# Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is a long poem (or song) about the meaning of life.  
  
It was written by King Solomon about 1000 BCE.

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 1

1These are the sayings of the great congregator, son of David, the king of IsraEl in JeruSalem.  
  
2The Great Congregator said:  
  
 ‘All is foolishness and waste,  
 Foolishness and waste… All that’s done is in vain.’  
 3‘What value does man gain from the things he’s done,  
 And the things he’s worked hard for under the sun?  
  
 4‘For, one generation passes away,  
 And then another arrives…  
 Yet, the earth remains throughout the ages.  
  
 5‘The sun keeps on rising and setting  
 As it draws to it’s place,  
 6And the winds blow in from the south,  
 As they move north in a circle…  
 Then they go back and come ‘round again.  
  
 7‘Even though all the rivers flow into the sea,  
 The sea doesn’t become filled.  
 For, to the places from which they all came,  
 They return and flow back again.  
  
 8‘So, no man can speak all the words he might say,  
 And his eyes can’t be filled with all he can see,  
 Nor can his ears handle all that they hear.  
  
 9‘What’s this thing that [just] happened?  
 The same thing will happen again!  
 What’s this thing being done?  
 The same will be done in the future…  
 For there’s nothing that’s new under the sun!  
  
 10‘Who can say, *Look, here’s something new*?  
 For the same thing has happened for ages  
 To those who have lived before us.  
 11But the things that they did were forgotten,  
 And those who are born in the future  
 Won’t remember the things that we’re doing now.'  
  
  
12The great congregator is the king over all of IsraEl from JeruSalem.  
  
  
 13‘So I set my heart to survey and inquire  
 About all that has happened under the sky.  
 God gave me this to distract me from bad,  
 And to lead sons of men back to Him.  
  
 14‘I’ve seen all that’s done under the sun,  
 And I find it to be a waste of [good] breath.  
 15For, things that go wrong are never made right,  
 And there’s too much that’s wrong to be counted.  
  
 16‘Once I spoke in my heart and I said:  
  
 *‘Look how great I’ve become!*  
 *For, I’ve been given more wisdom*  
 *Than all who have lived before me!’*  
  
 ‘So, I set my heart to learn wisdom and knowledge;  
 17And wisdom and knowledge, my heart then beheld,  
 As well as higher learning and proverbs.  
  
 ‘So, it became the resolve of my spirit  
 18To gain an abundance of wisdom,  
 Along with vast volumes of knowledge.  
 But, those who gain knowledge also gain pain.’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 2

1‘Then I said to my heart:  
  
 *‘Well come now;*  
 *I’ll [fill] you with joy and then you’ll know good!’*  
  
 ‘But, even that was just folly.  
  
 2‘To laughter, I said, *‘You’re a burden!’*  
 And to joy, I asked, *‘What have you achieved?’*  
 3So I thought in my heart:  
  
 *‘I’ll drink wine for my flesh!’*  
  
 ‘But my heart then led me towards wisdom.  
  
 ‘Next, I decided to hold onto joy  
 Until I could see just what kind of good  
 There is to be found among sons of men,  
 And what they can do in their short years of life.  
  
 4‘So thereafter, I went into action…  
 I planted vineyards and built many homes.  
 5I made myself gardens and parks,  
 Which I planted with all sorts of fruit.  
  
 6‘Around them, I dug ponds and lakes  
 To water the groves filled with trees.  
 7I acquired many slaves (both men and women),  
 And many native servants were born.  
  
 ‘I also acquired great herds and flocks…  
 More than all who had come before me.  
 8I collected much silver and gold for myself…  
 The possessions of kings and estates.  
  
 ‘I prepared for myself, many singers…  
 Men and women, I brought to amuse me.  
 I had men and women who just served me wine.  
  
 9‘Then, I became great as my wisdom increased  
 (More than all who had come before me);  
 And indeed, my wisdom was proven.  
  
 10‘Everything that I could ask for  
 Was there in front of my eyes,  
 And no joy was withheld from my heart.  
 But, although these efforts of my heart brought me joy;  
 This was the sum of all I’d achieved.  
  
