

## ECCLESIASTES

### Conversational Yahveh Covenant

**1:1**The Words of the Preacher, Ben-David, King in Jerusalem

**2**“*Completely pointless,*” the Preacher says;  
 “*Completely pointless! It’s all pointless.*”

**3**What do people get out of their work under the sun?

**4**One generation passes away and another comes along,  
 but the earth just goes on and on.

**5**The sun comes up, the sun goes down,  
 and hurries back to where it comes up again.

**6**The wind blows south, the wind blows north;  
 it just keeps circulating around and around. **Eccl 1:1-6**

**7**The rivers flow to the ocean; yet the ocean doesn’t run over;  
 they flow again to where they flowed before.

**8**Everything is too tiresome to talk about;  
 eyes aren’t satisfied by seeing;  
 ears aren’t fulfilled by hearing.

**9**What has been is what will be;  
 what’s been done is what’ll be done;  
 there’s nothing new under the sun.

**10**Is there anything you can say,  
 “*Look, that’s new*”?

**11**People don’t remember the past;  
 later, they won’t remember the future either.  
 The ones that come after you won’t remember you. **Eccl 1:7-11**

**12**I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. **13**I decided to examine with wisdom everything people do under the sky. It’s a grievous job God has stricken them with.

**14**I’ve looked at everything they do under the sun. It’s all pointless, like chasing the wind.

**15**What’s crooked you can’t straighten;  
 what’s missing you can’t get back.

**16**I said to myself,  
 “*I’m wiser than anybody that’s ruled Jerusalem before;*

*I've gained a wealth of knowledge."*

<sup>17</sup>I determined to experience everything from wisdom to madness and pointless behavior. I came to realize that it's all like chasing the wind.

<sup>18</sup>There's much grief in much wisdom;  
increasing knowledge increases pain.

**Eccl 1:12-18**

<sup>2:1</sup>I said to myself, "*Try pleasure; enjoy yourself.*" That turned out to have no purpose either. <sup>2</sup>Laughing's silly and pleasure's pointless. <sup>3</sup>I cast about in my mind how to cheer myself up with wine and embrace foolishness while thinking wisely.

I tried to find out what's worth doing under the sky during the few years we're alive. <sup>4</sup>I undertook big projects:

I built houses for myself;  
I planted vineyards for myself;  
<sup>5</sup>I made gardens and parks for myself,  
planted all kinds of fruit trees in them,  
<sup>6</sup>and built ponds to irrigate the trees;

<sup>7</sup>I bought male and female slaves and had home-born slaves;  
I owned bigger flocks and herds than anyone before me in Jerusalem;  
<sup>8</sup>I collected silver and gold and the treasure from kings and provinces;  
I provided for myself male and female singers and lots of concubines—men's pleasure.

<sup>9</sup>So I became great and surpassed everybody before me in Jerusalem, as my wisdom stayed with me. <sup>10</sup>I took whatever I saw that I wanted. I didn't deprive myself of any pleasure because I was pleased with my work and *pleasure* was my reward for it. <sup>11</sup>Then I looked at what I'd done and the effort I'd put into doing it. It was pointless, like chasing the wind. I hadn't gained anything under the sun.

**Eccl 2:1-11**

<sup>12</sup>So I compared wisdom to madness and fun; who can have more of that than a king? <sup>13</sup>I saw that wisdom excels fun as much as light excels darkness. <sup>14</sup>The wise can see where they're going, but the foolish walk around in the dark; yet both share the same fate. <sup>15</sup>I said, "*The fate of a fool will come to me too; so what's the point of being wise?*" <sup>16</sup>There's no more lasting memory of the wise than of the foolish. Later on, everybody will fade from memory. The wise and the foolish both die! <sup>17</sup>So I despised life because my work under the sun brought me grief. Everything's pointless, like chasing the wind.

