִיף דַּעַת יוֹסִיף מַכְאוֹב:	So I set my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly; I came to know that this too is chasing the wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and whoever adds knowledge adds pain.

THE TEST OF PLEASURE AND GREAT WORKS

Qohelet tries wine, building, wealth and pleasure, and finds no gain under the sun.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 2:1	אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי לְכָה־נָּא אֲנַסְּכָה בְשִׂמְחָה וּרְאֵה בְטוֹב וְהִנֵּה גַם־הוּא הָבֶל: לִשְׂחוֹק אָמַרְתִּי מְהוֹלָל וּלְשִׂמְחָה מַה־זּוֹה עֹשָׂה:	I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with joy; see what is good." But look, this too is breath. Of laughter I said, "It is mad," and of joy, "What does it accomplish?"
Eccl 2:3	תַּרְתִּי בִלִבִּי לִמְשׁוֹךְ בַּיַּיִן אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי וְלִבִּי נֹהֵג בַּחָכְמָה וְלֶאֱחֹז בְּסִכְלוּת עַד אֲשֶׁר־אֶרְאֶה אֵי־זֶה טוֹב לִבְנֵי הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשׂוּ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם מִסְפַּר יְמֵי חַיֵּיהֶם:	I explored in my heart how to cheer my body with wine— my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold of folly, until I might see what is good for human beings to do under heaven during the numbered days of their life.
Eccl 2:4	הִגְדַּלְתִּי מַעֲשָׂי בָּנִיתִי לִי בָּתִּים נָטַעְתִּי לִי כְּרָמִים: עָשִׂיתִי לִי גַּנּוֹת וּפַרְדֵּסִים וְנָטַעְתִּי בָהֶם עֵץ כָּל־פֶּרִי: עָשִׂיתִי לִי בְּרֵכוֹת מָיִם לְהַשְׁקוֹת מֵהֶם יַעַר צוֹמֵחַ עֵצִים:	I did great works: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them every kind of fruit tree. I made myself pools of water to water from them a forest sprouting with trees.
Eccl 2:7		

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
	קָנִיתִי עֲבָדִים וּשְׁפָחוֹת וּבְנֵי־בַיִת הָיָה לִי גַּם מִקְנֶה בָקָר וָצֹאן הַרְבֵּה הָיָה לִי מִכֹּל שֶׁהָיוּ לְפָנַי בִּירוּשָׁלָם: כָּנַסְתִּי לִי גַּם־כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וּסְגֻלַּת מְלָכִים וְהַמְּדִינוֹת עָשִׂיתִי לִי שָׁרִים וְשָׁרוֹת וְתַעֲנוּגֹת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם שִׁדָּה וְשִׁדּוֹת:	I acquired male and female slaves, and I had slaves born in my house; I also had herds of cattle and flocks, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces; I got myself men who sang and women who sang, and the delights of human beings—concubines, many of them.[2]
Eccl 2:9	וְגָדַלְתִּי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי מִכֹּל שֶׁהָיָה לְפָנַי בִּירוּשָׁלִָם אַף חָכְמָתִי עָמְדָה לִי׃ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁאֲלוּ עֵינַי לֹא אָצַלְתִּי מֵהֶם לֹא־מָנַעְתִּי אֶת־לִבִּי מִכָּל־שִׂמְחָה כִּי־לִבִּי שָׂמֵחַ מִכָּל־עֲמָלִי וְזֶה־ הָיָה חֶלְקִי מִכָּל־עֲמָלִי׃	So I grew great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too, stayed with me. Whatever my eyes asked for, I did not keep from them; I did not withhold any joy from my heart, for my heart rejoiced in all my toil, and this was my portion from all my toil.
Eccl 2:11	וּפָנִיתִי אֲנִי בְּכָל־מַעֲשַׂי שֶׁעָשׂוּ יָדַי וּבֶעָמָל שֶׁעָמַלְתִּי לַעֲשׂוֹת וְהִנֵּה הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ וְאֵין יִתְרוֹן תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃	Then I turned to all the works my hands had done and to the toil I had toiled to do them, and look, everything is breath and chasing the wind, and there is no gain under the sun.

THE WISE AND THE FOOL DIE ALIKE

One fate befalls wise and fool, so Qohelet hates his toil; best to eat, drink and see good.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 2:12	וּפָנִיתִי אֲנִי לִרְאוֹת חָכְמָה וְהוֹלֵלוֹת וְסִכְלוּת כִּי מָה הָאָדָם שֶׁיָּבוֹא אַחֲרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־כְּבָר עֲשׂוּהוּ׃ וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי שֶׁיֵּשׁ יִתְרוֹן לַחָכְמָה מִן־הַסִּכְלוּת כִּיתְרוֹן הָאוֹר מִן־הַחֹשֶׁךְ׃	Then I turned to consider wisdom, and madness and folly; for what can the one do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. And I saw that wisdom has gain over folly, as light has gain over darkness.
Eccl 2:14	הֶחָכָם עֵינָיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וְהַכְּסִיל בַּחֹשֶׁךְ הוֹלֵךְ וְיָדַעְתִּי גַּם־אֲנִי שֶׁמִּקְרֶה אֶחָד יִקְרֶה אֶת־כֻּלָּם׃ וְאָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי כְּמִקְרֵה הַכְּסִיל גַּם־אֲנִי יִקְרֵנִי וְלָמָּה חָכַמְתִּי אֲנִי אָז יוֹתֵר וְדִבַּרְתִּי בְלִבִּי שֶׁגַּם־זֶה הָבֶל׃	The wise one has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness; yet I also came to know that one fate befalls them all. So I said in my heart, “The fate of the fool will befall me too; why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this too is breath.
Eccl 2:16	כִּי אֵין זִכְרוֹן לֶחָכָם עִם־הַכְּסִיל לְעוֹלָם בְּשֶׁכְּבָר הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים הַכֹּל נִשְׁכָּח וְאֵיךְ יָמוּת הֶחָכָם עִם־הַכְּסִיל׃ וְשָׂנֵאתִי אֶת־הַחַיִּים כִּי רַע עָלַי הַמַּעֲשֶׂה שֶׁנַּעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ כִּי־הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ׃	For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, any more than of the fool, since in the days to come everything will long be forgotten. How the wise one dies just like the fool! So I hated life, for the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me; for everything is breath and chasing the wind.

2 The Hebrew phrase (*shiddah weshiddot*) is uncertain; “concubines” is a common guess.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 2:18	וְשָׂנֵאתִי אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי שֶׁאֲנִי עָמֵל תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ שֶׁאַנִּיחֶנּוּ לָאָדָם שֶׁיִּהְיֶה אַחֲרָי׃ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ הֶחָכָם יִהְיֶה אוֹ סָכָל וְיִשְׁלַט בְּכָל־עֲמָלִי שֶׁעָמַלְתִּי וְשֶׁחָכַמְתִּי תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ גַּם־זֶה הָבֶל׃	I hated all my toil at which I toil under the sun, since I must leave it to the one who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? Yet he will be master of all my toil at which I toiled and showed myself wise under the sun. This too is breath.
Eccl 2:20	וְסַבּוֹתִי אֲנִי לְיַאֵשׁ אֶת־לִבִּי עַל כָּל־הֶעָמָל שֶׁעָמַלְתִּי תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃ כִּי־יֵשׁ אָדָם שֶׁעֲמָלוֹ בְּחָכְמָה וּבְדַעַת וּבְכִשָּׁרוֹן וּלְאָדָם שֶׁלֹּא עָמַל־בּוֹ יִתְּנֶנּוּ חֶלְקוֹ גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וְרָעָה רַבָּה׃	So I turned and let my heart despair over all the toil at which I had toiled under the sun. For there is someone whose toil is done with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to someone who has not toiled for it he must give it as his portion. This too is breath and a great evil.
Eccl 2:22	כִּי מֶה־הָוָה לָאָדָם בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ וּבְרַעְיוֹן לִבּוֹ שֶׁהוּא עָמֵל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃ כִּי כָל־יָמָיו מַכְאֹבִים וְכַעַס עִנְיָנוֹ גַּם־בַּלַּיְלָה לֹא־שָׁכַב לִבּוֹ גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל הוּא׃	For what does a human get from all his toil and the striving of his heart at which he toils under the sun? For all his days are pains, and his business is vexation; even at night his heart does not rest. This too is breath.
Eccl 2:24	אֵין־טוֹב בָּאָדָם שֶׁיֹּאכַל וְשָׁתָה וְהֶרְאָה אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ טוֹב בַּעֲמָלוֹ גַּם־זֹה רָאִיתִי אָנִי כִּי מִיַּד הָאֱלֹהִים הִיא׃ כִּי מִי יֹאכַל וּמִי יָחוּשׁ חוּץ מִמֶּנִּי׃	There is nothing better for a human than to eat and drink and see good in his toil. This too, I saw, is from the hand of God; for who can eat, and who can have enjoyment, apart from me?
Eccl 2:26	כִּי לְאָדָם שֶׁטּוֹב לְפָנָיו נָתַן חָכְמָה וְדַעַת וְשִׂמְחָה וְלַחוֹטֶא נָתַן עִנְיַן לֶאֱסוֹף וְלִכְנוֹס לְתֵת לְטוֹב לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ׃	For to the person who pleases him he gives wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he gives the business of gathering and amassing, only to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is breath and chasing the wind.