 11‘For, when I looked at the things I had done,  
 And the things that I’d made with my hands…  
 When I considered the effort it took,  
 I saw that it all was just folly.  
 Since, no matter what our spirits may choose to do;  
 It brings no advantage under the sun.  
  
 12‘So thereafter, I examined my wisdom,  
 And I saw that it too was just folly.  
 For, who under the sun will follow my words…  
 Which man will do [what I’ve said]?  
 And although the wise may have eyes in their heads,  
 The fools will still travel in darkness.  
  
 ‘I also realized that both them and I  
 Will eventually all meet together.  
 15So, in my heart I said this:  
  
 *‘Since the fate of fools will also take me;*  
 *What value is there in my wisdom?’*  
  
 ‘And I also said this in my heart:  
  
 *‘The things that I’ve said about being a fool*  
 *Are also just [wasted breath];*  
 16*For, both the wise the fools are forgotten,*  
 *And what they do won’t be remembered.*  
 *So, how are the wise any better than fools?’*  
  
 17‘Then, I became disgusted with life;  
 For, all that I’ve done under the sun  
 Will eventually end up as bad…  
 It’s all foolish and a waste [of good] breath.  
  
 18‘I became disgusted with all of the things  
 That I had accomplished under the sun,  
 For I’ll leave it to the one who comes next…  
 19And who knows if he’s wise or another poor fool…  
 Who knows if he’ll care for the things I’ve made,  
 Or the things I’ve learned under the sun?  
 So, all of this is just folly!  
  
 20‘Thus I turned to dismiss it all from my heart…  
 All the results of my efforts,  
 And all that I’d made under the sun.  
  
 21‘For there’s a man who worked hard to gain wisdom,  
 As well as knowledge and courage.  
 But, there’s also a man who made no such effort,  
 And he will receive the same fate.  
 So, this is a great wicked folly.  
  
 22‘What happens to a man and his efforts,  
 And the resolves of his heart under the sun?  
 23During all of his days there’s pain,  
 And rage over things that are being destroyed;  
 So, during the night, his heart knows no rest…  
 Indeed, this too is just folly.  
  
 24‘Nothing worthwhile comes to a man  
 But eating, drinking, and searching for good…  
 These things truly come from God’s hands;  
 25For, without Him, who’s able to eat or to drink?  
  
 26‘To those whom He declares to be good,  
 He bequeaths wisdom, knowledge, and joy…  
 But, from the sinners, He rips this away!  
 They’re just given to those whom He finds to be good,  
 And to those who can stand before Him.  
 Yet, this is also just folly,  
 And just a waste of [good] breath.’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 3

1‘For all that’s under the sky  
 There’s a season and time…  
  
 2‘There are times to give birth and times that bring death;  
 There are times to plant and to harvest;  
  
 3‘There are times to heal and times to destroy;  
 There are times to build and tear down;  
  
 4‘There are times to laugh and to cry;  
 There are times for mourning and dancing;  
  
 5‘There are times to pick stones and to throw them;  
 There are times to hug and times to reject;  
  
 6‘There are times to lose and to find;  
 There are times to collect and discard;  
  
 7‘There are times to plant and times to rip out;  
 There are times to speak or be quiet;  
  
 8‘There are times to love and times to show hate;  
 There are times for peace and for war…  
  
 9‘So, what can your efforts accomplish?  
  
 10‘I’ve seen the amusements God’s given  
 To the sons of men to distract them…  
 11Yes, all that God’s made is good in its time.  
 And although He’s put the ages into our hearts,  
 No man can know all that’s been done  
 From the most ancient times to the present.  
  
 12‘I knew that there’s nothing good in [his efforts],  
 Unless they please [him]  
 And do him good in life;  
 13So, when a man has it all  
 (All that he needs to eat and to drink),  
 He will know that his ways have been blest,  
 And he’ll know that these gifts came from God.  
  
