

# Kohelet

## *Introduction*

The Book of Kohelet shows us that in the gruesome shadow of death, the whole life of Man is made to seem as so much empty and lonely loitering at the gates of an infinite abyss. There is a word for this emptiness in Hebrew, the word *hevel* which means empty, unsubstantial, a passing elusive vapor. This is what life is without a personal knowledge of G-d. The author, who calls himself Kohelet “leader of the Assembly,” “Ben Dovid Melech b'Yerushalayim” finds that death has thrown a shroud of gloom and meaninglessness over every kind of work that man does “under the sun.” G-d’s work endures (3:14; 7:13), but man’s does not. Death sees to that. And therein is the riddle of life. What can dying man gain from all his work (1:3)? What can mortal man achieve from all his labor, in view of his rapidly approaching demise (2:22)? There is a time to die (3:2), but death is life’s biggest riddle. What possible gain can workers have from all their life-long toil (3:9), since death causes them in the end to toil “for the wind (5:16)?” A generation comes and goes and expires in death and is forgotten (1:4; 2:16). Death makes all toil “wearisome” and predictably futile. Also, since everything dies, everything is *déjà vu* (disagreeably the same). People of long ago and people yet to come will both alike be forgotten and all their labors will be forgotten because of that great leveler called

Death. Death is what makes life at heart such an unhappy business, and there is nothing man can do about this crooked state of dying affairs (1:15). So this life in itself is found wanting, and death is the reason. Many who claim to be Jewish claim that life is wonderful as it is, but these people are not Biblical Jews, any more than that Jewish man Karl Marx was a Biblical Jew with all his philosophizing about the worker's existence "under the sun." The French philosopher Pascal noticed how we habitually block out the thought of our own coming demise. We do this in order to maintain a fragile sense of mental happiness. Death is an end too incomprehensibly ominous to contemplate. Yet our thoughts keep returning to glower at its reality. And though we try to divert ourselves with continuous activity and company and "unhappy business," we know that each of us must ultimately die alone and see everything we have done unraveled into nothingness. Where can we then find pleasure in anything we do? What in the world, what under the sun, are dying men to do with their meaningless lives? The author makes a test of various activities and pursuits: wisdom, madness, folly, pleasure, laughter, wine, women, song, great building projects, great "life works," great acquisitions, possessions, treasure-collecting; and in the end he finds only emptiness and meaninglessness in all these. Whatever pleasures these things brought him were fleeting indeed. The more wisdom he acquired, the more sorrow he became aware of. The more money he acquired, the more vexation came with it. Death

robs all men, because everyone goes to the grave naked and penniless. So what use is money, in the face of death? And since the sage and the fool must both go to the same all-consuming grave, what use is wisdom, in the face of death? The author acquired much wisdom and his wisdom remained with him (2:9), although wisdom can be ephemeral even in this life, in view of senility and the effects of aging, so grimly portrayed in chapter 12. But since man cannot really extend his life or control what happens after his death, all that his wisdom attains for him may fall into the hands of some foolish oblivion as soon as he dies, so, in the final analysis, what good is wisdom? The same fate (death) befalls everyone. No man has an heir he can really trust, since even one's posterity is also subject to death, which can, and eventually will, given sufficient time, play havoc with anyone's legacy. So death destroys life's meaning. Death makes one hate life (2:17). Death makes one hate one's work (2:18). Wise men, for all the work of their minds, are no better than mad men or fools because all alike die. Indeed, man is no better than the beasts who are also subject to the same fate. And man is ignorant! Man doesn't know what G-d has done or will do (3:11). Man doesn't know what will take place after his death. Man doesn't know if his human spirit awaits a fate different than animal extinction (3:20-22). Man needs G-d to give him some answers, because if death completely swallows and obliterates man, then Mankind that G-d created to work and till the ground and have dominion over the animals

(Gn 1:26; 2:15) is himself no better than an animal. This is the problem. Death. What is the answer? Is there anything that death cannot obliterate? Yes, the author of Kohelet says. The work of G-d. It endures and death has no dominion over it (3:14). But what is the work of G-d? What does G-d do, in the final analysis? G-d judges everyone, and he has appointed a time to judge the world (3:17). G-d judges the sinner by bringing all things he does into judgment (11:9). The sinner's life is dispensed with not as the sinner pleases but as G-d pleases, and the wages of sin that G-d pleases to dispense is a meaningless death (2:26). But death cannot obliterate this judgment that G-d metes out. Therein is where lies the hope of the resurrection from the dead, which this book questions but does not negate. The author does not merely say, "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." In fact he says just the opposite. He says, "I've tried that, and I don't recommend it." G-d will bring everything into judgment (11:9); therefore, fear G-d (5:7). Do not live for this world because this world in itself is meaningless and empty and fallen and dying. Live for G-d and enjoy everything that He gives you as a gift from Him. Otherwise, there is no pleasure in this life. Death is man's lot. To be able to accept this as a fact of life is itself a gift from G-d. G-d is a mystery and creation was created good but it is now fallen (7:29). Man has limits to his wisdom. There is no power in man that will save him from the day of death. All he can say is that death cannot take away the good that the G-d-fearer has. "It will

