

THE TEACHER SPEAKS

Wann Fanwar, PhD

Qohelet



Solomon

Qohelet's threefold critique

- 'hebel habelim' (1:2)
- 'under the sun' (1:9,14)
- 'chasing the wind' (1:14,17)

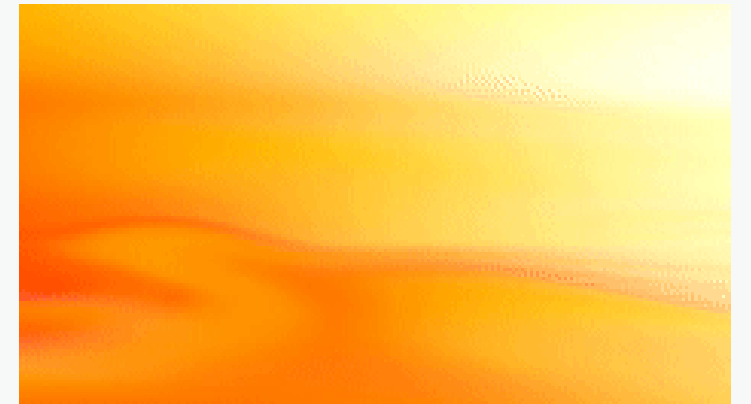


Qohelet 4:12

THE TEACHER SPEAKS 2

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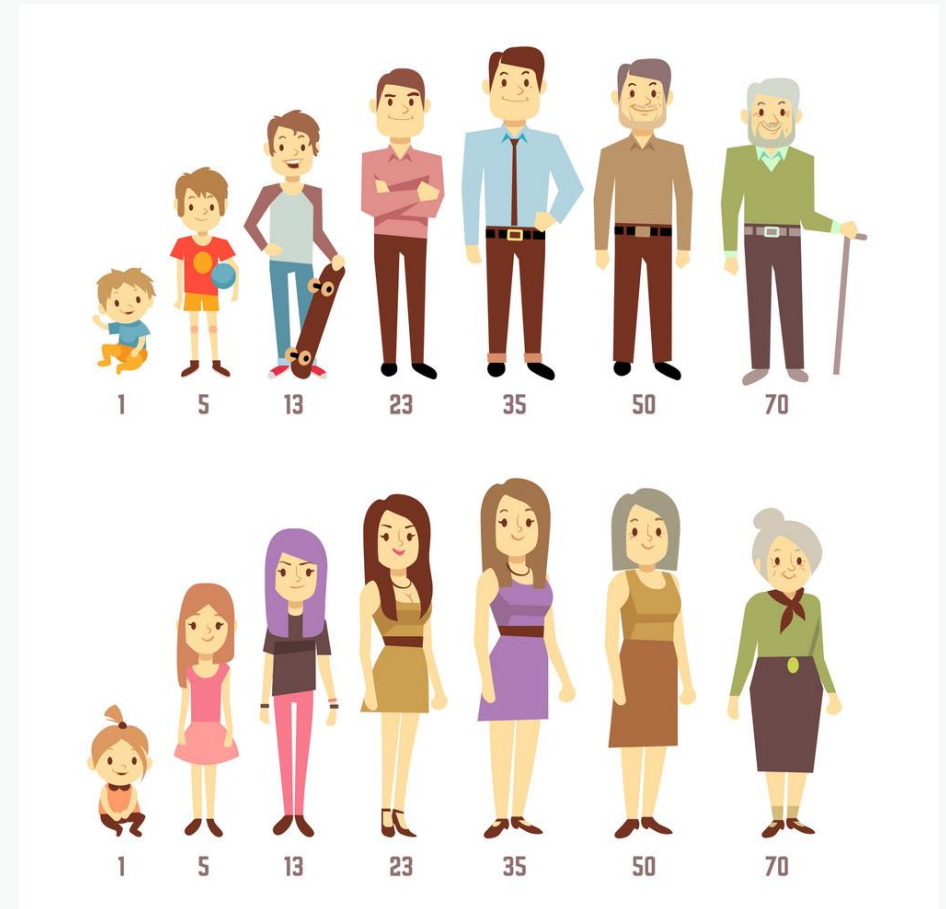
Qohelet 4:12

