

who enjoys but myself?⁷ ²⁶To the man, namely, who pleases Him He has given ⁹the wisdom and shrewdness to enjoy himself¹⁰; and to him who displeases, He has given the urge to gather and amass—only for handing on to one who is pleasing to God. That too is futile and pursuit of wind.

3 A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:¹¹

- 2 A time for ^b-being born^b and a time for dying,
A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;
- 3 A time for ^c-slaying and a time for healing,^c
A time for tearing down and a time for building up;
- 4 A time for weeping and a time for laughing,
A time for wailing and a time for dancing;
- 5 A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;
- 6 A time for seeking and a time for losing,
A time for keeping and a time for discarding;
- 7 A time for ripping and a time for sewing,
A time for silence and a time for speaking;
- 8 A time for loving and a time for hating;
A time for war and a time for peace.
- 9 What value, then, can the man of affairs get from what he earns? ¹⁰I have observed the business that God gave man to be concerned with: ¹¹He brings everything to pass precisely at its time; He also puts eternity

²⁶חַזֵּז מִמְּנִי: בַּי לְאָדָם שְׁטוּב
לְפָנָיו נָמֵן חַכְמָה וְרֻעָה
וְשְׁמַמָּה וְלִחְטָאָה נָמֵן עֲנֵנִי
לְאָסָף וְלִכְנוֹס לְתַהַת לְטוֹב
לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים גַּם־זֹה בְּכָל
וּרְעֹוֹת רַוִּית:

- 1 לְבָל זָמוֹן וְעֵת לְכָל־חַפֵּץ
תְּחִתַּת הַשְּׁמִים:
- 2 עֵת לְלִדְתָּה וְעֵת לְמֹות
עֵת לְפָעָה וְעֵת לְעַקּוֹר
- 3 עֵת לְהַרְגוֹן וְעֵת לְרִפְאָא
עֵת לְפָרוֹז וְעֵת לְבָנּוֹת:
- 4 עֵת לְבָבוֹת וְעֵת לְשָׁחוֹק
עֵת סְפָד וְעֵת רַקּוֹד:
- 5 עֵת לְהַשְּׁלִיךְ אָבָנִים
וְעֵת בָּנוֹס אָבָנִים
עֵת לְחַבּוֹק
וְעֵת לְרַחְקָה מִחְקָקָה:
- 6 עֵת לְקַבְּשָׁה וְעֵת לְאָבֶד
עֵת לְשִׁמְרָה:
- 7 עֵת לְקַרְוּעַ וְעֵת לְחַפּוֹד
עֵת לְחַשּׁוֹת וְעֵת לְדִבְרָה:
- 8 עֵת לְאָהָב וְעֵת לְשָׁנָא
עֵת מְלִכָּה וְעֵת שְׁלֹום:
- 9 מְהִידְרָזָן הַעֲוֹשָׂה בְּאָשָׁר
- 10 הַוְא עַמְלָל: רְאִיוֹת אֶחָד־הָעִנוֹן
אַלְפָר נָמֵן אֱלֹהִים לְבִנֵּי־הָאָדָם
לְעָנֹות בָּו: אֶת־הַבָּל עַשְׁתָּה
יִפְהָה בְּעַתָּה נִמְשָׁךְ אֶת־הַעַלְמָם נָנוֹן
בְּלִבְבָּס מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לְאֶיְמָצָא
הָאָדָם אֶת־הַמְּעֵשָׂה אֲשֶׁר־

⁷ Some mss. and ancient versions read *mimmennu* “by His doing”

⁸⁻¹⁰ Lit. “wisdom and knowledge and enjoyment”

^a I.e. all human experiences are preordained by God; see v. 11

^{b-b} Lit. “giving birth”

^{c-c} Emendation yields “wrecking . . . repairing”; cf. I Ki. 18.30

in their mind,^a but without man ever guessing, from first to last, all the things that God brings to pass. ¹²Thus I realized that the only worth-while thing there is for them is to enjoy themselves and do what is good^e in their lifetime; ¹³also, that whenever a man does eat and drink and get enjoyment out of all his wealth, it is a gift of God.

¹⁴I realized, too, that whatever God has brought to pass will recur evermore:

Nothing can be added to it

And nothing taken from it—
and God has brought to pass that men revere Him.

