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Koheleth: A Biblical Study of Reconciliation

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for ordination

Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
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DEDICATION

With gratitude and affection I dedicate this thesis to my mother and brother, who by their love and encouragement strengthened me for all that lies ahead and to a very special teacher, who by his presence and wisdom helped me to see the world with renewed faith, clarity and optimism.

* * *

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Digest

The aim of this thesis is two fold. The first aim is to show that Koheleth was influenced by many different traditions. The second aim is to investigate how he reconciled them when they contradicted each other.

Chapter One deals with parallels between Koheleth and the writings of Greek philosophy. It explores the writings of Theognis, Epicurus, the Stoics and Parmenides, in an attempt to show their influences on Koheleth. This chapter concludes that Koheleth was influenced by the above, yet only indirectly. It also concludes that it is unlikely that Koheleth read any of their texts or studied with any of their disciples.

Chapter Two concerns itself with the possibility of Platonic influence on Koheleth's development of justice. The first third of the chapter outlines The Republic's study of justice. The second third explores Koheleth's dealings with justice, and the final third compares Plato's discussion of justice to Koheleth's. This investigation uncovered no Platonic influence on Koheleth's views.

Chapter Three explores the influence of other Biblical works on Koheleth. It analyzes shared themes with Wisdom, Pentateuchal and Prophetic Literature and examines stylistic parallels between the same. This chapter shows that Koheleth was keenly aware of many of th books that later became known as the Bible. He did not always agree with some of the views included therein, but he was beyond a doubt aware of these views.

Chapter Four is divided into three sections. The first one describes the profound effects that Hellenism had on Palestinian Jewry. The second section deals with three ways in which Jews responded to the advent of Greek ways. It describes the process of Jewish retrenchment and separation, assimilation and syncretization. The final section of this chapter purports that Koheleth was a syncretist who struggled to reconcile the various, often contradictory philosophies of his day.

The final chapter points out that Koheleth, a Jew, became conflicted and confused as he was influenced by Greek philosophy. It concludes that he reconciled his confusion through his advocacy of acceptance of man's limitations, carpe diem and moral integrity.

Introduction

At first glance, the Book of Ecclesiastes, or as it is known in Hebrew, Koheleth, is a strange book to have made it in the Bible. The Bible speaks of God's providence in history. It is based on the supposition that God revealed His Will to the People of Israel at Mount Sinai and that the same people have the unique duty to follow that Will. The Bible is a profoundly optimistic book, believing that the people can stay on the path of God's mitzvot. What's more, the Bible asserts that change is always possible. No matter how low Israel sinks in their moral deeds, there is always the hope for personal as well as collective salvation. Verses 9:2-7 of Isaiah, for example, celebrate the redemption of Israel and the new world order that will arrive with the Messiah. Koheleth, on the other hand, does not even recognize a path for man to follow. According to Koheleth, God has revealed nothing to man. "However much man may toil in seeking (to understand the work of God) he will not find it out; even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out."(1) Koheleth believes that life is a fruitless endeavor to find meaning and newness. All of life, whether it involves the pursuit of wisdom, justice, possessions, or righteousness, is vain and empty. "Vanity of vanities! All (of life) is vanity."(2) Furthermore, both the phenomena of nature and the actions and experiences of men are limited in number. No newness is possible. This close-ended view of natural phenomena

is evident in 1:9-11 and 11:4-6, while the identical view regarding the human experience is expressed in 3:1-8, 10:11, 14-16, 4:1-2, 5:7, and 8:17-9:11. Indeed the text of Koheleth seems like a foreigner alongside the Prophets, the Torah and much of the Wisdom Literature.

The rabbis of Yavneh struggled with this strangeness as they decided on what was to be canonical. Shabbat 30b of the Babylonian Talmud points out that Koheleth's words are "self-contradictory" and that "the sages wished to hide the Book." In other words, they wished to exclude it from the canon. The Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 28:1 states that "the sages wanted to store away the Book of Ecclesiastes, for they found in it ideas that leaned towards heresy." Megillah 7a complains that the text was not sufficiently based in the tradition to be included in the canon. This passage reads, "Ecclesiastes does not render the hands unclean because it contains only the wisdom of Solomon." Yet the rabbis who wished to exclude the book finally conceded and included it amongst the writings. They did so for three reasons. First, the text was attributed to King Solomon, the author of previously accepted texts. Second, the rabbis taught that the beginning of the book, as well as the end of the book, contained religious teachings. And third, through hermeneutics they were able to reconcile the contradictions. Shabbat 30b reconciled the contradictions of 7:3, and 2:2 and 8:15 the following way. "The anger which the Holy One, blessed be He, displays to the righteous in this world is better than the laughter which the Holy One,

blessed be He, laughs with the wicked in this world." Thus what appeared to advocate sorrow or anger in verse 7:3 was harmonized with the verses that advocated joy.(3) Hence the rabbis recognized its heretical leanings, but "believing" it to be the product of Solomon's pen, seeing its traditional opening and conclusion, and reconciling the contradictions through hermeneutics, they saw fit to acquiesce to what must have been popular pressure and accept it.

