

THE BOOK OF KOHELET

WRITTEN BY KING SALOMON, MAY HIS MERIT SHIELD US

CHAPTER 1

All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. (1:8)

1 The words of Kohelet, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 Vanity of vanities, said Kohelet, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. 3 What gains a man from all his labor at which he labors under the sun? 4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides for ever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to its place where it rises again. 6 The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; it whirls around continually, and the wind returns again according to its circuits. 7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; to the place from where the rivers come, there they return again. 8 All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. 9 That which has been, is what shall be; and that which has been done is what shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. 10 Is there any thing about which it may be said, See, this is new? It has been already in the ages before us. 11 There is no remembrance of former things; nor shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those who shall come after. 12 I Kohelet was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; it is a hard task that G-d has given to the sons of man to be exercised with. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. 15 That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. 16 In my heart I said, Behold, I became a great man and acquired more wisdom than all those who have been before me in Jerusalem; and my heart has seen much of wisdom and knowledge. 17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly; I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. 18 For in much wisdom there is much grief; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.

CHAPTER 2

Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as light excels darkness (2:13)

1 I said in my heart, Come now, I will try you with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and, behold, this also is vanity. 2 I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What does it achieve? 3 I sought in my heart to give myself to wine, yet guiding my heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. 4 I made great works for myself; I built houses; I planted vineyards; 5 I made gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; 6 I made pools of water, to water with it a forest of growing trees. 7 I acquired servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me; 8 I gathered also silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I acquired men singers and women singers, and, the delight of men, many women. 9 And I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me. 10 And whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them, I did not restrain my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor. 11 Then I looked at all the works that my hands had done, and at the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun. 12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly; for what can a successor to the king do over that which has already been done. 13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as light excels darkness. 14 The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walks in darkness; and I myself perceived also that one event happens to them all. 15 Then said I in my heart, As it happens to the fool, so it happens even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. 16 For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. How the wise man dies, just like the fool! 17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and striving after wind. 18 And I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it to the man that shall be after me. 19 And who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet he shall have rule over all my labor in which I have labored, and in which I have showed myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. 20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor

which I took under the sun. 21 For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skill; yet to a man that has not labored in it shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22 For what has man of all his labor, and of the striving of his heart, in which he has labored under the sun? 23 For all his days are sorrows, and his labor grief; even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. 24 There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul find enjoyment in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of G-d. 25 For who can eat, or who can enjoy pleasure more than I? 26 For G-d gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, to the man who pleases Him, but to the sinner he gives the task to gather and amass, only to hand it to one who pleases G-d. This also is vanity and striving after wind.

CHAPTER 3

I know that, whatever G-d does, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it; and G-d does it, that men should fear before him. (3: 14)

1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; 7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. 9 What gains has he who works in that in which he labors? 10 I have seen the occupation which G-d has given men to be concerned with. 11 He has made every thing beautiful in his time; also he has set the mystery of the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work which G-d has made from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for them, than to rejoice, and to do good in their life. 13 And also that it is the gift of G-d that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor. 14 I know that, whatever G-d does, it shall be for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor any thing taken from it; and G-d does it, that men should fear before him. 15 That which is, already has been; and that which is to be has already been; and G-d seeks what has been driven away. 16 And moreover I

saw under the sun that in the place of judgment wickedness was there; and that in the place of righteousness, iniquity was there. 17 I said in my heart, G-d shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. 18 I said in my heart concerning the sons of men, that G-d is testing them, that they might see that they are but beasts. 19 For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; one thing befalls them both; as the one dies, so dies the other. They have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence over a beast; for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward, and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth? 22 So I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his work; for that is his portion; who can bring him to see what shall be after him?

CHAPTER 4

Better is a handful with quietness, than both hands full of labor and striving after wind. (4:6)

1 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. 2 So I praised the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still alive. 3 And better than both of them is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. 4 And I saw that all labor, and every skill in work, come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and striving after wind. 5 The fool folds his hands together, and eats his own flesh. 6 Better is a handful with quietness, than both hands full of labor and striving after wind. 7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. 8 There is a man alone, without a companion; he neither has son nor brother; yet there is no end of all his labor; nor is his eye satisfied with riches. He may say, For whom do I labor, and bereave my soul of good? This also is vanity, indeed it is a bad business. 9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone? 12 And though a man might attack, two shall withstand him; a threefold cord is not quickly broken. 13 Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king, who no longer knows how to take care of himself. 14 For out of prison he comes to reign; or in his own

kingdom had become poor. 15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead. 16 There is no end of all the people, even of all who have been before them; yet they who come after shall not rejoice in him. This also is vanity and striving after wind. 17 Guard your foot when you go to the house of G-d; to get near to listen is better than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil.

