

Teachings from the
 Teacher
 The Book of Ecclesiastes
 Chapter 2:8-26
 Thursday Morning Bible Study

1

2:8-10 - Translation

- I hoarded coins both of silver and gold, raided the treasure-houses of king, and stripped the caravans of their cargo. I filled my homes with singers and musicians, I piled crate upon crate stuffed with the most prized luxuries. I grew wealthier than any of my predecessors in Jerusalem, and yet none of this satisfied me, nothing but wisdom alone. I yielded to every desire in my eyes made known to me; I denied myself nothing. No pleasure was taboo. And in truth, my heart rejoiced in it all, and this joy was the reward for all my accumulation.

2

2:8-10 – Paraphrase

- Whatever I desired I took. I denied myself nothing, and I rejoiced in all that I had. Yes, I rejoiced! Do not pretend there is no joy in ownership or pleasure. Do not mistake me for one who denies the flesh. For such is the way of the fool who has nothing and so denies desire. There is desire, and there certainly is some pleasure in achieving one's desires. It's great! But there is no permanence in it. Pleasure, no less than knowledge, is empty of permanence, and is thus unable to bring the gift of tranquility. Only the wisdom of *chevel* does this.

3

2:8-10

- Solomon wants to live life to the fullest. He has everything at his disposal, so can test out how life really works.
- Here he is exploring what life is like with great wealth.
- He is honest and says that he found pleasure in luxury, but it did not bring lasting joy. It did not change the nature of *chevel*.
- There is no end to the pursuit of pleasure, it only leaves you wanting more and does not let you live in the moment.

4

2:8-10

- You need to know who you are, where you are, and embrace that moment.
- Solomon’s experiment is to see if there is anything in the world that will satisfy our craving for total control and permanence. His conclusion: There is nothing.
- He is not saying that all is terrible, but rather each moment is to be celebrated for what it is.

5

2:8-10

- “When we focus on what life is not, we can’t take delight in what life is.”
- How appreciative are you of life right now? That’s what wisdom is.
- “We can plan for the future, but we must not expect the future to conform to our plan. We can learn from the past, but we must not expect to be able to replicate it in the present.”

6

2:11-16

- In the final analysis, all is *chevel*. You can create whatever you want, but it won't last.
- Solomon tried wealth and pleasure, but was not able to capture *chevel*. Now he decides to try the way of wisdom and the way of folly.
- It's not that wisdom can capture *chevel* any more than folly can, but wisdom is a way to understand *chevel*, a way to navigate through it, rather than stumbling blindly in the darkness.

7

2:11-16

- But nothing, neither wisdom or folly can change the fact that everything changes!
- If there is one thing that Solomon discovered in all his experiments is that nothing is permanent.
- You can live your life as a fool or with wisdom. The end will be the same. Death will come to all.
- Wisdom will not give you permanence, but will enable you to find enjoyment in *chevel*.

8

2:17-21

- Solomon is being honest: We work hard in life, but what do we gain? We try to grasp *chevel*, but that is a vexing endeavor.
- We can accumulate a lot of things, but to what end? Just to leave it to the one who follows. We have no control over it.
- What do you get for all your toil under the sun? You end up with nothing. If we seek to control it, to keep it, we find our days filled with pain and grief.
- What have we accomplished? We have missed enjoying each day as it comes.

9

2:22-24 - Translation

• What can you show for all your effort? What value do you glean from your worrisome preoccupations? Dissatisfaction arises daily, and business is a frustration so great that your mind cannot sleep at night. To live this way is absurd. So what isn't absurd? To eat simply, and drink moderately, and do work that satisfies your soul. This is what HaElohim offers us.

10

2:22-24 - Paraphrase

• If you are trapped in the quest for permanence, each day boils with anger, frustration, and needless suffering. Night grants no rest, and your mind seethes in rage over the theft of security. You center your world on self; you pamper yourself with pity; you delude yourself with vanity – and none of it gives you what you seek. For your pursuit of permanence is but the ego's flight from truth. The pursuit is vain, the prize is mischief, and in the end all you have is what you are – *chevel* upon *chevel*.

11

2:22-24 - Paraphrase

• That is the way – eat when you are hungry, drink when you are thirsty, and make your “work” something that you are really passionate about and that satisfies your soul, and appreciate all that comes your way. For pleasure and profit are empty as the wind: these are not permanent sources of joy. Joy is *chevel*. Celebrate its coming and do not seek to halt its passing away.

12

2:22-24

- People are angry because they are not in control and things are not turning out the way they want.
- Most of the time, our issues of anger come from expecting people to meet our expectations.
- The way out of the anger is to realize that it isn't about you!
- The wisdom of *chevel* is to remember that we are not the target. Life just happens here and now.

13

2:25-26 - Translation

- For who should eat and find satisfaction if not you? To the one who is, pleases HaElohim, and HaElohim grants wisdom, intelligence, and joy. But to the hoarder addicted to things and permanence, amassing great wealth for the future, all that is gathered will pass to another more in tough with reality. So hoarding, too, is absurd and troubling.

14

2:25-26 - Paraphrase

- I have consumed it all and tired absolutely every path under the sun. Thus, I do know the way of the fool, because I tried it. I know the boundless quest for control, security, and permanence that bolsters the illusion of eternity. I know trying to hoard it all or to do it all is a fruitless pursuit, a vain chasing after the wind, leaving you tired, weak, frightened, and alone.

15

2:25-26

- Solomon is trying to help us learn the wisdom of simplicity. *Chevel* is having a simplified approach to life.
- Life has a simple formula: Eating, drinking, appreciating the moment. That's "*HaElohim*" and it's pretty awesome!
- "When we focus on what life is not, we can't enjoy life for what is."
- "We can plan for the future, but we must not expect the future to conform to our plan. We can learn from the past, but we must not expect to be able to replicate it in the present."
