

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND ECCLESIASTES 2:26?

ARON PINKER

Commentators in main agree that most, if not all, of the royal allusions in Ecclesiastes (Kohelet) are contained in 1:12-2:26, which forms a self-evident and recognizable unit. In this unit, often identified as "royal fiction," the author is speaking in the first person under the guise of a king, describing his experiments in pursuit of the lasting values that can be derived from human effort.¹ The last verse of this unit is the subject of our study.

The NJPS translates this verse as:

To the man, namely, who pleases Him He has given the wisdom and shrewdness to enjoy himself; and to him who displeases, He has given the urge to gather and amass – only for handing on to one who is pleasing to God. That too is futile and pursuit of wind [ki le-adam she-tov le-fanav natan hokhmah ve-da'at ve-simhah ve-la-hote natan inyan le'esof ve-likhnos latet le-tov lifnei ha-Elohim gam-zeh hevel u-re'ut ru'ah].

The verse presents considerable problems of interpretation, which are related to the proper understanding of the terms *hote* and *tov*, and its thematic consistency. Not long ago, Longman wrote, "The last verse of the section gives Ecclesiastes's understanding of how God deals with people. It is a difficult text to interpret and can be read in one of two ways, but in the final analysis context must determine its meaning."² Commentators adopted three approaches to the interpretation of Ecclesiastes 2:26, viewing it as an expression of "poetic justice," an exhibition of "Divine arbitrariness," or being a "pious gloss."³

Those who view the verse as expressing "poetic justice" usually translate it:

For to the man who is good before him, He [God] gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives the business to gather

Aron Pinker has a M.Sc. in theoretical physics and mathematics from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and a Ph.D. in mathematics from Columbia University, New York. He was professor of mathematics at Frostburg State University, and a Principal Operation Research Scientist at ANSER. His numerous articles and several books have been published in Israel, among them The Atom and Theory of Relativity. Whatever free time he has is dedicated to Judaic studies. Dr. Pinker resides in Silver Spring, Maryland.

*and amass, to give him who is good before God. This, too, is vanity, and striving after the wind.*⁴

Those who consider the verse as an example of "Divine arbitrariness" usually render it:

*For to the one who is favored, He [God] has given wisdom, knowledge, and pleasure, but to the offender He has given a preoccupation of gathering and collecting to give to the one who is good before God. This, too, is vanity and pursuit of wind.*⁵

Jastrow, who adopts the "pious gloss" approach, deletes this verse because he considers it a gloss by a pious commentator "who aims to tone down the cynical conclusion, which is particularly distasteful to him." He notes that the verse "is optimism with a vengeance, and in complete contrast to Koheleth's philosophy. It is amusing to follow the mental antics of some exegetes in their endeavor to reconcile the two points of view – the one absolutely exclusive of the other."⁶

Each of the three approaches to the understanding of 2:26 in the Ecclesiastes context presents fundamental difficulties.

POETIC JUSTICE

The "poetic justice" approach (Targum,⁷ Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Sforno, Metzudot, Ginsburg, Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Whybray, Artom, Zer-Kavod, et alia) is based on the doctrine that all the good things of life come to the morally good. The terms *tov* and *hote* are assumed to represent moral opposites: righteous and sinner. This understanding is presumably supported by 7:26, and especially 8:12-13, "where the same two characters are contrasted, and where *hote* is defined by *oseh ra*, 'an evil-doer,' and *einenu yare milifnei Elohim*, one who does not fear God'.⁸

While wisdom literature took a negative position on prostitution and promoted conjugal focus (Prov. 5), there is no biblical prohibition of a Jew having sexual relations with a non-Jewish woman. The situation described in 7:26 would not brand the *hote* as a sinner.⁹ Ecclesiastes 8:13 does not mention the *hote*, and in 8:12 *oseh ra* would be superfluous if *hote* necessarily means "sinner."

Use of *hote* in the verse as the opposite of *tov* rather than its obvious antonym *ra* (Ps. 109:5), could suggest that the author had in mind the intention-

al sinner. However, it is altogether unclear that Ecclesiastes refers to opposites in the terms *tov* and *hote*. If the verse deals with persons of opposite character, why is not what God bestows upon them of opposite nature? Can "wisdom," "knowledge," and "joy" be construed in any way as the opposites of "gather" and "amass"?