**What is
the
challenge?**



Dynamic-static nexus of existence

A generation goes and a generation comes,
but the earth remains
forever. (1:4)



Circularity of life

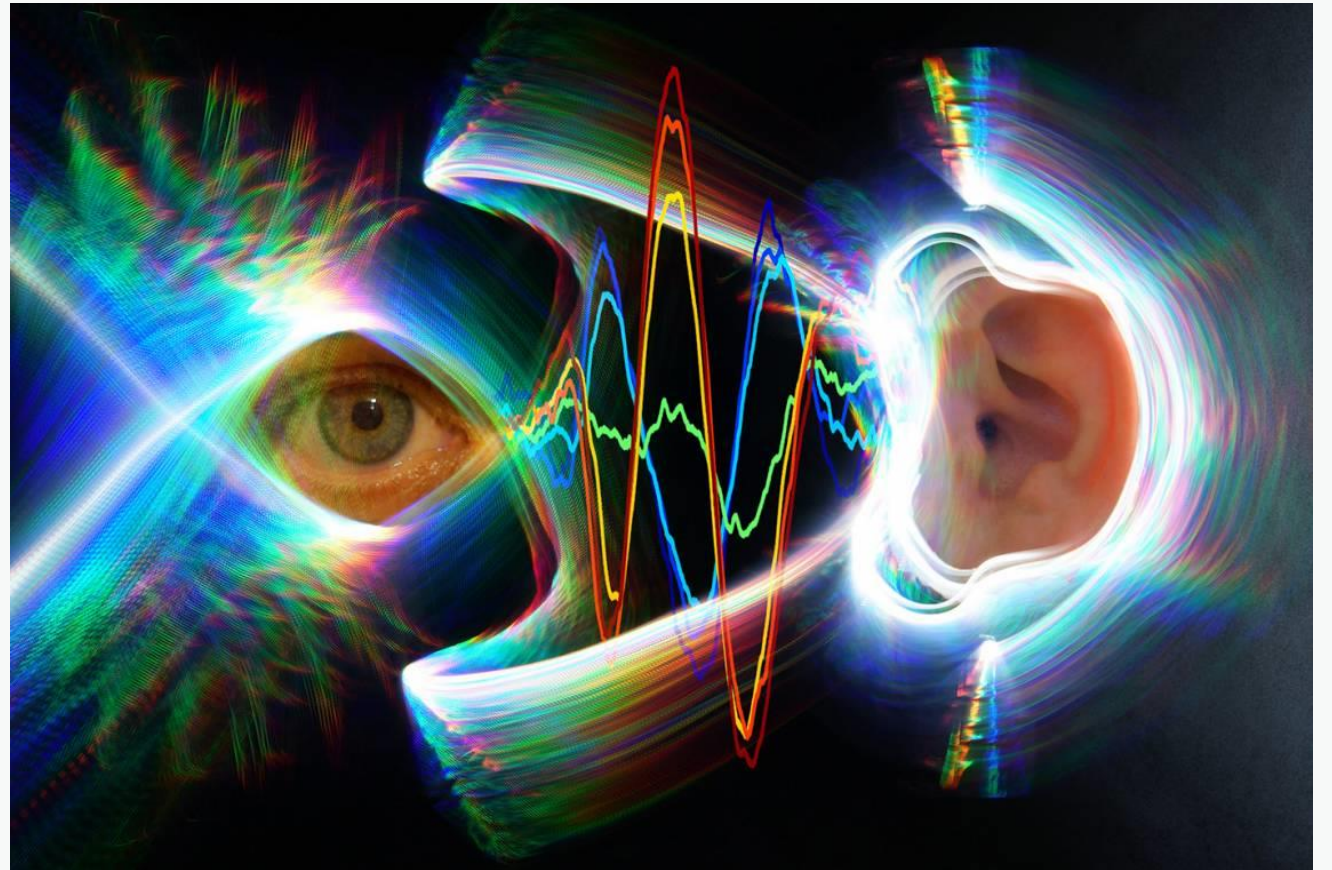
The sun rises and the sun sets.
Gusting to the south, turning
to the north, turning, turning,
goes the wind.

