

Ecclesiastes 2

JPS [Online]

The Futility of Pleasure

1I said in my heart: 'Come now, I will try thee with mirth, and enjoy pleasure'; and, behold, this also was vanity. **2**I said of laughter: 'It is mad'; and of mirth: 'What doth it accomplish?' **3**I searched in my heart how to pamper my flesh with wine, and, my heart conducting itself with wisdom, how yet to lay hold on folly, till I might see which it was best for the sons of men that they should do under the heaven the few days of their life. **4**I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; **5**I made me gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit; **6**I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the wood springing up with trees; **7**I acquired men-servants and maid-servants, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Jerusalem; **8**I gathered me also silver and gold, and treasure such as kings and the provinces have as their own; I got me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, women very many.

9So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom stood me in stead. **10**And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart had joy of all my labour; and this was my portion from all my labour. **11**Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

The Wise and the Foolish

12And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness and folly; for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. **13**Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. **14**The wise man, his eyes are in his head; But the fool walketh in darkness. And I also perceived that one event happeneth to them all. **15**Then said I in my heart: 'As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise?' Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. **16**For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will long ago have been forgotten. And how must the wise man die even as the fool! **17**So I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me; for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

The Futility of Work

18And I hated all my labour wherein I laboured under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. **19**And who knoweth whether he will be a wise man or a fool? yet will he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. **20**Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour wherein I had laboured under the sun. **21**For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skill; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. **22**For what hath a man of all his labour, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he laboreth under the sun? **23**For all his days are pains, and his occupation vexation; yea, even in the night his heart taketh not rest. This also is vanity.

24There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy pleasure for his labour. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God. **25**For who will eat, or who will enjoy, if not I? **26**For to the man that is good in His sight He giveth wisdom, and knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner He giveth the task, to gather and to heap up, that he may leave to him that is good in the sight of God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.