In Ecclesiastes 2:26, God gives to the righteous wisdom, knowledge, joy, and the amassed wealth of the *hote*.¹¹ Nothing is said in the verse about the efforts and endeavors of the righteous.¹² It seems that the righteous can be idle and still be the beneficiary of the wealth amassed by the sinner. This unrealistic notion of "poetic justice," perhaps entertained by many as wishful thinking, occurs also in a number of places in the Bible (Job 27:17, Prov. 13:22, 28:8). Barton is right saying "Such a cheerful view of the moral order of the universe is, however, totally opposed to Ecclesiastes' whole thought."¹³

The practical Ecclesiastes certainly does not advocate idleness for the wise. He is cognizant of the fact that wisdom enables the attainment of wealth (2:19, 21), and that wealth makes pleasure possible (2:10). In 2:21, he reports the possibility that a man who labors with wisdom, knowledge, and capability eventually gives his gain to someone who did not invest any effort.¹⁴ However, his concern is how to avoid such an eventuality, not to imply that idleness is preferable. Fox suggests that the passivity of the *tov* in 2:26 implies that it is desirable "to take it easy and enjoy what falls to one's lot." Perhaps, as the sages said: "Who is rich? One who is happy with his lot."¹⁵ However, it is not obvious that the *hote*, who was given by God the task of gathering and amassing, is not happy with his lot.

Ecclesiastes could not have subscribed to the doctrine of "poetic justice" because he brands it *futility and chasing the wind*. Indeed, traditional Jewish commentators who adopt the "poetic justice" approach seem to have had difficulty with the last clause of Ecclesiastes 2:26. Targum, Ibn Ezra, and Rashbam take *futility and chasing the wind* as referring to the sinner. Surprisingly, Rashi generalizes the sinner's predicament into an ephemeral occurrence applicable to anyone – that a person labors and someone else benefits ("this too is one of ephemeral things that were given to man, he labors and someone else takes it"). Sforno also deduces from the verse a general principle, but it is anchored in the experience of the righteous. Efforts to acquire luxuries even if not strenuous are futile, their purpose of no value. Metzudot observes:

"though the accumulated wealth [of the sinner] lands in the hand of the righteous, it still is futility, because it would have been of greater utility [to the sinner] had he done charity and good deeds with it himself."

This diversity of views among traditional Jewish commentators, indicative of the difficulty of naturally integrating the last clause into the "poetic justice" approach, is shared by modern biblical scholars who adopt this approach. Ginsburg feels that *This too is vanity* refers to Ecclesiastes 2:26a; "i.e., this wisdom, knowledge, and joy, are utterly unable to satisfy the mind, which is disturbed by the contemplation of the fact that whilst all the objects of nature are abiding, man vanishes and is buried in oblivion."¹⁶ Hengstenberg thinks that *This too is vanity* refers to Ecclesiastes 2:26b,¹⁷ and Zer-Kavod takes it as referring to 2:24-25.¹⁸

We see that the "poetic justice," approach reflecting unrealistic biblical notions of justice, is incompatible with Ecclesiastes' point of view, and the closing clause is incongruous with the obvious desirability of the suggested outcome. At this point, we can reject the "poetic justice" approach or retain it as a popular opinion that is mentioned by Ecclesiastes but is rejected by him as "futility."

Fox observes:

Currently the prevalent approach is to identify certain statements as words that Ecclesiastes quotes in order to dispute or modify them. But this is too facile. I am not saying that there are no quotations in Ecclesiastes, but that they don't matter. For, quoted or not, words an author speaks in his own voice are an expression of his own ideas,¹⁹ unless he shows us otherwise.

In line with Fox, our analysis and the "futility" statement at the end of 2:26 show that in Ecclesiastes' view the notion of "poetic justice" has no validity, consequently it can at best be construed a quote that is rejected.