All the streams flow to the
sea, yet the sea is never full.
(1:5-7)



Human discontent propensity

The eye is not
satisfied by seeing
or the ear filled
with hearing. (1:8)



Life's repetitive nature

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. (1:9)



Difficulty of change

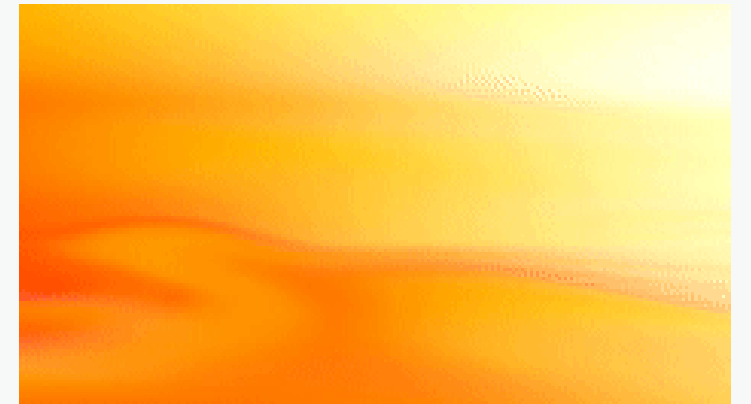
What is crooked
cannot be
straightened;
what is lacking
cannot be
counted. (1:15)



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Qohelet 4:12

**What
things are
hebel
habelim?**



Hebel habelim: Pleasure

I said to myself, “Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good.” But it turned out to be **hebel habelim**. (2:1)



Hebel Habelim: Achievements

I increased my achievements. . . . When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had laboured to achieve, I found everything to be **hebel habelim** and a pursuit of the wind. (2:4,11)



Hebel Habelim: Possessions

I acquired male and female servants . . .
I also owned many herds of cattle and flocks . . .
I also amassed silver and gold for myself . . .
(2:7-8)



Hebel Habelim: Wisdom

I realised that there is an advantage to wisdom over folly, like the advantage of light over darkness.

Yet I also knew that one fate comes to them both.

I said to myself that this is also **hebel habelim**. (2:13-15)



Hebel Habelim: Work



For what does a man get with all his work and all his efforts that he labours at under the sun?

For all his days are filled with grief, and his occupation is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is **hebel habelim**.

However, there is nothing better for man than to eat, drink and enjoy his work. (2:22-24)

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Qohelet 4:12

**Hebel
habelim
compounded
by time
conundrum**



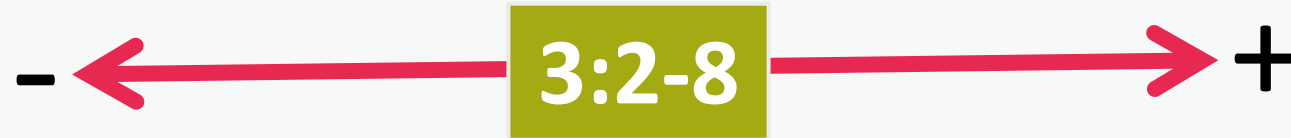
Hebel habelim: Time's Mystery

There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven (3:1)



Hebel Habelim: Time's Polarity

Die
Uproot
Kill
Tear down
Weep
Mourn
Throw stones
Avoid embrace
Lose
Throw away
Tear
Be silent
Hate
War



Give birth
Plant
Heal
Build
Laugh
Dance
Gather stones
Embrace
Search
Keep
Sew
Speak
Love
Peace

Hebel Habelim: God Transcends Time

He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their (human) hearts, but humans cannot discover the work God has done from beginning to end.

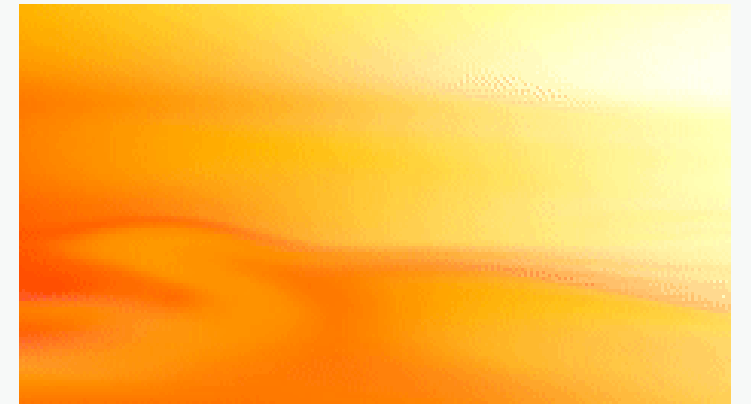
I know that all God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. (3:11,14)



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Qohelet 4:12



HEBEL HABELIM:
LIFE IS UNFAIR

Working hard



Hebel habelim: Hard work?

