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Reflections

commonly called
Kohelet
(meaning 'The group leader')

Introduction

This collection of *Reflections* (commonly called *Ecclesiastes*), was written by a wise leader. Some of the proverbs here were written by King Shelomoh (Solomon), but there's also proverbs from other writers. The authors of these thought carefully about the meaning of life. They looked at everything that happens here in the world ('under the sun') to discover its purpose and to try to understand the meaning of life. They advise that it's necessary to respect and obey Yahweh, to strive to find happiness in our daily lives. (The meaning of Ecclesiastes is 'The group leader'. The title commonly used in English is a Latin transliteration of the Greek translation of the Hebrew word קֹהֶלֶת.) In Hebrew texts, this document is grouped in with 'The Writings (Ketuvim)'.

Main components of this document

Questions about life *1:1–2:26*
Truths about life *3:1–11:8*
The final advice *11:9–12:8*
Conclusion *12:9-14*

Lighter type marks additions. Underscores join parts of a single source word.
Struck words are untranslated. The ◘ sign marks a verse with no text.
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Readers' Version

1:1 The following are the words of the leader,[1] David's son,
king in Yerushalem (Jerusalem):

Everything's meaningless

2 "Totally pointless," says the leader.
"A complete waste of time. Everything's worthless."
3 What profit does humanity gain from all their hard work
in this world?
4 Generations come, and generations go,
but the world just carries on going.
5 The sun rises and the sun sets,
then rushes around to its place, rising there again.
6 Going to the south then around to the north,
the wind is going, changing, turning,
then it's returning on its rounds.
7 All the rivers flow into the sea but it never gets full.
The place that the rivers are going to, they end up going
there again.
8 Everything is wearisome—not even worth talking about.
The eyes never stop seeing,
and your ears never fill up with everything they hear.
9 Whatever that was in the past, it will be in the future,
and everything that's happened before, will happen again.
There's nothing new in this world.[2]
10 If someone says, "Look at this—it's new,"
well, it was already done long ago before we even got here.
11 Things that happened in the past get forgotten,
and the same will also happen for future events.
People in the future will be exactly the same.

The persecution of wise

12 I, the leader, was king over Yisrael (Israel) in Yerushalem (Jerusalem).
13 I used my mind and wisdom to discover and to explore
everything that is done in this world.
It's a difficult job that God has given humanity to be busy
with.
14 I saw everything that gets done in this world,
and look—everything's pointless like chasing after the
wind.
15 Something that's bent can't be straightened again,
and what's missing can't be counted.
16 I spoke with sincerity, saying, "Look at me—I've become
powerful,
and I've increased in wisdom relative to everyone who
ruled before me here in Yerushalem (Jerusalem).[3]
My mind has acquired much knowledge and wisdom."
17 I made it my aim to discover knowledge and wisdom versus madness and folly.
I was aware that that also is chasing after the wind
18 because having much wisdom leads to much frustration
and anyone who's adding knowledge is also adding pain.
2:1 I said to myself,
"Come on, let me find out what's good and enjoy the pleasure from them."
But look, it was also pointless.
2 To laughter, I said, "It's madness,"
and to joy, "What's the point of this?"
3 I explored in myself how to indulge my body with wine,
but my mind was guiding me in wisdom.
Also, how to grasp foolishness
until I could see whether that's better for humanity to do
while they live out their lives here on this earth.
4 I expanded my program of works.
I built houses for myself.
I planted vineyards for myself.[4]
5 I made gardens for myself, and royal parks,
and I planted all different kinds of fruit trees in them.
6 I constructed pools for myself
to irrigate a forest of growing trees.
7 I acquired male and female servants,
and the children born to them belonged to me.
Also a large number of sheep and cattle belonged to me—
more than all my predecessors in Yerushalem (Jerusalem).[5]
8 I also accumulated gold and silver for myself,
and treasure from kings and from the provinces.[6]
I appointed male and female singers for myself,
and the pleasures of the sons of humanity—many women.
9 So I became famous,
and I added more than all who preceded me in
Yerushalem.[7]
Also my wisdom stayed with me.
10 Everything my eyes wanted, I gave them.
I didn't hold back from anything that would make me
happy,
because I was happy inside from all my work
and that was my reward from all my effort.
11 And I turned, I, to all the things that I'd made
and to the work that I'd done,
and look, everything was pointless and chasing after the
wind,