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

There is a season for every matter; God has made everything beautiful in its time.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 3:1	לַכֹּל זְמָן וְעֵת לְכָל־חֵפֶץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמָיִם׃	For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
Eccl 3:2	עֵת לָלֶדֶת וְעֵת לָמוּת עֵת לָטַעַת וְעֵת לַעֲקוֹר נָטוּעַ׃ עֵת לַהֲרוֹג וְעֵת לִרְפּוֹא עֵת לִפְרוֹץ וְעֵת לִבְנוֹת׃	A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build;
Eccl 3:4	עֵת לִבְכּוֹת וְעֵת לִשְׂחוֹק עֵת סְפוֹד וְעֵת רְקוֹד׃ עֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים וְעֵת כְּנוֹס אֲבָנִים עֵת לַחֲבוֹק וְעֵת לִרְחֹק מֵחַבֵּק׃	a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to throw stones and a time to gather stones,

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
		a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
Eccl 3:6	עֵת לְבַקֵּשׁ וְעֵת לְאַבֵּד עֵת לִשְׁמוֹר וְעֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ׃ עֵת לִקְרוֹעַ וְעֵת לִתְפּוֹר עֵת לַחֲשׁוֹת וְעֵת לְדַבֵּר׃ עֵת לֶאֱהֹב וְעֵת לִשְׂנֹא עֵת מִלְחָמָה וְעֵת שָׁלוֹם׃	a time to seek and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to sew, a time to keep silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.
Eccl 3:9	מַה־יִּתְרוֹן הָעוֹשֶׂה בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא עָמֵל׃ רָאִיתִי אֶת־הָעִנְיָן אֲשֶׁר נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לִבְנֵי הָאָדָם לַעֲנוֹת בּוֹ׃ אֶת־הַכֹּל עָשָׂה יָפֶה בְּעִתּוֹ גַּם אֶת־הָעֹלָם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְצָא הָאָדָם אֶת־ הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מֵרֹאשׁ וְעַד־סוֹף׃	What gain has the worker from that at which he toils? I have seen the business that God has given human beings to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time; he has also put a sense of eternity in their hearts, yet in such a way that a human cannot find out the work that God has done from beginning to end.[3]
Eccl 3:12	יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אֵין טוֹב בָּם כִּי אִם־לִשְׂמוֹחַ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב בְּחַיָּיו׃ וְגַם כָּל־הָאָדָם שֶׁיֹּאכַל וְשָׁתָה וְרָאָה טוֹב בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ מַתַּת אֱלֹהִים הִיא׃	I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good while they live; and also that every human who eats and drinks and sees good in all his toil— that is a gift of God.
Eccl 3:14	יָדַעְתִּי כִּי כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים הוּא יִהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם עָלָיו אֵין לְהוֹסִיף וּמִמֶּנּוּ אֵין לִגְרֹעַ וְהָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה שֶׁיִּרְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו׃	I know that whatever God does will last forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God has done this so that people will fear before him.

HUMANS AND ANIMALS SHARE ONE FATE

Wickedness sits in the place of justice, and humans and animals alike return to dust.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 3:15	מַה־שֶּׁהָיָה כְּבָר הוּא וַאֲשֶׁר לִהְיוֹת כְּבָר הָיָה וְהָאֱלֹהִים יְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־נִרְדָּף׃ וְעוֹד רָאִיתִי תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ מְקוֹם הַמִּשְׁפָּט שָׁמָּה הָרֶשַׁע וּמְקוֹם הַצֶּדֶק שָׁמָּה הָרֶשַׁע׃	What has been already is, and what is to be already has been; and God seeks out what is pursued. Moreover, I saw under the sun: in the place of justice there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness there was wickedness.
Eccl 3:17	אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי אֶת־הַצַּדִּיק וְאֶת־הָרָשָׁע יִשְׁפֹּט הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי־עֵת לְכָל־חֵפֶץ וְעַל כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה שָׁם׃ אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְּלִבִּי עַל־דִּבְרַת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם לְבָרָם הָאֱלֹהִים וְלִרְאוֹת שְׁהֵם־בְּהֵמָה הֵמָּה לָהֶם׃	I said in my heart, “God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter, and for every deed, there.” I said in my heart concerning human beings, “God is sifting them so they may see that they themselves are but animals.”

3 The Hebrew is uncertain: *ha‘olam* usually means “eternity” or “long duration,” but some read “the world” or “ignorance.”

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 3:19	כִּי מִקְרֶה בְנֵי־הָאָדָם וּמִקְרֶה הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִקְרֶה אֶחָד לָהֶם כְּמוֹת זֶה כֵּן מוֹת זֶה וְרוּחַ אֶחָד לַכֹּל וּמוֹתַר הָאָדָם מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה אָיִן כִּי הַכֹּל הָבֶל:	For the fate of human beings and the fate of animals is one and the same fate: as one dies, so dies the other, and all have the same spirit; the human has no advantage over the animal, for everything is breath.
Eccl 3:20	הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד הַכֹּל הָיָה מִן־הֶעָפָר וְהַכֹּל שָׁב אֶל־הֶעָפָר: מִי יוֹדֵעַ רוּחַ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם הָעֹלָה הִיא לְמָעְלָה וְרוּחַ הַבְּהֵמָה הַיֹּרֶדֶת הִיא לְמַטָּה לָאָרֶץ:	All go to one place; all came from the dust, and all return to the dust. Who knows whether the spirit of human beings goes upward and the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?
Eccl 3:22	וְרָאִיתִי כִּי אֵין טוֹב מֵאֲשֶׁר יִשְׂמַח הָאָדָם בְּמַעֲשָׂיו כִּי־הוּא חֶלְקוֹ כִּי מִי יְבִיאֶנּוּ לִרְאוֹת בְּמֶה שֶׁיִּהְיֶה אַחֲרָיו:	So I saw that there is nothing better than for a human to rejoice in his works, for that is his portion; for who will bring him to see what will be after him?