¹⁵ ^fWhat is occurring occurred long since,

And what is to occur occurred long since: and God seeks the pursued. ¹⁶And, indeed, I have observed under the sun:

Alongside justice there is wickedness,

Alongside righteousness there is wickedness.

¹⁷I mused: “God will doom both righteous and wicked, for ^gthere is ^ga time for every experience and for every happening.”

¹⁸ ^fSo I decided, as regards men, to dissociate them [from] the divine beings and to face the fact that they are beasts.^h ¹⁹For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same life-breath; man has no superiority over beast, since both amount to nothing. ²⁰Both go to the same place; both came from dust and both return to dust. ²¹Who knows if a man’s life-breath does rise upward and if a beast’s breath does sink down into the earth?

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3.12

עַשְׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מִרְאֵשׁ וְעַד־
¹² סֹוףּ: יְדַעְתִּי בַּי אֵין טוֹב בָּם
 בַּי אַם־לְשָׁמוֹת וְלְעַשׂוֹת טוֹב
¹³ בְּחִיּוֹ: וְנִם בְּלִדְהָאָדָם
 שִׁיאָכֵל וְשָׁהָה וְרָאָה טוֹב
 בְּכָל־עַמְלָיו מִתְּחִזְקַת אֱלֹהִים
¹⁴ הִיא: יְרַעְתִּי בַּי בְּלִדְאָשָׁר
 יַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים הִוא יְהִי
 לְעוֹלָם עַלְיוֹ אֵין לְהֹסִיף
 וּמְמַנוֹ אֵין לְגַעַע וְרָאֵה
¹⁵ שְׁלָה שִׁירָאָרְיוֹ מַלְפָנִיו: מַה־
 שְׁהִיָה בְּבָרְהָה הָאָנָשָׁר לְהִיּוֹת
 בְּבָרְהָה וְהָאֱלֹהִים וּבְקַשְׁ
¹⁶ אַתְּדִינְרַכְתִּי: וְעוֹד רָאִיתִי
 פָתַח הַשְׁמַשׁ מִקּוֹם הַמְּשִׁפְטָה
 שְׁמָה הַרְשָׁעָה וּמִקּוֹם הַצְּדָקָה
¹⁷ שְׁמָה הַרְשָׁעָה: אִמְרָתִי אֲנִי
 בְּלִבִּי אֶתְהָצְדִיק וְאַתְּ
 הַרְשָׁעָה יַשְׁפֵּט הָאֱלֹהִים בַּי־
 עַת לְכָלְחַפֵּץ וְעַל בְּלִי־
 הַמְּעֻשָּׂה שֵׁם: אִמְרָתִי אֲנִי
¹⁸ בְּלִבִּי עַל־דְּבָרַת בְּנֵהָרָם
 לְבָעֵם הָאֱלֹהִים וּלְרָאֹת
¹⁹ שְׁהָסָבָה מִהְמָה? לְהָמָה? בַּי
 מִקְרָה בְּיִדְהָאָרְם וּמִקְרָה
 הַבְּהִמָה וּמִקְרָה אַחֲרָלְהָם
 בְּמִוּת זֶה בָּן מִוּת זֶה וְרִיתָם
 אַחֲרָלְבָל וּמוֹתָר הָאָרָם מִן־
 הַבְּהִמָה אֲנִי בַּי הַבָּל הַבָּל:
²⁰ הַבָּל הַיְהָ מַוְדַחַעַפְר וְהַבָּל
 שָׁב אַל־הַעֲפָר: מַי יְרַע
 רִיתָם בְּנֵהָאָרְם הַעַלְהָה דָיוָה
 לְמַעַלָה וְרוֹתָה הַבְּהִמָה

^a I.e. He preoccupies man with the attempt to discover the times of future events; cf. 8.17

^e I.e. what the author has already concluded (2.24) is good

^f Meaning of parts of verse uncertain

^{g,g} Shift of a diacritical point yields “He has set”

^h Contrast Ps. 8.5-6

22I saw that there is nothing better for man than to enjoy his possessions, since that is his portion. For who can enable him to see what will happen afterward?

4 I further observed^a all the oppression that goes on under the sun: the tears of the oppressed, with none to comfort them; and the power of their oppressors—with none to comfort them. 2Then I accounted those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living; 3and happier than either are those who have not yet come into being and have never witnessed the miseries that go on under the sun.

