

Old Testament Overviews

# The Book of Ecclesiastes, or *Qoheleth*

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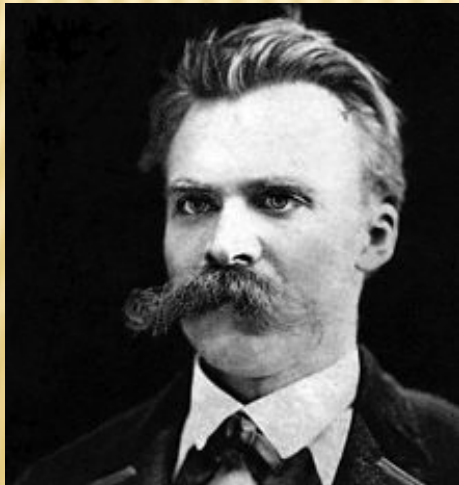
# BACKGROUND

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- ✘ דְּבַר־יְקֹהֱלֵת בֶּן־דָּוִד - *The words of qoheleth son of David*
- ✘ תַּחַת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ - *under the sun*, appears 29 times
- ✘ The writer had the resources for the pursuit
- ✘ Perspective or vantage point is very important
- ✘ This is not his pursuit. It is a *record* of his pursuit. (e.g., 1:17)
- ✘ What is the writer's conclusion? Look for it...

# 1:1-11 LIFE UNDER THE SUN IS VANITY

- ✘ Everything is הֶבֶל  
– vanity, breath.
- ✘ The cycles of life continue
- ✘ Compare with Nietzsche's existentialism



- ✘ 1:1 *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*
- ✘ 2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.”
- ✘ 9 That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.



# 1:12-18 SOLOMON'S 'UNDER THE SUN' QUEST

- ✘ Solomon began his pursuit to understand all that happens under heaven
- ✘ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם
- ✘ By the time he *recorded* his pursuit, he already had his conclusion.
- ✘ 13 And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. *It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.*
- ✘ 17 And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind.



## 2:1-11 VANITY OF PLEASURE AND POSSESSION

- ✘ Possessions and pleasure are vanity
- ✘ Hedonism does not satisfy



- ✘ 2:1 *I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself.” And behold, it too was futility.*
- ✘ 9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me.<sup>11</sup> Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.



## 2:12-17 VANITY OF WISDOM, MADNESS AND FOLLY

- ✘ Death was the great equalizer.
- ✘ Solomon's consideration of wisdom, madness and folly led to despair.



- ✘ 12 *So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly...*
- ✘ 13 And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.
- ✘ 16 *...the wise man and the fool alike die!*
- ✘ 17 So I hated life...everything is futility and striving after wind.

# 2:18-23 VANITY

## LABOR AND CONSEQUENCE UNDER THE SUN



- ✘ 18 *Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.*
- ✘ 22 For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?
- ✘ 23 Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

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- ✘ 24 There is nothing better for a man *than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.*
  - ✘ 25 For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?
  - ✘ 26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.



## 2:24-26 CONCLUSION: GOD IS



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# 3:1-10 GOD HAS ORDERED ALL THINGS

- ✗ Order invites questions
- ✗ 3:1 *There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—*
- ✗ 9 What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils?





# 3:11-22 GOD HAS A “BEYOND THE SUN” PROGRAM FOR HUMANITY



- ✧ 11 *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*
- ✧ 14 I know that everything God does will remain forever...
- ✧ 20 All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.



# 4:1-3 VANITY OF LIFE AND OPPRESSION UNDER THE SUN



- ✘ 4:1 *Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them...*
- ✘ 2 *So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living.*
- ✘ 3 *But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.*

## 4:4-6 VANITY OF SURVIVAL AND RIVALRY UNDER THE SUN



- ✘ 4 I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is *the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.*
- ✘ 5 The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.
- ✘ 6 One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind.



# 4:7-12 VANITY OF EGOCENTRISM AND ALONENESS UNDER THE SUN



- ✗ 7 Then I looked again at vanity under the sun.
- ✗ 8 There was a certain man without a dependent, having neither a son nor a brother, yet there was no end to all his labor. Indeed, his eyes were not satisfied with riches *and he never asked, “And for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure?” This too is vanity and it is a grievous task.*



# 4:13-16 VANITY OF FOOLISHNESS UNDER THE SUN



- ✘ 13 A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows *how to receive instruction*.
- ✘ 14 For he has come out of prison to become king, even though he was born poor in his kingdom.
- ✘ 15 I have seen all the living under the sun throng to the side of the second lad who replaces him.
- ✘ 16 There is no end to all the people, to all who were before them, and even the ones who will come later will not be happy with him, for this too is vanity and striving after wind.

# 5:1-20 CONCLUSION

## FEAR GOD AND ENJOY HIS GIFTS

- ✦ 18 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun *during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.*
- ✦ 19 Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.
- ✦ 20 For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.



# 6:1-12 VANITY OF WEALTH, RICHES AND HONOR UNDER THE SUN



- ✘ 10 Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is; for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is.
- ✘ 11 For there are many words which increase futility. What *then is the advantage to a man?*
- ✘ 12 For who knows what is good for a man during *his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?*



# 7:1-8:17 CONCLUSION

## WELL-BEING IS BEYOND THE SUN



- ✖ 7:2 It is better to go to a house of mourning Than to go to a house of feasting, Because that is the end of every man, And the living takes *it to heart*.
- ✖ 13 Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?
- ✖ 18 It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them.
- ✖ 8:16 When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the task which has been done on the earth (even though one should never sleep day or night),
- ✖ 17 and I saw every work of God, *I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover; and though the wise man should say, "I know," he cannot discover.*

# 9:1-10 CONCLUSION

## THE URGENCY OF LIFE UNDER THE SUN



- ✘ 2-3 It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked...This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they *go to the dead*.
- ✘ 7 Go then, *eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works.*
- ✘ 9 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.
- ✘ 10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.*



# 9:11-11:8 CONCLUSION

## WISDOM IS BETTER THAN STRENGTH



- ✖ 16 So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength.” But the wisdom of the poor man is despised and his words are not heeded.
- ✖ 10 If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen *its edge*, *then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.*



# 11:9-10 CONCLUSION

## ENJOY 'BEYOND THE SUN' LIFE



- ✘ 9 Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.
- ✘ 10 So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

# 12:1-7 CONCLUSION

## REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR



- ✘ 12:1 *Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”*
- ✘ 7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.



# 12:8-14 CONCLUSION

## LIFE WITH GOD IS NOT VANITY

**FEAR GOD &  
KEEP HIS  
COMMANDS.**  
Ecclesiastes 12:13

- ✘ 8 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “all is vanity!”
- ✘ 13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.*
- ✘ 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.