People work so hard because they envy what their neighbours have. It is hebel habelim (4:4)

Better one handful with rest than two handfuls with effort and a pursuit of the wind(4:6)

Hebel Habelim: Being alone?

There is a person without a companion, without even a son or brother, and though there is no end to all his struggles, his eyes are still not content with riches. This too is hebel habelim. (4:8)

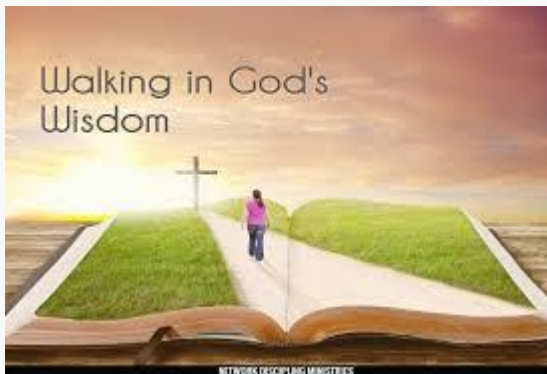


Two are better than one . . . A cord of three strands is not easily broken (4:9,12)

Hebel Habelim: Having power?

Someone may rise from poverty to become king of his country, or go from prison to the throne . . . It is hebel habelim. It is like chasing the wind. (4:13,16)

He has made everything appropriate ^b in its time. He has also put eternity in ^b discover the work God has done from beginning to



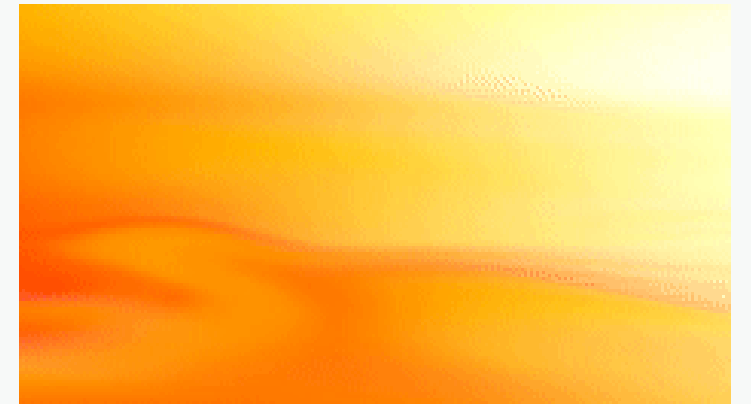
[it is better] to be poor but wise. (4:14)



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Qohelet 4:12



HEBEL HABELIM:
LIFE IS UNFAIR



Hebel Words

‘Do not be hasty to speak . . . Let your words be few . . . A fool’s voice [comes] from many words . . . Many words bring hebel (5:2-7)

So fear God (5:7)

Hebel Wealth

The one who loves money is never satisfied with money . . . This too is hebel (5:10)
[a person] will go as he came into the world, with nothing . . . This is hebel (5:15,16)



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The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether he eats little or much but the abundance of the rich permits him no sleep (5:12)

Hebel life a gift!

It is appropriate to eat, drink and experience good . . . During the few days of life God has given . . . This is a gift of God (5:18,19)



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Qohelet 4:12



HEBEL HABELIM:
LIFE IS UNFAIR



Hebel Question

And if a person lives a thousand years twice, but does not experience happiness, [is that not *hebel*]? (6:6)

For a person comes in *hebel*
and goes in darkness (6:4)

Hebel Questions



What advantage then does the wise man have over the fool?

What advantage is there for the poor person who knows how to conduct himself before others? (6:8)

Better what the eyes see than wandering desire (6:9)



Hebel Questions

What advantage do humans have?

Who knows what is good for humans in life, in the few days of their *hebel* lives that they spend like a shadow?

Who can tell what will happen after them under the sun? (6:11-12)

For when there are many words,
they increase *hebel* (6:11)

Hebel life!