OPPRESSION, ENVY AND COMPANIONSHIP

Qohelet sees the tears of the oppressed and the envy behind toil; two are better than one.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 4:1	וְשַׁבְתִּי אֲנִי וָאֵרְאֶה אֶת־כָּל־הָעֲשֻׁקִים אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשִׂים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְהִנֵּה דִמְעַת הָעֲשֻׁקִים וְאֵין לָהֶם מְנַחֵם וּמִיַּד עֹשְׁקֵיהֶם כֹּחַ וְאֵין לָהֶם מְנַחֵם: וְשַׁבֵּחַ אֲנִי אֶת־הַמֵּתִים שֶׁכְּבָר מֵתוּ מִן־הַחַיִּים אֲשֶׁר הֵמָּה חַיִּים עֲדֶנָה:	Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: look, the tears of the oppressed, and they have no one to comfort them; power is on the side of their oppressors, and they have no one to comfort them. So I praised the dead, who have already died, more than the living, who are still alive.
Eccl 4:3	וְטוֹב מִשְּׁנֵיהֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עֲדֶן לֹא הָיָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־רָאָה אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הָרָע אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ: וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי אֶת־כָּל־עָמָל וְאֵת כָּל־כִּשְׁרוֹן הַמַּעֲשֶׂה כִּי הִיא קִנְאַת־ אִישׁ מֵרֵעֵהוּ גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ:	But better than both is the one who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. And I saw that all toil and all skill in work comes from one person's envy of another; this too is breath and chasing the wind.
Eccl 4:5	הַכְּסִיל חֹבֵק אֶת־יָדָיו וְאֹכֵל אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ: טוֹב מְלֹא כַף נָחַת מִמְּלֹא חָפְנַיִם עָמָל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ: וְשַׁבְתִּי אֲנִי וָאֵרְאֶה הֶבֶל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:	The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh. Better is one handful with quiet than two fistfuls with toil and chasing the wind. Again I saw breath under the sun:
Eccl 4:8	יֵשׁ אֶחָד וְאֵין שֵׁנִי גַּם בֵּן וְאָח אֵין־לוֹ וְאֵין קֵץ לְכָל־עֲמָלוֹ גַּם־עֵינוֹ לֹא־תִשְׂבַּע עֹשֶׁר וּלְמִי אֲנִי עָמֵל וּמְחַסֵּר אֶת־נַפְשִׁי מִטּוֹבָה גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וְעִנְיַן רָע הוּא:	There is someone alone, with no second—he has neither son nor brother—yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eye is never satisfied with riches. "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of good?" This too is breath, and it is an unhappy business.
Eccl 4:9	טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנַיִם מִן־הָאֶחָד אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ־לָהֶם שָׂכָר טוֹב בַּעֲמָלָם: כִּי אִם־יִפֹּלוּ הָאֶחָד יָקִים אֶת־חֲבֵרוֹ	Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other;

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
	וְאִילוֹ הָאֶחָד שֶׁיִּפּוֹל וְאֵין שֵׁנִי לַהֲקִימוֹ׃ גַּם אִם־יִשְׁכְּבוּ שְׁנַיִם וְחַם לָהֶם וּלְאֶחָד אֵיךְ יֵחָם׃	but woe to the one who falls with no second to lift him up! Again, if two lie down together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone?
Eccl 4:12	וְאִם־יִתְקְפוֹ הָאֶחָד הַשְּׁנַיִם יַעַמְדוּ נֶגְדּוֹ וְהַחוּט הַמְשֻׁלָּשׁ לֹא בִמְהֵרָה יִנָּתֵק׃ טוֹב יֶלֶד מִסְכֵּן וְחָכָם מִמֶּלֶךְ זָקֵן וּכְסִיל אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע לְהִזָּהֵר עוֹד׃	And if someone overpowers one, two can stand against him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to take advice.
Eccl 4:14	כִּי־מִבֵּית הָסוּרִים יָצָא לְמָלְךָ כִּי גַּם בְּמַלְכוּתוֹ נוֹלַד רָשׁ׃ רָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַחַיִּים הַמְהַלְכִים תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ עִם הַיֶּלֶד הַשֵּׁנִי אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֹד תַּחְתָּיו׃	For he came out of prison to reign, even though he was born poor in his kingdom. I saw all the living who walk under the sun side with the youth, the second one, who would stand in his place.
Eccl 4:16	אֵין־קֵץ לְכָל־הָעָם לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה לִפְנֵיהֶם גַּם הָאַחֲרוֹנִים לֹא יִשְׂמְחוּ־בוֹ כִּי־גַם־זֶה הֶבֶל וְרַעְיוֹן רוּחַ׃	There was no end to all the people, to all at whose head he stood; yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this too is breath and chasing the wind.
	שְׁמֹר רַגְלְךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ אֶל־בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים וְקָרוֹב לִשְׁמֹעַ מִתֵּת הַכְּסִילִים זָבַח כִּי־אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע׃	Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than for fools to offer a sacrifice, for they do not know that they are doing evil.

WORDS BEFORE GOD

Let your words before God be few, and fulfill what you vow.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 5:1	אַל־תְּבַהֵל עַל־פִּיךָ וְלִבְּךָ אַל־יְמַהֵר לְהוֹצִיא דָבָר לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם וְאַתָּה עַל־הָאָרֶץ עַל־כֵּן יִהְיוּ דְבָרֶיךָ מְעַטִּים׃ כִּי בָּא הַחֲלוֹם בְּרֹב עִנְיָן וְקוֹל כְּסִיל בְּרֹב דְּבָרִים׃	Do not be rash with your mouth, and do not let your heart hurry to utter a word before God; for God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.
Eccl 5:3	כַּאֲשֶׁר תִּדֹּר נֶדֶר לֵאלֹהִים אַל־תְּאַחֵר לְשַׁלְּמוֹ כִּי אֵין חֵפֶץ בַּכְּסִילִים אֵת אֲשֶׁר־תִּדֹּר שַׁלֵּם׃ טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִדֹּר מִשֶּׁתִּדּוֹר וְלֹא תְשַׁלֵּם׃	When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it, for he has no pleasure in fools; fulfill what you vow. It is better that you not vow than that you vow and not fulfill it.
Eccl 5:5	אַל־תִּתֵּן אֶת־פִּיךָ לַחֲטִיא אֶת־בְּשָׂרֶךָ וְאַל־תֹּאמַר לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ כִּי שְׁגָגָה הִיא לָמָּה יִקְצֹף הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־קוֹלֶךָ וְחִבֵּל אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ׃ כִּי בְרֹב חֲלֹמוֹת וַהֲבָלִים וּדְבָרִים הַרְבֵּה כִּי אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יְרָא׃	Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For with many dreams come breaths and words in plenty; so fear God.[4]

THE LOVE OF MONEY

Whoever loves silver is never satisfied; riches are lost, and everyone leaves naked as he came.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 5:7	אִם־עֹשֶׁק רָשׁ וְגֵזֶל מִשְׁפָּט וָצֶדֶק תִּרְאֶה בַמְּדִינָה אַל־תִּתְמַהּ עַל־ הַחֵפֶץ כִּי גָבֹהַּ מֵעַל גָּבֹהַּ שֹׁמֵר וּגְבֹהִים עֲלֵיהֶם: וְיִתְרוֹן אֶרֶץ בַּכֹּל הוּא מֶלֶךְ לְשָׂדֶה נֶעֱבָד:	If you see the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be astonished at the matter; for one high official watches over another, and there are higher ones over them. But the gain of a land in all this is a king for a cultivated field.[5]
Eccl 5:9	אֹהֵב כֶּסֶף לֹא־יִשְׂבַּע כֶּסֶף וּמִי־אֹהֵב בָּהָמוֹן לֹא תְבוּאָה גַּם־זֶה הָבֶל: בִּרְבוֹת הַטּוֹבָה רַבּוּ אוֹכְלֶיהָ וּמַה־כִּשְׁרוֹן לִבְעָלֶיהָ כִּי אִם־רְאוּת עֵינָיו: מְתוּקָה שְׁנַת הָעֹבֵד אִם־מְעַט וְאִם־הַרְבֵּה יֹאכֵל וְהַשֹּׂבַע לָעָשִׁיר אֵינֶנּוּ מַנִּיחַ לוֹ לִישׁוֹן:	Whoever loves silver will not be satisfied with silver, nor whoever loves wealth with income; this too is breath. When goods increase, those who eat them increase; and what benefit has their owner, except to look at them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eats little or much; but the surfeit of the rich man will not let him sleep.
Eccl 5:12	יֵשׁ רָעָה חוֹלָה רָאִיתִי תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ עֹשֶׁר שָׁמוּר לִבְעָלָיו לְרָעָתוֹ: וְאָבַד הָעֹשֶׁר הַהוּא בְּעִנְיַן רָע וְהוֹלִיד בֵּן וְאֵין בְּיָדוֹ מְאוּמָה:	There is a sickening evil I have seen under the sun: riches kept by their owner to his own harm. Those riches are lost in an unhappy business, and he has fathered a son, and there is nothing in his hand.
Eccl 5:14	כַּאֲשֶׁר יָצָא מִבֶּטֶן אִמּוֹ עָרוֹם יָשׁוּב לָלֶכֶת כְּשֶׁבָּא וּמְאוּמָה לֹא־יִשָּׂא בַעֲמָלוֹ שֶׁיּוֹלֵךְ בְּיָדוֹ: וְגַם־זֹה רָעָה חוֹלָה כָּל־עֲמַת שֶׁבָּא כֵּן יֵלֵךְ וּמַה־יִּתְרוֹן לוֹ שֶׁיַּעֲמֹל לָרוּחַ:	As he came out of his mother's womb, naked he will return, going as he came; and he will carry away nothing for his toil that he can take in his hand. This too is a sickening evil: exactly as he came, so he will go; and what gain does he have, that he toils for the wind?
Eccl 5:16	גַּם כָּל־יָמָיו בַּחֹשֶׁךְ יֹאכֵל וְכַעַס הַרְבֵּה וְחָלְיוֹ וָקָצֶף: הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר־רָאִיתִי אֲנִי טוֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֶה לֶאֱכוֹל־וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִרְאוֹת טוֹבָה בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ שֶׁיַּעֲמֹל תַּחַת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ מִסְפַּר יְמֵי־חַיָּיו אֲשֶׁר־ נָתַן־לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי־הוּא חֶלְקוֹ:	Besides, all his days he eats in darkness, with much vexation, and sickness, and anger. Look, this is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting for one to eat and drink and see good in all his toil at which he toils under the sun, through the numbered days of his life that God has given him, for that is his portion.
Eccl 5:18	גַּם כָּל־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים עֹשֶׁר וּנְכָסִים וְהִשְׁלִיטוֹ לֶאֱכֹל מִמֶּנּוּ וְלָשֵׂאת אֶת־חֶלְקוֹ וְלִשְׂמֹחַ בַּעֲמָלוֹ	Also, every human to whom God has given riches and possessions, and the power to eat from them,