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1 **RV 1:1 · Note** We don't have enough information to fully understand the meaning of the Hebrew word 'קֹהֶלֶת' (Kohelet), but it probably means something like 'leader/speaker of the assembly', so we use 'the leader' throughout this document.

2 **RV 1:9 · Note** 'Under the sun' isn't a natural English idiom

3 **RV 1:16 · Cross-ref.** 1Ki 4:29-31.

4 **RV 2:4-8 · Cross-ref.** 1Ki 10:23-27; 2Ch 9:22-27.

5 **RV 2:7 · Cross-ref.** 1Ki 4:23.

6 **RV 2:8 · Cross-ref.** 1Ki 10:10,14-22.

7 **RV 2:9 · Cross-ref.** 1Ch 29:25.

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and there wasn't any profit in anything done in this world.
12 Then I changed direction to investigate wisdom and madness and folly,
because what could any future king do that hasn't already been done?
13 I saw that wisdom is to be preferred over folly,
just as light is to be preferred over darkness.
14 The wise person uses their eyes,
but the fool walks in the darkness,
and even I know that the same fate comes to both of them.
15 I said to myself, "The fool's end will also come to me,
so what use was it being so wise back then?"
Then I told myself that that also is pointless,
16 because neither the wise person nor the fool will be remembered forever,
as they'll both be forgotten in the days to come—
and how strange it is that the wise die just like the fool!
17 Then I hated life because of the misfortune around me—
the work that was done in this world,
because everything was pointless and chasing after the wind.
18 Then I hated all the work that I'd done in this world
that will get left to those who follow me after I go.
19 And who knows whether my successor will be wise or a fool?
He'll have authority over all my projects that I worked hard on
and which I've applied wisdom to in this world.
That also was pointless.
20 Then I changed to despairing over all the projects in this world that I'd worked hard on,
21 because there are people whose work is in wisdom and knowledge, and in skill.
However, then a person who hasn't worked on it, will gain it as their inheritance.
That also is pointless and a great misfortune
22 because what does a person get in exchange for all their work and their goals in life that they work towards in this world?
23 Because all his days are painful, and anger is his business—
even in the night, his mind doesn't rest.[8]
That also is pointless.
24 There's nothing better for humanity other than eating and drinking,
and genuinely enjoying their hard work.[9]
Also I saw that that comes from God
25 because who could eat and enjoy life apart from him?
26 Yes, he gives wisdom and knowledge and happiness to people who are good in his sight.[10]
But to the sinner, he gives the job of gathering and collecting to give to the one who's good in God's sight.
That also is pointless and chasing after the wind.

A right time for everything

3:1 There's an appointed time for everything,
and an appropriate time for every activity in this world:
2 A time to give birth and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to pull out what was planted.
3 A time to kill and a time to heal.
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
4 A time to cry and a time to laugh.
A time to mourn and a time to dance.
5 A time to throw stones and a time to pick up stones.
A time to embrace and a time to avoid embracing.
6 A time to search and a time to lose.
A time to keep and a time to toss out.
7 A time to tear and a time to mend.
A time to be silent and a time to speak up.
8 A time to love and a time to hate.
A time for war and a time for peace.