DIVINE ARBITRARINESS

The "Divine arbitrariness" approach (Herzfeld, Graetz, J. Carlebach, Thilo, Hertzberg, Stuart, Galling, Gordis, Ginsberg, Crenshaw, Fox, Seow, Rudman, Longman, et alia) assumes that in verse 2:26 the terms *tov* and *hote* do not have a moral sense ("righteous" and "sinner"), and that God arbitrarily grants or withholds the power of enjoying earthly good, as He likes or dis-

likes an individual, irrespective of moral worth. For instance, R. Gordis notes that:

. . . the verse speaks not of the *tsadiq* and the *rasha'* but of '*adam shetov le-fanav* and the *hote'*, as in 7:26. This variation in usage is most significant. Koheleth uses the conventional terms *tsadiq* and *rasha'*, to express the concepts of conventional morality and piety, 'the righteous and the wicked'; cf. 7:15 ff., 20; 8:9 f., 13 (a quoted proverb; see note *ad loc.*); and 9:2. On the other hand, *hote'*, etymologically 'the one who misses the mark,' has a richer semantic development. Ecclesiastes rarely uses the word in the conventional sense of sinner (8:12 is a cited proverb, where incidentally it is explained by '*oseh ra'*,²⁰ and in 9:2 its meaning is clear from the contrast with *ke-tov*).

The major problem with the "Divine arbitrariness" approach is the identification, with respect to God, of the criteria for the non-moral categories *tov* and *hote*. It is possible to show that *hote* can have a non-moral sense when it refers to an offense against humans.²¹ However, can this concept have a non-moral sense when the *het* is in the eyes of God? Ecclesiastes 2:26 does not provide any clear insight into what makes a person belong to one of the two categories from God's perspective, and it is difficult (perhaps impossible) to suggest in what way could a person be pleasing or offensive to God except in the moral sphere, when biblical morality is based on God's pleasures and displeasures.²²

One approach might be to exploit verse 2:26 and say that a person is, with respect to God, in the category *tov* when he is observed to be: (a) wise; (b) knowledgeable; (c) happy; and (d) a beneficiary of a miser's accumulated wealth. From verses 2:21 (and 5:11) it seems that for a person to qualify, all four conditions have to be satisfied. Studying what such people have in common could give an inkling of what God likes or desires, but not why he does so. Experience shows that the set of individuals who satisfy all of the four conditions is extremely small. But even if we had a respectable sample, and could identify a shared behavior or trait, it would automatically become a moral criterion, a desired mode of behavior, for it would be something with which God is consistently pleased. For instance, suppose that all in this sam-

ple go to the ritual bath before they engage in study. Then this act becomes the right act, and is consequently moral.

A second approach could be to scan the Hebrew Bible for expressions of God's likes and desires. Anyone observing these likes and desires (apart from specific commandments) would be considered *tov*. For instance, a number of Psalms (148, 149, et alia) suggest that God might like praise. Thus, anyone who praises God would be doing something that characterizes a person who is *tov*.²³ This approach is also inconsistent for the same reason as the previous one. If Ecclesiastes is right, and God always wants to be praised, then with respect to God, praising Him is the right behavior and thus a moral principle.

It seems that commentators have sensed that God's consistent preference for a trait (or condition) makes the preference into a moral principle. Consequently, those who assume a non-moral sense for the terms *tov* and *hote* ascribe to Ecclesiastes a notion of God who is arbitrary in His reactions, exerts justice randomly, and is indifferent to morality.²⁴ This third approach is also inconsistent. If God is arbitrary in His reactions to human behavior then the categories *tov* and *hote* (with respect to God) do not exist, whether they have a moral or non-moral sense. These abstract concepts can be only derived by having corresponding sets of acts in which each act has been unequivocally characterized as being *tov le-fanav* or not so. An individual would be *tov* if he performs the acts in the set characterized as being *tov le-fanav* and *hote* otherwise. If Divine arbitrariness makes such an unequivocal determination impossible then the concept-defining set cannot be formed and the concept does not exist.

We see, then, that a major problem with the "Divine arbitrariness" approach is its inconsistency. This, however, is not the only problem. A number of commentators (Crenshaw, Fox, Seow, et alia) who adopt the "Divine arbitrariness" approach make the association *hote* = "fool."²⁵ For instance, R. Gordis observes that "As in Proverbs 14:21; 19:2 and the Wisdom writers generally, *hote*' occurs as synonymous with 'fool.'" However, can a person who diligently amasses wealth be considered a fool? Is not accumulation of wealth what many of us attempt? Is the waste of wealth without thinking of the "tomorrow" a virtue? Can anyone secure the accumulated wealth as a result of an "act of God?" Moreover, if we assume that in our case the terms *hote* represents a person who is disadvantaged or handicapped in some way, why

is he not protected by God as the Bible intimates are *pet'a'im*, *gerim*, *almannah*, et cetera (Ps. 116:6, 146:9, 12:6-8, 68:6)?