4 "The messenger" is perhaps a temple official or priest; the ancient Greek translation reads "God."
5 The Hebrew of the last two lines is uncertain.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
	זֹה מַתַּת אֱלֹהִים הִיא׃ כִּי לֹא הַרְבֵּה יִזְכֹּר אֶת־יְמֵי חַיָּיו כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים מַעֲנֶה בְּשִׂמְחַת לִבּוֹ׃	to take up his portion and to rejoice in his toil— this is a gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.
Eccl 6:1	יֵשׁ רָעָה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְרַבָּה הִיא עַל־הָאָדָם׃ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִתֶּן־לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים עֹשֶׁר וּנְכָסִים וְכָבוֹד וְאֵינֶנּוּ חָסֵר לְנַפְשׁוֹ מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יִתְאַוֶּה וְלֹא־יַשְׁלִיטֶנּוּ הָאֱלֹהִים לֶאֱכֹל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי אִישׁ נָכְרִי יֹאכְלֶנּוּ זֶה הֶבֶל וְחֳלִי רָע הוּא׃	There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on humankind: a man to whom God gives riches, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him the power to eat from it, but a stranger eats it; this is breath and an evil sickness.
Eccl 6:3	אִם־יוֹלִיד אִישׁ מֵאָה וְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת יִחְיֶה וְרַב שְׁנֵי־חַיָּיו וְיָמִי־שָׁנָיו וְנַפְשׁוֹ לֹא־תִשְׂבַּע מִן־הַטּוֹבָה וְגַם־קְבוּרָה לֹא־הָיְתָה לוֹ אָמַרְתִּי טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ הַנָּפֶל׃ כִּי־בַהֶבֶל בָּא וּבַחֹשֶׁךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבַחֹשֶׁךְ שְׁמוֹ יְכֻסֶּה׃	If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however many the days of his years may be, but he does not get his fill of good things, and has no burial either— I say the stillborn child is better off than he. For it comes in breath and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered.
Eccl 6:5	גַּם־שֶׁמֶשׁ לֹא־רָאָה וְלֹא יָדָע נַחַת לָזֶה מִזֶּה׃ וְאִלּוּ חָיָה אֶלֶף שָׁנִים פַּעֲמַיִם וְטוֹבָה לֹא רָאָה הֲלֹא אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד הַכֹּל הוֹלֵךְ׃ כָּל־עֲמַל הָאָדָם לְפִיהוּ וְגַם־הַנָּפֶשׁ לֹא תִמָּלֵא׃	It has not even seen the sun or known it, yet it has more rest than he. Even if he lived a thousand years twice over and saw no good— do not all go to one place? All the toil of a human is for his mouth, and still the appetite is not filled.
Eccl 6:8	כִּי מַה־יּוֹתֵר לֶחָכָם מִן־הַכְּסִיל מַה־לֶּעָנִי יוֹדֵעַ לַהֲלֹךְ נֶגֶד הַחַיִּים׃ טוֹב מַרְאֵה עֵינַיִם מֵהֲלַךְ־נָפֶשׁ גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ׃ מַה־שֶּׁיְּהִיָה כְּבָר נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ וְנוֹדָע אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אָדָם וְלֹא־יוּכַל לָדִין עִם שֶׁתַּקִּיף מִמֶּנּוּ׃	For what advantage has the wise over the fool? What has the poor man who knows how to conduct himself before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire; this too is breath and chasing the wind. Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what a human is; he cannot contend with one stronger than he.
Eccl 6:11	כִּי יֵשׁ־דְּבָרִים הַרְבֵּה מַרְבִּים הָבֶל מַה־יֹּתֵר לָאָדָם׃ כִּי מִי־יוֹדֵעַ מַה־טּוֹב לָאָדָם בַּחַיִּים מִסְפַּר יְמֵי־חַיֵּי הֶבְלוֹ וְיַעֲשֵׂם כַּצֵּל אֲשֶׁר מִי־יַגִּיד לָאָדָם מַה־יִּהְיֶה אַחֲרָיו תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃	For there are many words that increase breath; what advantage is that to a human? For who knows what is good for a human in life, through the numbered days of his life of breath, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell a human what will be after him under the sun?

BETTER THE DAY OF DEATH: PROVERBS

Sayings weigh mourning against feasting, rebuke against praise, and patience against pride.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 7:1	טוֹב שֵׁם מִשֶּׁמֶן טוֹב וְיוֹם הַמָּוֶת מִיּוֹם הִוָּלְדוֹ׃ טוֹב לָלֶכֶת אֶל־בֵּית־אֵבֶל מִלֶּכֶת אֶל־בֵּית מִשְׁתֶּה בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא סוֹף כָּל־הָאָדָם וְהַחַי יִתֵּן אֶל־לִבּוֹ׃	A good name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for that is the end of every human, and the living will take it to heart.[6]
Eccl 7:3	טוֹב כַּעַס מִשְּׂחָק כִּי־בְרֹעַ פָּנִים יִיטַב לֵב׃ לֵב חֲכָמִים בְּבֵית אֵבֶל וְלֵב כְּסִילִים בְּבֵית שִׂמְחָה׃ טוֹב לִשְׁמֹעַ גַּעֲרַת חָכָם מֵאִישׁ שֹׁמֵעַ שִׁיר כְּסִילִים׃	Vexation is better than laughter, for when the face is sad, the heart may grow bet- ter. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of joy. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for someone to hear the song of fools.
Eccl 7:6	כִּי כְקוֹל הַסִּירִים תַּחַת הַסִּיר כֵּן שְׂחֹק הַכְּסִיל וְגַם־זֶה הָבֶל׃ כִּי הָעֹשֶׁק יְהוֹלֵל חָכָם וְיאַבֵּד אֶת־לֵב מַתָּנָה׃ טוֹב אַחֲרִית דָּבָר מֵרֵאשִׁיתוֹ טוֹב אֶרֶךְ־רוּחַ מִגְּבַהּ־רוּחַ׃	For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool; this too is breath. For oppression drives the wise mad, and a bribe destroys the heart. Better is the end of a thing than its beginning; better is patience of spirit than pride of spirit.[7]
Eccl 7:9	אַל־תְּבַהֵל בְּרוּחֲךָ לִכְעוֹס כִּי כַעַס בְּחֵיק כְּסִילִים יָנוּחַ׃ אַל־תֹּאמַר מֶה הָיָה שֶׁהַיָּמִים הָרִאשֹׁנִים הָיוּ טוֹבִים מֵאֵלֶּה כִּי לֹא מֵחָכְמָה שָׁאַלְתָּ עַל־זֶה׃	Do not be quick in your spirit to be vexed, for vexation rests in the bosom of fools. Do not say, "How is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not out of wisdom that you ask this.
Eccl 7:11	טוֹבָה חָכְמָה עִם־נַחֲלָה וְיֹתֶר לְרֹאֵי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃ כִּי בְּצֵל הַחָכְמָה בְּצֵל הַכָּסֶף וְיִתְרוֹן דַּעַת הַחָכְמָה תְּחַיֶּה בְעָלֶיהָ׃ רְאֵה אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי מִי יוּכַל לְתַקֵּן אֵת אֲשֶׁר עִוְּתוֹ׃	Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and an advantage to those who see the sun. For to be in the shade of wisdom is to be in the shade of silver, and the gain of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. Consider the work of God: for who can make straight what he has made crooked?
Eccl 7:14	בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה הֱיֵה בְטוֹב וּבְיוֹם רָעָה רְאֵה גַּם אֶת־זֶה לְעֻמַּת־זֶה עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־דִּבְרַת שֶׁלֹּא יִמְצָא הָאָדָם אַחֲרָיו מְאוּמָה׃	On a good day, enjoy the good, and on a bad day, consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that a human may not find out anything that will come after him.