 14‘All that God does lasts through ages;  
 So to them, you can add nothing more,  
 Nor can you take it away.  
 For, all that God has accomplished  
 Was done so we’d live before Him in fear.  
 15And all that is, has been before…  
 Yes, it’s all happened before,  
 And God searches to see what we’ve chosen.  
  
 16‘I’ve also noticed that under the sun,  
 There’s a place where the godless are judged  
 And a place where the righteous are judged.  
 17So, in my heart, I’ve concluded  
 That both the unrighteous and just will be judged.  
 Yes, there’s a season for all,  
 And for every deed, there’s a right time.  
  
 18‘I said in my heart what sons of men say…  
 That God views us like we’re cattle.  
 19For, man’s outcome is the same as his herds…  
 As this one dies, so dies the other,  
 Since we all share the very same breath.  
  
 ‘So, how are men better than cattle? They aren’t,  
 And it’s all just a joke!  
 20For we all return to the very same place…  
 We come from the dust and return to the dust.  
 21So, who knows if man’s breath goes upward,  
 Or the breath of his cattle goes into the ground?  
  
 22In all of this, I saw [little] that’s good,  
 Except to find joy in the things that we do…  
 Yes, this is all we’ve been given.  
 For, who’ll lead us to see  
 The things that will happen after [we’re gone]?

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 4

1‘Yes, I’ve turned and I’ve seen it all…  
 The extortions and other such things  
 That will happen to all under the sun.  
 I’ve seen power in the hands of extorters,  
 And I’ve seen the tears of the swindled…  
 Then, no one arrived to bring comfort.  
  
 2‘I’ve also praised the things of the dead;  
 For, more have died than have lived,  
 3And the best of these two is the one not yet born…  
 The one who has not seen the evil  
 In what will be done under the sun.  
  
 4‘I beheld all their efforts and acts of great courage…  
 Men’s rivalries with their companions.  
 And I see that it all is just foolish…  
 It’s all a huge waste of breath.  
  
 5‘The fool folds his hands… Then he eats his own flesh!  
 6But it’s better to enjoy a handful in peace  
 Than to have twice as much in distress;  
 For, this is also a waste of good breath.  
  
 7‘I turned and noticed man’s foolish ways…  
 All that he’s done under the sun.  
 8For, there are those who live all alone,  
 And who have had no dependents.  
 But, although they have no brothers or sons,  
 They deprive their lives of things that are good.  
 And indeed, this too is just folly…  
 It’s just a distraction from evil.  
  
 9‘Two are better than living alone,  
 For the efforts of two return a good wage…  
 10If he stumbles, his partner will lift him.  
 But, woe to the one who stumbles and falls,  
 And has no partner to raise him.  
  
 11‘When two share a bed, they’ll be warm…  
 But, one alone can’t keep himself warm.  
 12And a person alone can be beaten,  
 While two make a better defense…  
 Yet a three-corded rope is harder to break.  
  
 13‘It’s better to be a poor but wise child  
 Than a king who’s foolish and old…  
 One who no longer listens [to council].  
 14For he reigns within his own ‘prison,’  
 And in his own kingdom, has nothing.  
  
 15‘I’ve gazed upon all of the living  
 (All who are walking under the sun),  
 And I see the next generation  
 That will soon become their replacements.  
  
 16‘There’s no limit to all of the people,  
 Or to those who have come before.  
 And since the last take no joy in the first;  
 This too is foolish and a waste of good breath.

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 5

1‘Watch your feet as you enter God’s House  
 (Whenever you go there to listen),  
 And bring an offering that’s better  
 Than the rest of the gifts of the foolish  
 Who are unaware of the evil that comes.  
  
 2‘Don’t let your mouths speak too quickly  
 Or let your hearts be too hasty  
 When making [a vow] in the presence of God.  
 For, God is up in the heavens,  
 And you’re here on the earth;  
 So, let your words remain few.  
  
 3‘As many [concerns] bring [bad] dreams;  
 Many words are heard from the voices of fools.  
 4So, when you make a vow to [your] God,  
 Don’t waste any time to repay it,  
 Since He doesn’t like vows that are foolishly made.  
  
