

Through the Bible- Proverbs 20-31, Ecclesiastes

On Repaying Evil for Evil

[PPT] Proverbs 20:22

Do not say, "I will repay evil";

Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.

- Romans 12:21 — Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

On Vows and Oaths

[PPT] Proverbs 20:25

It is a trap for a person to say carelessly, "It is holy!"

And after the vows to make inquiry.

- Vow: נָדַר *neder*, originally was a type of oath whereby someone would bind themselves to bring a sacrifice or dedicate something to the temple service. It was often stated conditionally, "If such and such happens, I will dedicate this thing."
- A vow is an obligation or prohibition that someone takes upon themselves.
- "If I don't die from this tornado, I will never drink coffee again."
- "If my crops succeed this year, I will dedicate an extra 10% of my produce to the Temple service."

On the Value of Old Age

[PPT] Proverbs 20:29

The glory of young men is their strength,

And the honor of old men is their gray hair.

- Why is gray hair the honor of old men?
- Pirkei Avot 6:8 — Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: Beauty, strength, riches, honor, wisdom, [old age], gray hair, and children are becoming to the righteous, and becoming to the world, As it is said: "Gray hair is a crown of glory (beauty); it is attained by way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31), And it says: "The ornament of the wise is their wealth" (Proverbs 14:24), And it says: "The glory of youths is their strength; and the beauty of old men is their gray hair" (Proverbs 20:29), And it says: "Grandchildren are the glory of their elders, and the glory of children is their parents" (Proverbs 17:6),

On Honoring those in Authority

[PPT] Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD;

He turns it wherever He pleases.

Proverbs 29:14

If a king judges the poor with truth,

His throne will be established forever

- 1 Peter 2:13–17 — Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God, that by doing right you silence the ignorance of foolish

people. *Act* as free people, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bond-servants of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

Proverbs 29:26

Many seek the ruler's favor,

But justice for mankind comes from the LORD.

On Righteousness and Sacrifice

[PPT] Proverbs 21:3

To do righteousness and justice

Is preferred by the LORD more than sacrifice.

- Does this mean that God does not desire sacrifice? No, he commanded it.
- It means that the sacrifice is ineffective if you are not pursuing righteousness and justice
- This is the call of the prophets
- **[Isaiah 1:11-17]**
 - First, God expresses how much he dislikes Israel's offerings, their Sabbath keeping, and their observance of the festivals.
 - But the problem is that they are just being hypocrites.
 - "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Stop doing evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor, Obtain justice for the orphan, Plead for the widow's case.
- **[Micah 6:7-8]**
 - Does the LORD take pleasure in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give Him my firstborn for my wrongdoings, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, mortal one, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?
- **[PPT] Look at Proverbs 21:13**
 - One who shuts his ear to the outcry of the poor
Will also call out himself, and not be answered

On Contentious Spouses

Proverbs 21:9, 19

It is better to live on a corner of a roof

Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

It is better to live in a desert land

Than with a contentious and irritating woman.

- I'd say this applies to a contentious and irritating man, too.

Proverbs 21:31

The horse is prepared for the day of battle,

But the victory belongs to the LORD.

- אֲדֹנָי צְבָאוֹת (Adonai Tz'vaot) = the LORD of Armies — not just the armies of heaven, but the armies of Israel, as well.

On the Fear of the Lord

[PPT] Proverbs 22:4

The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD
Are riches, honor, and life.

Proverbs 28:14

How blessed is the person who fears always,
But one who hardens his heart will fall into disaster.

- What is the “fear of the Lord?”
- To believe that God exists, and that he punishes evil and rewards righteousness.
- The Fear of the Lord is a consistent refrain in the Proverbs:

[PPT] Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD prolongs life,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Proverbs 14:27

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
By which one may avoid the snares of death.

On Child Rearing

[PPT] Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he grows older he will not abandon it.

Proverbs 22:15

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Proverbs 13:24

He who withholds his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

[PPT] Proverbs 23:13–14

Do not withhold discipline from a child;
Though you strike him with the rod, he will not die.
You shall strike him with the rod
And rescue his soul from Sheol.

[PPT] Proverbs 29:15

The rod and a rebuke give wisdom,
But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 29:17

Correct your son, and he will give you comfort;
He will also delight your soul.

On Friendship

[PPT] Proverbs 22:24–25

Do not make friends with a person given to anger,
Or go with a hot-tempered person,

Or you will learn his ways
And find a snare for yourself.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron,
So one person sharpens another.

[PPT] Proverbs 25:17

Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house,
Or he will become weary of you and hate you.