be well with those who fear G-d, because they stand in fear before Him.” The author seems to be questioning and looking for something new under the sun (1:9-10), which was what the Moshiach is when he comes walking out of the tomb in his glorious resurrection body. Otherwise, “there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the abode of the dead), to which you are going” (9:10). The righteous and the wise and their deeds are “in the hand of G-d” Who endures and Whose judgment not even death can thwart. This is the assurance of wisdom that makes the resurrection of the dead the vibrant hope and the only answer to the riddle that death poses to the author of this book. Philosophers like David Hume may say that they are not afraid to die, but put a pistol to their breasts, then threaten to kill them, and see (with Boswell and Johnson) how the wisest philosopher will behave. The illusions of genteel philosophy will not help us face the rude indignities of death when they brutally rap at the door. The problem of evil as it churns bitterly around in our minds often tempts us to doubt the existence of G-d, especially a G-d who is safely removed from both suffering and death and waits austere in heaven to judge us [but this is not the G-d of the Bible, the G-d in Moshiach, the G-d who as Immanu-El suffers with us in this world]. But if we think of death’s inescapableness, where do we have to go with the guilt of our moral failures as our years quickly arraign us into the courts of the inevitable graveyard? Facing the universal evil of the human condition and the absurd, meaningless, sniper fire of death picking off

everyone around us, we begin to feel a deep inner unhappiness and anxiety. We ask ourselves, what is lurking at the bottom of our fears — is it not the fear of death? Yet the English philosopher Hobbes once wrote, “G-d, that could give life to a piece of clay, hath the same power to give life again to a dead man, and renew his inanimate and rotten carcass into a glorious, spiritual and immortal body.” This very point is what separates the religion of the Jews from that of Homer, for the Greek g-ds could not revive the dead. They were not truly omnipotent. But omnipotence is precisely the claim of the G-d of the Bible, Whose Hebrew prophets even predicted the Moshiach’s coming victory over death. The prophets said that the coming Moshiach would be an eternal kohen and his death would be a momentous “ah-sham” guilt offering for sin (see Ps 110:4; Isa 53:10). Further, these Hebrew prophets predicted that after the Moshiach offered himself as an offering for sin he would see the light of resurrection life (see Isa 52:13–53:12 in the Dead Sea Scrolls).

<sup>1</sup> Divrei Kohelet, Ben Dovid, Melech in Yerushalayim.

<sup>2</sup> Hevel havalim, saith Kohelet,  
hevel havalim, all is hevel.

<sup>3</sup> What profit hath a man from all his amal (*toil*)  
which he hath toiled under the shemesh?

<sup>4</sup> Dor v'dor, generations come and go, passing  
away;  
but ha'aretz remaineth l'olam.

<sup>5</sup> The shemesh also ariseth, and the shemesh goeth down,  
and hasteth to its place, there to arise again.

<sup>6</sup> The ruach (*wind*) goeth toward the darom (*south*),  
and turneth about unto the tzafon (*north*);  
it whirleth about continually,  
and the ruach returneth again according to its circuits.

<sup>7</sup> All the nechalim (*rivers*) run into the yam;  
yet the yam is not full;  
unto the place from whence the nechalim come,  
thither they return to go again.

<sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome;  
no ish can express it;  
the ayin is not satisfied with seeing,  
nor the ozen full with hearing.

<sup>9</sup> The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be;  
and that which is done is that which shall be done;  
and there is nothing chadash under the shemesh.

<sup>10</sup> Is there anything whereof it may be said:  
See, this is chadash?  
L'olamim (*ages ago*), which were before us,  
it hath been already.

<sup>11</sup> There is no zichron (*remembrance*) of former things;  
neither shall there be  
with those who come after any zikaron (*recollection*)  
of things that are to come.

<sup>12</sup> I, Kohelet, was Melech over Yisroel in Yerushalayim.

<sup>13</sup> And I set my lev to seek and search out by chochmah concerning all things that are done under Shomayim; what grievous task hath Elohim given to the bnei haAdam to be afflicted therewith.

<sup>14</sup> I have seen all the ma'asim that are done under the shemesh; and, hinei, all is hevel and chasing after ruach (*wind*).

<sup>15</sup> That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and chesron (*that which is lacking*) cannot be numbered.

<sup>16</sup> I communed with mine own lev, saying: Hinei, I am come to greatness, even greater chochmah than all they that have been before me over Yerushalayim; yea, my lev had great experience of chochmah and da'as.

<sup>17</sup> And I applied my lev to have da'as of chochmah, and to have da'as of holelot (*madness*) and sichlut (*folly*); I perceived that this also is striving after ruach (*wind*).

<sup>18</sup> For in much chochmah (*wisdom*) is much ka'as (*grief, vexation*); and he that increaseth da'as increaseth mach'ov (*sorrow*).

## 2

<sup>1</sup> I said in mine lev, Come now, I will test thee with simchah, therefore enjoy tov; and, hinei, this also is hevel.

<sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, It is mad; and of simchah, What doeth it accomplish?