 ‘So, whatever you vow, you should bring!  
 5And it’s best that you don’t make a vow  
 Than to vow and then fail to pay it!  
  
 6‘Don’t let your mouth lead your flesh into sin,  
 And don’t say too much in the presence of God.  
 [Don’t say] stupid things,  
 And don’t make Him angry with your words,  
 Or He’ll bring destruction to the works of your hands.  
  
 7‘So, although you may have many daydreams and follies,  
 Fear to say many words,  
 Whenever you stand before God.  
  
 8‘If you see the needy extorted and robbed  
 By lawsuits or other legal actions;  
 Don’t give this too much attention.  
 For, from above, the High One keeps watch…  
 He sees all that happens under [the sky].  
  
 9‘And although the land’s bounty is there for us all,  
 Even a king needs his fields to be worked.  
  
 10‘But for those who love silver, there’s never enough,  
 And with plenty comes even more young…  
 And indeed, this too is just folly.  
 11For, when you have many good things,  
 There’ll also be many to eat it.  
 So what value is there in getting much more,  
 When it’s just to be seen by your eyes?  
  
 12‘Sleep is always sweet to a slave,  
 Whether he has little or much…  
 But the rich never get enough sleep.  
  
 13‘I’ve seen all this illness under the sun…  
 For there are those who store up much treasure,  
 14Which is thereafter lost in hard times.  
 So, wealth is just a distraction from bad.  
  
 ‘When a man fathers a son,  
 The child arrives here with nothing at all.  
 15Naked he comes from his mother’s womb,  
 And when he dies, he leaves the same way…  
 With nothing to show for his efforts,  
 And nothing to carry back in his hands.  
  
 16‘Indeed, this is illness that’s evil;  
 For, as he arrives is how he returns.  
 And what advantage has he gained from his efforts,  
 When they’re [blown away] in the wind?  
  
 17‘In darkness and mourning, men fill their days…  
 In anger, illness, and rage.  
 18Yet, I’ve seen good in the things that we eat and drink,  
 And I’ve also seen good from man’s efforts…  
 In the things he’s accomplished under the sun,  
 And in the portion that God has allowed him.  
  
 19‘For, those who gain wealth and possessions from God,  
 Are allowed to own them and eat them.  
 Thus, they reap the joy of their efforts…  
 And these are [the true] gifts from God!  
 20So, although they’ll forget most days of their lives,  
 God amuses them with the joy in their hearts.

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 6

1‘There’s something bad that I’ve seen,  
 Which is common to all under the sun.  
 2It’s when God gives a man wealth,  
 Along with possessions, and glory,  
 So that he lacks nothing his soul could desire…  
 Then he’s not allowed the time to [enjoy] it,  
 And thereafter, it’s given to strangers…  
 Yes, this is a sickness and folly.  
  
 3‘If a man should live to 100  
 (No matter how long the days of his years),  
 And his life has never known good things;  
 Before he’s buried, I’d say:  
  
 *‘It would have been better if he’d been miscarried.’*  
  
 4For, from darkness he came and in darkness he left,  
 And in darkness his name will be covered.  
  
 5‘Indeed, he knew not the sun,  
 And none would know him from others.  
 6And if he came back and lived thousands [of years],  
 But he still never saw any good;  
 Wouldn’t things still be the same?  
  
 7‘So, all men can do is just fill their mouths,  
 Since their lives never reach their fulfillment.  
 8And what advantage have the wise over fools?  
 For, only the poor put just living first.  
  
 9‘It’s better to have a dream in your eyes  
 Than to see what will really happen in life;  
 So, all of that’s just folly…  
 It’s just a waste of good breath.  
  
 10‘Whenever something new comes along,  
 It was already named [in the past].  
 And although a man may know his own [strength],  
 He can’t know when someone is stronger.  
  
 11‘There’s so much that makes foolishness grow,  
 12And what does this mean for a man?  
 Who knows what will be the best parts in his life,  
 Or how many of his days will be foolish?  
 For, his life is much like a shadow,  
 And who can report to a man  
 What under the sun will succeed him?’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 7

1‘A good name is better than oil,  
 And the day that you die is much greater  
 Than the day you were born.  
  