**Eccl 2:12-17**

<sup>18</sup>So I despised everything I'd worked for under the sun because I'll have to leave it to other people. <sup>19</sup>Who knows if they'll be wise or foolish? Yet they'll control everything I worked for in wisdom under the sun. It's pointless. <sup>20</sup>So I let myself despair over everything I worked for under the sun. <sup>21</sup>After people labor with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, they have to leave it to somebody that didn't work for it. It's pointless, a great misfortune. <sup>22</sup>What do people get out of

their hard work and striving under the sun? <sup>23</sup>Their whole life is painful and grievous. Even at night their mind doesn't rest. It's all so pointless.

<sup>24</sup>There's nothing better than to eat and drink and get satisfaction out of your work. I've seen even that comes from God; <sup>25</sup>apart from him, who can eat and enjoy anything? <sup>26</sup>He gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to the ones he considers good. He gives sinners the job of accumulating wealth to give to the ones he considers good. That's pointless too, like chasing the wind.

Eccl 2:18-26

**3:1**There's a time for everything under the sky:

- <sup>2</sup>a time to be born and a time to die;
- a time to plant and a time to uproot what's planted;
- <sup>3</sup>a time to kill and a time to heal;
- a time to build and a time to tear down;
- <sup>4</sup>a time to laugh and a time to cry;
- a time to dance and a time to mourn;
- <sup>5</sup>a time to gather stones and a time to throw them away;
- a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
- <sup>6</sup>a time to search and a time to quit searching;
- a time to keep and a time to throw away;
- <sup>7</sup>a time to rip apart and a time to sew together;
- a time to speak and a time to be quiet;
- <sup>8</sup>a time to love and a time not to love;
- a time for peace and a time for war.

<sup>9</sup>What do workers get out of work? <sup>10</sup>I've seen the job God has given people to occupy themselves. <sup>11</sup>He's set an appropriate time for everything and planted eternity in their hearts, but in a way that they can't see his work beginning to end.

Eccl 3:1-11

<sup>12</sup>I realize there's nothing better for people than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live. <sup>13</sup>There's nothing better than eating and drinking and taking pleasure in their work—that's God's gift. <sup>14</sup>Everything God does is final. There's nothing to add or take away, because he has worked in such a way that people should respect him. <sup>15</sup>What will be has already been, because God does again what he's done before.

<sup>16</sup>Besides, I've seen that in place of justice and goodness there's wickedness under the sun. <sup>17</sup>I said to myself,

*“God will judge the good and the bad because he's appointed a time for everything.*

*<sup>18</sup>He tests them so they can see they're no better than animals.”*

<sup>19</sup>People and animals have the same fate: one dies like the other; they both have to breathe. People don't have any advantage. <sup>20</sup>They both came from dust, and they'll go back to it. <sup>21</sup>Who

knows if a person's spirit goes up and an animal's spirit goes down into the ground? <sup>22</sup>I've seen that there's nothing better for people than to be happy in what they do; that's their lot. Who can make them see what'll happen when they're gone?

Eccl 3:12-22

**4:**<sup>1</sup>Then I looked at the oppression that's under the sun and saw the tears of the oppressed that have no comforters because their oppressors have the power. <sup>2</sup>So I decided the dead are better off than the living, <sup>3</sup>and the ones that never existed are better off yet.

**4:**<sup>1</sup>I saw that competition between people drives work and achievement. That's pointless too, like chasing the wind. <sup>5</sup>Fools fold their hands, so their bodies atrophy. <sup>6</sup>One handful with quietness is better than two with toil—and chasing the wind.

**7:**<sup>1</sup>I saw something else that's pointless under the sun: <sup>8</sup>people with nobody that needs them—offspring or sibling, yet they work as hard as they can to get wealth, but to no end because wealth doesn't satisfy them: "*Who am I working for? Who am I depriving myself of enjoyment for?*" It's all meaningless and depressing.

Eccl 4:1-8

**9:**<sup>1</sup>Two are better than one because they can get more done. <sup>10</sup>If either falls, the other can help; misfortune awaits whoever doesn't have anybody that can help. <sup>11</sup>Besides, if two lie down together, they can keep warm; how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup>A bully can overpower someone that's alone, but two can resist. A cord with three strands doesn't break easily.