Enjoying life and work

9 What do people gain from all the work they do?
10 I've seen the task that God has given people to keep them occupied.
11 God makes everything happen at the appropriate time.
Also, he puts the awareness of eternity into the human mind,
yet humanity can't grasp what God has done from the beginning to the end.
12 I know that there's nothing better for them
than being cheerful and doing good during their lives
13 and everyone should eat and drink and see good in everything they do—
that's a gift from God.
14 I know that everything God does will be enduring.
There's nothing that needs to be added to it, or taken away,
and God has done it like that so that people will respect and want to obey him.
15 Whatever there is, it already was,
and whatever is to be, it already is,
and God will watch whatever's being worked on.

Not/None correct judging here of world

16 Then again I saw in this world at the place of judgement, there was wickedness,
and at the place of righteousness, there was wickedness.
17 I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked,
because there's a time for every matter, and for every ac-

8 **RV 2:23 · Cross-ref.** Yob 5:7; 14:1.
9 **RV 2:24 · Cross-ref.** Ecc 3:13; 5:18; 9:7; Isa 56:12; Luk 12:19; 1Cor 15:32.
10 **RV 2:26 · Cross-ref.** Yob 32:8; Prv 2:6.

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tion to be judged."
18 I said to myself, "God tests humanity
so they can see that they themselves are like animals
19 because the same one thing happens to both people and animals:
just like one dies, so does the other—they both have the same breath.
But people have no advantage over animals—everything is pointless.
20 Both go to the same place—
both came from the dust and both return to the dust.
21 Who can know that a person's spirit is the one going up—upwards,
and the animal's spirit is the one going down—downwards to the earth?
22 Then I saw that there is nothing better than that people would enjoy their work,
because that's their assignment.
Yes, who can see what will happen to them after they die?
4:1 Then I turned and I saw all the oppression around the world,
and, look, see the tears of the oppressed
but there was no one to comfort them.
The oppressors exerted their power against them,
but there was no one to comfort the oppressed.
2 So I praised those who were dead—who've already died,
more than the living—those who are still alive.
3 But better than both of them, is the one who hasn't yet lived—
who hasn't seen the evil things that are being done in this world.
4 Then I noticed all the skills used and the work that gets done,
but also saw that it raised the envy of others.
That is also pointless and chasing after the wind.
5 The fool folds his hands together instead of working
and ends up ruining himself.
6 A small handful of quietness is better
than two very full handfuls of work and chasing after the wind.
7 Then I turned and I saw a pointless thing in this world:
8 Sometimes there's a person living alone without a child or a relative, who works hard without stopping.
However, wealth doesn't satisfy them because they wonder why they're working so hard and not sitting down to enjoy their good things.
That also is pointless, and it's an unpleasant business.
9 Two people are better than one.
because their working together can give a better result.
10 Yes, if they fall, one person can help his companion up,
but it wouldn't end so well if one person falls alone
and there's no second person to help them.
11 Similarly, if two people lie down together, they can help each other stay warm,
but how can one person stay warm by themself?
12 And even if one person would be easily overpowered,
two people could stand against an attacker.
A three-stranded rope can't be easily broken.
13 A poor but wise youth is better off
than an old but foolish king who can't accept advice,
14 because coming from a family who'd spent time in prison, he made it to become king—yet even in his kingdom he was born poor.
15 I saw all those walking around in this world with the next child who will rule after him—
16 there was no end to all the people who've ruled before them.
Even the ones who follow him won't speak kindly about him,
because even that is pointless and chasing after the wind.

Be careful of your words

5:1 Watch your step when you go to God's house.
Going in to listen is better than fools who offer sacrifices,
because they don't realise that what they're doing there is evil.
2 Don't speak out too quickly,
and don't let your emotions rush to make you request something from God,
because God is in the heavens,
but you're on the earth, so let your words be few.
3 A dream can lead to a lot of panic,
and a fool's voice brings many words.
4 When you promise something to God,
don't put off doing what you promised
because no one likes fools.
Whatever you promise, do it![11]
5 It's better not to make a promise
than to promise something and then not do it.
6 Don't allow your mouth to cause your whole body to sin,
and don't tell the temple messenger that it was an unintentional sin.
Why make God angry by what you say
and destroy the good things that you've done?
7 Yes, there's many dreams and pointless things and many words—
just respect and strive to obey God.