6 The Hebrew plays on *shem* "name" and *shemen* "oil."
7 The Hebrew plays on *sirim* "thorns" and *sir* "pot."

DO NOT BE OVERLY RIGHTEOUS

The righteous perish and the wicked live long; Qohelet advises fearing God and avoiding extremes.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 7:15	אֶת־הַכֹּל רָאִיתִי בִּימֵי הַבְלִי יֵשׁ צַדִּיק אֹבֵד בְּצִדְקוֹ וְיֵשׁ רָשָׁע מַאֲרִיךְ בְּרָעָתוֹ׃ אַל־תְּהִי צַדִּיק הַרְבֵּה וְאַל־תִּתְחַכַּם יוֹתֵר לָמָּה תִּשּׁוֹמֵם׃ אַל־תַּרְשַׁע הַרְבֵּה וְאַל־תְּהִי סָכָל לָמָּה תָמוּת בְּלֹא עִתֶּךָ׃	I have seen everything in my days of breath: there is a righteous person who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked person who lives long in his evil. Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise; why should you ruin yourself? Do not be overly wicked, and do not be foolish; why should you die before your time?
Eccl 7:18	טוֹב אֲשֶׁר תֶּאֱחֹז בָּזֶה וְגַם־מִזֶּה אַל־תַּנַּח אֶת־יָדֶךָ כִּי־יָרֵא אֱלֹהִים יֵצֵא אֶת־כֻּלָּם׃ הַחָכְמָה תָּעֹז לֶחָכָם מֵעֲשָׂרָה שַׁלִּיטִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בָּעִיר׃ כִּי אָדָם אֵין צַדִּיק בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה־טּוֹב וְלֹא יֶחֱטָא׃	It is good that you hold on to this, and from that too do not let go your hand; for whoever fears God will come through them all. Wisdom makes the wise stronger than ten rulers who are in a city. For there is no human on earth so righteous that he does good and never sins.
Eccl 7:21	גַּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּרוּ אַל־תִּתֵּן לִבֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשְׁמַע אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ מְקַלְלֶךָ׃ כִּי גַּם־פְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת יָדַע לִבֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה קִלַּלְתָּ אֲחֵרִים׃ כָּל־זֹה נִסִּיתִי בַחָכְמָה אָמַרְתִּי אֶחְכָּמָה וְהִיא רְחוֹקָה מִמֶּנִּי׃	Also, do not give your heart to every word that people speak, lest you hear your servant cursing you; for your heart knows that many times you too have cursed others. All this I tested by wisdom; I said, “I will be wise,” but it was far from me.
Eccl 7:24	רָחוֹק מַה־שֶּׁהָיָה וְעָמֹק עָמֹק מִי יִמְצָאֶנּוּ׃ סַבּוֹתִי אֲנִי וְלִבִּי לָדַעַת וְלָתוּר וּבַקֵּשׁ חָכְמָה וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן וְלָדַעַת רֶשַׁע כֶּסֶל וְהַסְּכְלוּת הוֹלֵלוֹת׃	Far off is whatever has been, and deep, deep—who can find it out? I turned, I and my heart, to know and to explore and to seek wisdom and the sum of things, and to know that wickedness is folly, and foolishness is madness.
Eccl 7:26	וּמוֹצֵא אֲנִי מַר מִמָּוֶת אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־הִיא מְצוֹדִים וַחֲרָמִים לִבָּהּ אֲסוּרִים יָדֶיהָ טוֹב לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים יִמָּלֵט מִמֶּנָּה וְחוֹטֵא יִלָּכֶד בָּהּ׃ רְאֵה זֶה מָצָאתִי אָמְרָה קֹהֶלֶת אַחַת לְאַחַת לִמְצֹא חֶשְׁבּוֹן׃	And I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a net and whose hands are fetters; one who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is caught by her. “See, this is what I have found,” says Qohelet, “adding one to one to find the sum of things—[8]
Eccl 7:28	אֲשֶׁר עוֹד־בִּקְשָׁה נַפְשִׁי וְלֹא מָצָאתִי אָדָם אֶחָד מֵאֶלֶף מָצָאתִי וְאִשָּׁה בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה לֹא מָצָאתִי׃ לְבַד רְאֵה־זֶה מָצָאתִי אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם יָשָׁר וְהֵמָּה בִקְּשׁוּ חִשְׁבֹּנוֹת רַבִּים׃	which my soul still seeks, but I have not found: one man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found. Only see, this I have found: that God made human

8 Commentators differ on whether this refers to a particular type of woman, like the seductress of Proverbs 7, or to women in general.

HEBREW		ENGLISH
		beings upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”

THE KING’S COMMAND AND THE INJUSTICE OF THE WORLD

Obey the king, Qohelet advises, though he sees the wicked honored and the righteous treated as wicked.

HEBREW		ENGLISH
Eccl 8:1	מִי כְהֶחָכָם וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ פֵּשֶׁר דָּבָר חָכְמַת אָדָם תָּאִיר פָּנָיו וְעֹז פָּנָיו יְשֻׁנֶּא׃ אֲנִי פִּי־מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹר וְעַל דִּבְרַת שְׁבוּעַת אֱלֹהִים׃ אַל־תִּבָּהֵל מִפָּנָיו תֵּלֵךְ אַל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּדָבָר רָע כִּי כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַחְפֹּץ יַעֲשֶׂה׃	Who is like the wise, and who knows the interpretation of a thing? A person’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. I say: keep the king’s command, and that because of the oath to God. Do not hurry to leave his presence; do not persist in a bad cause, for he does whatever he pleases.
Eccl 8:4	בַּאֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־מֶלֶךְ שִׁלְטוֹן וּמִי יֹאמַר־לוֹ מַה־תַּעֲשֶׂה׃ שֹׁמֵר מִצְוָה לֹא יֵדַע דָּבָר רָע וְעֵת וּמִשְׁפָּט יֵדַע לֵב חָכָם׃ כִּי לְכָל־חֵפֶץ יֵשׁ עֵת וּמִשְׁפָּט כִּי־רָעַת הָאָדָם רַבָּה עָלָיו׃	Since the word of the king is power, who can say to him, “What are you doing?” Whoever keeps a command will know no harm, and the heart of the wise knows a time and a judgment. For every matter has a time and a judgment, for the evil of humankind lies heavy upon them.
Eccl 8:7	כִּי־אֵינֶנּוּ יֹדֵעַ מַה־שֶּׁיִּהְיֶה כִּי כַאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מִי יַגִּיד לוֹ׃ אֵין אָדָם שַׁלִּיט בָּרוּחַ לְכָלְוֹא אֶת־הָרוּחַ וְאֵין שִׁלְטוֹן בְּיוֹם הַמָּוֶת וְאֵין מִשְׁלַחַת בַּמִּלְחָמָה וְלֹא־יְמַלֵּט רֶשַׁע אֶת־בְּעָלָיו׃	For no one knows what will be; for who can tell him how it will be? No one has power over the spirit to hold back the spirit, and no one has power over the day of death; there is no discharge in war, and wickedness will not deliver those who practice it.
Eccl 8:9	אֶת־כָּל־זֶה רָאִיתִי וְנָתוֹן אֶת־לִבִּי לְכָל־מַעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ עֵת אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַט הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם לְרַע לוֹ׃	All this I saw as I gave my heart to every work that is done under the sun, a time when one human has power over another to his harm.
Eccl 8:10	וּבְכֵן רָאִיתִי רְשָׁעִים קְבֻרִים וָבָאוּ וּמִמְּקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ יְהַלֵּכוּ וְיִשְׁתַּכְּחוּ בָּעִיר אֲשֶׁר כֵּן־עָשׂוּ גַּם־זֶה הָבֶל׃ אֲשֶׁר אֵין־נַעֲשָׂה פִתְגָם מַעֲשֵׂה הָרָעָה מְהֵרָה עַל־כֵּן מָלֵא לֵב בְּנֵי־הָאָדָם בָּהֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע׃	And so I saw the wicked buried; they used to come and go from the holy place, and they were forgotten in the city where they had done such things. This too is breath. Because sentence against an evil deed is not carried out quickly, therefore the heart of human beings is fully set on doing evil.[9]
Eccl 8:12	אֲשֶׁר חֹטֶא עֹשֶׂה רָע מְאַת וּמַאֲרִיךְ לוֹ כִּי גַּם־יוֹדֵעַ אֲנִי אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה־טּוֹב לְיִרְאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִירְאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו׃	Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and lives long, yet I also know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before him;