Most of Koheleth's strangeness becomes understandable if it is seen in light of Hellenistic influence. Thus the first two chapters of this thesis will explore the possibilities of Greek influence on Koheleth. They will explore parallels between Koheleth and Theognis, the Epicureans, the Stoics, Parmenides, and Plato. Chapter Three will then show in what ways Koheleth was influenced by older Biblical traditions.

But as paralleling Koheleth to various philosophies and traditions can explain where some of Koheleth's ideas originated it can also shed some light on Koheleth the man, and the age in which he lived. It can point to some of the prevalent philosophic movements at work in third century Palestine and show how it affected Jews, like Koheleth. Thus what follows will be an attempt to show Greek and Biblical influence on Koheleth and to make psychological conclusions based on Koheleth's contradictory statements and sociological/historical conclusions regarding the life of Jews during the early period of Hellenistic influence in Palestine.

NOTES

(1) Koheleth 8:17

(2) Ibid., 1:2

(3) Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 30b

THE INFLUENCE OF THEOGNIS, THE EPICUREANS, THE STOICS,

and

PARMENIDES ON KOHELETH

Was Koheleth influenced by the Greeks? Did he learn many of his novel ideas and his scientific method of inquiry from the Hellenics or did he develop them on his own? Did he have the Epicureans in mind when he often repeated, "Eat, drink, and be merry?" Were the Stoics responsible for Koheleth's cyclical view of nature and his belief that man must accept the fate and fortune of life with quiet resolution? Was the philosophy of Parmenides the basis for his notion of the world's changeless character? Could the Greek philosopher of the sixth century, Theognis have been the source for Koheleth's this worldly bent and his skepticism regarding the possibility of attaining knowledge of God?

A myriad of questions puzzles Biblical scholars regarding the degree of Greek influence on Koheleth. Questions that present themselves because of our author's chronological, geographical, and philosophical proximity to Greek culture and because of several of the author's non-Hebraic attitudes. Bernhard Anderson, recognizes the likelihood that Koheleth was influenced by the Hellenic spirit. "It seems clear that Ecclesiastes was influenced in some degree by the spirit of Greek culture. This was the atmosphere he breathed, and he could no more escape the Hellenic spirit than a modern writer can avoid the influence of the scientific spirit of the twentieth century." Yet, Anderson modifies his assertion,

as follows: "But it is doubtful that Greek concepts influenced Koheleth in any fundamental way. In spite of his 'tragic sense of life', he never surrenders the conviction that God is sovereign over human affairs."(1) As with most scholars, the issue for Anderson is not whether or not Koheleth was influenced by the Greeks. Recognizing many similarities with the Greeks, he postulates that Koheleth was influenced. The question is, was the influence direct or indirect? Did he actually study with the Greeks, or are his ideas only the result of cultural assimilation?

Many scholars recognize remarkable similarities between Koheleth's work and popular Greek philosophical notions. They also notice divergencies between his ideas and contemporary Jewish beliefs. Koheleth's view on creation, providence and revelation, plus his approach to studying these issues are more similar to popular Greek philosophers than they are to general scriptural views. According to the Stoics, Parmenides and Koheleth, the world was created with limited possibilities. This is in direct contradiction to earlier Jewish sources, which put forth that the world was created ex-nihilo with infinite possibilities for natural growth and human development. Koheleth and some Greeks such as the Epicureans believe that Divine Providence was impossible. Unlike Pentateuchal, Prophetic and some Wisdom Literature, where God intervenes in history to reward the righteous and punish the wicked, Koheleth and these Greeks depict God as uninvolved in history. God serves history as a Prime Mover

and as a veritable truth, but not as a participant. Also, according to Koheleth and some Greeks such as the Epicureans and Theognis, any possibility of Divine Revelation or knowledge of God was excluded. Ecclesiastes 3:11 bemoans the fact that man will never pierce God's mysteries. We "may not discover the work God has done from beginning to end." In addition to the similarity with Greek thought, Koheleth's view of an unknowable God through either reason or revelation sharply diverges from the Biblical notion of God as giver of the Covenant. Finally, scholars have noticed a unique empirical approach in Ecclesiastes that is lacking elsewhere in the Bible, yet fundamental to Greek philosophic pursuits. "The chief outcome. . .of Greek culture in the intellectual doman was. . .the giving rise to the scientific spirit, substituting astronomy for astrology. . . giving to medicine a more scientific aspect by the study of the forces of nature and the structure of animals. Koheleth betrays to a considerable extent the influence of this scientific spirit."(2)

Certainly not all scholars accept the above assertions. Some affirm the existence of Greek influence (Pfleiderer, Siegfried, Haupts, Graetz, Wildeboer, Levy, Plumptre and Tyler) while others outright deny it (McNeile, Delitzsch, Nowak, and Barton). One scholar suggests the possibility that Koheleth was influenced by Buddhist philosophy (Dillon).(3) The only consensus among scholars is that there are many plausible theories.