Proverbs 27:14

One who blesses his friend with a loud voice early in the morning,
It will be considered a curse to him.

[PPT] Proverbs 27:6

Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 28:23

One who rebukes a person will afterward find more favor
Than one who flatters with the tongue.

Proverbs 29:1

A person often rebuked who becomes obstinate
Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

On Laziness

[PPT] Proverbs 20:13

Do not love sleep, or you will become poor;
Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food.

Proverbs 21:17

One who loves pleasure will become a poor person;
One who loves wine and oil will not become rich.

Proverbs 22:13

The lazy one says, "There is a lion outside;
I will be killed in the streets!"

[PPT] Proverbs 22:29

Do you see a person skilled in his work?
He will stand before kings;
He will not stand before obscure people.

Proverbs 24:30–34

[READ]

Proverbs 26:13–16

[READ]

On Good Business Practices

[PPT] Proverbs 20:23

Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD,
And a false scale is not good.

Proverbs 22:16

One who oppresses the poor to make more for himself,
Or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.

[PPT] Proverbs 22:26–27

Do not be among those who shake hands,
Among those who become guarantors for debts.

If you have nothing with which to repay,
Why should he take your bed from under you?

Proverbs 22:7

The rich rules over the poor,
And the borrower becomes the lender's slave.

On the Power of the Tongue

[PPT] Proverbs 21:23

One who guards his mouth and his tongue,
Guards his soul from troubles.

Proverbs 25:11

Like apples of gold in settings of silver,
Is a word spoken at the proper time.

On Alcohol and Being Drunk

[PPT] Proverbs 20:1

Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink a brawler,
And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

Proverbs 23:29–35

[READ]

Proverbs 31:6

Give intoxicating drink to one who is perishing,
And wine to one whose life is bitter.

Seek Wisdom

[PPT] Proverbs 23:23

Buy truth, and do not sell it,
Get wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

Proverbs 24:5–6

A wise man is strong,
And a person of knowledge increases power.
For by wise guidance you will wage war,
And in an abundance of counselors there is victory.

[PPT] Proverbs 24:13–14

My son, eat honey, for it is good;
Yes, the honey from the comb is sweet to your taste;
Know that wisdom is the same for your soul;
If you find it, then there will be a future,
And your hope will not be cut off.

[PPT] Proverbs 26:12

Do you see a person wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Proverbs 29:11

A fool always loses his temper,
But a wise person holds it back.

On Enemies

[PPT] Proverbs 24:17–18

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,
And do not let your heart rejoice when he stumbles,
Otherwise, the LORD will see and be displeased,
And turn His anger away from him.

[PPT] Proverbs 25:21-22

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
For you will heap burning coals on his head,
And the LORD will reward you.

- Compare the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31–46
- [READ Romans 12:14–21] Paul takes this lesson and gives us a detailed exposition

On Boasting

[PPT] Proverbs 27:1

Do not boast about tomorrow,
For you do not know what a day may bring.

James 4:13–16

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. For you are just a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Matthew 6:34

34 “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

On the Value of the Torah

[PPT] Proverbs 28:4

Those who abandon the Law praise the wicked,
But those who keep the Law strive against them.

Proverbs 28:7

He who keeps the Law is a discerning son,
But he who is a companion of gluttons humiliates his father.

[PPT] Proverbs 28:9

One who turns his ear away from listening to the Law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained,
But happy is one who keeps the Law.

Eishet Chayil (אִשֶּׁת-חַיִל)

- [PPT] Recited over wives every Friday night at the Shabbat dinner table
- This part of the chapter forms an acrostic in Hebrew, with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet starting each new line. The rabbis say that just as God gave the Torah by means of those 22 letters, he praises the righteous woman with those same letters.
- [sing it]
- The capable wife described here is not a wallflower.
- She is a true עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ *ezzer kenegdo*, a helper opposite him

- The Hebrew word *chayil* is best translated as “accomplished.” It implies the presence of whatever skills or attributes are needed to fulfill the tasks at hand. The wife here is described as energetic, righteous, and capable, thus accomplished.
- Proverbs 31:23 — Her husband is prominent in the gates, As he sits among the elders of the land.
 - This is because she is the one who has made his clothes, meaning that he is prominent because of her.
- Proverbs 31:30 — Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, But a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
 - Charm and beauty are fleeting, but Fearing God is the beginning of wisdom, and thus the source of true praise.

