
ECCLESIASTES 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 pleasure in them";

Youth should remember their Creator, Ecc 12:1. A description of old age and its infirmities, with the causes of death and dissolution, Ecc 12:2-9. How the Preacher taught the people knowledge, Ecc 12:9-11. General directions, and conclusion of the work, Ecc 12:12-14.

Verse 1

Remember thy Creator - בוראִיךְ Boreeycha, thy Creators. The word is most certainly in the plural number in all our common Hebrew Bibles; but it is in the singular number, בוראֵךְ Borecha, in one hundred and seventy-six of Dr. Kennicott's MSS., and ninety-six of De Rossi's; in many ancient editions; and in all the ancient versions. There is no dependence on the plural form in most of the modern editions; though there are some editions of great worth which exhibit the word in this form, and among them the Complutensian, Antwerp, Paris, and London polyglots.

The evidence, therefore, that this text is supposed to give to the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, is but precarious, and on it little stress can be laid; and no man who loves truth would wish to support it by dubious witnesses. Injudicious men, by laying stress on texts dubious in themselves, and which may be interpreted a different way, greatly injure the true faith. Though such in their hearts may be friends to the orthodox faith, they are in fact its worst friends, and their assistance is such as helps their adversaries.

But what does the text say? It addresses the youth of both sexes throughout the creation; and says in effect: -

I. You are not your own, you have no right to yourselves. God made you; he is your Creator: he made you that you might be happy; but you can be happy only in him. And as he created you, so he preserves you; he feeds, clothes, upholds you. He has made you capable of knowing, loving, and serving him in this world, and of enjoying him in his own glory for ever. And when you had undone yourselves by sin, he sent his Son to redeem you by his blood; and he sends his Spirit to enlighten, convince, and draw you away from childishness, from vain and trifling, as well as from sinful, pursuits.

II. Remember him; consider that he is your Creator, your loving and affectionate Father. In youth memory is strong and tenacious; but, through the perversion of the heart by sin, young people can remember any thing better than God. If you get a kindness from a friend, you can remember that, and feel gratitude for it; and the person is therefore endeared to you. Have any ever given you such benefits as your Creator? Your body and soul came from him; he gave you your eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, etc. What blessings are these! how excellent! how useful! how necessary and will you forget Him?

III. Remember him in thy Youth, in order that you may have a long and blessed life, that you may be saved from the corruption and misery into which young people in general run; and the evils they entail upon themselves by giving way to the sinful propensities of their own hearts. As in youth all the powers are more active and vigorous, so they are capable of superior enjoyments. Faith, hope, and love, will be in their best tenor, their greatest vigor, and in their least encumbered state. And it

will be easier for you to believe, hope, pray, love, obey, and bear your cross, than it can be in old age and decrepitude.

IV. Remember him Now, in this part of your youth - you have no certainty of life; now is yours, tomorrow may not be. You are young; but you may never be old. Now he waits to be gracious; tomorrow may be too late. God now calls; his Spirit now strives; his ministers now exhort. You have now health; sin has not now so much dominion over you as it will have, increasing by every future moment, if you do not give up your hearts to your Maker.

V. There is another consideration which should weigh with you: should you live to old age. it is a very disadvantageous time to begin to serve the Lord in. Infirmities press down both body and mind, and the oppressed nature has enough to do to bear its own infirmities; and as there is little time, so there is generally less inclination, to call upon the Lord. Evil habits are strengthened by long continuance; and every desire and appetite in the soul is a strong hold for Satan. There is little time for repentance, little for faith, none for obedience. The evil days are come, and the years in which you will feelingly be obliged to say, Alas! "we have no pleasure in them;" and, what is worse, the heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 2 Before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain;

Verse 2

While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened - i.e., in the Spring, prime, and prosperity of life.

Nor the clouds return - The infirmities of old age of which Winter is a proper emblem, as spring is of youth, in the former clause of this verse.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 3 in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look out of the windows are darkened,

Verse 3

In the day when the keepers of the house - The Body of man is here compared to a House: - mark the metaphors and their propriety.