4I have also noted that all labor and skillful enterprise come from men's envy of each other—another futility and pursuit of wind!

5 [True,]

The fool folds his hands together^b
And has to eat his own flesh.

6 [But no less truly,]

Better is a handful of gratification
Than two fistfuls of labor which is pursuit of wind.

7And I have noted this further futility under the sun: 8the case of the man who is alone, with no companion, who has neither son nor brother; yet he amasses wealth without limit, and his eye is never sated with riches. For whom, now,^c is he amassing it while denying himself^c enjoyment? That too is a futility and an unhappy business.

9^dTwo are better off than one, in that they have greater^e-benefit from^e their earn-

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3.22

הַרְבָּתָה הָיָה לְמַטָּה לְאָרֶץ:
וְרָאִיתִי בַּי אַזְּנוֹ טֻבָּמָאָשָׁר
יִשְׁמַח הָאָדָם בְּמַעַשׂוֹ בַּי-
הָיָה חִלְקוֹ בַּי מַיְּוִיכָּאָנָּבָן:
לְרָאֹת בְּמַה שִׁיחַיָּה אַחֲרָיו:

ד 1 וְשַׁבְּתִי אָנָּי וְאֶרְאֶה אַחֲרָכֶל-
הַעַשְׂלִים אֲשֶׁר גַּעֲשִׁים פָּתָח
הַשְּׁמַשְׁוֹנָה וְדַמְעַתְּהַעַשְׁלִים
וְאַזְּנוֹ לְהַמְּמַנְּחָם וּמִינְחָם
עַשְׂלִיקָם בָּה וְאַזְּנוֹ לְהַמְּנַחָּם
2 מְנַחָּם: וְשַׁבְּחָאַנְיָה אַחֲרַתְּמַתְּרִים
שְׁבָכֶר מְתוֹן מְרַתְּחִתִּים אֲשֶׁר
3 הַמְּהַחְיִים עַרְבָּה: וּטֻובָּ
מְשִׁינְחָם אֶת אַשְׁרַדְעָנוּ לְאָהָ
הַיָּה אֲשֶׁר לְאַדְרָאָה אַתְּ
הַמְּעַשָּׂה הַרְעָאָשֶׁר גַּעֲשָׁה
4 פָּתָח הַשְּׁמַשָּׁה: וְרָאִיתִי אָנָּי
אַחֲרָכֶל-עַמְּלָל וְאַתְּ בְּלָ-
כְּשַׁרְזַׁן הַמְּעַשָּׂה בַּי קְיָה
קְנַתְּה-אִישׁ מְרַעְיוֹ נִסְדִּיה
5 הַכְּבֵל וּרְעוֹת רָוִת: הַכְּסִילָּ
חַבְקָה אַחֲרִינְיוֹ וְאַכְלָל אַחֲ-
6 בְּשָׁרוֹ: טֻוב מְלָא כְּפָנָה
מְפֻלָּלָא חַפְנִים עַמְּלָל וּרְעוֹת
7 רָוִת: וְשַׁבְּחָי אָנָּי וְאֶרְאֶה הַכְּבֵל
8 פָּתָח הַשְּׁמַשָּׁה: יְשַׁ אַחֲרָדָן וְאַזְּנוֹ
שְׁנַי נַּמְּ בָּנוֹ וְאַחֲרַיְלָנוֹ וְאַזְּנוֹ
קְזַׁע לְכָל-עַמְּלָנוֹ גִּסְעִינְיוֹ
לְאַחֲרַבְעָעָע עַשְׁר וְלִמְרֵי | אָנָּי
עַמְּלָל וּמְחַסְרָ אַחֲרַנְפְּשָׁ
מְטוּבָה נִסְדִּיה הַכְּבֵל וְעַנְיַן רַע
9 הָוָא: טֻובִים הַשְּׁנִים מַן-
הַאַחֲרָדָן אֲשֶׁר יְשַׁלְּחָם שְׁבָר

^a Cf. 3.16

^b I.e. does not work; cf. Prov. 6.10; 24.33

^{c-c} Lit. "am I amassing . . . myself?"

^d 4.9-5.8 consists of a series of observations of which each one is introduced by some slight association with what precedes. The theme of 4.4-8 is not resumed until 5.9

^{e-c} Emendation yields "hope for"; cf. 2.20