

Ecclesiastes Chapter Twelve

Remembering One's Creator (vv. 1-7)

VERSE 1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth (בְּיָמֶיךָ בְּחֹרְתֶיךָ)

אֶת־בּוֹרְאֵיךָ וְזָכַר [waw w/Qal imper.m.s. zakar remember + d.o. + Qal

part.m.p.constr.w/2m.s.suff. bara create; Creator + prep beth w/noun m.p.constr. yom day + noun f.p.constr.w/2m.s.suff. bechurim youth; and at 11:9], **before the evil days come and**

the years draw near when you will say [וְהָיָה וְהִגִּיעוּ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר]

עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא [part. adh even unto; “before” + rel.pro. asher which + neg lo + Qal impf.3m.s.

bo come + noun m.p.constr. yom day + d.a.w/adj.f.s.abs. ra-ah evil; trouble + waw w/Hiphil perf.3p. naga reach; “draw near” + noun f.p.abs. shanah year + rel.pro. asher “when” + Qal

impf.2m.s. amar say], **“I have no delight in them** [אֵין־לִי בָהֶם חֵפֶז]

[[part. ayin none; “no” + prep lamed w/1s.suff. in reference to; “from” + noun m.s.abs. chatetz delight]]”;

VERSE 2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and

clouds return after the rain (וְהָאֵוֶר וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים וְשָׁבוּ הָעָבִים אַחַר הַגֶּשֶׁם)

עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִחְשַׁךְ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ [part. adh while; “before” + rel.pro. asher + neg lo + Qal

impf.3f.s. chashak be dark; “are darkned” + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. shemesh sun + waw w/d.a.w/noun both s.abs. or light + waw w/d.a. w/noun m.s.abs. yareach moon; cp. yerach

month + waw w/d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. kokab star + waw w/Qal perf.3p. shub return + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. abh cloud + part. achar after + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. geshem rain]);

ANALYSIS: VERSES 1-2

1. The fleeting time of youth makes the enjoyment of one's life urgent (11:8-10).
2. Solomon presents a final exhortation by the employment of the imperative "remember."
3. This imperative is for the individual(s) who are in the prime of life.
4. Here the young man is admonished to "remember [his] Creator in the days of [his] youth."
5. The mention of God as "Creator" takes the advice previously given to another level.
6. The designation derives from the Hebrew verb *bara* which means 'to create.'
7. In other words, to bring into existence that which did not previously exist (54x).
8. The Greek equivalent is *ktizo* (12x; cp. *ktisis* creation 19x).
9. Curiously, the title 'Creator' is a Qal plural participle.
10. The other OT uses of this title for deity occurs as a singular participle (Isa. 27:11; 40:28; 43:1, 15; cp. Rom. 1:25; 1 Pet. 4:19).
11. The plural form is designed by grammarians as a 'plural of majesty.'
12. It is interesting to note that God is referred to as Maker by the plural participle of the verb 'to make' (*ashah*) in Job 35:10 and Isa. 54:5.
13. To remember something is to consider the object as important (Ps. 22:37; 63:6; 77:11; Hos. 2:13).
14. Its' opposite is 'to forget' and so to abandon (as in Deut. 32:18; Judg. 3:7; Pss. 78:11; 106:12, 21).
15. As will be noted in the epilogue (vv. 8-14) the remembrance is the keep God's commandments.
16. The stated reason that 'youth' is the time one should remember the Creator is because there is a time coming when the desire for the things of God will no longer exist.
17. "Before the evil days come" refers to the time before old age sets in.
18. 'Evil days' are the days of old age when a variety of physical and emotional disabilities overtake a person leading to inevitable death.
19. The observation here is the elderly people do not as a rule turn to God and His will.
20. Their inner most thought is: "I have no delight in them."
21. What is "them"?
22. This can only be a veiled reference to divine commandments and promises.
23. Old age overtakes youthful vigor, but it need not be a time of emotional distress.
24. Those who remember God, even in old age, will be happy and productive (cf. Ps. 92:14; 2 Cor. 4:16).
25. Two examples: Anna, a prophetess (Lk. 2:36) and Simeon (Lk. 2:25ff.).
26. In verse 2 the author provides the reader with a metaphor to illustrate an approaching storm.
27. The term translated "before" consists of two words: the adverb *adh* followed by the relative pronoun *asher*.
28. This combination occurs 47 times in 47 verses and is usually translated 'until' or 'before' (cf. v. 1 & v. 6).
29. "Before" in verse 2 corresponds to 'before' in verses 1 and 6.
30. The darkening of the luminaries (sun, moon, and stars) is the result of a storm.
31. Youth is the period of the shining of the luminaries (cf. 11:7 "the light is pleasant, and it is good to see the sun.").
32. The term "the light" is simply a reference to the primary light that shines upon the earth-the sun.

33. The clouds returning “after the rain” reinforces the idea of a depressing period of more bad weather.
34. This corresponds to the onset of old age.
35. Note also the opening phrase of verse 3 “in the day” followed by a mostly metaphorical presentation of the common human problems associated with old age.