1. The keepers shall tremble - the hands become paralytic, as is constantly the case, less or more, in old age.
2. The strong men shall bow - The legs become feeble, and unable to support the weight of the body.
3. The grinders cease because they are few - The teeth decayed and mostly lost; the few that remain being incapable of properly masticating hard substances or animal food. And so they cease; for soft

or pulpy substances, which are requisite then, require little or no mastication; and these aliments become their ordinary food.

4. Those that look out of the windows - The optic nerves, which receive impressions, through the medium of the different humours of the eye, from surrounding objects - they are darkened; the humours becoming thick, flat, and turbid, they are no longer capable of transmitting those images in that clear, distinct manner, as formerly. There may be an allusion here to the pupil of the eye. Look into it, and you will see your own image in extreme minature looking out upon you; and hence it has its name pupillus, a little child, from pupus, a baby, a doll; because the image in the eye resembles such. The optic nerve being seated at the bottom of the eye, has the images of surrounding objects painted upon it; it looks out through the different humors. The different membranes and humours which compose the eye, and serve for vision, are, the tunica conjunctiva, the tunica sclerotica, the cornea, the iris, the pupil, the choroides, and the retina. The iris is perforated to admit the rays of light, and is called the pupil; the retina is a diffusion of the optic nerve in the bottom of the eye, on which the images are painted or impressed that give us the sensation we term sight or vision. All these membranes, humours, and nerves, are more or less impaired, thickened, or rendered opaque, by old age, expressed by the metaphor, "Those that look out of the windows are darkened."

ECCLESIASTES 12: 4 and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

Verse 4

And the doors shall be shut in the streets -

5. The doors - the lips, which are the doors by which the mouth is closed.

6. Be shut in the streets - The cavities of the cheeks and jaws, through which the food may be said to travel before it is fitted by mastication or chewing to go down the aesophagus into the stomach. The doors or lips are shut to hinder the food in chewing from dropping out; as the teeth, which prevented that before, are now lost.

7. The sound of the grinding is low - Little noise is now made in eating, because the teeth are either lost, or become so infirm as not to nsuffer their being pressed close together; and the mouth being kept shut to hinder the food from dropping out, the sound in eating is scarcely heard. The teeth are divided into three kinds: -

1. The dentes incisores, or cutting teeth, in the front of the jaw.

2. The dentes canini, or dog teeth, those in the sides of the jaws, for gnawing, or tearing and separating hard or tough substances. And,

3. Dentes molares, or grinding teeth, the posterior or double teeth, in both jaws, generally termed the grinders; because their office is to grind down the substances that have been cut by the fore teeth, separated into their parts or fibres by the dog teeth, and thus prepare it for digestion in the stomach.

8. He shall rise up at the voice of the bird - His sleep is not sound as it used to be; he slumbers rather than sleeps; and the crowing of the cock awakes him. And so much difficulty does he find to respire

while in bed, that he is glad of the dawn to rise up and get some relief. The chirping of the sparrow is sufficient to awake him.

9. All the daughters of music shall be brought low - The Voice, that wonderful instrument, almost endless in the strength and variety of its tones, becomes feeble and squeaking, and merriment and pleasure are no more. The tones emitted are all of the querulous or mournful kind.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 5 yes, they shall be afraid of heights, and terrors will be on the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goes to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets:

Verse 5

When they shall be afraid of that which is high -

10. Being so feeble, they are afraid to trust themselves to ascend steps, stairs, etc., without help. And when they look upwards, their heads turn giddy, and they are ready to fall.

11. Fears shall be in the way - They dare not walk out, lest they should meet some danger, which they have not strength to repel, nor agility to escape. A second childishness has taken place - apprehensions, fears, terrors, and weakness.