<sup>3</sup> I searched in mine lev to draw my basar on with yayin, my mind guiding me with chochmah; and to lay hold on sichlut (*folly*), till I might see what was tov for bnei haAdam, which they should do under Shomayim all the few days of their life.

<sup>4</sup> I undertook me great works; I built me batim (*houses*); I planted me kramim (*vineyards*);

<sup>5</sup> I made me ganot (*gardens*) and parks, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them;

<sup>6</sup> I made me reservoirs of mayim, to water there-with the forest of trees tzomeiach (*sprouting up*);

<sup>7</sup> I bought me avadim and shfakhot, and had bnei bayit (*avadim born in my bais*); also I had great possessions of herds and tzon more than all that were in Yerushalayim before me;

<sup>8</sup> I amassed for me also kesef and zahav, and the treasure of melachim and of the provinces; I acquired for me men singers and women singers, and the delights of bnei haAdam, musical instruments of all kinds.

<sup>9</sup> So I was great, and excelled more than all that were before me in Yerushalayim; also my chochmah remained with me.

<sup>10</sup> And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my lev from any simchah; for my lev rejoiced in all my amal (*labor*); and this was my chelek (*portion*) for all my amal.

<sup>11</sup> Then I looked on kol ma'asim that my hands had wrought, and on the amal that I had labored to do; and, hinei, all was hevel and chasing after ruach, and there was no profit under the shemesh.

<sup>12</sup> And I turned myself to consider chochmah, and holelot, and sichlut; for what can the adam

do who cometh after HaMelech? Even that which hath been done already.

<sup>13</sup> Then I saw that chochmah excelleth sichlut, as far as ohr excelleth choshech.

<sup>14</sup> The chacham (*wise man*) hath eyes in his rosh; but the kesil (*fool*) walketh in choshech; but I myself perceived also that the same mikreh (*fortune*) happeneth to them all.

<sup>15</sup> Then said I in my lev, As the mikreh befalls the kesil, so also will the same mikreh befall me; and wherein have I then been of more chochmah? Then I said in my lev, This also is hevel.

<sup>16</sup> For no zichron (*remembrance*) of the chacham — no less the kesil — remains l'olam; seeing that in hayamim haba'im (*the days to come*) all shall be forgotten. How can the chacham die just like the kesil?

<sup>17</sup> Therefore I hated HaChayyim (*Life*); because the ma'aseh that is wrought under the shemesh is grievous unto me; for all is hevel and chasing after ruach.

<sup>18</sup> Yea, I hated all my amal for which I had toiled under the shemesh; because I must leave it unto the adam that shall occupy my place after me.

<sup>19</sup> And who hath da'as whether he shall be a chacham or a kesil? Nevertheless shall he have shlitah (*control, authority*) over all my amal for which I have toiled, and have poured out my chochmah under the shemesh. This also is hevel.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore I turned aside to give up my lev to despair over all the wearisome amal with which I toiled under the shemesh.

<sup>21</sup> For there is an adam whose amal is with chochmah, and da'as, and kishron (*skill*); yet to an adam that hath not worked for it he must leave

it for his chelek. This also is hevel and a ra'ah rabbah.

<sup>22</sup> For what hath adam for all his amal, and for all the striving of his lev, wherein he hath labored under the shemesh?

<sup>23</sup> For all his yamim are machovim (*sorrows*), and his travail ka'as (*grief, vexation*); yea, his lev taketh not rest balailah. This also is hevel.

<sup>24</sup> There is nothing better for adam, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his nefesh find satisfaction in his amal. Also this I saw; even this was from the Yad HaElohim.

<sup>25</sup> For who can eat, or who can find enjoyment without HASHEM?

<sup>26</sup> For to the adam that is pleasing in His sight, HASHEM gives chochmah, and da'as, and simchah; but to the choteh (*sinner*) HASHEM giveth travail; HASHEM giveth the work of gathering and storing up, that HASHEM may give to him that pleases HaElohim. This also is hevel and chasing after ruach.

### 3

<sup>1</sup> To every thing there is a zeman (*time*), and an et (*season*) for every matter under Shomayim:

<sup>2</sup> An et (*season*) to be born,  
and an et (*season*) to die;  
an et (*season*) to plant,  
and an et (*season*) to uproot that which is planted;

<sup>3</sup> An et (*season*) to kill,  
and an et (*season*) to heal;  
an et (*season*) to tear down,  
and an et (*season*) to build up;

<sup>4</sup> An et (*season*) to weep,

and an et (*season*) to laugh;

an et (*season*) to mourn,

and an et (*season*) to dance;

<sup>5</sup> An et (*season*) to throw stones away,

and an et (*season*) to gather stones together;

an et (*season*) to embrace,

and an et (*season*) to refrain from embracing;

<sup>6</sup> An et (*season*) to look for,

and an et (*season*) to lose;

an et (*season*) to keep,

and an et (*season*) to throw away;

<sup>7</sup> An et (*season*) to tear,

and an et (*season*) to mend;

an et (*season*) to keep silent,

and an et (*season*) to speak;

<sup>8</sup> An et (*season*) to love,

and an et (*season*) to hate;

an et (*season*) of milchamah,

and an et (*season*) of shalom.