**13:**<sup>1</sup>A poor, wise youth is better off than a foolish old king who doesn't know how to accept instruction anymore. <sup>14</sup>*A youth* can come out of prison to become king, though he was born in poverty. <sup>15</sup>But I've seen people throng to the next young man to replace him, <sup>16</sup>and there's no end to his successors. But people won't be happy with those successors either. That whole scenario is pointless, too, like chasing the wind.

Eccl 4:9-16

**5:**<sup>1</sup>When you go to God's Temple, go there to listen rather than offer mindless sacrifice and not realize you're sinning. <sup>2</sup>Don't think impulsively or speak rashly in God's presence. He's in heaven, you're on earth; so don't say too much. <sup>3</sup>Working too much fosters false dreams, and talking too much makes you a fool. <sup>4</sup>When you make a vow to God, don't delay paying it. He doesn't delight in fools; pay what you vow. <sup>5</sup>It'd be better not to vow than not to pay it. <sup>6</sup>Don't sin in what you say; don't say in God's presence that you misspoke. Why have him angry with what you say and destroy your work? <sup>7</sup>When daydreams grow and words multiply, emptiness comes. Respect God, instead.

Eccl 5:1-7

**8:**<sup>1</sup>Don't be shocked if you see the poor oppressed and justice denied in the realm. One official oversees another official, higher officials oversee them, <sup>9</sup>and the king that cultivates the land to his own advantage.

**10:**<sup>1</sup>People that love money aren't satisfied with money; those who love wealth *aren't satisfied* with wealth. That's pointless too. <sup>11</sup>The more you make, the more people there are that want to get you to spend it. So what's the advantage of being an owner except to have something

to look at? <sup>12</sup>Working people's sleep is pleasant, whether they eat a little or a lot. But the full stomach of the rich doesn't let them sleep.

Eccl 5:8-12

<sup>13</sup>There's a grievous problem I've seen under the sun: wealth hoarded to the hoarder's hurt. <sup>14</sup>When he lost that wealth in a bad venture and had fathered a son, he couldn't support him. <sup>15</sup>He came naked from his mother's womb; he'll go like he came. He won't take anything with him from his labor. <sup>16</sup>That's a grievous thing: people die like they're born; so what do they get out of working for the wind? <sup>17</sup>Their whole life they eat in the dark, oppressed, sick, and angry.

<sup>18</sup>I've seen something that's fitting and good: to eat, drink, and enjoy your work under the sun for the few years God gives you; that's your reward. <sup>19</sup>It's also God's gift to all he's given wealth. He's enabled them to eat from it, receive their reward, and enjoy what they do. <sup>20</sup>They won't dwell on how long they're going to live, because God keeps them occupied with happiness.

Eccl 5:13-20

**6:1**There's a common tragedy I've seen under the sun: <sup>2</sup>people that God has given wealth and honor so they have everything they could want, but he hasn't given them a chance to enjoy them; a foreigner is enjoying them. That's a pointless tragedy. <sup>3</sup>If a man fathers 100 children and lives for however many years, but isn't satisfied with good things and doesn't even get a proper burial, then I say,

*"A miscarriage is better off <sup>4</sup>because he would have come in pointless and gone out in the dark. <sup>5</sup>A miscarriage never sees the sun or knows anything. <sup>6</sup>Even if someone lives 1,000 years twice and isn't content, what's the point? Everybody ends up in the same place."*

<sup>7</sup>All our labor is for our mouth; yet our appetite isn't satisfied. <sup>8</sup>What advantage do the wise have over the foolish? What advantage do the poor have that know how to conduct themselves with other people? <sup>9</sup>What the eyes see is better than what the soul wants. That's pointless too, like chasing the wind.

Eccl 6:1-9

<sup>10</sup>God has already decided what's going to happen, including what each of us will be. We can't argue with him about it; he's stronger than we are. <sup>11</sup>The more we say the less it means; so what's the point of talking? <sup>12</sup>Who knows what's good for us anyway during the few years of our pointless life? They'll go by like a shadow, and who can tell us what will happen under the sun when they're done?