12. The almond tree shall flourish - $\Upsilon\text{אנִי}$ yenaets, not flourish, but fall off. The hair begins to change, first gray, then white; it having no longer that supply of nutritive juices which it once had, this animal vegetable withers and falls off. The almond tree, having white flowers, is a fit emblem of a hoary head; or as Hasselquist says, who observed the tree in full flower in Judea, "like an old man with his white locks."

13. The grasshopper shall be a burden - Even such an inconsiderable thing as a locust, or a very small insect, shall be deemed burdensome, their strength is so exceedingly diminished. In cases of the gout, especially in old men, the shadow of a person passing by puts them to acute pain! How much less can they bear the smallest pressure! But probably the words refer to the man himself, who, bent at the loins, and his arms hanging down, exhibits some caricature of the animal in question. The poor grasshopper has become a burden to himself. Another interpretation has been given of the grasshopper; but I pass it by as impertinent and contemptible; such commentators appear as if they wished to render the text ridiculous.

14. Desire shall fail - Both relish and appetite for food, even the most delicate, that to which they were formerly so much attached, now fails. The teeth are no longer able to masticate the food, or have all dropped out; the stomach no longer able to digest any thing; and, as the body is no longer capable of receiving nourishment, appetite and relish necessarily fail.

15. Because man goeth to his long home - אל בית עולמו el beith olamo, "to the house of his age;" the place destined to receive him, when the whole race or course of life shall be finished; for עולם olam takes in the whole course or duration of a thing; if applied to a dispensation, such as the Law, it takes in its whole duration; to the life of man, it takes in the whole life; to time, it includes its whole compass; to eternity, it expresses its infinite duration. So old age terminates the olam, the complete duration of human life; and when life is no longer desired, and nutrition ceases, the olam of man is terminated. My old MS. Bible translates it, The hous of his everlastingness.

16. He is just departing into the invisible world; and this is known by the mourners going about the streets, the long hollow groans and throat rattlings which proceed from him; the sure prognostications of the extreme debility and speedy cessation of those essential animal functions next mentioned.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 6 before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the spring, or the wheel broken at the cistern,

Verse 6

Or ever the silver cord be loosed - We have already had all the external evidences of old age, with all its attendant infirmities; next follow what takes place in the body, in order to produce what is called death, or the separation of body and soul.

1. The silver cord - The medulla oblongata or spinal marrow, from which all the nerves proceed, as itself does from the brain. This is termed a cord, from its exact similitude to one; and a silver cord, from its color, as it strikingly exhibits the silver gray; and from its preciousness. This is said to be loosed; as the nervous system became a little before, and at the article of death, wholly debilitated. The last loosing being the fall of the under jaw, the invariable and never-failing evidence of immediate death; a few struggles more, and the soul is dismissed from its clay tenement.

2. The golden bowl be broken - The brain contained in the cranium, or skull, and enveloped with the membranes called the dura and pia mater; here called a bowl, from its resemblance to such a vessel, the container being put for the contained; and golden because of its color, and because of its exceeding preciousness as has been noticed in the former case. Broken - be rendered unfit to perform its functions, neither supplying nor distributing any nervous energy.

3. Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain - The vena cava, which brings back the blood to the right ventricle of the heart, here called the fountain, המבוע hammabbua, the spring whence the water gushes up; properly applied here to the heart, which by its systole and diastole (contraction and expansion) sends out, and afterwards receives back, the blood; for all the blood flows from, and returns back to, the heart.

4. The wheel broken at the cistern - The great aorta, which receives the blood from the cistern, the left ventricle of the heart, and distributes it to the different parts of the system. These may be said, as in the case of the brain above, to be broken, i.e., rendered useless; when, through the loosening of the silver cord, the total relaxation of the nervous system, the heart becomes incapable of dilatation and contraction, so that the blood, on its return to the right ventricle of the heart, is not recessed, nor that already contained in the ventricles propelled into the great aorta. The wheel is used in allusion to the Asiatic wheels, by which they raise water from their wells and tanks, and deep cisterns, for domestic purposes, or to irrigate the grounds. Thus, then, the blood becomes stagnate; the lungs cease to respire; the blood is no longer oxidized, all motion, voluntary and involuntary, ceases; the body, the house of the immortal spirit, is no longer tenable, and the soul takes its flight into the eternal world. The man D-I-E-S! This is expressed in the following verse: -