<sup>9</sup> What profit hath the worker from his amal (*labor*)?

<sup>10</sup> I have seen the occupation, which Elohim hath given to the bnei HaAdam to keep them occupied.

<sup>11</sup> HASHEM hath made every thing yafeh in its et (*season*); also He hath set HaOlam in their lev, yet so that no adam can find out the ma'aseh that HaElohim hath done from the beginning to the end.

<sup>12</sup> I have da'as that there is nothing better for adam, than that they have simchah and do tov while they live.

<sup>13</sup> And also that kol haAdam should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his amal. This is a gift of Elohim.

<sup>14</sup> I have da'as that, all that HaElohim doeth will endure l'olam; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it; HaElohim doeth it, that men should fear before Him.

<sup>15</sup> That which is hath been already; and that which is to be hath already been; and HaElohim will call that which is past to account.

<sup>16</sup> And moreover I saw under the shemesh that in the Mekom Mishpat (*place of judgment*) resha (*wickedness*) was there; and in the Mekom Tzedek, resha (*wickedness*) was there.

<sup>17</sup> I said in mine lev, HaElohim shall judge the tzaddik and the resha (*wicked*); for an et (*season*) for every matter and for every ma'aseh is there.

<sup>18</sup> I said in mine lev, As for bnei haAdam, HaElohim tests them, that they might see that they themselves are like beheimah.

<sup>19</sup> For bnei haAdam and beheimah share one and same mikreh (*fortune*); as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that the adam hath no advantage above the beheimah; for all is hevel.

<sup>20</sup> All go unto mekom echad; all are of the afahr (*dust*), and all return to the afahr again.

<sup>21</sup> Who hath da'as of the ruach bnei haAdam that goeth upward, and the ruach habeheimah that goeth downward to ha'aretz?\*

<sup>22</sup> Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that the adam find simchah in his

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\* 3:21 see 12:7

ma'asim; for that is his chelek; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

## 4

<sup>1</sup> So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the shemesh, and, hinei, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no menachem (*comforter*); and on the side of their oppressors there was ko'ach (*power*); but they had no menachem (*comforter*).

<sup>2</sup> Wherefore I praised the mesim which are already dead more than the living ones which are yet alive.

<sup>3</sup> Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the ma'aseh harah that is done under the shemesh.

<sup>4</sup> Again, I considered all amal, and every kishron hama'aseh (*skillful achievement*), that such is a simple derivative of kinat ish meirei'eihu (*the envy of man of his neighbor*). This also is hevel, a chasing after ruach.

<sup>5</sup> The kesil foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own basar.

<sup>6</sup> Better is a handful with tranquility than both the hands full with amal and chasing after ruach.

<sup>7</sup> Then I returned, and I saw under the shemesh this hevel:

<sup>8</sup> There was a man all alone, and there was with him neither ben nor ach (*brother*); yet there was no ketz (*end*) to all his amal; neither was his ayin satisfied with osher (*riches*); neither saith he, For whom do I toil, and deprive my nefesh of tovah? This also is hevel, yea, it is an evil matter.

<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one because they have a sachar toy for their amal.

<sup>10</sup> For if they fall, the echad will lift up his partner; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

<sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down, then they have chom (*heat*), but how can one be warm alone?

<sup>12</sup> Though echad may be overpowered, shnayim shall withstand him; and a khoot hameshulash (*threefold cord*) is not quickly broken.

<sup>13</sup> Better is a poor and a wise yeled than an old and foolish melech, who will no more be admonished.

<sup>14</sup> For out of the bais hasohar he cometh to reign, although he was born a poor man in his malchut (*kingdom*).

<sup>15</sup> I considered all the living ones which walk under the shemesh in the throng of the yeled, that is, the second one that shall enter into the place of the former.\*

<sup>16</sup> There is no ketz of kol haAm, all those at whose head he stands; and yet they who come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is hevel and striving for ruach.

<sup>17</sup> Keep thy footing when thou goest to the Bais HaElohim, and be more ready to listen than to give the zevach of kesilim, for they have no da'as that they do rah.

## 5

<sup>1</sup> Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine lev be hasty to utter any thing before HaElohim;

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\* 4:15 melech

for HaElohim is in Shomayim, and thou upon ha'aretz; therefore let thy devarim be few.

<sup>2</sup> As by a multitude of cares cometh a chalom, so by a multitude of devarim cometh the kol kesil (*the voice of the fool*).

<sup>3</sup> When thou vowest a neder unto Elohim, defer not to pay it; for HASHEM hath no pleasure in kesilim; pay that which thou hast vowed.

<sup>4</sup> Better it is that thou shouldest not make a neder, than that thou shouldest vow and not fulfill the neder.

<sup>5</sup> Suffer not thy mouth to lead thy basar into chet (*sin*); neither say thou before the Malach [of G-d], that it was a mistake. Wherefore should HaElohim be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

<sup>6</sup> For in the multitude of chalomot and many devarim there are also divers havalim;\* but fear thou HaElohim.