CHAPTER 5

He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with gain; this also is vanity. (5:9)

1 Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter any thing before G-d; for G-d is in heaven, and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few. 2 For a dream comes through a multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words. 3 When you vow a vow to G-d, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools; pay what you have vowed. 4 It is better that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay. 5 Do not allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin; and do not say, before the angel, that it was an error; why should G-d be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands? 6 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also many vanities; but you, fear G-d. 7 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, do not be amazed by it; for he who is higher than the highest watches; and there are yet higher ones over them. 8 And the land has an advantage for everyone; he who works the field is a king. 9 He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with gain; this also is vanity. 10 When goods increase, they who eat them are increased; and what good is there to its owners, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? 11 The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not let him sleep. 12 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun; riches kept for their owner to his hurt. 13 But those riches perish by bad venture; and he fathers a son, and there is nothing in his hand. 14 As he came forth from his mother's womb, he shall return, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his labor, which he may carry away in his hand. 15 And this also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go; and what gains has he who has labored for the wind? 16 All his days also he eats in darkness, and he has much sorrow and sickness and wrath. 17 Behold that which I have seen; it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the

good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun during the number of the days, which G-d gave him, because that is his portion. 18 Every man also to whom G-d has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat of it, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of G-d. 19 For he shall not much remember the days of his life, in which G-d provides him with the joy of his heart.

CHAPTER 6

All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. (6:7)

1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon men; 2 A man to whom G-d has given riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacks nothing for his soul of all that he desires, yet G-d does not give him power to eat of it, but a stranger eats it; this is vanity, and it is an evil disease. 3 If a man fathers one hundred children, and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, and his soul is not content with the good, and he also has no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. 4 For it comes in vanity, and departs in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. 5 Moreover he has not seen the sun, nor known anything; this has more rest than the other. 6 And even though he should live a thousand years twice, and had not seen enjoyment. Do not all go to the same place? 7 All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. 8 For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? What has the poor man who knows how to walk among the living? 9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire; this also is vanity and striving after wind. 10 That which has been named already, and it is known what man is; nor may he contend with one who is mightier than he. 11 Seeing there are many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? 12 For who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spends like a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

CHAPTER 7

And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are fetters; whoever pleases G-d shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be caught by her. (7:26)

1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. 2 It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. 5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool; this also is vanity. 7 Surely oppression makes a wise man mad; and a bribe destroys the heart. 8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. 9 Be not hasty in your spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of fools. 10 Do not say, Why were the former days better than these? For It is not from wisdom that you ask this. 11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance; and by it there are gains to those who see the sun. 12 For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense; and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. 13 Consider the work of G-d; for who can make that straight, what he has made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider; G-d has made the one as well as the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. 15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity; there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. 16 Do not be too righteous; nor make yourself too wise; why should you destroy yourself? 17 Do not be too wicked, nor be foolish; why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you should take hold of this; but do not withdraw your hand from that either; for he who fears G-d shall come forth from them all. 19 Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers who are in the city. 20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and does not sin. 21 Also take no heed to all words that are spoken; lest you hear your servant curse you; 22 For many times has your heart known that you yourself have cursed others. 23 All this have I proved by wisdom; I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. 24 That which is far off, and very deep, who can find it out? 25 I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and foolishness which is

madness; 26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are fetters; whoever pleases G-d shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be caught by her. 27 Behold, this have I found, said Kohelet, counting one thing to another to find out the sum; 28 Which yet my soul seeks, but I find not; one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. 29 Behold, only this have I found, that G-d has made man upright; but they have sought out many schemes.