Also, if the terms *tov* and *hote* have a non-moral sense, then we are forced to assume that God has arbitrary likes, preferences, and sympathies, according to which He grants, withholds, or shifts wealth and enables the enjoyment of earthly goods irrespective of one's moral worth. Such a perception would be contrary to the fundamental Israelite view of a just, non-capricious God. It would be difficult to ascribe to Ecclesiastes a perception of God that is typical of the gods of other nations, and the book would not have been accepted into the canon had it been obvious that he held such a view. Fox is right in stating:

Ecclesiastes never sets himself across the divide from the more conventional beliefs, and he does not invoke the anomalies to undermine orthodox wisdom. He applies the *hevel*-judgment only after describing both the rule and its violation.²⁶

The "Divine arbitrariness" approach cannot represent Ecclesiastes' personal opinion and consequently can be retained only if it assumed that Ecclesiastes quotes an opinion and rejects it.

PIOUS GLOSS

The "pious gloss" approach (Wildeboer, Siegfried, McNeile, Haupt, Barton, Jastrow, et alia) assumes that verse 2:26 should be interpreted as in the "poetic justice" approach, but the verse is not Ecclesiastes'. The verse (perhaps, without the last clause) is a gloss which was added by a Hasid glossator. Barton categorically asserts "That the verse with the exception of the last clause is the work of a Chasid glossator, must be granted."²⁷ This position is justified by the "poetic justice" approach contradicting Ecclesiastes' fundamental philosophy. While the "pious gloss" approach effectively eliminates the problems associated with verse 2:26, it is unsatisfactory because the verse is also eliminated from Ecclesiastes' text. Current biblical scholarship naturally shies away from this prospect, making this approach unacceptable. This does not mean that the Book of Ecclesiastes does not have glosses, but that the utilization of this argument, in particular at the verse level, should be kept as much as possible at a minimum. Obviously, if no other explanation for Ecclesiastes

2:26 exists than there is no choice but to accept the "pious gloss" approach. As we have seen, this is not the case.

CONCLUSION

Gese felt that Ecclesiastes breaks away from the order of the early conceptions of Israelite wisdom. He says:

In early wisdom, wealth and acquired goods were the sign of one's pious [*heilvoll*] actions whereas Koheleth emphasizes that after the death of the possessor laboriously acquired goods fall into the hands of one who has not worked for them, nor does one know whether that person will be wise or foolish (2:18-19). The goods gained by wisdom do not remain in the possession of the wise (2:20-23). But it is not only death which draws the curtain on possession; even in life the frugally saved wealth can be lost unutilized (5:13-17) or, even worse, the wealthy person has to be a spectator while a stranger consumes the former's wealth (6:1-6).²⁸

At first glance it would seem that our verse supports Gese's notion of a crisis of wisdom in Ecclesiastes. As we have seen, that cannot be the case.²⁹ It seems to us that verse 2:26 has to be understood within a Ecclesiastes conceptual framework that Murphy aptly describes as follows:

First, it is within this [Israelite] tradition that he thought and wrote; his work is intelligible only in this perspective. Second, even while he quarrels with views of traditional wisdom, his goal remains that of an Israelite sage: the discovery of what is good for humans to do (Eccl. 2:3b). He does not simply jettison past teaching; he purifies and extends it. His grief against classical wisdom is its claim to security, not its methodology. Third, his argument is not theoretical; it is practical.³⁰

Within this framework, Ecclesiastes could not have subscribed to any of the doctrines underpinning the standard approaches. He would have found the "poetic justice" unrealistic and the "Divine arbitrariness" inconsistent. This leads to the conclusion that 2:26 is a quote that Ecclesiastes rejects, or that it was added by a pious glossator.