<sup>7</sup> If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of mishpat and tzedek in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher watches over him that is high; and there be higher than they.

<sup>8</sup> Moreover the profit of eretz is for all; Melech himself is served by the sadeh.

<sup>9</sup> He that loveth kesef shall never have enough kesef; nor shall he that loveth abundance have enough increase; this also is hevel.

<sup>10</sup> When hatovah (*good things*) increase, they are increased that consume them; and what kishron (*useful result*) is there to the ba'al (*owner*) thereof, except as an onlooker?

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\* 5:6 see 1:2



<sup>11</sup> The sleep of the oved (*working man*) is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the oisher (*rich man*) will not permit him to sleep.

<sup>12</sup> There is a grievous ra'ah which I have seen under the shemesh; osher (*riches*) hoarded by the ba'al thereof to his hurt;

<sup>13</sup> The same osher (*riches*) perish by an evil event and he begetteth a ben; thus this one hath nothing in his hand.

<sup>14</sup> As he came forth of the womb of his Em (*mother*), arom (*naked*) shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his amal (*labor*), which he may carry away in his hand.

<sup>15</sup> And this also is a grievous evil, that in every respect as he came, just so shall he go; and what profit hath he that hath toiled for the ruach (*wind*)?

<sup>16</sup> All his yamim also he eateth in choshech, and he hath much ka'as (*grief, vexation*) and sickness and anger.

<sup>17</sup> Hinei I have seen it is tov and yafeh for one to eat and to drink, and to find tovah in all his amal (*labor*) that he toils under the shemesh all the few days of his life, which HaElohim giveth him; for it is his chelek.

<sup>18</sup> Also kol ha'adam to whom HaElohim hath given osher and possessions, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his chelek, and to rejoice in his amal; this is the gift of Elohim.

<sup>19</sup> For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because HaElohim keeps him occupied with simchat libbo (*gladness of his heart*).

## 6

<sup>1</sup> There is a ra'ah which I have seen under the shemesh, and it is a great weight upon the adam;

<sup>2</sup> An ish to whom HaElohim hath given os-her (*riches*), nekhasim (*possessions*), and kavod (*honor*), so that he wanteth nothing for his nefesh of all that he desireth, yet HaElohim giveth him not shlitah (*empowerment*) to have enjoyment thereof, but an ish nochri (*stranger*) hath the enjoyment thereof; this is hevel, and it is a grievous ill.

<sup>3</sup> If an ish beget a hundredfold, and live shanim rabbot, so that rav be the yamim of his shanim, and his nefesh be not filled with hatovah, and also that he have no kevurah (*grave*); I say, that a nefel (*stillborn*) is better than he.

<sup>4</sup> For he cometh in with hevel, and departeth in choshech, and shmo shall be shrouded with choshech.

<sup>5</sup> Moreover though he hath not seen the shemesh, nor known any thing, this hath more nakhat (*rest, quietness*) than the other.

<sup>6</sup> Yea, though he live an elef shanim twice over, yet hath he seen no tovah. Do not all go to mekom echad?

<sup>7</sup> All the amal (*labor*) of haAdam is for his mouth, and yet the nefesh is not satisfied.

<sup>8</sup> For what hath the chacham more than the kesil? What hath the poor man, who has da'as of how to conduct himself before the living?

<sup>9</sup> Better what the eynayim see than the roving of the nefesh; this also is hevel and chasing after ruach.

<sup>10</sup> That which is, its shem hath already been named, and it is known what adam shall be; neither may he contend with what is stronger than he.

<sup>11</sup> Seeing there be many things that increase hevel, what profit is there for adam?

<sup>12</sup> For who has da'as what is tov for adam in this life, all the few days of his chayyei hevel which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell adam what shall be after him under the shemesh?

## 7

<sup>1</sup> A shem tov is better than precious ointment; and the yom hamavet than the day of one's birth.

<sup>2</sup> It is better to go to the bais evel (*house of mourning*),

than to go to the bais mishteh (*house of feasting*); for that is the sof (*end, conclusion*)\* of kol haAdam; and the living will take it to heart.

<sup>3</sup> Ka'as (*sorrow*) is better than laughter; for sadness of the countenance is good for the lev.

<sup>4</sup> The lev of chachamim is in the bais evel (*house of mourning*);

but the lev of kesilim is in the bais simchah.

<sup>5</sup> It is better to hear the rebuke of the chacham, than for an ish to hear the shir kesilim.

<sup>6</sup> For as is the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the kesil; this also is hevel.

<sup>7</sup> Surely oppression maketh a chacham mad; and a bribe corrupts the heart.

<sup>8</sup> Better is the acharit (*end*) of a thing than the reshit (*beginning*) thereof;

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\* 7:2 See 12:13

and erech ruach (*patience*) is better than gavoah ruach (*haughtiness*).

<sup>9</sup> Be not hasty in thy ruach to be angry;  
for ka'as (*anger*) resteth in the kheyk (*bosom*) of kesilim.

<sup>10</sup> Say thou not, What is the cause that the yamim harishonim were better than these? For it is not because of chochmah that thou dost inquire concerning this.