In an attempt to answer the question of the degree of Greek influence on Koheleth, this chapter will look for similarities between the text and the four Greek philosophies most readily associated with him, those of Theognis, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and Parmenides.

Koheleth was Influenced by Theognis

A reader of both Koheleth and Theognis will immediately recognize parallel viewpoints and opinions in areas ranging from man's dependence on God to his lack of opportunities for redress after death. For whatever the reason, the similarities are striking.

Both Theognis and Koheleth saw themselves as the highest possessors of knowledge. Theognis claimed that he had "signal knowledge of wisdom."(4) Likewise, Koheleth in two places referred to himself as the wisest of Jerusalem's sages. "Said I to myself, 'Here I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.'"(5)

Not only did both view themselves as the wisest of scholars, they both took it upon themselves to teach. Theognis wrote about himself, "It is meet that the servant and messenger of Muses, if he has any signal knowledge of wisdom, would not begrudge it; no, some things he must seek, some he must present, and others compose; to what purpose is his sole knowledge?"(6) Koheleth, like Theognis, was of the belief that one acquired wisdom in order to teach the people. Knowledge for its own sake was meaningless. "And I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived

that this also is but a striving after the wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow."(7) Unless the sage employed his wisdom in the academies to guide the youth, knowledge was useless. So like Theognis, the editor of Koheleth tells us that, "Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and searching and arranging proverbs with great care."(8)

Both philosophers stressed man's complete dependence on God. Theognis wrote, "No one is himself the cause of loss or gain: the Gods are givers of both. . .No man is happy or poor or bad or good apart from Divine agency. . .Apart from the Gods there happens neither good nor evil to man."(9) Likewise, we find underpinning Koheleth's philosophy, the belief that all events whether good or evil are the work of God's hands.(10)

In almost the same language as Koheleth, Theognis asserted, "Tis not for mortals to fight with Immortals, nor to argue (with them); to no one this is right."(11) Koheleth phrased the identical idea this way in 6:10, "He is not able to dispute with one stronger than he."

Both writers stressed man's ignorance of the future and his inability to understand God's world. Koheleth in 3:11 stated, "He has put eternity in man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end." Similar notions are expressed in 6:12 and 7:14. Theognis also expressed his dismay over human ignorance and intellectual limitations. He argued that "Nothing is defined

by Diety for mortals, nor the road in which a man must go to please the Immortals." In another passage he reinforces this idea, "No one knows when a matter begins where he is likely to land."(12)

Regarding a world in which the wicked and the righteous receive equal treatment for their deeds, or even the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, both Theognis and Koheleth expressed their dismay. Theognis wrote, "The unrighteous and wicked man, shunning the wrath neither of man nor the Immortals waxes wanton, and is glutted with wealth, whereas the righteous are worn out, and distressed by sore poverty."(13) Koheleth observed that "There are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous."(14)

Koheleth's persistent denial of an after life in 2:14b-16, 3:17, 3:19, 9:2, 9:5, 9:10, 11:9, and 12:14 is reminiscent of Theognis' assertions that all cognition ends with death. In 2:14b-15 he wrote that death equalizes all distinction in life. "I perceived that one fate comes to all of them (the wise and the fool). Then I said to myself, 'what befalls the fool will befall me also; why then have I been so very wise?" Leaving no hope for anything beyond the grave, Theognis wrote, "when a man dies he lies long beneath the ground, like a voiceless stone and though he be a man of worth, he shall see nothing any more." Man is nothing but dust, who returns to his original state upon his demise. "Soon there

will be some other men, and I, when dead, shall be black earth."(15)

Furthermore, the two sages came to the conclusion that human nature is fraught with sin. In passages 327, 665, 898, and 1027, Theognis wrote that "sin attends mortals." Beyond this obvious fact, he stated that totally good individuals are non-existent. "The sun looks down on no one living who is entirely good and virtuous."(16) Koheleth concurred in 7:20 stating, "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth that does good and never sins." Both then referred to one of the most noticeable manifestations of human sin, the elevation of the unworthy and the degradation of the noble in society. In 10:6 Koheleth phrased his condemnation thusly, "folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on foot like slaves." Theognis said the same thing some three hundred years earlier. "(The base) are now enobled and the nobles of old are now made base. . .Laborers rule; the base have the upper hand of the nobles. . .who can bear to see these things?"(17)