Eccl 6:10-12

**7:1**A good reputation is better than expensive ointment;  
the day you die is better than the day you're born.

**2**It's better to go to a house of mourning  
than to a house of feasting;  
because that's the end of everyone,

and the living should take it to heart.

<sup>3</sup>Sorrow is better than laughter in this respect:  
when the face is sad, the heart can be happy.

<sup>4</sup>The heart of the wise remembers there's mourning,  
but the heart of a fool just thinks about having fun.

<sup>5</sup>It's better to listen to a rebuke from the wise  
than be regaled by the songs of a fool.

<sup>6</sup>A fool's laughter doesn't last long;  
it's like thorns crackling under a *heating* pot:  
it's pointless.

**Eccl 7:1-6**

<sup>7</sup>Oppression can turn the wise into fools;  
bribes corrupt their heart.

<sup>8</sup>Finishing is better than starting;  
patience is better than pride.

<sup>9</sup>Don't get mad quick,  
because anger thrives in the chest of fools.

<sup>10</sup>Don't say, "*Why were the old days better than now?*"  
You don't ask that because you're wise.

<sup>11</sup>Wisdom plus inheritance is good;  
it's an advantage to those who see the sun.

<sup>12</sup>Protecting knowledge is like protecting money,  
but only knowledge can save your life.

**Eccl 7:7-12**

<sup>13</sup>Think about what God does;  
who can straighten out what he bends?

<sup>14</sup>Be happy in prosperous times,  
but in hard times think about *this*:  
God has made the one as well as the other;  
so you can't be sure what will happen when you're gone.

<sup>15</sup>I've seen all kinds of things in my pointless life,  
including good people that die young and bad people that die old.

<sup>16</sup>Don't overestimate your "goodness" or "wisdom."  
Why ruin what you really are?

<sup>17</sup>Don't be excessively bad or foolish.

Why die early? <sup>18</sup>Avoid extremes.

A *humble* person that respects God

ends up with both *wise goodness and long life*.

<sup>19</sup>One wise person is stronger than ten rulers in a city.

<sup>20</sup>Nobody's *always* good; <sup>21</sup>so don't take too seriously everything you hear; you may hear your servant cursing you, <sup>22</sup>and you know how often you've cursed people.      **Ecl 7:13-22**

<sup>23</sup>I determined I'd be wise about everything, but I couldn't do it. <sup>24</sup>No one can figure out what's distant and deep. <sup>25</sup>I set my mind to knowing, investigating, looking for wisdom and explanation, to identifying sinfulness, foolishness, and folly. <sup>26</sup>I discovered more bitter than death is a woman whose heart is a snare, whose hands are chains.

<sup>27</sup>"*Here's something I've discovered,*" the Preacher says, "*combining one thing with another to reach a conclusion, 28 something I'm still looking for and haven't found. I've found a man among a thousand, but I haven't found a woman among them. 29 I've found only this: God made people godly, but they've sought out their own ways.*"

**Ecl 7:23-29**

**8:1**Who is wise enough to figure out what things mean? Wisdom puts a glow on the face and changes a harsh countenance to a radiant one.

<sup>2</sup>My advice to you is to keep the king's command that you've sworn before God to do. <sup>3</sup>Don't try to avoid your duty or put it off because it's unpleasant. The king can do what he pleases <sup>4</sup>because his word is final and you're in no position to question it. <sup>5</sup>The one that obeys his command won't come to harm because the wise know how to do it and when. <sup>6</sup>There's a right time and proper way to do everything even in times of trouble. <sup>7</sup>How can anybody avoid what nobody knows is going to happen? <sup>8</sup>None of us can keep our spirit from leaving or prevent our death from coming. There's no getting out of a war, and sin won't let people off that practice it. <sup>9</sup>I've seen all that and thought about what all people do under the sun to lord it over one another.

**Ecl 8:1-9**

<sup>10</sup>Then I saw the sinful buried who use to frequent the Holy Place. They were soon forgotten in the city where they did it. It's pointless. <sup>11</sup>The sentence against a sin doesn't always come right away. That's why people think they can get away with it. <sup>12</sup>Though a sinner sins 100 times and keeps living, I still know it'll be well with those who respect God openly. <sup>13</sup>but it won't be well for those sinners; they won't lengthen their days like a shadow because they don't respect God.