Not/None purpose of wealth

8 If you see the extortion of the poor
and the perversion of justice and righteousness in the provinces,
don't be amazed about it because a high official is watching over another official,
and higher ones are watching over them.

11 RV 5:4 · Cross-ref. Psa 66:13-14.

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9 Land is an advantage for everyone—the king gets served from the countryside.
10 A person who loves money won't be satisfied with it,
and anyone who loves wealth won't be satisfied with their income.
That's also pointless.
11 When material goods increase, people's consumption increases,
and what advantage does the owner get other than just feeding his eyes?
12 The labourer has a pleasant sleep, whether they've had a lot to eat or just a little,
^but the many investments of the rich person don't permit them to sleep.
13 There's a sad contradiction that I've seen in this world:
wealth hoarded up by its owner, but working to destroy him.
14 Then that wealth was lost in a failed investment
and although he had a son, he had nothing left to live on.
15 He was naked when he was born and he'll be naked when he goes again,
and despite all his hard work, he won't be able to take any money with him.[12]
16 This is also a sickening misfortune:
He will leave this world just like he entered it,
and what profit belongs to him who will work hard for the wind?
17 What's more, all his life he'll eat in darkness,
and in a lot of distress, as well as sickness and anger.
18 Listen, this is what I myself have discovered to be good:
It's good for a person to eat and drink
and to see benefit in all the hard work that they'll do in this world
during the number of the days of their life that God has given that person,
because that's their allocation in life.
19 Also, each person who's been given wealth and possessions by God and has been empowered
to eat from it
and to accept their allocation in life
and to enjoy their hard work:
that's a gift from God.
20 Those people don't retain a memory of each day that passed
because God keeps them full of internal happiness.
6:1 There's a problem in this world
and it troubles people:
2 God gives wealth and possessions and prestige to someone,
and that person has access to everything they want,
but God doesn't allow them to enjoy it—
instead a foreigner will get to enjoy it.
That's totally pointless, and it's senseless and unfair.
3 If a man should father a hundred children
and live many years however long his life might be,
but he's not satisfied in himself by his prosperity
and he doesn't have anywhere to be buried,
then I'd say that a stillborn child would have been better off than him,
4 because that child came for no reason
and it went in darkness, and its name will be covered in darkness.
5 It didn't even see the sun or know about it.
It'll rest easier than that man will.
6 Even if that man lived a thousand years twice over,
but never saw good in anything,
aren't they both going to the same place?
7 All of humanity's work is for their mouth,
but the inner cravings are never fulfilled.
8 So what advantage does a wise person have over a fool?
What advantage does a poor person's knowledge give them over others?
9 It's better to enjoy what's right there than to feed the imagination.
That's also pointless and chasing after the wind.
10 Everything that existed has already been named.
It's known what humankind is
and that humans can't dispute with the one who's stronger than them.
11 Yes, many words just become more pointless.
What advantage is that to anyone?
12 Who knows what's good for a person
for those pointless days that he/she lives?
The days pass by like a shadow
but who can tell anyone what will happen to them next in this world?

The life

7:1 A good reputation is better than expensive perfume,[13]
and the day you die is more important than the day of your birth.
2 It's better to go to a house where there's mourning than to a house where there's a party,
because death is the end of each person,
and those still alive should consider this in their hearts.
3 Laughter is better than grief
because a serious face means that the mind is working.
4 Wise people do their thinking at a funeral,
whereas foolish people prefer to spend time at a party.
5 It's better to accept a rebuke from a wise person
than to listen to the songs from foolish people,

12 **RV 5:15 · Cross-ref.** Yob 1:21; Psa 49:17; 1Tim 6:7.

13 **RV 7:1 · Cross-ref.** Prv 22:1.