 2‘So it’s better to go to a funeral  
 Than to spend time at a banquet…  
 For, that’s the end of all men,  
 And it’s good for all who are living  
 To take such good warnings to heart.  
  
 3‘Indignant rage is better than laughter;  
 For a face that’s been hurt creates a good heart.  
 4So the wise at heart are at funerals,  
 While the foolish heart [searches for] pleasure.  
  
 5‘It’s better to hear the scolding of the wise  
 Than to listen to the [praising] of fools.  
  
 6‘As the [crackling] of tinder under a pot,  
 Is the sound of the laughter of fools;  
 For, this is also just folly.  
  
 7‘Extortion makes wise people crazy;  
 For it destroys the greatest plans of their hearts.  
  
 8‘The way that a matter turns out  
 Is [more important] than how it began.  
  
 ‘It’s better [for a man] to forgive  
 Than to have a high-minded spirit.  
  
 9‘Don’t get angry too quickly;  
 For, rage rests in the bosoms of fools.  
  
 10‘Don’t ask why past days were better;  
 For in asking such things, there’s no wisdom.  
  
 11‘True wisdom brings plenty of good  
 To those who can still see the sun;  
 12For, wisdom is in the sun’s shadow,  
 And in the shadow of silver.  
  
 ‘The advantage of those who have wisdom  
 Is that those who’ve found it will live [longer] lives.  
  
 13‘Behold the actions of God;  
 For, who can add to the things that He brings?  
  
 14‘Enjoy the good life during good days,  
 For you know that bad days will come!  
  
 ‘Look! Harmonious words, God sent through this man,  
 So people will need nothing more!  
  
 15‘I’ve seen it all in my foolish days…  
 I’ve seen the righteous unjustly destroyed,  
 And the irreverent allowed to keep doing what’s bad.  
  
 16‘Don’t be too discerning or righteous,  
 So you won’t overwhelm all the others.  
 17Nor should you be disrespectful of them,  
 Lest you harden and die before it’s your time.  
  
 18‘It’s best to hang on to all that’s good  
 And not to get your hands dirty;  
 For, everything comes to those who fear God.  
  
 19‘Wisdom has much greater power  
 Than 10 mighty men in a city.  
  
 20‘There’s no man on earth who’s righteous…  
 There are none who are good and free from all sins.  
  
 21‘Don’t keep all the bad that’s said in your heart,  
 And don’t notice when you’re cursed by your servants.  
 22For, against you, they’ll say wicked things,  
 And often they’ll hurt you at heart…  
 Just as you’ve often cursed others.  
  
 23‘All of these things, I’ve tested as wisdom;  
 But, although I may say that I understand,  
 It has stayed too far from my grasp…  
 24It’s too high above me and too deep below;  
 So, who’s able to find it?  
  
 25‘To understand, I’ve searched my heart through…  
 I’ve looked it all over and sought what’s wise.  
 I’ve reasoned and seen how the godless are fools,  
 And of how they’re misled to do wrong.  
  
 26‘I find her more bitter than death…  
 The woman with snares and nets in her heart,  
 And who creates slaves with her hands.  
 Only those who are found to be good before God  
 Will be delivered from her,  
 While those who sin will be captured.’  
  
27The Great Congregator says:  
  
 ‘Look! This is what I’ve found,  
 I’ve counted and carefully searched…  
 28Seeking for such ones with my whole soul…  
 But, I was unable to find  
 A man in a thousand who’s [righteous],  
 And none at all among women!  
  
 29‘Yet, this is the one thing I’ve found:  
 God deals with the man who’s upright,  
 And He searches for ways to reward him.’  
  
 ‘But, who knows who truly is wise,  
 And who understands the meanings of proverbs?’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 8

1‘Wisdom will make faces brighter,  
 While impudent faces are hated.  
  