<sup>14</sup>Something else happens that's pointless too: good people treated like they're bad, and bad people treated like they're good. <sup>15</sup>So I recommend enjoying life, because there's nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy life.

**16**When I applied my mind to knowing wisdom and seeing what happens in the world (even if a person never slept), **17**I looked at everything God does and *concluded* that no one can figure out what's going on under the sun no matter how hard they try. Though the wisest may claim to understand it, they haven't figured it out.

**Eccl 8:10-17**

**9:**<sup>1</sup>I've concluded that good, wise people and what they do are in God's hands, but they don't know if love or hate lies around the corner. <sup>2</sup>It's the same for everyone. The good and the bad share the same fate whether they're ceremonially clean or not, whether they offer sacrifices or not. Good people are treated like sinners; people that take oaths are treated like ones that are afraid to. <sup>3</sup>It doesn't seem right that there's one destiny for everybody. Their hearts are perverted; their minds harbor insanity their whole life; afterward they go to the dead. <sup>4</sup>Where there's life there's hope; it's better to be a live dog than a dead lion. <sup>5</sup>The living do know they'll die; the dead don't know anything. They don't have any future because they're forgotten. <sup>6</sup>Their love, their hate, their zeal perish with them; they won't play a part in anything under the sun. **Eccl 9:1-6**

**7**So enjoy your bread and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, because God already approves of it. **8**Wear good clothes and use plenty of oil on your head. **9**Enjoy life with the wife you love all the fleeting days God gives you. That's the reward in life for your toil under the sun. **10**Whatever your hand finds to do, do it diligently; there's no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol where you're going.

**11**Again, I saw that under the sun the swift don't *necessarily* win the race, soldiers don't win the battle, the wise don't get the bread, the discerning aren't wealthy, the capable don't gain approval; time and chance interfere with everything. **12**Besides, people don't know what's going to happen to them; they're like fish in a seine or birds in a snare: they unexpectedly get caught by misfortune.

**13**I've also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it impressed me. **14**There was a small city where few people lived. A powerful king came, surrounded it, and built big siege works against it. **15**But a poor man in the city delivered it by his wisdom; yet nobody remembered that poor wise man.

**Eccl 9:7-15**

**16**So I said, "*Wisdom is better than power.*"

People often look down on poor people's wisdom  
and ignore what they say.

**17**The words of the wise heard in quietness  
are better than the shouts of a ruler among fools.

**18**Wisdom is better than weapons,  
but one sinner can destroy lots of good.

**Eccl 9:16-18**

**10:**<sup>1</sup>Dead flies even make perfume stink;  
likewise, a little foolishness can spoil wisdom and honor.

**2**A foolish heart pulls to the left;

a wise one pulls to the right.

<sup>3</sup>You can recognize fools

just by the way they walk.

<sup>4</sup>If a ruler's anger flares at you, don't react,

because composure smooths over big offenses.

**Eccl 10:1-4**

<sup>5</sup>There's a problem I've seen under the sun, an error that originates in rulers <sup>6</sup>who appoint foolish people to high positions while putting successful people in lower ones. <sup>7</sup>I've seen slaves ride horses beside princes that walk on the ground like slaves.

<sup>8</sup>If you dig a pit, you may fall in it;

if you break through a wall, you may get bit by a snake.

<sup>9</sup>If you quarry stones, you may be injured by them;

if you split logs, you may hurt yourself doing it.

<sup>10</sup>If you don't sharpen your axe,

you have to work harder;

wisdom aids success.

**Eccl 10:5-10**

<sup>11</sup>If a snake bites before it's charmed,

the charmer hasn't accomplished anything.

<sup>12</sup>Words from the wise are gracious;

the thoughts of fools destroy them.

<sup>13</sup>They begin with foolish talk,

and *foolish talk* leads to foolish deeds;

<sup>14</sup>but fools just keep talking.