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6 because the laughter of a fool
is like the crackling of burning thorn twigs under a cooking pot—
that's also pointless.
7 Oppression drives a wise person insane,
and a bribe destroys a person's morals.
8 Finishing something is better than starting it,
and being patient is better than being proud.
9 Don't be quick to get angry,[14]
because anger belongs in a fool's toolbox.
10 Don't ask, "What was it about the old days that were better than these?"
because that question doesn't display wisdom.
11 Wisdom is good when you get an inheritance,
and it's an advantage to those doing well.
12 Wisdom can protect us just like money can,
but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its owner.
13 Look at God's work:
who can straighten what he's made crooked?
14 Be happy on a good day,
but on a day of problems, consider this:
God caused one, as well as the other—
humanity can't discover what's going to come next.
15 I've seen everything in my days of pointlessness:
There's godly people dying despite doing everything right,
and there are wicked people living long lives doing evil.
16 Don't be highly righteous or overly wise—
Why go to the trouble of destroying yourself?
17 Don't be very wicked and don't be a fool—
why should you die when it's not your time?
18 It's good to take hold of wisdom and don't rest from doing what is right,
because the godly person should continue with both of them.
19 Wisdom gives strength to the wise—
more than the ten most powerful men in the city.
20 But yes, there's no person on the earth who's truly good,
only doing what is right and never disobeying.
21 Don't give your attention to everything that people say,
otherwise you might hear your servant speaking against you,
22 because you know how often you've belittled others yourself.
23 I tested all of that with wisdom.
I said, "Let me be wise," but it eluded me.
24 It seemed far away
and deeper down than anyone can find.
25 I changed my mind's direction to try to learn and explore—
to search for wisdom and to understand how things work,
and to understand the foolishness of wickedness and how that leads to madness.
26 I learnt that a woman who takes advantage of you leads to more bitterness than death would be—
her heart is like a net and her hands become chains.
Any person that's good in God's eyes would escape from her,
but an ungodly person would end up captured by her.
27 The leader has discovered that—
adding one thing to another to try to find an explanation for everything.
28 I continually tried to learn more, but I didn't find it.
I found one special man out of a thousand
but I couldn't find one such woman out of all of them.
29 This is the only conclusion I came to:
God made humankind to do good, but instead they've come up with many other kinds of schemes.
8:1 Who's like the wise person and understands what's going on?
A person's wisdom makes their face lighten up
and gives their face a certain firmness.
2 Follow the king's orders
because of your promise to God.
3 Don't rush away from the king's presence
or take a stand on an evil matter
because whatever he wants to do, he'll do.
4 A king's word is authoritative—
who'll ask him what he thinks he's doing?
5 Those who follow commands will stay out of trouble,
and a wise person will know the right time and place for something
6 because there's a time and a right way to do everything,
otherwise humanity's misery will be severe.
7 No one knows what the future will bring
so no one can tell you what will happen next.
8 Just as no person has control over the wind to be able to restrain it,
nor does anyone have authority over the day of their death.
Just as no one can be discharged in the middle of a war,
nor can being wicked rescue you from your situation.
9 I saw all that and applied my mind to everything that happens in this world.
I saw that sometimes a person can dominate someone else to that person's detriment.
10 I've seen wicked people being buried—
being carried out from a sacred place,
and what they'd done there in the city was just forgotten.
That's also pointless.
11 When an evil activity isn't quickly condemned,
then humanity will become totally determined to do evil.