<sup>11</sup> Chochmah is good with a nachalah (*inheritance*); and by it there is an advantage to them that see the shemesh.

<sup>12</sup> For chochmah is a protective tzel (*shade*), and kesef is as well; but the advantage of da'as is, that chochmah giveth chayyim (*life*) to them that possess it.

<sup>13</sup> Consider the ma'aseh HaElohim; for who can make straight what HASHEM hath made crooked?

<sup>14</sup> In the yom tovah be joyful, but in the yom ra'ah consider: HaElohim also hath set the one over against the other in such a way that adam may not find out anything that will come after him.

<sup>15</sup> All things have I seen in the yamim of my hevel; there is a tzaddik that perisheth in his tzedakah, and there is a rasha that prolongeth his life in his ra'ah.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be over much the tzaddik nor over much the chacham; why cause thyself desolation?

<sup>17</sup> Be not over much resha, neither be thou foolish; why shouldest thou die before thy time?

<sup>18</sup> It is good that thou holdest fast to the one and withdrawest not thine hand from the other; for he is a yire Elohim (*G-d fearer*) who shall fulfill both.

<sup>19</sup> Chochmah makes one chacham stronger than asarah shalitim (*ten rulers*) which are in the city.

<sup>20</sup> Surely indeed there is not a tzaddik upon earth, that doeth tov, and sinneth not.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Also take no heed unto kol devarim that are spoken; lest thou hear thy eved curse thee;

<sup>22</sup> For oftentimes also thine own lev hath da'as that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

<sup>23</sup> I tested all this with chochmah; I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.

<sup>24</sup> That which is far off, and exceeding deep, whose chochmah can find it out?

<sup>25</sup> I applied mine lev to have da'as, and to search, and to seek out chochmah, and the cheshbon (*scheme, plan*) of things, and to have da'as of resha (*wickedness*) of kesel (*stupidity*), even of sichlut (*folly*) and holelot (*madness*).

<sup>26</sup> And I find more mar (*bitter*) than mavet the isha, whose lev is snares and traps, and her hands are as chains; whoso pleaseth HaElohim shall escape from her; but the choteh (*sinner*) shall be ensnared by her.

<sup>27</sup> Look, this have I discovered, saith Kohelet, adding one point to another to find out the cheshbon (*the scheme, plan of things*);

<sup>28</sup> Which yet my nefesh seeketh, but I have not found; one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all those have I not found.

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<sup>†</sup> 7:20 Ro 3:23

<sup>29</sup> Lo, this only have I found, that HaElohim hath made man yashar (*upright*);<sup>‡</sup> but they have sought out chishvonot rabbim (*many schemes*).§

## 8

<sup>1</sup> Who is the chacham?

And who knoweth the peshet (*interpretation, explanation*) of a thing?

A man's chochmah maketh his face bright, and the rudeness of his face is changed.

<sup>2</sup> I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that because of the shevuat Elohim (*the oath of G-d*).

<sup>3</sup> Be not hasty to go out of his sight; stand not in a rah (*an evil matter*); for he executeth whatsoever pleaseth him.

<sup>4</sup> For the devar melech is shilton (*supreme*), and who may say unto him, What doest thou?

<sup>5</sup> Whoso is shomer mitzvah shall meet no harm; and a lev of a chacham discerneth both et (*time*) and mishpat (*judgment*).

<sup>6</sup> Because every matter has its et (*time*) and mishpat (*judgment*), though the ra'at haAdam be great upon him.

<sup>7</sup> For he has no da'as of that which shall be; for who can tell him how it will be?

<sup>8</sup> There is no adam that hath power over the ruach to restrain ruach; neither hath he shilton (*power*) over the yom hamavet; and there is no discharge in war; neither shall resha deliver its possessor.

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‡ 7:29 Gn 1:27    § 7:29 Gn 3:6-7; Ps 51; Ro 5:12; 3:23

<sup>9</sup> All this have I seen, and applied my lev unto every ma'aseh (*labor; work*) that has been done under the shemesh wherein one adam ruleth over another adam to the other's hurt.

<sup>10</sup> And so I saw the resha'im buried, who had come and gone out of the mekom kadosh (*the holy place*), and they were forgotten in the city where they had done such things; this is also hevel.

<sup>11</sup> Because pitgam (*sentence*) against a ma'aseh hara'ah (*an evil work*) is not executed speedily, therefore the lev of the bnei haAdam is fully set in them to do rah.

<sup>12</sup> Though a choteh do rah an hundred times, and his yamim be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear HaElohim, which fear before HASHEM;

<sup>13</sup> But it shall not be well with the rasha, neither shall he lengthen his yamim like a tzel (*shadow*); because he feareth not before Elohim.

<sup>14</sup> There is a hevel which is done upon ha'aretz; that there be tzaddikim, unto whom it happeneth according to the ma'aseh haresha'im; again, there be resha'im, to whom it happeneth according to the ma'aseh hatzaddikim; I say that this also is hevel.

<sup>15</sup> Then I commended simchah, because a man hath no better thing under the shemesh, than to eat, and to drink, and to have simchah; for that shall accompany him in his amal the yamim of his life, which HaElohim giveth him under the shemesh.