9 The Hebrew of the first line is difficult; some manuscripts and ancient versions read “praised” for “forgotten.”

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
	וְטוֹב לֹא־יִהְיֶה לָרָשָׁע וְלֹא־יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים כַּצֵּל אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ יָרֵא מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים:	but it will not be well with the wicked, and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.
Eccl 8:14	יֶשׁ־הֶבֶל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ צַדִּיקִים אֲשֶׁר מַגִּיעַ אֲלֵהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָרְשָׁעִים וְיֵשׁ רְשָׁעִים שֶׁמַּגִּיעַ אֲלֵהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַצַּדִּיקִים אָמַרְתִּי שֶׁגַּם־זֶה הָבֶל:	There is a breath that is done on the earth: there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this too is breath.
Eccl 8:15	וְשִׁבַּחְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת־הַשִּׂמְחָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־טוֹב לָאָדָם תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי אִם־לֶאֱכוֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמוֹחַ וְהוּא יִלְוֶנּוּ בַעֲמָלוֹ יְמֵי חַיָּיו אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:	So I praised joy, for there is nothing better for a human under the sun than to eat and drink and rejoice; this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.
Eccl 8:16	כַּאֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי אֶת־לִבִּי לָדַעַת חָכְמָה וְלִרְאוֹת אֶת־הָעִנְיָן אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה עַל־הָאָרֶץ כִּי גַם בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה שֵׁנָה בְּעֵינָיו אֵינֶנּוּ רֹאֶה:	When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth— for neither by day nor by night do one's eyes see sleep—
Eccl 8:17	וְרָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי לֹא יוּכַל הָאָדָם לִמְצוֹא אֶת־ הַמַּעֲשֶׂה אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּשֶׁל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֹל הָאָדָם לְבַקֵּשׁ וְלֹא יִמְצָא וְגַם אִם־יֹאמַר הֶחָכָם לָדַעַת לֹא יוּכַל לִמְצֹא:	then I saw all the work of God: that a human cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; however much a human may toil in seeking, he will not find it. Even if the wise one claims to know, he cannot find it.

ONE FATE FOR ALL: ENJOY YOUR LIFE

The same fate comes to all, so eat your bread with joy and work with all your strength.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 9:1	כִּי אֶת־כָּל־זֶה נָתַתִּי אֶל־לִבִּי וְלָבוּר אֶת־כָּל־זֶה אֲשֶׁר הַצַּדִּיקִים וְהַחֲכָמִים וַעֲבָדֵיהֶם בְּיַד הָאֱלֹהִים גַּם־אַהֲבָה גַם־שִׂנְאָה אֵין יוֹדֵעַ הָאָדָם הַכֹּל לְפָנֵיהֶם:	For all this I laid to heart, examining all this: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God; whether it is love or hate, no human knows; everything lies before them.
Eccl 9:2	הַכֹּל כַּאֲשֶׁר לַכֹּל מִקְרֶה אֶחָד לַצַּדִּיק וְלָרָשָׁע לַטּוֹב וְלַטָּהוֹר וְלַטָּמֵא וְלַזֹּבֵחַ וְלָאֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ זֹבֵחַ כַּטּוֹב כַּחֹטֶא הַנִּשְׁבָּע כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁבוּעָה יָרֵא:	Everything is the same for everyone: one fate comes to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good, to the clean and to the unclean, to the one who sacrifices and to the one who does not sacrifice; as is the good, so is the sinner; the one who swears is like the one who fears an oath.
Eccl 9:3	זֶה רָע בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי־מִקְרֶה אֶחָד לַכֹּל וְגַם לֵב בְּנֵי־הָאָדָם מָלֵא־רָע וְהוֹלֵלוֹת בִּלְבָבָם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וְאַחֲרָיו אֶל־ הַמֵּתִים:	This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all; also, the heart of human beings is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that—to the dead.
Eccl 9:4	כִּי־מִי אֲשֶׁר יְחֻבַּר אֶל כָּל־הַחַיִּים יֵשׁ בִּטָּחוֹן כִּי־לְכֶלֶב חַי הוּא טוֹב מִן־הָאַרְיֵה הַמֵּת:	

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
	כִּי הַחַיִּים יוֹדְעִים שֶׁיָּמֻתוּ וְהַמֵּתִים אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים מְאוּמָה וְאֵין־עוֹד לָהֶם שָׂכָר כִּי נִשְׁכַּח זִכְרָם׃	For whoever is joined to all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing at all; they have no more reward, for their memory is forgotten.
Eccl 9:6	גַּם אַהֲבָתָם גַּם־שִׂנְאָתָם גַּם־קִנְאָתָם כְּבָר אָבָדָה וְחֵלֶק אֵין־לָהֶם עוֹד לְעוֹלָם בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃ לֵךְ אֱכֹל בְּשִׂמְחָה לַחְמֶךָ וּשְׁתֵה בְלֵב־טוֹב יֵינֶךָ כִּי כְבָר רָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת־מַעֲשֶׂיךָ׃	Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and they have no portion ever again in all that is done under the sun. Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a glad heart, for God has already approved your works.
Eccl 9:8	בְּכָל־עֵת יִהְיוּ בְגָדֶיךָ לְבָנִים וְשֶׁמֶן עַל־רֹאשְׁךָ אַל־יֶחְסָר׃ רְאֵה חַיִּים עִם־אִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־אָהַבְתָּ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֵּי הֶבְלֶךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ כָּל יְמֵי הֶבְלֶךָ כִּי הוּא חֶלְקְךָ בַּחַיִּים וּבַעֲמָלְךָ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה עָמֵל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ׃	At all times let your garments be white, and let oil not be lacking on your head. See life with the woman you love, all the days of your life of breath that he has given you under the sun, all your days of breath; for that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.
Eccl 9:10	כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא יָדְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּכֹחֲךָ עֲשֵׂה כִּי אֵין מַעֲשֶׂה וְחֶשְׁבּוֹן וְדַעַת וְחָכְמָה בִּשְׁאוֹל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה הֹלֵךְ שָׁמָּה׃	Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your strength; for there is no work, no sum of things, no knowledge, no wisdom in Sheol, where you are going.[10]