NOTES

1. For instance, G.A. Barton, *Ecclesiastes. International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908) p. 76; J.L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1988) p. 171; N. Lohfink, *Ecclesiastes: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) p. 44. Some have suggested that the "royal fiction" is limited to 1:12-2:11. See for instance, R. Gordis, *Koheleth – The Man and his world, a study of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) p. 278; C.L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, Anchor Bible 18C. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) p. 98.
2. T. Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) p. 109.
3. I have coined these terms for convenience of use.
4. C.D. Ginsburg, *Cohélet, Commonly Called the Book of Ecclesiastes* (London: Longman, 1861) pp. 302-303.
5. Seow, pp. 118-119.
6. M. Jastrow, *A Gentle Cynic, Being a Translation of the Book of Koheleth, Commonly Known as Ecclesiastes, Stripped of Later Additions, also its Origin, Growth, and Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1919) p. 209, n. 38.
7. According to the Targum, the wisdom and knowledge bestowed on the man, (whose works are) proper before the Lord, is of benefit to him in this world, and he shares joy with the righteous in the hereafter.
8. Ginsburg, p. 302. Ginsburg observes: "Herzfeld will not admit that טוב לפני האלהים and חוּטָא have any reference to the moral character of the individuals thus described; חוּטָא he says, 'bezeichnet Einen, der die Gnade Gottes verfehlt, ihrer nicht-theilhaftig wird.'" However, in Ginsburg's view 7:26, 8:12, and 13, "are subversive of this interpretation."
9. Contra Zer-Kavod who takes *hote* as "a person who does not keep God's commandments." Cf. M. Zer-Kavod, מ. קהלת, in *חמש מגילות* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1973) p. 46.
10. A. Schellenberg, "Ecclesiastes' Use of the Word ענין. Some Observations on Ecclesiastes 1,13; 2:23.26; 3.10, and 8,16," in *The Language of Ecclesiastes In Its Context* (eds. R. Berlejung and P. Van Hecke) (Leuven: Peeters, 2007) p. 149. Schellenberg's suggestion that '*inyan*-endeavor could be the endeavor for knowledge would level the difference between what is bestowed on the *tov* and the *hote*'. She argues that "Usually this half-verse is interpreted as a statement about 'gathering' and 'heaping' material goods. However, since no object is mentioned, one could also think of intellectual goods, more so as the first half of the verse specifically talks about the latter." Her understanding of the verse as an elaboration of v. 23, explaining "what causes him so much pain: it is the awareness that there is no guarantee that an attempt to acquire knowledge will be successful, the insight that the endeavor for knowledge might be a failure," shows that her suggestion is impossible. Ecclesiastes clearly speaks of accumulation of something, which is later transferred to someone else. Such a process is certainly no indication of failure to acquire knowledge, but to retain it. We also doubt that the process described in Ecclesiastes 2:26 would be applicable to knowledge.
11. A. Schoors, *The Preacher Sought to Find Pleasing Words: A Study of the Language of Ecclesiastes. Volume II: Vocabulary*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 143. (Leuven: Peeters, 2004) pp. 93-98. Schoors conducts a thorough analysis of Ecclesiastes' use of *natan* and its derivatives. He concludes that the translation "gift/to give" in the sense of "grant, bestow on" is not very felicitous, since it creates positive associations whereas God "gives" bad things, too.
12. Ibn Ezra notes it, saying: *ve-lo natan lo amal*.

13. Barton, p. 84.

14. Note the key words *ki, adam, hokhmah, da'at, gam-zeh hevel*, which are used in both vv. 21 and 26.

15. M.V. Fox, *Ecclesiastes* קהלת. *The Jewish Publication Society Bible Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004) p. 19. Fox says: "Kohleth sees himself as an example of a man who toils and strains to accumulate wealth without benefiting from it, and who is a 'sinner' and displeases God (see 2:18-23). Kohleth was unable to follow his own advice to avoid immoderate labors and to enjoy what comes to hand. A cloud of an unnamed guilt hangs over him, even if he has not violated God's commandments." However, in 2:10 he clearly concludes "I got enjoyment out of my wealth. And that was all I got out of my wealth."

16. Ginsburg, p. 303, observes, "That *gam zeh hevel* refers to *hochmah ve-da'at ve-simchah* is evident from the fact that these are the very things, and the very words, which Kohleth has already characterized as vain and unable to secure for him lasting good in, in 1:16, and 2:1. Thus Kohleth concludes the first portion of his enquiry, by showing that wisdom, knowledge and enjoyment of earthly blessing, which are the best things for short-lived man, cannot satisfy the craving of the human soul."