 2‘Watch the mouth of a king  
 Because of the oath that God swore!  
 3Don’t depart from his face in a hurry,  
 And don’t go to him for wrong reasons;  
 For, he’ll do whatever he pleases,  
 4And then, who can ask of the king:  
  
 *‘Why did you make [that decision]?’*  
  
 5‘Those who keep the Commandments don’t contemplate evil;  
 For, wise hearts discern right ways and right times.  
  
 6‘There’s a time and a ruling for all,  
 And the knowledge of men ranges widely.  
 7But, since no one knows what will happen,  
 Who can foretell what the future will hold?  
  
 8‘No man controls [his own] life,  
 Nor is he able to keep it in check.  
 None can avoid the day of their deaths,  
 And none can avoid days of war…  
 Nor can the irreverent avoid what they’re due.  
  
 9‘I’ve now seen it all…  
 I’ve given my heart to all under the sun…  
 And I’ve found that all men can do,  
 Is just bring to bad on themselves.  
  
 10‘I’ve seen the irreverent carried to tombs  
 From a place that’s Holy.  
 They were also praised in the city  
 For the things they’d done…  
 And this is also just folly.  
  
 11‘When no one opposes the wicked,  
 Men’s hearts feel safe in turning towards bad.  
 12And those who are guilty of sins,  
 Just go on living their lives.  
  
 ‘But, I know that good comes to those who fear God,  
 And before Him, the rest should feel fear.  
 13For, good doesn’t really come to the godless,  
 And what they do doesn’t lengthen their days.  
 So, they’re nothing but shadows [that pass],  
 Because they’ve shown no fear of God.  
  
 14‘There’s even more folly that’s done on the earth…  
 As when the righteous receive what the guilty deserve,  
 And the godless receive what the righteous deserve…  
 Yes, this is also just folly!  
  
 15‘So, although I may sing their praises in joy,  
 There’s nothing good that happens to men  
 Anywhere under the sun,  
 Other than eating, drinking, and pleasure…  
 Yes, that’s all there is to man’s efforts…  
 It’s what he’s been given by God  
 As [his portion] under the sun.  
  
 16‘So I turned my heart to learn wisdom  
 And to overlook what’s done on the earth.  
 For, both day and night, men sleep with [closed] eyes,  
 So they can’t see all that happens.  
  
 17‘Then I started to observe the actions of God,  
 Which men under the sun haven’t noticed.  
 For, despite all the efforts they put in their search,  
 They’ve been unable to find it.  
 And although the wise speak of knowledge,  
 They too are unable to find it.  
 But because I gave my heart to discernment;  
 These are the things that my heart came to see.’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 9

1‘The deeds of the righteous and wise  
 Are in the hands of our God.  
 And with all of their loves and dislikes,  
 Man can’t really comprehend it…  
 2For, foolish are the ways of all men!  
  
 ‘There are things that happen to the righteous,  
 And things that happen to the godless…  
 And to either, can come good or evil.  
  
 ‘There are also the clean and unclean;  
 There are those who bring sacrifices,  
 And those who offer God nothing.  
 Yet, the same things [can happen to] both…  
 To the good as well as the sinners…  
 To those who choose to swear oaths,  
 And to those who fear to swear oaths.  
 3In all of this, there’s evil  
 In what’s done under the sun…  
 For the same things can happen to both.  
  
 ‘Indeed; men’s hearts are filled with what’s bad,  
 And it leads them to madness throughout their lives…  
 Then they go to the grave.  
  
 4‘But, for the living, there’s still hope,  
 Since a living dog is much greater  
 Than a mighty lion that has died.  
 5For the living know that they’ll die,  
 While the dead know nothing at all,  
 Nor do they have a wage,  
 Since the memory of them is forgotten.  
  
 6‘Their loves and dislikes are both gone,  
 And their zeal has already perished.  
 Then, throughout the age they’ll not be involved  
 In whatever is done under the sun.  
  
 7‘So, eat your bread in contentment,  
 And drink to your heart with fine wines…  
 And God will think well of your actions.  
  