14 RV 7:9 · Cross-ref. Jam 1:19.

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12 Even if an ungodly person does some evil thing a hundred times over and goes on to live a long time,
I know that things will go better for those who respect and obey God.
13 It won't go well for the wicked and what they do won't help them live longer
because they've shown no respect for God's presence.
14 There's something else strange that happens in this world:
when bad things happen to godly people
and when good things happen to evil people.
That's also hard to understand.
15 Then I recommended enjoyment
because there's nothing better for a person in this world than to eat and drink and be cheery,
then that attitude will be with them as they work
during the days of their life that God gives them in this world.
16 So when I set my mind on gaining wisdom
and observing all the business done on this earth,
because day and night there's someone not sleeping,
17 and I saw everything that God does—
realising that humanity can't discover everything that's done in this world—
they'll try to discover it but fail.
Even if a wise person claimed to know,
they wouldn't be able to discover it.
9:1 Indeed I set my mind to examine all this
and concluded that godly and wise people and their work is in God's hands.
Being loved or being hated, humankind doesn't know what's ahead of them.
2 We all have the same fate whether godly or wicked,
or good or pure or impure,
whether you sacrifice or not,
or you're good or disobedient,
or you make a promise or you're the subject of a promise.
3 There's evil in everything that's done in this world:
that same final event for everyone.
Yes, humankind's minds are full of evil and madness during their lifetimes,
and after that they join the dead.
4 Anyone who's joined to the living has hope,
because a dog that's alive is better than a lion that's dead,
5 because the living know that we'll die
but the dead don't know anything
and have no further reward because their memory is forgotten.
6 Their love and hatred and their envy will have already perished,
and they no longer have a part in everything that's done in this world.
7 So go and enjoy eating your food and drinking your wine
because God has already approved what you've been doing.
8 Always let your clothes be clean and white,
and don't spare the use of lotion on your head.
9 Live together with the wife that you love
for all the length of your pointless life that you're given in this world,
because that's your allocation in your life
and in the work that you're doing in this world.
10 Everything that you find to do, do it well,
because in the grave where you'll be going,
there's no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.
11 I again saw in this world
that the fastest ones don't always win the race,
the most powerful side doesn't always win the war,
wise people don't always have enough to eat,
intelligent people don't always get wealthy,
and people with understanding don't always win favour,
because chance and timing affects them all.
12 You see, humanity doesn't know when their time is about to be up:
just like a fish getting caught in a deadly net,
or birds that get caught in a trap,
so too people can get caught out when trouble suddenly hits them.

Wisdom is better than stupidity

13 I also saw this about wisdom in this world
and found it powerful: 14 There was a small walled city with not so many inhabitants and a powerful king decided to attack it so he surrounded it and built large siege ramps against the walls. 15 There was a poor man in the city who was wise and used his wisdom to save it from that king, but the people soon forgot about that poor man. 16 So I concluded that wisdom is better than strength and yet the poor person's wisdom wasn't appreciated and his words were soon forgotten.
17 The words of wise people are quietly heeded—
more than those of a ruler shouting at a bunch of fools.
18 It's better to be wise than to have many weapons,
but one disobedient person will destroy a lot of good.
10:1 Dead flies make a perfumer's product stink.
Similarly, a little foolishness can ruin all your wisdom or honour.
2 A wise person's thoughts lead to protection,
^but a fool's thoughts lead to vulnerability
3 and while they're walking along the road,
the fool lacks common sense
and everyone is aware of what a fool they are.
4 If a ruler gets upset with you, don't quit your position,
because calmness will smooth over large offenses.
5 I saw another misfortune in this world:
where an error happened in front of a ruler.
6 Foolishness can happen even in high positions,
^and wealthy people can be in low positions.