The Ills of Old Age Leading to Death (vv. 3-5)

VERSE 3 in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble (שִׁזְעוּ שָׂמָרֵי הַבַּיִת)

בַּיּוֹם [d.a.w/prep. beth w/noun m.s.abs. yom day + rel.pro.prefix w/Qal impf.3m.p. zua tremble,

quiver + Qal part.m.p.constr. shamar guard; “watchmen” + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. bayith house],

and mighty men stoop [וְהִתְעִיפוּ אַנְשֵׁי הַחַיִל] [waw w/Hithpael perf.3p. awath bend;

“stoop” + noun m.p.constr. ish man + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. chayil might], the grinding ones

stand idle because they are few [וּבְטָלוּ הַטַּחֲנוֹת כִּי מְעַט] [waw w/Qal perf.3p. gatal

cease; “stand idle” + d.a.w/Qal part.f.p.abs. tachan grind; “the grinding ones” + part ki

because + Piel perf.3p. ma-at be few], and those who look through windows grow dim

[וְחָשְׁכוּ הָרְאוֹת בְּאַרְבּוֹת] [waw w/Qal perf.3p. chashak be dark; “grow dim” + d.a.w/Qal

part.f.p.abs. ra-ah see, look + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun f.p.abs. arubah window]);

VERSE 4 and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is

low [וּסְגָרוּ דְלָתִים בְּשׁוּק בְּשַׁפֵּל קוֹל הַטַּחֲנָה] [waw w/Pual perf.3p. sagar shut + noun f.

dual abs. deleth door + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun m.s.abs. shuq street + prep beth w/Qal

infin.constr. shapel be low + noun m.s.abs. qol sound + d.a.w/noun f.s.abs. techno grinding

mill],

and one will arise at the sound of the bird [וַיָּקוּם לְקוֹל הַצִּפּוֹר] [waw w/Qal impf.3m.s. qum stand; rise + prep lamed w/noun m.s.abs. qol sound + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. sippor bird], **and all the daughters of song will sing softly** [וַיִּשְׁחוּ כָּל-בָּנוֹת הַשִּׁיר] [waw w/Niphal impf.3m.p. shachach bow low; “sing softly” + noun m.s.constr. kol all + noun f.p.constr. bath daughter + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. shir song]).

VERSE 5 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road

[וְגַם מִגֹּבַהּ יִרְאוּ וְחַתְחֻתִּים בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַיִּנְאֵץ הַשָּׁקֶד] [conj. gam “Furthermore” + prep min w/adj.m.s.abs. gobah high + Qal impf.3m.p. yare fear, be afraid + waw w/noun m.p.abs. chathath terror; only here + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun both s.abs. derek road]; **the almond tree blossoms** [וַיִּנְאֵץ הַשָּׁקֶד] [waw w/Hiphil impf.3m.s. natzatz blossom + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. sheqed almond tree], **the grasshopper drags himself along** [וַיִּסְתַּבֵּל הַחֲגַב] [waw w/Hithpael impf.3m.s. shabal bear; drag oneself along in Hithpael + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. chagab grasshopper], **and the caperberry is ineffective** [וְתִפַּר הָאֲבִיוֹנָה] [waw w/Hiphil impf.3f.s. parar break, frustrate, invalidate; “is ineffective” + d.a.w/noun f.s.abs. abiyonah caperberry; only here]).

For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street (הַסֹּפְרִים)

[כִּי-הֵלֵךְ הָאָדָם אֶל-בַּיִת עוֹלָמוֹ וְסָבְבוּ בְּשׁוּק] [part ki for + Qal part.m.s.abs. halak go, walk + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam man + prep el to + noun m.s.constr. bayith house; home + noun m.s.constr.w/3m.s.suff. olam eternal + waw w/Qal perf.3p. sabab go about + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun m.s.ab.s shuq street + d.a.w/Qal part.m.p.abs. saphad mourn]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 3-5

1. Mostly everyone agrees that verse 6-7 is a poetic description of death, but there is a lack of consensus on the meaning of verses 3-5.
2. The imagery is that of a house that is in peril do to a violent storm (cf. v. 2).
3. 'House' here is a metaphor for the human body (see 2 Cor. 5:1, 2).
4. "In the day" refers to old age.
5. "The watchmen of the house tremble" refers to a deterioration of locomotion.
6. Elderly people often find it difficult to walk which involves muscular impairment.
7. "Mighty men stoop" refers to the opposite of an upright posture (skeletal issues).
8. "The grinding ones stand idle because they are few" is widely understood as a loss of teeth.
9. Keep in mind that the imagery is that of a notable household that has a variety of servants.
10. Grinders refer to women who grind grains making flour for food.
11. "Watchmen" refers to men who guard the estate.
12. "Those who look through windows grow dim" refers to failing eyesight.
13. Those who look through windows" refers the women in the house who are who are women of leisure.
14. There a four classes of individuals in this major household.
15. Two first two are male and the second two are female.
16. Two of these represent the servants and two the upper class.
17. Number one ("watchmen") and number three ("grinders") are servants.
18. Number two ("mighty men") are upper class landowners, and number four ("those who look out windows") are ladies of leisure.
19. Verse 4 is the most challenging.
20. "The doors on the street are shut" refers to the decline in social life—that is the elderly become shut-ins.
21. "The sound of the grinding mill is low" refers to the tampering off of human industry (?).
22. "And one will arise at the sound of a bird" suggests how unnerving even a familiar noise can cause alarm.
23. This may also indicate insomnia.
24. "And all the daughters of song will sing softly" suggest that merrymaking is on the wane (?).
25. In any case, verse 4 features the slowing down of normal everyday activities.
26. I think all this is somehow connected to a coming deadly storm imagery that threatens the house no matter how substantial it is.
27. Fear is heights (even insignificant ones) and fear of travel are featured in v. 5a (not metaphor here).
28. "The almond tree blossoms" refers to white/gray hair.
29. The grasshopper dragging himself along is taken to suggest that the smallest weight is a burden.
30. "The capperberry is ineffective" is a bush that sheds its bloom (defoliated) and refers to a decline in appetite, or including sexual desire.
31. The scene at the end of verse 5 envisages the death of a person in non-poetic terms.
32. "For man goes to his eternal home" refers to the afterlife, and perhaps includes the grave.
33. "Mourners go about in the street" is self-explanatory.