 8‘May your clothes always be white,  
 And may there be plenty of oil for your head.  
  
 9‘Share what you have with the woman you’ve loved  
 All the days of your wasted life.  
 For it’s all that you’ll get under the sun,  
 Since the days of your life are a folly…  
 Yes, this is the sum of your life  
 For all of your efforts under the sun.  
  
 10‘So whatever your hands find to do,  
 Do it with all of your power!  
 For, there’s no doing, thinking, wisdom, or knowledge  
 In the place of the dead where you’re going.  
  
 11‘I turned and I saw that under the sun,  
 The race isn’t won by those quick on their feet,  
 Nor are battles all won by the mighty.  
 The wise aren’t always those who eat bread,  
 And the discerning aren’t always the rich;  
 Nor are those with knowledge shown favor.  
  
 ‘Yet, there’s a time and a meeting for all,  
 12And no one knows when this time will arrive.  
 As fish being caught in a net,  
 And as birds being trapped in a snare;  
 The sons of men will be swiftly caught  
 In a bad time that arrives all too quickly.  
  
 13‘I’ve beheld all this wisdom under sun,  
 And it rests heavily upon me.  
  
 14‘If a city is small with just a few men,  
 And a mighty king comes to attack,  
 Building high siege mounds around it;  
 15And if a wise man who’s poor can be found there,  
 And his wisdom results in saving that town;  
 All will forget that he’d been poor.  
  
 16‘So, this is what I can tell you:  
  
 *‘Wisdom is better than power.’*  
  
 But the wisdom of the poor is treated with contempt,  
 And none pay attention to their words.  
 17Yet, the words of the wise who have nothing  
 Should be heeded over the words of the foolish  
 Who may have been given the power,  
 18Since wisdom is better than weapons of war,  
 And a single error can wipe out the good.’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 10

1‘As a dead fly can spoil a good ointment;  
 A little folly can conquer great wisdom.  
  
 2‘The hearts of the wise are at their right hands,  
 But the hearts of fools stay on their left.  
 3So, whichever way a fool chooses to go;  
 In his heart, he’s sure that he’ll fail,  
 Since he thinks that he can’t succeed.  
  
 4‘If the spirit of a ruler flares against you,  
 Don’t turn away from your place;  
 For, [patience] heals all great sins.  
  
 5‘I’ve observed a wickedness under the sun…  
 It’s when a ruler does something in haste,  
 6And puts a fool over important things,  
 While those who’ve proven their worth are put low…  
 7I’ve seen ‘slaves’ who are riding on horses,  
 And ‘princes’ who are walking as slaves on the ground.  
  
 8‘The one who’s digging a cesspool  
 Is also the one who’ll fall in it;  
 And those who move boundary markers,  
 Will find themselves bitten by snakes.  
  
 9‘Quarry workers may be harmed by the rocks [they’ve hewn],  
 And those who split logs are in danger.  
  
 10‘If the axe isn’t sharp, you’ll work harder;  
 So, doing what’s wise paves the way to success.  
  
 11‘If a snake-charmer whispers and the serpent still bites;  
 All of his charming is worthless.  
  
 12‘Words from a wise mouth bring favor,  
 While foolish lips rip it away.  
 13And if foolish words are accepted;  
 It’ll end in what’s wicked and crazy.  
  
 14‘The fool often speaks many words,  
 Although he doesn’t really know what will happen,  
 Or what will soon come to be.  
 So, who’ll walk behind and announce him?  
  
 15‘The efforts of fools bring them trouble…  
 For, they know not the right ways to enter a town.  
  
 16‘Woe to you, O great city,  
 Where your king is just a young [man],  
 And your princes eat meals in the mornings.  
 17Rather, blest is the land  
 Where the king has been born of nobles,  
 And whose princes eat at the right times.  
 For, the things that they eat makes them strong,  
 So they’ll never be shamed.  
  
 18‘By sloth and neglect a home [falls apart],  
 And with idle hands, [its roof] starts to leak.  
  
 19‘Bread, wine, and oil are made to cause laughter,  
 And to bring joy to the living…  
 But, they must also be [paid for].  
  