TIME AND CHANCE

The race is not to the swift; a poor wise man saves a city and is forgotten.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 9:11	שַׁבְתִּי וְרָאָה תַּחַת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי לֹא לַקַּלִּים הַמֵּרוֹץ וְלֹא לַגִּבּוֹרִים הַמִּלְחָמָה וְגַם לֹא לַחֲכָמִים לֶחֶם וְגַם לֹא לִנְבֹנִים עֹשֶׁר וְגַם לֹא לַיֹּדְעִים חֵן כִּי־עֵת וָפֶגַע יִקֶּרֶה אֶת־כֻּלָּם׃	Again I saw under the sun that the race does not go to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the discerning, nor favor to the knowledgeable; for time and chance overtake them all.
Eccl 9:12	כִּי גַּם לֹא־יֵדַע הָאָדָם אֶת־עִתּוֹ כַּדָּגִים שֶׁנֶּאֱחָזִים בִּמְצוֹדָה רָעָה וְכַצִּפֳּרִים הָאֲחֻזוֹת בַּפָּח כָּהֶם יוּקָשִׁים בְּנֵי הָאָדָם לְעֵת רָעָה כְּשֶׁתִּפּוֹל עֲלֵיהֶם פִּתְאֹם׃ גַּם־זֹה רָאִיתִי חָכְמָה תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּגְדוֹלָה הִיא אֵלָי׃	For a human does not even know his time: like fish caught in an evil net, and like birds caught in a snare, so human beings are trapped at an evil time, when it falls on them suddenly. This too I saw as wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me:
Eccl 9:14	עִיר קְטַנָּה וַאֲנָשִׁים בָּהּ מְעָט וּבָא־אֵלֶיהָ מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל וְסָבַב אֹתָהּ וּבָנָה עָלֶיהָ מְצוֹדִים גְּדֹלִים׃ וּמָצָא בָהּ אִישׁ מִסְכֵּן חָכָם וּמִלַּט־הוּא אֶת־הָעִיר בְּחָכְמָתוֹ וְאָדָם לֹא זָכַר אֶת־הָאִישׁ הַמִּסְכֵּן הַהוּא׃	There was a small city with few people in it, and a great king came against it, surrounded it, and built great siegeworks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he saved the city by his wisdom; yet no one remembered that poor man.

10 Sheol is the shadowy realm of the dead in the Hebrew Bible.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 9:16	וְאָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי טוֹבָה חָכְמָה מִגְּבוּרָה וְחָכְמַת הַמִּסְכֵּן בְּזוּיָה וּדְבָרָיו אֵינָם נִשְׁמָעִים׃ דִּבְרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנַחַת נִשְׁמָעִים מִזַּעֲקַת מוֹשֵׁל בַּכְּסִילִים׃ טוֹבָה חָכְמָה מִכְּלֵי קְרָב וְחוֹטֶא אֶחָד יְאַבֵּד טוֹבָה הַרְבֵּה׃	So I said, “Wisdom is better than might, but the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.” The words of the wise, heard in quiet, are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

WISDOM AND FOLLY

Proverbs on fools, rulers, accidents, idle talk, and careless kings.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 10:1	זְבוּבֵי מָוֶת יַבְאִישׁ יַבִּיעַ שֶׁמֶן רוֹקֵחַ יְקָר מֵחָכְמָה מִכָּבוֹד סִכְלוּת מְעָט׃ לֵב חָכָם לִימִינוֹ וְלֵב כְּסִיל לִשְׂמֹאלוֹ׃ וְגַם־בַּדֶּרֶךְ כְּשֶׁסָּכָל הַלֵּךְ לִבּוֹ חָסֵר וְאָמַר לַכֹּל סָכָל הוּא׃	Dead flies make the perfumer’s oil stink and ferment; a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. The heart of the wise inclines to his right, but the heart of a fool to his left. Even on the road, when the foolish one walks, he lacks sense, and he tells everyone that he is foolish.
Eccl 10:4	אִם־רוּחַ הַמּוֹשֵׁל תַּעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ מְקוֹמְךָ אַל־תַּנַּח כִּי מַרְפֵּא יַנִּיחַ חֲטָאִים גְּדוֹלִים׃ יֵשׁ רָעָה רָאִיתִי תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ כִּשְׁגָגָה שֶׁיֹּצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי הַשַּׁלִּיט׃ נִתַּן הַסָּכָל בַּמְּרוֹמִים רַבִּים וַעֲשִׁירִים בַּשֵּׁפֶל יֵשֵׁבוּ׃	If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness lays great offenses to rest. There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like an error that goes out from the one in power: folly is set in many high places, while the rich sit in low places.
Eccl 10:7	רָאִיתִי עֲבָדִים עַל־סוּסִים וְשָׂרִים הֹלְכִים כָּעֲבָדִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃ חֹפֵר גּוּמָּץ בּוֹ יִפּוֹל וּפֹרֵץ גָּדֵר יִשְּׁכֶנּוּ נָחָשׁ׃ מַסִּיעַ אֲבָנִים יֵעָצֵב בָּהֶם בּוֹקֵעַ עֵצִים יִסָּכֵן בָּם׃	I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves. Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall, a snake will bite him. Whoever quarries stones will be hurt by them; whoever splits logs will be endangered by them.
Eccl 10:10	אִם־קֵהָה הַבַּרְזֶל וְהוּא לֹא־פָנִים קִלְקַל וְחַיִל יְגַבֵּר וְיִתְרוֹן הַכְשֵׁר חָכְמָה׃ אִם־יִשֹּׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ בְּלוֹא־לָחַשׁ וְאֵין יִתְרוֹן לְבַעַל הַלָּשׁוֹן׃ דִּבְרֵי פִי־חָכָם חֵן וְשִׂפְתוֹת כְּסִיל תְּבַלְּעֶנּוּ׃	If the iron is blunt and one has not sharpened its edge, he must put forth more strength; but wisdom has the gain of success. If the snake bites before it is charmed, there is no gain for the charmer. The words of a wise man’s mouth win favor, but the lips of a fool swallow him up.
Eccl 10:13	תְּחִלַּת דִּבְרֵי־פִיהוּ סִכְלוּת וְאַחֲרִית פִּיהוּ הוֹלֵלוּת רָעָה׃ וְהַסָּכָל יַרְבֶּה דְבָרִים לֹא־יֵדַע הָאָדָם מַה־שֶּׁיִּהְיֶה וַאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מֵאַחֲרָיו מִי יַגִּיד לוֹ׃ עֲמַל הַכְּסִילִים תְּיַגְּעֶנּוּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע לָלֶכֶת אֶל־עִיר׃	The beginning of the words of his mouth is folly, and the end of his talk is evil madness. Yet the foolish one multiplies words— no human knows what will be, and what will be after him, who can tell him?

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
		The toil of fools wears them out, those who do not even know the way to town.
Eccl 10:16	אִי־לְךָ אֶרֶץ שֶׁמַּלְכֵּךְ נָעַר וְשָׂרַיִךְ בַּבֹּקֶר יֹאכֵלוּ׃ אַשְׁרַיִךְ אֶרֶץ שֶׁמַּלְכֵּךְ בֶּן־חוֹרִים וְשָׂרַיִךְ בָּעֵת יֹאכְלוּ בַּגְּבוּרָה וְלֹא בַשְׁתִּי׃ בַּעֲצַלְתַּיִם יִמַּךְ הַמְּקֶרֶה וּבְשִׁפְלוּת יָדַיִם יִדְלֹף הַבָּיִת׃	Woe to you, land, whose king is a boy and whose princes feast in the morning! Happy are you, land, whose king is a son of nobles and whose princes feast at the proper time, for strength and not for drunkenness! Through sloth the roof sinks, and through idle hands the house leaks.
Eccl 10:19	לִשְׂחוֹק עֹשִׂים לֶחֶם וְיַיִן יְשַׂמַּח חַיִּים וְהַכֶּסֶף יַעֲנֶה אֶת־הַכֹּל׃ גַּם בְּמַדְּעֲךָ מֶלֶךְ אַל־תְּקַלֵּל וּבְחַדְרֵי מִשְׁכָּבְךָ אַל־תְּקַלֵּל עָשִׁיר כִּי עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם יוֹלִיךְ אֶת־הַקּוֹל וּבַעַל כְּנָפַיִם יַגִּיד דָּבָר׃	For laughter they make bread, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything. Do not curse the king even in your thoughts, and do not curse the rich even in your bedroom, for a bird of the air will carry the voice, and some winged creature will tell the matter.