<sup>16</sup> When I applied mine lev to have da'as of chochmah, and to see the business that is done

upon ha'aretz, though one's eynayim see sleep  
neither yom nor lailah,

<sup>17</sup> then I beheld kol ma'aseh HaElohim, that  
haAdam cannot comprehend the ma'aseh that  
is done under the shemesh; because though  
haAdam labor to seek it out, yet he shall not com-  
prehend it; moreover, though a chacham claim  
to have da'as of it, yet shall he not be able to  
comprehend it.

## 9

<sup>1</sup> All this I took to my lev, explaining it all,  
that the tzaddikim, and the chachamim, and their  
works, are in the yad HaElohim; adam does not  
have da'as of whether it will be ahavah or sinah;  
all lies before him.

<sup>2</sup> All things come alike to all; there is one mikreh  
(*fortune*) to the tzaddik, and to the rasha; to the  
tov and to the tavor, and to the tameh; to him that  
sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is  
the tov, so is the choteh; and he that sweareth, as  
he that feareth a shevuah (*an oath*).

<sup>3</sup> This is a rah among all things that are done  
under the shemesh, that there is one mikreh (*for-  
tune*) unto all; yea, also the lev of the bnei haAdam  
is full of rah, and holelot (*madness*) is in their  
lev while they live, and after that they go to the  
mesim.

<sup>4</sup> For to him that is joined to all the living there  
is bitachon; for a kelev chai (*living dog*) is better  
than an aryeh hamet (*dead lion*).

<sup>5</sup> For the living have da'as that they shall die; but  
the mesim do not have da'as of anything, neither



have they any more a sachar, for the memory of them is forgotten.

<sup>6</sup> Also their ahavah, and their sinah, and their kina, is now perished; neither have they any more a chelek l'olam in any thing that is done under the shemesh.

<sup>7</sup> Go thy way, eat thy lechem with simchah, and drink thy yayin with a lev tov; for HaElohim now accepteth thy ma'asim.

<sup>8</sup> Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no shemen (*ointment*).

<sup>9</sup> Live joyfully with the isha whom thou lovest all the days of thy chayyei hevel, which he hath given thee under the shemesh, all the days of thy hevel; for that is thy chelek in this life, and in thy amal (*toil*) which thou laborest under the shemesh.

<sup>10</sup> Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy koach; for there is no ma'aseh, nor cheshbon, nor da'as, nor chochmah in Sheol, whither thou goest.

<sup>11</sup> I returned, and saw under the shemesh, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the gibborim, neither yet lechem to the chachamim, nor yet osher to the intelligent, nor yet chen (*favor*) to the experts; but et (*time*) and pega (*chance*) happeneth to them all.

<sup>12</sup> For haAdam also hath no da'as of his et (*time, hour*);\* as the dagim that are caught in a metzodah rah (*evil net*), and as the birds that are trapped in the pach (*snare*), so are the Bnei HaAdam snared

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\* **9:12** but see Yn 13:1; 8:20; 7:30; 2:4 regarding the Moshiach's knowledge of his hour

in an et ra'ah (*evil time*), when it falleth suddenly upon them.

<sup>13</sup> This chochmah have I seen also under the shemesh, and it seemed gedolah (*great*) unto me:

<sup>14</sup> There was an ir ketanah (*little city*), and few men within it; and there came a melech gadol against it, and besieged it, and built metzorim gedolim (*huge siegeworks*) against it.

<sup>15</sup> Now there was found in it a poor chacham, and he by his chochmah delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

<sup>16</sup> Then said I, Chochmah is better than gevurah (*strength*); nevertheless the poor man's chochmah is despised, and his devarim are not heard.

<sup>17</sup> Divrei chachamim in quiet are more to be heeded than the shouting of the moshel (*one ruling*) among kesilim.

<sup>18</sup> Chochmah is better than weapons of war, but one choteh destroyeth much good.

## 10

<sup>1</sup> Dead flies cause the perfumer's shemen to send forth a foul odor;  
so doth a little sichlut outweigh chochmah and kavod.

<sup>2</sup> A chacham's lev is at his yamin (*right hand*);  
but a kesil's lev is at his semol (*left hand*).

<sup>3</sup> Yea also, when he that is a kesil  
even walketh along the derech, his sense faileth him,  
and he saith to every one that he is a kesil.

<sup>4</sup> If the ruach of the moshel rise up against thee,  
leave not thy mekom;

for calmness pacifieth chatta'im gedolim.

<sup>5</sup> There is a ra'ah which I have seen under the shemesh, the sort of error which proceedeth from a shalit (*ruler*);

<sup>6</sup> Sekhel (*folly*) is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

<sup>7</sup> I have seen avadim (*servants*) upon susim, and sarim (*princes*) walking as avadim upon ha'arets.

<sup>8</sup> He that diggeth a gumatz (*pit*) shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh through a wall, a nachash shall bite him.

<sup>9</sup> Whoso pulleth out avanim (*stones*) may be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood may be endangered thereby.