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7 I've seen slaves riding horses
^and princes walking on the ground like slaves.
8 A person who digs a pit can fall into it,[15]
and an attacker who breaks through a wall gets bitten by a snake.
9 A person who pulls out rocks might be hurt by them.
Someone who splits wood might get injured by it.
10 If your iron axe head gets blunt and the owner doesn't sharpen it,
then he has to use lots of strength,
so use wisdom if you want to succeed.
11 If a snake bites before it's charmed,
the snake charmer won't be able to charge for the show.
12 A wise person's words earn them favour,
but a fool's lips destroy him—
13 as soon as he opens his mouth, foolishness comes out,
and the end of his chatter is wicked madness.
14 Then the fool continues again with more nonsense.
No one knows what will happen next.
Who can tell you what will happen in the future?
15 A foolish person's work wears him out,
because he doesn't know how to get to a city.
16 A country won't end well
if its king is young and its princes feast in the morning.
17 A country is blessed if its king comes from a noble family
and its princes eat and drink for strength and not for drunkenness.
18 With a lazy owner, the roof beams will sag.
Idle hands will result in a leaky house.
19 There's laughter around the meal table,
wine makes people glad,
and money is the answer to everything.
20 Don't curse the king even in your mind,
and don't curse the rich even in your bedroom,
because a little birdie will carry your words
and some feathered critter will pass on what you said.

The to do of wise

11:1 Throw your bread out onto the waters
because you'll find it again in several days.
2 Share it around seven or eight others
because you don't know when a calamity will hit your area.
3 If the clouds are filled with rain, they'll pour it out,
and if a tree falls to the north or the south,
wherever it falls, that's where it'll be.
4 A person who worries about the wind,
won't sow any seed,
and someone who keeps looking at the clouds,
will never harvest their crop.
5 Just as you don't know how the winds work,
or how the bones get into a pregnant woman's womb,
nor do you know how God does everything that he does.
6 Sow your seed in the morning
and don't stop planting until the evening,
because you don't know which areas will grow well,
or whether it will all succeed equally.
7 Light is sweet
and it's good for your eyes to see the sun.
8 Even if a person lives for many years,
they should take pleasure in all of them,
but remember the dark days
because everything that happens is pointless.

Advice to young people

9 Young people, enjoy being young and strong
and stay cheerful during that youthful stage.
Follow your ambitions and your desires
but be aware that God will judge you concerning all those things.
10 Don't allow yourself to be controlled by anger
and keep your body away from evil,
because youth and good looks are a vapour that passes.
12:1 Think about your creator while you're still young,
before troubling times come
and the years arrive when you'll say that you no longer find pleasure in them.
2 Yes, before the sun and the light, and the moon and the stars seem darker,
and the clouds return after the rain.
3 That day when the guards of the house will get the trembles
and the strong men will be bent over,
and the women grinding grain will stop because there's only a few of them left,
and the women looking out the windows will no longer see clearly.[16]
4 Then the doors in the street will be shut
so that the grinding that gets louder with the first birdsong will be barely heard
and all the girls singing will be quietened.
5 The people will also become afraid of heights
and the road will have its terrors.
The almond trees will blossom
and the locusts will drag themselves along.
Normal desires will be lost
because you'll be heading for your eternal home
and the mourners will be in the streets.
6 Think about God before the silver cord gets broken
and the golden bowl breaks,
the pitcher shatters at the well

15 **RV 10:8 · Cross-ref.** Psa 7:15; Prv 26:27.

16 **RV 12:3 · Note** This may also be referring to the failing body, e.g., the guards being the arms, the stooping being the legs, the grinders being few would refer to the teeth, and the windows might refer to the eyes.

Readers' Version

and the wheel is crushed at the cistern,
7 the dust returns to the earth as it was
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
8 "Nothing but a puff of air," says the leader. "Everything is pointless."

Conclusion

9 Besides the fact that the leader was wise, he still taught the people knowledge, and he searched and evaluated. He arranged and edited many proverbs.
10 The leader searched for pleasing words, and wrote down many truthful words that would lead to godliness.
11 The words of wise people can prod others along,
and they're like nails holding things firm.
They're all given by one shepherd.
12 My son, be careful of anything in addition to these,
because there's no end to producing books
and too much study wears you out.
13 So after listening to everything, here's the final conclusion:
Respect God and strive to follow him and obey his commands,
because that's humanity's whole duty.
14 Yes, God will judge everything we do
including everything that's been hidden
whether good or bad.

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