Ecclesiastes

- [PPT] Our English name Ecclesiastes comes from the Greek (Ἐκκλησιαστής), which is a translation of the name Kohelet, to whom the book is ascribed in the first verse:
 - The words of Kohelet (קֹהֵלֶת בֶּן דָּוִד), the son of David, King in Jerusalem
 - Kohelet comes from the Hebrew root word *kahal*, which means “assembly,” and Ecclesiastes comes from the related Greek word *ekklesia*.
 - The intended meaning of the name Kohelet in the text is “someone speaking before an assembly,” which is why it is translated often as “Teacher” or “Preacher.”
- According to Ramban (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, 1194–1270), the book has three main themes:
 - 1. Man should not strive after the pleasures of this world because—for all their allures—they are fleeting and without value.
 - 2. Man's spiritual essence is eternal and he has a vital role in God's master plan.
 - 3. Human intelligence cannot comprehend God's ways or assimilate all the situations or calculations upon which His justice is based. Only when the Messiah leads the world to perfection will we know why the righteous seem to suffer while the wicked seem to prosper.
- What does that sound like? The Book of Job
 - **Theodicy:** Why do the righteous seem to suffer while the wicked seem to prosper
- [PPT] Title (1:1)
- Initial poem (1:2–11)
- I: Kohelet's investigation of life (1:12–6:9)
- II: Kohelet's conclusions (6:10–11:6)
 - Introduction (6:10–12)
 - A: Man cannot discover what is good for him to do (7:1–8:17)
 - B: Man does not know what will come after him (9:1–11:6)
- Concluding poem (11:7–12:8)
- Epilogue (12:9–14)

Initial poem (1:2–11)

- There is nothing new under the sun.

Kohelet's investigation of life (1:12–6:9)

- He says, I had more wisdom than anyone else
- However, (1:18) “in much wisdom there is much grief; and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.”
- So I tested out whether pleasure would bring me joy, but that didn't work
- I built houses for myself, and vineyards, and got rich

- I had lots of concubines
- 2:10 - All that my eyes desired, I did not refuse them. I did not restrain my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor
- But (2:11) “all was futility and striving after wind, and there was no benefit under the sun.”
- Then Kohelet thought about wisdom itself, and decided that since he was going to die just like a fool, there was no point in wisdom, either.
- Then he despaired because all the stuff he had built might go to a fool who would not use it well.
- (Chapter 3) A time for everything:
 - Man cannot fathom God’s scheme for the world
 - God is ultimately in control of everything, and sets times for all things to occur
 - If the plan is ordered by God, then (3:12) “there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one’s lifetime”
- Then he gets fatalistic:
 - (3:19) For the fate of the sons of mankind and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so dies the other
 - We are all going to die, and who can tell for sure that there is an afterlife?
 - (3:22) I have seen that nothing is better than when a person is happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?
- (Chapter 4) There are lots of bad things in the world
 - However, friendship and companionship are a bright spot
 - (4:9-12) Two are better than one
- Chapter 5 —
 - (5:1) Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and approach to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil.
 - This is the intention of Hosea 6:6 — For I desire loyalty rather than sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
 - 5:4 — When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it — Remember our earlier discussion about Vows
 - 5:6 — Do not let your speech cause you to sin — James has a lot to say about this (James 3:3–12)
 - 5:9 — a king who cultivates the field is beneficial to the land” — This was the intention in the Torah for kings! (Deuteronomy 17:14–20)
- [PPT] Kohelet’s fatalistic attitude is this:
 - Ecclesiastes 5:15 — Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink, and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he labors under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.

Kohelet's Conclusions (6:10–11:6)

- [PPT] Kohelet states his basic concluding questions in 6:12, then explains his answers after that.
 - 1) For who knows what is good for a person during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow.
 - 2) For who can tell a person what will happen after him under the sun?
- Then he spends the next few chapters expounding on those topics
- Here is his conclusion on those two points:
- [PPT] 1) Man cannot discover what is good for him to do
 - 8:16-17 — When I devoted my mind to know wisdom and to see the business which has been done on the earth (even though one should never sleep day or night), and I saw every work of God, I concluded that one cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though a person laboriously seeks, he will not discover; and even if the wise person claims to know, he cannot discover.

- 9:10 — Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.
- **Do you agree?**
- **[PPT]** 2) Man does not know what will come after him
 - 11:4–5 — One who watches the wind will not sow and one who looks at the clouds will not harvest. Just as you do not know the path of the wind, and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes everything.
 - 12:1 — Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years approach
 - **Do you agree?**

Epilogue (12:9–14)

- The Ultimate Conclusion is stated at the end of the book
- Some scholars think this is a later addition, and that the original text ends with 12:8.
- **[PPT]** Either way, this conclusion actually sums it all up pretty well:
 - 12:13–14 — The conclusion, when everything has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.