<sup>10</sup> If the barzel (*iron*)\* be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must more strength be marshalled; but chochmah brings success.

<sup>11</sup> If the nachash will bite before it is charmed, there is no use in a charmer.

<sup>12</sup> The words of a chacham's mouth are chen (*gracious*); but the lips of a kesil will swallow up himself.

<sup>13</sup> The beginning of the words of his mouth is sichlut; and the end of his talk is holelot ra'ah.

<sup>14</sup> A kesil also is full of devarim; haAdam has no da'as of what shall be, and what shall be after him,

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\* **10:10** of the axe

who can tell him?

<sup>15</sup> The amal of the kesilim wearieeth him,  
because he has no da'as of how to go to town.

<sup>16</sup> Woe to thee, O eretz, when thy melech is a na'ar,  
and thy sarim (*princes*) feast in the boker!

<sup>17</sup> Blessed art thou, O eretz, when thy melech is a  
nobleman,  
and thy sarim (*princes*) eat in due season,  
for strength, and not for drunkenness!

<sup>18</sup> By much atzlut (*slothfulness*) the rafters falleth;  
and through idleness of the hands the bais  
leaketh.

<sup>19</sup> Lechem is made for laughter,  
and yayin maketh merry;  
but kesef answereth everything.

<sup>20</sup> Curse not the Melech, no not in thy thought;  
and curse not the oisher in thy bedchamber;  
for an Oph haShomayim may carry the voice,  
and that which hath wings may report what you  
say.

## 11

<sup>1</sup> Cast thy lechem upon the waters,  
for thou shalt find it after many yamim.

<sup>2</sup> Give chelek (*portions*) to shivah, and also to  
shmonah;  
for thou knowest not what ra'ah shall be upon  
ha'aretz.

<sup>3</sup> If the clouds be full of geshem,  
they empty themselves upon ha'aretz;  
and if the etz fall toward the darom (*south*), or  
toward the tzafon (*north*),

in the makom (*place*) where the etz falleth, there it lieth.

<sup>4</sup> He that observeth the ruach (*wind*) shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

<sup>5</sup> As thou knowest not what is the derech haruach,\* nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the ma'asei HaElohim who maketh all.

<sup>6</sup> In the boker sow thy zera, and in the erev do not let thine hand be idle; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike tovim.

<sup>7</sup> Truly the ohr is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eynayim to behold the shemesh;

<sup>8</sup> But if haAdam live many shanim, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the yamim of choshech; for they shall be many. All that cometh is hevel.

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice, O bochur, in thy yaldut (*youth*); and let thy lev cheer thee in the yamim of thy bechurim (*youth*), and walk in the ways of thine lev, and in the sight of thine eynayim; but have da'as of this; that for all these things HaElohim will bring thee into mishpat.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore banish ka'as (*sorrow*) from thy lev, and put away ra'ah from thy basar; for yaldut and shacharut (*prime of life*) are hevel.

## 12

<sup>1</sup> Remember now thy Bo're (*Creator*) in the yamim of thy bechurot, while the yamei hara'ah

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\* **11:5** See Yn 3:3-8

come not, nor the shanim draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no chefetz (*pleasure*) in them;

<sup>2</sup> While the shemesh, or the ohr, or the yarei'ach, or the kokhavim, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain;

<sup>3</sup> In the yom when the shomrei habayit shall tremble, and the strong men shall stoop, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows grow dim,

<sup>4</sup> And the delatayim (*doors*) shall be shut in the street, when the sound of the grinding fades, and he shall arise at the sound of a tzipor (*bird*), and all their banot hashir (*daughters of song*) are brought low;

<sup>5</sup> Also when they shall be afraid of height, and fears shall be in the derech, and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper drags himself along, and desire shall fail; because haAdam goeth to his bais olam (*eternal home*), and the mourners go about the streets;

<sup>6</sup> Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the bor (*cistern*).

<sup>7</sup> Then shall the apha return to ha'aretz as it was; and the ruach shall return unto HaElohim who gave it.

<sup>8</sup> Hevel havalim, saith Kohelet; all is hevel.

<sup>9</sup> And moreover, because Kohelet was chacham, he taught the people da'as; yea, he applied, and searched out, and set in order many meshalim (*proverbs*).

<sup>10</sup> Kohelet searched to find out divrei chefetz; and that which was written was yosher, even

divrei emes.

<sup>11</sup> Divrei chachamim are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings that are given by Ro'eh Echad (*One Shepherd*).

<sup>12</sup> And further, by these, beni, be admonished; of making many sefarim there is no ketz; and much study is a weariness of the basar.

<sup>13</sup> Let us hear the sof (*conclusion*) of the whole matter; Fear HaElohim, and of His commandments be shomer mitzvot; for this is the whole duty of haAdam.

<sup>14</sup> For HaElohim shall bring kol ma'aseh (*every work*) into mishpat (*judgment*), with every ne'lam (*secret thing, concealed thing*), whether it be tov (*good*), or whether it be rah (*evil*).

# **The Orthodox Jewish Bible**

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### **THE ORTHODOX JEWISH TANAKH**

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