Nobody knows what's going to happen;

who can tell people what will come after them?

<sup>15</sup>Fools' toil wears them out so much

they can't find their way home.

<sup>16</sup>Misfortune awaits the land whose king is a kid,

whose princes feast in the morning.

<sup>17</sup>You're a fortunate land if its king is noble

and its princes eat at normal times—

for energy, not for gluttony.

**Eccl 10:11-17**

<sup>18</sup>Through laziness, rafters sag;

through idleness, the roof leaks.

<sup>19</sup>People fix a meal for enjoyment;

wine makes life happy;

money solves everything;  
<sup>20</sup>Don't curse the king in your bedroom  
     or the rich where you sleep.  
     A bird in the sky may hear what you say  
     and spread it around. Eccl 10:18-20

**11:1**Toss your bread on the water;  
     it'll come back around a long time later.  
<sup>2</sup>Diversify your investments seven or eight ways;  
     you don't know what risks lie ahead.  
<sup>3</sup>Heavy clouds drop rain;  
     a tree stays where it falls.

<sup>4</sup>If you keep worrying about the weather, you won't sow;  
     if you keep watching the clouds, you won't reap.  
<sup>5</sup>Just like you don't know where the wind will blow  
     or how bones form in a womb,  
     you don't understand what God's doing  
     who makes everything happen.  
<sup>6</sup>Plant your seed in the morning;  
     don't be idle in the afternoon;  
     you don't know if planting in the morning  
     or afternoon is best,  
     or if one's as good as the other. Eccl 11:1-6

<sup>7</sup>Light is pleasing;  
     sunrise is pleasant to behold.  
<sup>8</sup>If you live a long time, enjoy all your years;  
     *just remember, there'll be lots of dark days,*  
     *and nothing will seem important in the end.*  
<sup>9</sup>Young people, enjoy life while you're young;  
     stay pleasant.  
     Go ahead and follow your impulses and desires;  
     *just remember, God will judge you for all of them.*  
<sup>10</sup>So don't worry; take care of your health,  
     because childhood and the prime of life soon pass. Eccl 11:7-10

**12:1**Remember your Creator when you're young,  
     before the difficult days come,

before the years close in and you say,  
 “*I don’t enjoy them anymore*”;  
<sup>2</sup>before the sun, moon, and stars grow faint  
 and clouds remain after rain;  
<sup>3</sup>when the watchmen [arms and hands?] of the house [body] are palsied  
 and strong men [shoulders?] hunch over;  
 when grinders [teeth?] stand idle because they’re few  
 and those looking out of windows [eyes?] can’t see much;  
<sup>4</sup>when the doors to the street [lips?] are shut  
 and the sound of grinding [chewing?] is muffled,  
 when you arise at the time of a bird’s chirping  
 and young women sing faintly; Eccl 12:1-4  
<sup>5</sup>when you’re afraid of falling\*  
 and scared to walk around;  
 when your hair turns white like almond-tree blossoms  
 and the grasshopper drags itself along;  
 when your appetite’s gone\*  
 and you go to your eternal home  
 while wailers walk the streets;  
<sup>6</sup>before the silver cord snaps,  
 the golden bowl breaks,  
 the pitcher by the well shatters,  
 the pulley at the cistern doesn’t work anymore;  
<sup>7</sup>when the dust returns to the earth where it was  
 and the spirit returns to the God who gave it.  
<sup>8</sup>“*Completely pointless*,” the Preacher says; “*it’s all pointless*.” Eccl 12:5-8

<sup>9</sup>Besides being a wise man, the Preacher taught the people. He weighed, studied, and classified lots of proverbs. <sup>10</sup>He endeavored to write true things and searched for expressive words.

<sup>11</sup>The words of the wise are like goads. Collections of them are like nails tightly driven; they come from one Shepherd. <sup>12</sup>My child, beware of anything more: there’s no end to writing books, and too much study wears you out.

<sup>13</sup>You’ve heard every view. Here’s the conclusion: respect God and do his will; that’s your role. <sup>14</sup>God will judge every act, everything secret, good or bad. Eccl 12:9-13