ECCLESIASTES 12: 7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

 Verse 7

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God -

5. Putrefaction and solution take place; the whole mass becomes decomposed, and in process of time is reduced to dust, from which it was originally made; while the spirit, הרוח haruach, that spirit, which God at first breathed into the nostrils of man, when he in consequence became a Living Soul, an intelligent, rational, discoursing animal, returns to God who gave it. Here the wise man makes a most evident distinction between the body and the soul: they are not the same; they are not both matter. The body, which is matter, returns to dust, its original; but the spirit, which is immaterial, returns to God. It is impossible that two natures can be more distinct, or more emphatically distinguished. The author of this book was not a materialist.

Thus ends this affecting, yet elegant and finished, picture of Old Age and Death. See a description of old age similar, but much inferior, to this, in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, 5:76-82.

It has been often remarked that the circulation of the blood, which has been deemed a modern discovery by our countryman Dr. Harvey, in 1616, was known to Solomon, or whoever was the author of this book: the fountains, cisterns, pitcher, and wheel, giving sufficient countenance to the conclusion.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher. "All is vanity!"

Verse 8

This affecting and minute description of old age and death is concluded by the author with the same exclamation by which he began this book: O vanity of vanities, saith Koheleth, all is vanity. Now that man, the masterpiece of God's creation, the delegated sovereign of this lower world, is turned to dust, what is there stable or worthy of contemplation besides? All - All is Vanity!

ECCLESIASTES 12: 9 Further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge. Yes, he pondered, sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

Verse 9

Because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge - And in order to do this he took good heed - considered what would be most useful. He set in order - collected and arranged, many parables, probably alluding to the book over which we have already passed.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 10 The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written blamelessly, words of truth.

Verse 10

He sought to find out acceptable words - דברי חפץ dibrey chephets, words of desire, words of will; the best, the most suitable words; those which the people could best understand. But these words were not such as might merely please the people; they were words of truth; such as came from God, and might lead them to him.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 11 The words of the wise are like goads; and like nails well fastened are words from the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

Verse 11

The words of the wise - Doctrines of faith, illustrated by suitable language, are as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, בעלי אספות baaley asuphoth, the masters of collections, those who had made the best collections of this kind, the matter of which was of the most excellent nature; every saying sinking as deeply into the mind, by the force of the truth contained in it, as a nail well pointed does into a board, when impelled by the hammer's force. These masters of collections have been supposed to be public persons appointed by the prince himself, the sole shepherd, to see that nothing was put into the people's hands but what would be profitable for them to read; and that, when any wise man gave public instructions, a good scribe sat by to take down the words; and then the master examined what he had written, to see that it was upright, and that the words were doctrines of truth. These were something like our licensers of the press; but the existence of such is little more than conjecture.

After all, masters of assemblies may mean public teachers; that which was written, the oracles of God, out of which they instructed the people; the one Shepherd, God Almighty, from whom they received their authority and unction to preach the truth; and by the energy of whose Spirit the heavenly teaching was fastened in their hearts, as a well-driven nail in a sound piece of wood.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 12 Furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

Verse 12

And farther, by these, my son, be admonished - Hear such teachers, and receive their admonitions; and do not receive the grace of God in vain.

Of making many books there is no end - Two thousand years have elapsed since this was written; and since that time some millions of treatises have been added, on all kinds of subjects, to those which have gone before. The press is still groaning under and teeming with books, books innumerable; and no one subject is yet exhausted, notwithstanding all that has been written on it. And we who live in these latter times are no nearer an end, in the investigation of Nature and its properties; of God, his attributes, his providence, his justice, and his mercy; of Man, his animal life, his mode of nutrition and existence, and his soul and its powers; of Jesus, and the redemption by him; of Eternity, and what it implies as exhibiting to us the pains of the cursed, and the glories of the blessed. Of several of these we know no more than they who have lived five thousand years before

us; nor do we know any thing certainly by the endless books that have been published, except what bears the seal of the God of heaven, as published in that word which was declared by his Spirit.