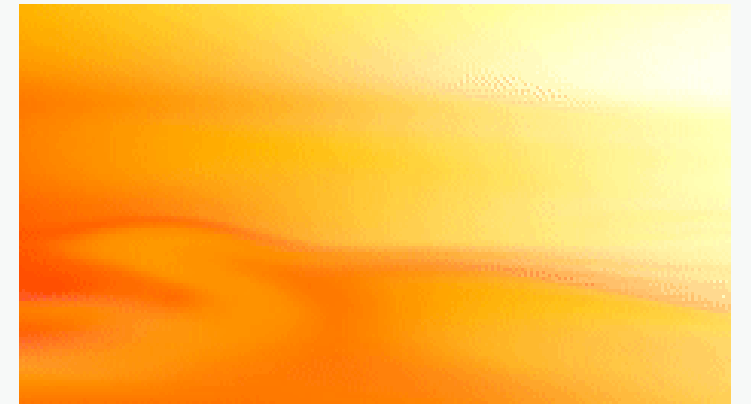
God gives a man riches, wealth, and honour so that he lacks nothing of all he desires for himself, but God does not allow him to enjoy them (6:2)



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THOUGHTS ABOUT
HEBEL LIFE

Negative Power

(7:1-13)

NEGATIVE

- The day you die is better than the day you were born
- Better a house of mourning than one with a party
- Sorrow is better than laughter
- A wise person thinks about death
- The end of everything is better than its beginning

Think about what God does . . . He sends both happiness and trouble

Middle Path (7:15-22)

I devoted myself to
knowledge and study

- § Don't be too good or too wise (hyper-religious)
- § Don't be too wicked or too foolish (hyper-irreligious)
- § Avoid extremes
- § There is no one who does right all the time and never makes a mistake
- § Don't listen to everything you hear





A Tested Conclusion (7:23-29)

- Tested everything
- Determined to be wise
- Looked for answers

This is what I have learnt:

God made us plain and simple, but we have made ourselves very complicated



God is in control; We believe that His children will not be forsaken
God is in control; We will choose to remember and never be shaken
There is no power above or beside Him, we know; God is in control

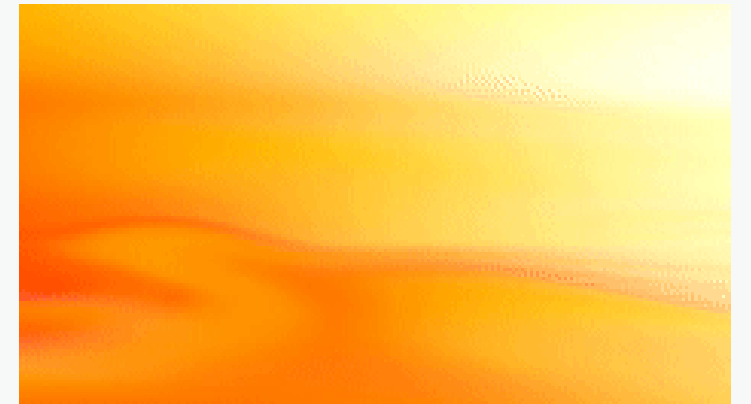


INITIAL CONCLUSION

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THOUGHTS ABOUT
HEBEL LIFE



**Do the Wise
have an
advantage?**

How wonderful to be wise, to analyse and interpret things. Wisdom lights up a person's face, softening its harshness. (8.1)

Don't try to avoid doing your duty. (8.2)

There is a time and a way for everything, even when a person is in trouble. (8.6)

Not even the wisest people discover everything, no matter what they claim. (8.17)

Only the wise know what things really mean. Wisdom makes them smile and makes their frowns disappear.



Wicked and Righteous Imbalance

People have the power to hurt each other. I have seen wicked people buried with honour. Yet they were the very ones who frequented the Temple and are now praised in the same city where they committed their crimes! This, too, is *hebel*. (8.9-10)

Wicked and Righteous Imbalance

In this life, good people are often treated as though they were wicked, and wicked people are often treated as though they were good. This is also *hebel!* (8.14)



So?



So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun. (8.15)

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THOUGHTS ABOUT
HEBEL LIFE



3 DISCOVERIES ABOUT WISDOM



Living is
so much
better!

