**Ecclesiastes 1**

Words of Qowhelet[[1]](#footnote-1), son of David, King in Jerusalem.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Breath of breath[[3]](#footnote-3), said Qoheleth, breath of breath, all is breath.

What does Human[[4]](#footnote-4) get for all the work he works in the Sun[[5]](#footnote-5)’s land?

An age goes, and an age comes, but the earth stands firm always,

Sun enters, Sun exits, and pants for his home of sun-rise,

Wind walks south, and circles around to the north, it walks and walks, and wind whirls in wheels.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Rivers pour into Sea[[7]](#footnote-7), yet Sea is not slaked. To home where the torrent-rivers come from, they flow again.

Words are weary; Human cannot say them; Eye is not slaked with seeing, Ear not full with listening.

You can’t say, look, this is new. It has already happened. No remembering of the first things or the last things, no remembering by those in the time to come.

I have seen the work worked in the Sun’s land. Look, all is breath and longing for wind;[[8]](#footnote-8)

The crooked can’t be straight, and Not cannot be numbered.

I said, Heart, I’m rich, I am wiser than anyone ever, and Heart saw all the wisdom and knowing.

I devoted Heart[[9]](#footnote-9) to know wisdom and to know Yeehaw[[10]](#footnote-10) and folly

and know even that was longing for wind,

For wisdom is grieving. More knowing is pain.

**Ecclesiastes 11:7-end**

And is sweet the Light and good for eyes to see the Sun[[11]](#footnote-11).

But if many years lives Human and in them all he rejoices, remember let him the days of darkness,

For many they will be.

The future is only breath.

Be happy, young man, in the days of childhood, and let cheer you your heart in the days of your prime,

And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes.

But know, despite everything, bring you will God into judgement[[12]](#footnote-12)

Therefore, turn aside grief from your heart and wild[[13]](#footnote-13) from your body,

for childhood and prime are breath.

12

Remember your maker in the days of your prime before will come days evil

And draw near years when you say, “I have no joy in them.”

When even are darkened Sunlight and Moonlight and Starlight and do not come again, after the clouds and rain

In the day when tremble the guards of the house and stoop the men of valor

And when grinders[[14]](#footnote-14) stop because they are few[[15]](#footnote-15)

and grow dim those that look through the windows[[16]](#footnote-16)

and when shut are doors in the streets

And is low the sound of grinding

And rises the song of a bird and falls the daughters of song[[17]](#footnote-17)

And of height they are afraid and of terrors in the road

And when almond blossoms

and the locust heavy[[18]](#footnote-18)

and when desire fails[[19]](#footnote-19)

For goes Human to his forever-house, and whirl in the markets the mourners

Before is cut the silver cord

Or broken the golden bowl[[20]](#footnote-20)

Or shattered the pitcher at the well[[21]](#footnote-21)

Or smashed the wheel at the pit

Before will go back to dust the earth as it was

And the life-wind return to The God[[22]](#footnote-22) who gave it

Breath of Breath, says Qowhelet, all is breath.

**Motifs**

Circling

Death in the context of the age of the earth

Sheol

Bor/Beer [Pit/ Well]

Darkness

Youth to Age

Breathing, gasping, panting (and connection to the soul or spirit or “life-breath”

Thirst and “unfilling”

1. Maybe “assembler” or “part of the assembly” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Authors of textbook think this is late Persian or early Hellenistic period (200s?) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Diminutive form, according to Alter, who uses “merest breath.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Adam or “of clay” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Shemesh [Persian sun god] [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. shoob sabeeb [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Yam [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Not vexation, but “grazing wind” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Leb [desires, soul, inner self] [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Howlelah! [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Evokes the creation 1:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Probably an editorial addition, since judgment and last judgments weren’t a thing at this time. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Usually translated “evil” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Molars. This could also mean women servants who grind grain. The “house” in the previous line becomes both a face with eyes and teeth and also a decaying home, so it’s doing double duty. The locust may refer to gray hair. (Youth can mean “the time of black hair.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Presumably most of the teeth have fallen out. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Eyes lose their sight [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I wonder if this refers to female mourners, whose office it was to grieve publicly for the dead and on sad occasions. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Tree or insect is unclear, but the context of almond blossoms and caper fruit makes me think tree. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Alter, on whom I rely heavily, says this really means caperfruit, so some read the withering caper fruit as a metaphor for male impotence. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Alter thinks shards of pottery might have been buried with the dead. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Well (ber) and Pit (bor) might have sounded alike, but they are in a sense opposites. Pits are where the dead are buried; The Pit was called Sheol, and is often translated as “hell” in English. (The NT “hell” is “Gehenna” or “Valley of Hinnon,” where garbage was burned outside of Jerusalem.) On the other hand, wells were sacred sites of encounter with God because of their life-giving properties, and Sukkot, when Ecclesiastes is performed, is a holiday when God is supposed to reveal how much rain will come in the winter months. It is a little like the American Groundhog Day holiday, in that the groundhog is supposed to know how long winter will last. On *Northern Exposure*, there was an annual tradition of trying to predict who would die over the winter (holes had to be dug before the ground froze). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ha Elohim can mean the god or the gods. Ha (the) is emphatic in a title, as in Ha Satan (The Satan or The Adversary) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)