 20‘Never curse a king in your mind,  
 Nor curse the rich in your bedrooms or closets.  
 For your words will be carried by birds in the skies,  
 And those with wings will report what you’ve said.’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 11

1‘Scatter your seeds on the water,  
 And after some time, you’ll find them.  
 2Yes, share what you have with seven or eight [other people],  
 Since you don’t know what bad may come to the land.  
  
 3‘If clouds become filled, they’ll send rain to the ground.  
 And if a tree falls towards the north of the south,  
 Wherever it falls, it’ll stay.  
 4So, those who look to the wind may not plant,  
 And those who look to the clouds may not reap.  
 5For, attempting to know which way the wind blows,  
 Is like knowing the bones in the womb of a mother…  
 You don’t know the actions of God,  
 Or any of the things He will do.  
  
 6‘So, start your planting in the morning,  
 And don’t rest your hand ‘til the evening;  
 For, you never know what will grow over there,  
 Or what will grow best over here…  
 Or if the two will grow well together.  
  
 7‘Daylight is sweet and it’s good for the eyes  
 To be able to see by the sun.  
 8But, although a man’s years may bring him much joy,  
 He will also know many days that are dark…  
 And all that will come is just folly.  
  
 9‘Take joy, young man, in your youth;  
 And may your heart do good while you’re young.  
 May your heart walk in ways that are pure,  
 Not in the ways that you see with your eyes…  
 For, know that this leads to God’s judgment.  
  
 10‘So, remove all the rage from your heart,  
 And all the wicked ways from your flesh;  
 For, youth’s thoughtless ways are all folly!’

### Ecclesiastes

## Chapter 12

1‘Remember your Creator in the days of your youth;  
 For, bad days will come [all too soon],  
 And the years will arrive when you’ll say:  
  
 *‘I never really wanted [to see] them!’*  
  
 2‘[It’s a time when] the ‘sun’ becomes dark,  
 And you’ll not see the light of the moon or the stars,  
 Or the clouds passing by after rain.  
  
 3‘It’s a day when the ‘watchman’ starts to tremble…  
 When the powerful man is bent double,  
 And the grinders cease, because they’re few.  
  
 Then, ‘women’ will stare from their ‘windows’ at darkness,  
 4And they’ll lock all their doors  
 In fear of the sounds of those grinding in the market.  
  
 ‘Then the sound of a sparrow will wake you,  
 And the daughters of song will be humbled.  
 5From above, you’ll look down and see  
 Frightening things on the road.  
  
 ‘Then, at the time when ‘almonds’ should blossom,  
 The ‘locusts’ will grow to be many,  
 And ‘capers’ will drop on the ground…  
 For, you’ll have gone to your home of the ages.  
  
 ‘Then, people will circle the market,  
 Beating their chests in mourning for you.  
 6For the silver cord has been severed;  
 The gold decoration is broken;  
 The bucket at the well has been shattered;  
 And the wheel has rolled into the pit.  
  
 7‘For, that which is dust went back to the ground  
 From which it once had been taken;  
 And the breath has also returned  
 To the God by whom it was given.’  
  
8Says the great congregator:  
  
 ‘Oh how silly and foolish!’  
  
9Yet to him, came even more wisdom,  
 And he taught all his knowledge to men…  
 He traced it all out and composed it as proverbs.  
  
10The Great Congregator searched for the words,  
 And he wrote them as right ways of truth:  
  
 11‘As words to the wise and as ox goads…  
 As nails that are hammered in tight.  
 They’re agreeable things from a shepherd;  
 12So, carefully guard them, my son!  
  
 ‘For, many scrolls have been written  
 (Yes, to them, there’s no end),  
 And spending much time thinking about them  
 Is just a weariness to the flesh.  
  
 13‘But listen, for this is what I’ve concluded:  
  
 ‘Fear God and keep His Commandments…  
 This is all that there is for a man!  
  
 14‘The rest just leads to judgment by God,  
 Who decides whether we’ve been bad or good.’