This, too, I carefully explored: Even though the actions of godly and wise people are in God's hands, no one knows whether God will show them favour. The same destiny ultimately awaits everyone. (9.1-2)

“It's better to be a live dog than a dead lion!” (9.4)

Only the wise know what things really mean. Wisdom makes them smile and makes their frowns disappear.



Beware Lady Luck!

I have observed something else under the sun. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise sometimes go hungry, and the skilful are not necessarily wealthy. (9.11)

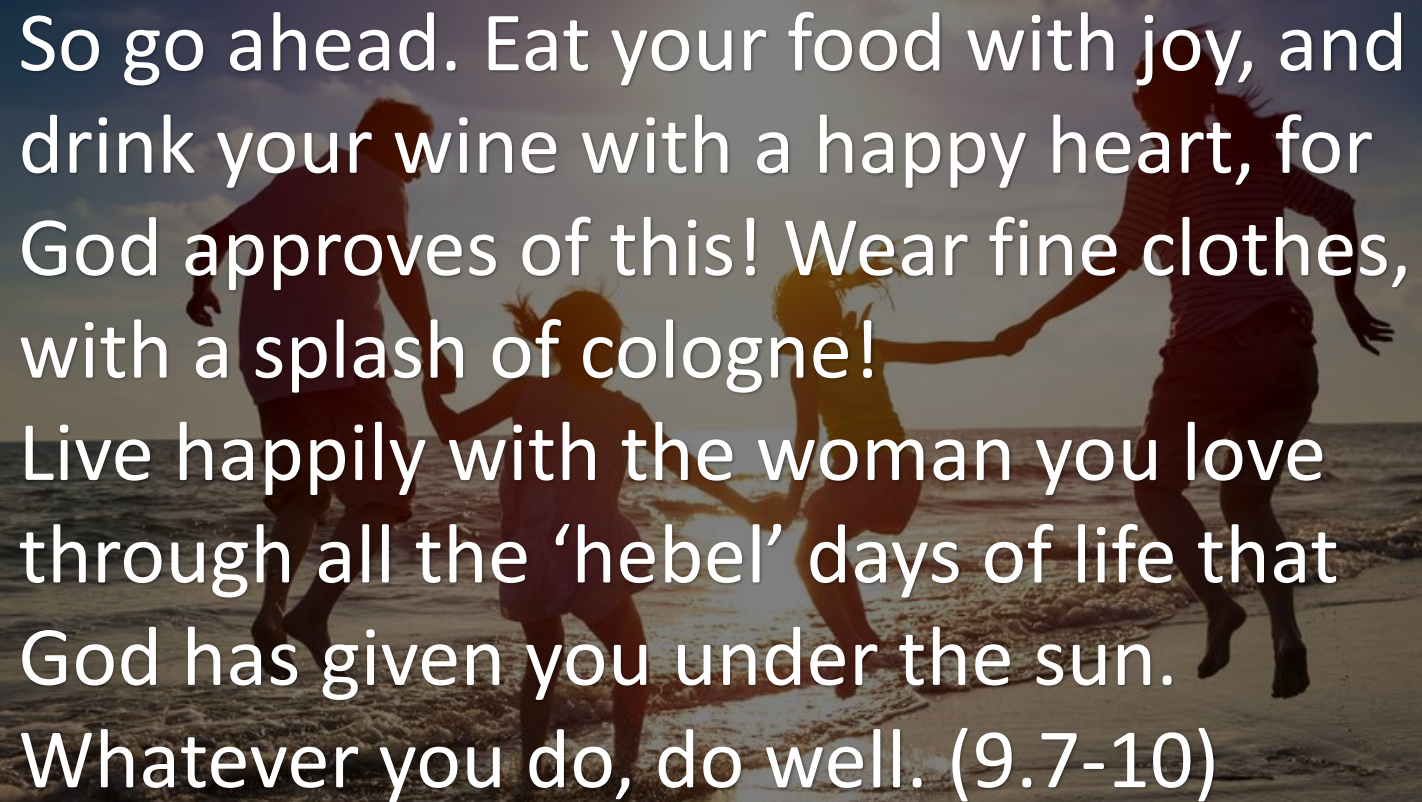
An open book with glowing pages and a starry background. The book is open, and the pages are illuminated with a warm, golden light. The background is dark with many small, bright stars and a larger, glowing orb in the upper right. The overall atmosphere is magical and wise.

