



Fragment of Ecclesiastes Scroll from Qumrân, probably dating from the middle of the 2nd cent. B.C. (Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums)¹

Summary of Outline

Question: 6:12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?

Answer: 7:1-12 (this is better than that)

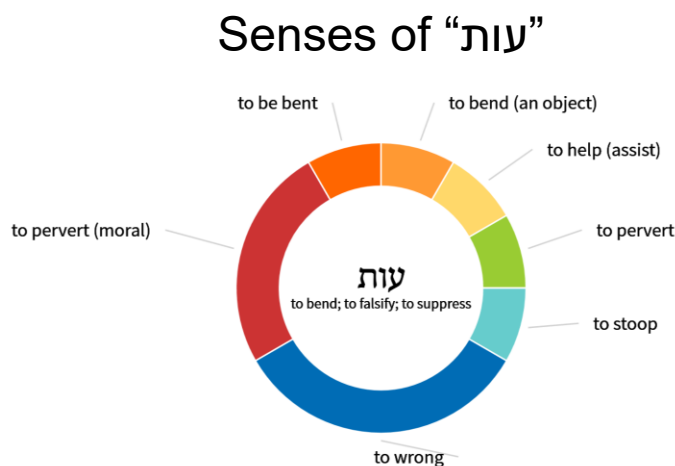
- A. Instruction: 7:13** Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?
- B. Application: 7:14** 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.
- C. Observation: 7:15** In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing.
- D. Application: 16** Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? **17** Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time?
- E. Conclusion 7:18** It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.

¹ Beecher, W. J., & Armerding, C. E. (1979–1988). Ecclesiastes. In G. W. Bromiley (Ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Vol. 2, p. 13). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Outline

A. Instruction: 7:13 Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?

a. What is the meaning of “crooked”?



Conclusion: There is no necessary moral connotation of the Hebrew word translated “crooked”

b. What has God made crooked?

When the Preacher talks about something “crooked,” he is not referring to something that is morally out of line, as if God could ever be the author of evil. Instead he is talking about some trouble or difficulty in life we wish we could change but cannot alter. -Phillip Ryken²

...verse 13 is speaking not of moral crookedness but of the shapes of things and events which we find awkward but should accept from God. It includes His judgments—for ‘the way of the wicked he “twists” ’, as Psalm 146:9 literally puts it (using this verb)—but also presumably many of life’s trials, as the next verse (14) suggests. –Derik Kidner³

² Ryken, P. G. (2010). *Ecclesiastes: Why everything matters* (pp. 161–162). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

³ Kidner, D. (1984). *The Message of Ecclesiastes: A Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance*. (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.) (p. 68). England: Inter-Varsity Press.

B. Application: 7:14 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

-All is from God so:

-Do not be Stoic (disengaged) in times of joy.

-Do not be Epicurean (God does not govern) in times of adversity.

C. Observation: 7:15 In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing.

Why is the Preacher so surprised?

Example of Calvin contrasted to reprobates:

D. Application: 7:16 Be not **overly righteous**, and do not make yourself **too wise**. Why should you destroy yourself? **17** Be not **overly wicked**, neither be a **fool**. Why should you die before your time?

“overly righteous”

-What it can't mean: evil in moderation is acceptable.

-What it probably doesn't mean: self-righteous.

-It probably refers to how one understands the limitations of righteousness. It can never merit the grace of God. To think so (even subconsciously) is:

-futile

-arrogant

-breeds joylessness

“too wise”

-pursuit of wisdom unbridled by the limitations of living in a world that is “crooked”

“overly wicked”

- what it can't mean: some wickedness is permissible
- it is an admission that V20, “Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.” ...over and against “Perfectionism”
- it includes accepting any sin pattern in our life we refuse to repent of.

“a fool”

- if wisdom is knowing the right end and how to get there, foolishness is just the opposite.
- complete rejection of any act of foolishness
- general consequence: early death.
- caveat: “There is no necessary no principle of retribution that assures the righteous that they will be better off than the wicked.- Tremper Longman III⁴

E. Conclusion 7:18 It is good that you should take hold of **this**, and from **that** withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them. (i.e.

- positively, pursue righteousness and wisdom, but remember their limitations.
- negatively: just because you will sin, do not accept it as normative, especially patterns of sin. Make no allowance for acts of foolishness.

“...if (you) ponder them they will tend to impress on (you) that fear of God which is a part of wisdom, and will guide (you) safely through all the perplexities of this life.” – Albert Barnes⁵

Psalm 92:6–7 The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: ⁷ that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; ⁸ but you, O LORD, are on high forever.

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⁴ Longman, T. (1998). *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (p. 196). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

⁵ Barnes, A. (1879). *Notes on the Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Jeremiah, Lamentations & Ezekiel*. (F. C. Cook & J. M. Fuller, Eds.) (pp. 103–104). London: John Murray.