And much study is a weariness of the flesh - O how true is this! Let the trembling knees, the palsied hands, the darkened eyes, the aching heart, and the puzzled mind of every real student declare! And should none more worthy of the name of student be within reach to consult, the writer of this work is a proof in point.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 13 This is the end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

Verse 13

After all, the sum of the great business of human life is comprised in this short sentence, on which some millions of books have been already written!

Fear God, and Keep His Commandments

1. Know that He Is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
2. Reverence him; pay him adoration.
3. Love him, that you may be happy.

Keep his commandments - They are contained in two words:

1. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;"
2. "And thy neighbor as thyself."

Blessed be God, much reading and much study are not necessary to accomplish this, which is called **אדם כל** col haadam, the whole of Adam; the whole that God required of the first man and of all his posterity. But the gospel of Jesus Christ must be understood to comprehend the full force of this short saying.

The word duty, added here by our translators, spoils, if not Perverts, the sense.

The whole passage is rendered with great simplicity by Coverdale: - "The same preacher was not wyse alone: but taught the people knowledge also. He gave good hede, sought out the grounde, and set forth many parables. His diligence was to fynde out acceptable wordes, right scripture, and the wordes of trueth. For the wordes of the wyse are like prickes and nales that go thorow, wherewith men are kepte together: for they are geven of one Shepherd onely. Therefore be warre (my sonne) that above these thou make thee not many and innumerable bookes, nor take dyverse doctrynes in hande, to weery thy body withall. "Let us heare the conclusion of all thinges; Feare God, and kepe his comaundementes, for that toucheth all men; for God shall judge all workes and secrete thinges, whether they be good or evell."

I shall give the same from my old MS. Bible: -

And wan Ecclesiastes was most wiis he taght the peple, and told out what he had don, and enserchinge maade many parablis. He soght profitable wordis, and wrote most right sermons, and ful of trewth, The wordis of wismen as prickis and as nailis into herte pigt: that bi the counseyle of

maisteris ben geven of oon scheperd. More thann thes sone myn, ne seche thou; of making many bokes is noon eend, and oft bethinking is tormenting of the flesche. Eend of spekinge alle togydir heere mee. Drede God, and his hestis kepe; that is eche man. Alle thingis that ben maad schal bringen into dome, for eche erid thinge, whithir good or evyl it be.

ECCLESIASTES 12: 14 For God will bring every work into judgement, with every hidden thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.

Verse 14

For God shall bring every work into judgment - This is the reason why we should "fear God and keep his commandments."

1. Because there will be a day of judgment.
2. Every soul of man shall stand at that bar.
3. God, the infinitely wise, the heart-searching God, will be judge.
4. He will bring to light every secret thing - all that has been done since the creation, by all men; whether forgotten or registered; whether done in secret or in public.
5. All the works of the godly, as well as all the works of the wicked, shall be judged in that day; the good which the godly strove to conceal, as well as the evil which the wicked endeavored to hide.

This, then, will be the conclusion of the whole mortal story. And although in this world all is vanity; yet there, "vanities will be vain no more." Every thing whether good or evil, will have its own proper stable, eternal result. O God! prepare the reader to give up his accounts with joy in that day! Amen.

Masoretic Notes

Number of verses, 222.

Middle verse, Ecc 6:10.

Sections, 4.

The Arabic subjoins this colophon: - "Praise be to God for ever and ever!" "By the assistance of the Most High God this book of Ecclesiastes, which is vanity of vanities, written by Solomon the son of David who reigned over the children of Israel, is completed."

The Syriac has, "The end of the book of Koheleth."

There are others, but they are of no importance.