SEND YOUR BREAD ON THE WATERS

No one knows what will happen, so give generously and sow your seed morning and evening.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 11:1	שַׁלַּח לַחְמְךָ עַל־פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם כִּי־בְרֹב הַיָּמִים תִּמְצָאֶנּוּ׃ תֵּן־חֵלֶק לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לִשְׁמוֹנָה כִּי לֹא תֵדַע מַה־יִּהְיֶה רָעָה עַל־הָאָרֶץ׃ אִם־יִמָּלְאוּ הֶעָבִים גֶּשֶׁם עַל־הָאָרֶץ יָרִיקוּ וְאִם־יִפּוֹל עֵץ בַּדָּרוֹם וְאִם בַּצָּפוֹן מְקוֹם שֶׁיִּפּוֹל הָעֵץ שָׁם יִהְוֶא׃	Send your bread out on the face of the waters, for after many days you will find it. Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what evil may come on the earth. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty it on the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.
Eccl 11:4	שֹׁמֵר רוּחַ לֹא יִזְרָע וְרֹאֶה בֶּעָבִים לֹא יִקְצוֹר׃ כַּאֲשֶׁר אֵינְךָ יוֹדֵעַ מַה־דֶּרֶךְ הָרוּחַ כַּעֲצָמִים בְּבֶטֶן הַמְּלֵאָה כָּכָה לֹא תֵדַע אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַכֹּל׃	Whoever watches the wind will not sow, and whoever looks at the clouds will not reap. Just as you do not know the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of a pregnant woman, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything.[11]
Eccl 11:6	בַּבֹּקֶר זְרַע אֶת־זַרְעֶךָ וְלָעֶרֶב אַל־תַּנַּח יָדֶךָ כִּי אֵינְךָ יוֹדֵעַ אֵי זֶה יִכְשָׁר הֲזֶה אוֹ־זֶה וְאִם־שְׁנֵיהֶם כְּאֶחָד טוֹבִים׃	In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not let your hand rest; for you do not know which will succeed, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

11 The Hebrew *ruach* means both "wind" and "spirit" or "life-breath," so the line may also speak of how life comes to the unborn child.

YOUTH AND OLD AGE

Rejoice in youth and remember your Creator before old age and death arrive.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 11:7	וּמָתוֹק הָאוֹר וְטוֹב לָעֵינַיִם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־הַשָּׁמֶשׁ: כִּי אִם־שָׁנִים הַרְבֵּה יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם בְּכֻלָּם יִשְׂמָח וְיִזְכֹּר אֶת־יְמֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ כִּי־הַרְבֵּה יִהְיוּ כָּל־שֶׁבָּא הָבֶל:	Sweet is the light, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun. For if a human lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. All that comes is breath.
Eccl 11:9	שְׂמַח בָּחוּר בְּיַלְדוּתֶיךָ וִיטִיבְךָ לִבְּךָ בִּימֵי בְחוּרוֹתֶךָ וְהַלֵּךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לִבְּךָ וּבְמַרְאֵי עֵינֶיךָ וְדַע כִּי עַל־כָּל־אֵלֶּה יְבִיאֲךָ הָאֱלֹהִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט: וְהָסֵר כַּעַס מִלִּבֶּךָ וְהַעֲבֵר רָעָה מִבְּשָׂרֶךָ כִּי־הַיַלְדוּת וְהַשַּׁחֲרוּת הָבֶל:	Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your prime; walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Remove vexation from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for youth and the dawn of life are breath.
Eccl 12:1	וּזְכֹר אֶת־בּוֹרְאֶיךָ בִּימֵי בְחוּרֹתֶיךָ עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָבֹאוּ יְמֵי הָרָעָה וְהִגִּיעוּ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵין־לִי בָהֶם חֵפֶץ: עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תֶחְשַׁךְ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהָאוֹר וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים וְשֻׁבוּ הֶעָבִים אַחַר הַגָּשֶׁם:	Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years arrive of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”; before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain;[12]
Eccl 12:3	בַּיּוֹם שֶׁיָּזֵעוּ שֹׁמְרֵי הַבַּיִת וְהִתְעַוְּתוּ אַנְשֵׁי הֶחָיִל וּבָטְלוּ הַטֹּחֲנוֹת כִּי מִעֵטוּ וְחָשְׁכוּ הָרֹאוֹת בָּאֲרֻבּוֹת: וְסָגְרוּ דְלָתַיִם בַּשּׁוּק בִּשְׁפַל קוֹל הַטַּחֲנָה וְיָקוּם לְקוֹל הַצִּפּוֹר וְיִשַּׁחוּ כָּל־בְּנוֹת הַשִּׁיר:	on the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders stop because they are few, and those who look through the windows grow dark; when the doors to the street are shut, as the sound of the mill grows low, and one rises at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low;
Eccl 12:5	גַּם מִגָּבֹהַּ יִרָאוּ וְחַתְחִתִּים בַּדָּרֶךְ וְיָנֵאץ הַשָּׁקֵד וְיִסְתַּבֵּל הֶחָגָב וְתָפֵר הָאֶבְיוֹנָה כִּי־הֹלֵךְ הָאָדָם אֶל־בֵּית עוֹלָמוֹ וְסָבְבוּ בַשּׁוּק הַסֹּפְדִים:	when they are afraid of what is high, and terrors are on the road; when the almond tree blossoms, and the grasshopper drags itself along, and the caper berry fails— for the human goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about in the street;
Eccl 12:6	עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֵרָתֵק חֶבֶל הַכֶּסֶף וְתָרֻץ גֻּלַּת הַזָּהָב וְתִשָּׁבֵר כַּד עַל־הַמַּבּוּעַ וְנָרֹץ הַגַּלְגַּל אֶל־הַבּוֹר: וְיָשֹׁב הֶעָפָר עַל־הָאָרֶץ כְּשֶׁהָיָה וְהָרוּחַ תָּשׁוּב אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר נְתָנָהּ:	before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is crushed, and the jar is shattered at the spring and the wheel is broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

12 The images of 12:1–7 are commonly read as pictures of old age and death.

EPILOGUE: THE WORDS OF THE WISE

A narrator describes Qohelet's work and concludes: fear God and keep his commandments.

	HEBREW	ENGLISH
Eccl 12:8	הֲבֶל הֲבָלִים אָמַר הַקּוֹהֶלֶת הַכֹּל הָבֶל׃ וְיֹתֵר שֶׁהָיָה קֹהֶלֶת חָכָם עוֹד לִמַּד־דַּעַת אֶת־הָעָם וְאִזֵּן וְחִקֵּר תִּקֵּן מְשָׁלִים הַרְבֵּה׃ בִּקֵּשׁ קֹהֶלֶת לִמְצֹא דִבְרֵי־חֵפֶץ וְכָתוּב יֹשֶׁר דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת׃	Breath of breaths, says Qohelet; everything is breath. Besides being wise, Qohelet also taught the people knowledge; he weighed and searched out and arranged many proverbs. Qohelet sought to find pleasing words, and what was written uprightly, words of truth.
Eccl 12:11	דִּבְרֵי חֲכָמִים כַּדָּרְבֹנוֹת וּכְמַשְׁמְרוֹת נְטוּעִים בַּעֲלֵי אֲסֻפּוֹת נִתְּנוּ מֵרֹעֶה אֶחָד׃ וְיֹתֵר מֵהֵמָּה בְּנִי הִזָּהֵר עֲשׂוֹת סְפָרִים הַרְבֵּה אֵין קֵץ וְלַהַג הַרְבֵּה יְגִעַת בָּשָׂר׃	The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails driven in are the masters of collections; they are given by one shepherd. Beyond these, my son, take warning: there is no end to the making of many books, and much study wears out the body.[13]
Eccl 12:13	סוֹף דָּבָר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יְרָא וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שְׁמוֹר כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם׃ כִּי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים יָבִא בְמִשְׁפָּט עַל כָּל־נֶעְלָם אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע׃	The end of the matter; all has been heard: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of being human. For God will bring every deed into judgment, concerning everything hidden, whether good or evil.

13 "Masters of collections" may mean collected sayings or their compilers; the "one shepherd" is variously understood.