17. E.W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes, with Other Treatises* (Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co., 1840) p. 86. Hengstenberg observes, "That also is vanity and empty effort, even this gathering together and the circumstances of the time rendered it peculiarly necessary to lay stress on the folly of such a course: the less God bestowed, the more avaricious was it deemed necessary to become."

18. Zer-Kavod, p. 14. Stuart, who interprets *tov* and *hote* in a non-moral sense, also takes the closing colon as referring to v. 24. Stuart says: "But what is it which is vanity and a fruitless affair? Surely, not the distribution which God makes; and not the scraping together of treasure, for this has already been denounced in vs. 17, 18. We can therefore do no less than fall back on v. 24, and refer it to the effort to obtain enjoyment in the way which is there spoken of." Cf. M. Stuart, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (New York: Putnam, 1851) p. 140.

19. M.V. Fox, "The Inner Structure of Ecclesiastes' Thought," in *Ecclesiastes In The Context of Wisdom* (ed. A. Schoors) (Leuven: University Press, 1998) p. 226. Fox observes, "Ecclesiastes' innovation is in applying the word to facts or scenarios that violate reason, which is to say Ecclesiastes' reason" (p. 227).

20. R. Gordis, *Kohleth – The Man and His World, a Study of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) p. 227.

21. M.V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down & A Time to Build Up* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) pp. 212-213. Fox notes that in Ecclesiastes 10:4, the *הטאים* "offenses" that enrage a ruler cannot be moral trespasses, but actions that irritate him. Bathsheba says that she and her son will be *הטאים* (1 Kings 1:21), meaning that they will be offensive to Adonijah, not that they will be guilty of moral infractions. See also Genesis 40:1, Judges 20:16, 1 Kings 8:31, Isaiah 65:20, Job 5:24, Proverbs 8:36, and 20:2. Examples in which *טוב* has the non-moral sense "pleasing, favorable" are 1 Sam. 29:6, Nehemiah 2:5, et cetera.

22. If the term *moral* relates to principles of right and wrong in behavior, then anything that pleases God in our behavior is moral and anything that displeases Him is amoral. This is the core of the fallacy in Fox's *Time to Tear*, p. 190 example of a non-moral offense, that of "a man's toiling endlessly, pushing too hard for gain, an idea shared by Proverbs 28:20." Fox characterizes

"the hurried and strained attempt to grasp wealth" as arrogance. However, if "arrogance" is displeasing to God it becomes a moral principle.

23. Aron Pinker, "Psalm 116:15-Death of the Saints?" *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* Heft 4 (2009) or Heft 1 (2010). Pinker reads Psalm 116:15 as an expression of God's desire for praise from His worshippers.

24. Herzfeld already suggested that our verse sets forth God's arbitrary granting or withholding the power of enjoying earthly good, as He likes or dislikes any one, irrespective of moral worth. This approach found much acceptance in current scholarship. For instance, Rudman says "God's favour for one individual over another seems to be arbitrary rather than following a particular pattern of behaviour." See, D. Rudman, "The Use of as an Indicator of Chaos in Ecclesiastes," in *The Language of Ecclesiastes In Its Context* (eds. R. Berlejung and P. Van Hecke). (Leuven: Peeters, 2007) p. 138. Crenshaw (op. cit. p. 90) suggests that "Ecclesiastes' observations transpose the motif, dear to the sages, that wicked people's wages eventually go to the devout (Prov. 13:22; 28:8; Job 27:16-17). Ecclesiastes turns this cherished belief on its head. Since good people can and do lose their possessions to sinners, the disposer of goods must be indifferent to morality." This conclusion, as we show, leads to a contradiction, and has no support whatsoever in the text.

25. Gordis, p. 227. For instance, Seow (p. 157) says, "In the vocabulary of the wisdom tradition, the *hote'* is the bungler, the loser, the one who is always making mistakes. The *hote'* is the fool."

26. Fox, "Inner Structure", p. 231.

27. Barton, p. 84.

28. H. Gese, "The Crisis of Wisdom in Koheleth." In *Theodicy in the Old Testament, Issues in Religion and Theology* 4 (ed. J.L. Crenshaw) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963) pp. 142-143. See also p. 152, n. 22.

29. It is interesting to note that Gese does not discuss Ecclesiastes 2:26 in his paper.

30. R.E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*. World Biblical Commentary, 23A (Waco, Texas: Word, 1992) p. lxiv.



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