WISDOM TRUMPS ALL!

Here is another bit of wisdom that has impressed me. (9.13)

Better to hear the quiet words of a wise person than the shouts of a foolish king.

Better to have wisdom than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much that is good. (9.17-18)

A family of four is captured in a joyful moment on a beach at sunset. They are running along the shoreline, holding hands, with the sun low on the horizon behind them, creating a warm, golden glow. The scene is reflected in the shallow water of the waves.

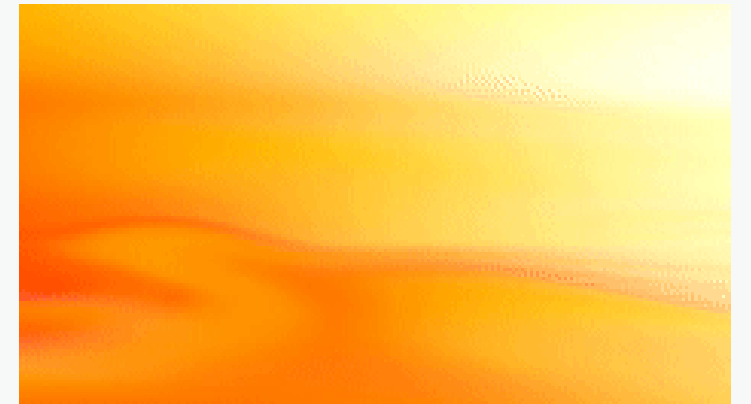
So go ahead. Eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, for God approves of this! Wear fine clothes, with a splash of cologne! Live happily with the woman you love through all the 'hebel' days of life that God has given you under the sun. Whatever you do, do well. (9.7-10)

Enjoy Life!

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IRONIES ABOUT WISE
AND FOOLS (CH 10)

Fools!

Kings and rulers make a grave mistake when they give great authority to foolish people and low positions to people of proven worth.

A fool takes the wrong road

Fools base their thoughts on foolish assumptions

Fools are so exhausted by a little work that they can't even find their way home.

Dead flies cause even a
bottle of perfume to stink

A quiet spirit can overcome
even great mistakes.

A wise person chooses
the right road

Wise words bring approval

That's the value of wisdom;
it helps you succeed.

The Wise

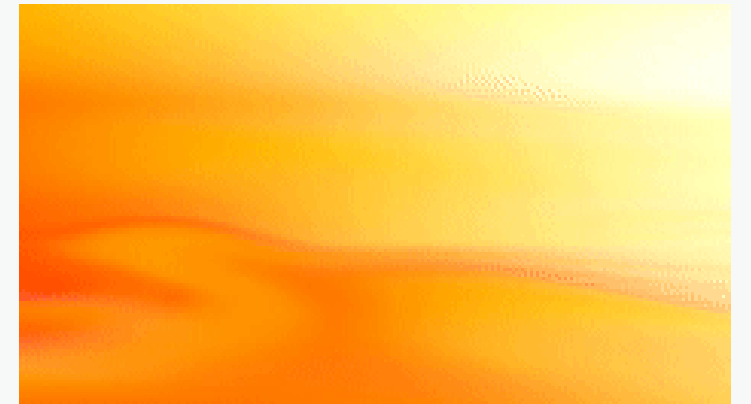
When you dig a well,
you might fall in.
When you demolish an old wall,
you could be bitten by a snake.
When you work in a quarry,
stones might fall and crush you.
When you chop wood,
there is danger with each stroke of your axe.

The wise
understand
ironies of life

THE TEACHER SPEAKS 12

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SUGGESTIONS FOR LIVING
A HEBEL LIFE (CH 11)

A person is captured in mid-air, jumping across a deep chasm between two large, dark rock formations. The background features a range of jagged mountains under a bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, golden-brown tones.

LIVES
ENTERPRISINGLY

Send your bread on the
waters and after many
days you may find it.

Give portions to seven,
give to eight.



Live generously

One who watches the wind will not sow, and the one who looks at the clouds will not reap.



In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hand rest because you do not know which will succeed.

Live
diligently

LOVE JOYFULLY

Indeed, if a person
lives many years, let
him rejoice in them all.