CHAPTER 8

Though a sinner does evil one hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with those who fear G-d, who fear before him (8:12)

1 Who is like the wise man? and who knows the meaning of a matter? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the boldness of his face is changed. 2 I keep the king's commandment, and in the manner of an oath of G-d. 3 Do not be hasty to leave his presence; stand not in an evil thing; for he does whatever pleases him. 4 For in the word of a king there is authority; and who may say to him, What do you do? 5 Whoever keeps the commandment shall feel no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment. 6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, though the misery of man is great upon him. 7 For he knows not that which shall be; for who can tell him when it shall be? 8 There is no man who has power over the wind to retain the wind; nor has he authority over the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war; nor shall wickedness deliver those who are given to it. 9 All this have I seen, and gave my heart to every work that is done under the sun; there is a time when one man rules over another to his own hurt. 10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the holy place, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done; this also is vanity. 11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. 12 Though a sinner does evil one hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with those who fear G-d, who fear before him; 13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, nor shall he prolong his days, which are like a shadow; because he does not fear before G-d. 14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there are just men, to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked; again, there are wicked men, to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous; I said that this also is vanity. 15 And I

commended mirth, because a man has no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry; for this will go with him in his labor during the days of his life, which G-d gives him under the sun. 16 When I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth; for neither by day nor by night one's eyes see sleep, 17 And I saw all the work of G-d, for a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man would labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; and also if a wise man claims to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

CHAPTER 9

Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good. (9:18)

1 For all this I laid to my heart, and sought to clarify all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their deeds, are in the hand of G-d; no man knows whether it is love or hatred; all is before them. 2 All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the pure, and to the impure; to him who sacrifices, and to him who does not sacrifice; as is the good man, so is the sinner; and he who swears as he who shuns an oath. 3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event to all; also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. 4 For to him who is joined to all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 5 For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know nothing, nor do they have a reward any more; for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; nor have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. 7 Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for G-d has already accepted your works. 8 Let your garments be always white; and let your head lack no ointment. 9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of the life of your vanity, which he has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in your labor in which you labor under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your strength; for there is no work, nor scheme, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, to which you are going. 11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all. 12 For man also does not know

his time; like the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and like the birds that are caught in the trap; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them. 13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me; 14 There was a little city, and few men in it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great siege works against it; 15 And a poor wise man was found in it, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that poor man. 16 And said I, Wisdom is better than might; but the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. 17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the shouting of him who rules among fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good.

CHAPTER 10

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow him up. (10:12)

1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the perfumer to send forth a foul smell; so does a little folly outweigh wisdom and honor. 2 A wise man's heart inclines him to his right hand; but a fool's heart to his left. 3 And also, on the road, when a fool walks by, his understanding fails him, and he says to every one that he is a fool. 4 If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, leave not your place; for deference pacifies great offenses. 5 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceeds from the ruler; 6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. 7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. 8 He who digs a pit shall fall into it; and whoever breaks a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. 9 He who removes stones shall be hurt by them; and he who chops wood shall be endangered by that. 10 If the iron is blunt, and one does not whet the edge, he must apply more strength; but wisdom increases skill. 11 If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage in a charmer. 12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow him up. 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is evil madness. 14 A fool is full of words; a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him? 15 The labor of fools wearies him, for he does not know how to go to the city. 16 Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes dine in the morning! 17 Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of free men, and your princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! 18 By slothfulness the beams collapse; and through idleness of the

hands the house leaks. 19 For laughter bread is made, and wine gladdens life, and money answers all things. 20 Do not curse the king, not even in your thought; and curse not the rich in your bed chamber; for a bird of the sky shall carry the voice, and that which has wings shall tell the matter.

CHAPTER 11

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know, that for all these things G-d will bring you into judgment. (11:9)

1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days. 2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for you know not what evil shall be upon the earth. 3 If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree falls to the south, or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie. 4 He who observes the wind shall not sow; and he who regards the clouds shall not reap. 5 As you do not know what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child; even so you do not know the works of G-d who makes all. 6 In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both alike shall be good. 7 And the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun. 8 And if many years lives a man, let him rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity. 9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth; and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know, that for all these things G-d will bring you into judgment. 10 And remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity.

CHAPTER 12

Vanity of vanities, said Kohelet; all is vanity (12:8)

1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw near, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them; 2 Before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; 3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look out of the windows are dimmed, 4 And the doors are shut on the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; 5 Also when they are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way, and the almond tree blossoms, and the grasshopper drags itself along, and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets; 6 Before the silver cord is removed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. 7 And the dust returns to the earth as it was; and the spirit returns to G-d who gave it. 8 Vanity of vanities, said Kohelet; all is vanity. 9 And besides being wise, Kohelet also taught the people knowledge; for he weighed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. 10 Kohelet sought to find out acceptable words; and words of truth written in proper form. 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings, which are given by one shepherd. 12 And furthermore, by these, my son, be admonished; of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. 13 The end of the matter, after all has been heard. Fear G-d, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. 14 For G-d shall bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.

The end of the matter, after all has been heard. Fear G-d, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. (12:13)