THE TEACHER SPEAKS 13

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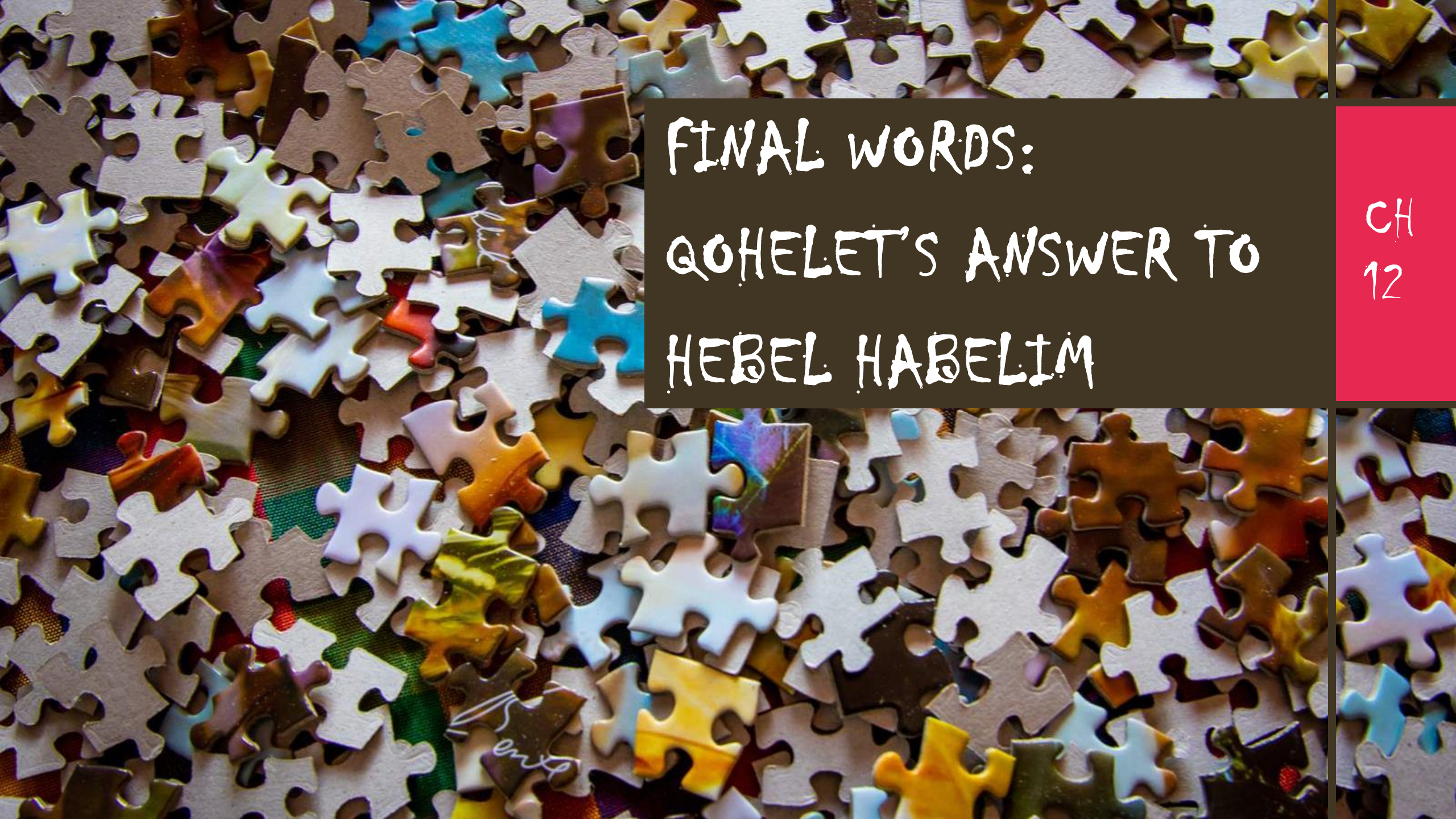
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FINAL WORDS:
QOHELET'S ANSWER TO
HEBEL HABELIM

CH
12



Last Suggestion

Remember your Creator while you are young, before the evil days come.

Final Conclusion

End of words, all is heard: Fear God and keep his commands for this is the totality of humanity.