The similarities between the Greek sage and the Hebrew one in reference to Chance are remarkable. Theognis saw Chance as the cause of success and failure. Verse 129f reads, "Pray to be foremost neither in excellence nor in wealth, but simply let there be luck to a man." Later on in his work he complained that Chance causes the poor to become rich and the rich to become poor. "wise man errs and glory oft attends the senseless, and honor even the base man obtains."(18)

Ecclesiastes expressed the same idea. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill, but time and chance happen to them all."(19) Yet both in the end, after recognizing the force Chance plays in man's life, subordinated its power to that of the Divine Will. Theognis wrote that the luck which either builds or destroys a man is the result of Divine favor. Koheleth 2:24, 3:13, 5:19, 7:14, and 9:1 suggests that success is not a result of Chance alone; ultimately God is responsible. Hence both recognize the powerful effects of Chance on man's fortune, while subordinating it to the Will of God.

The weariness of life led both men to long for death. Theognis lamented, "Of all things to men on earth, it is best not to be born, nor to see the beams of the piercing sun; but once born, as swiftly as may be to pass the gates of Hades and lie under a heavy heap of earth." Likewise, Koheleth having observed the vanity of existence envied the dead. He wrote, "And I praise the dead who have already died, more than the creatures who are still alive. And more fortunate than both is he who has not yet been born and so has never seen the evil deeds that are being done under the sun." (20) Koheleth's pessimistic view of life is further mentioned in 2:17 and 7:2.

Both sages temper their pessimism with occasional beams of hope and praise for life. Rejoicing in the gifts of life, Koheleth wrote, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" and "Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes

to behold the sun."(21) So Theognis loved life despite his pessimism. "I shall leave the lovely light of the sun and though I being a good man, I shall see nothing any more." And both conclude "carpe diem"--"get all the joy out of life that comes your way." Perhaps in his most renowned passage, Koheleth advised, "A man has no better thing under the sun than to eat, and drink and enjoy himself." Theognis counseled the same. "Most delightful of all is to gain what one desires."(22)

Finally, both suggests moderation as a guide for happiness. Koheleth 7:16 - 7:18 reads, "Be not wicked, overmuch, neither be a fool; why should you die before your time? It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for he who fears God shall come forth from them all." Ranston believed that that admonition to sin moderately signalled Hellenic influences rather than Jewish ones. "He is advising his reader not to give himself up wholly to righteousness or to wickedness, but to seek to keep the medium. This is the interpretation of Rashbam, Hitzig, Ginsburg, following the Syriac and Vulgate versions. 'This' and 'that' refer to the 'wickedness' and the 'righteousness' of the preceding verses. Clearly we are in a Hellenistic atmosphere . . .You may sin to a moderate degree so long as there is no excess. Avoid all extremes of folly or wisdom, piety or sin. Give a share to both, even keeping the middle course. This is surely not the native Hebrew spirit."(23) Ranston then pointed out that it was not unreasonable to assume that Koheleth echoed Theognis, who

repeatedly stressed the golden mean. This Greek wrote "The good know how to keep the mean of things" and we must "Strive after nothing too much, (for) the mean is best in all things."(24)

Since it is possible that each sage developed his theories independent of the other, it would be premature to draw conclusions regarding the parallels thus far presented. If, however, more parallels may be pointed out between Koheleth and Epicurus, the Stoics or Parmenides, a supposition based on numerical probabilities would be more warranted. So let us now turn to the Epicurean philosophy in search of common themes.

Koheleth was influenced by the Epicureans

Epicureanism, beginning in the middle of the fourth century BCE was a mixture of hard-headed empiricism, speculative metaphysics and rules for the attainment of a tranquil life. Epicureans were concerned not with abstract metaphysical problems and definitions as was Plato. Instead, they focused on what was relevant to individual contentment. They found that the happy life was won by basing knowledge on evident sensations and directing conduct towards the obvious motives of attaining pleasure and avoiding pain. Naturally, Epicureanism became very popular. In fact, it became the most widespread of the ancient Greek philosophies, lasting over six centuries.

Noticeable parallels exist between the widespread Epicurean philosophic system and the ideas of Koheleth. Epicureans and at times Koheleth agree that God was completely removed from nature and history; both consider death to be

the final stage of life and both conclude that the proper response to our limitations is to pursue the pleasures of this world. Both proposed that the attainment of happiness was all we could hope for.

Seneca, the Roman Epicurean, spoke of God's transcendent nature. "God dispenses no benefits; he is impregnable, heedless of us: indifferent to the world. . .untouched by benefits and wrongs."(25) Man need have no fear of God, based on the common superstitions that all of our mistakes are being watched from above. God is not a divine supervisor. He exists in perfect tranquility completely removed from all earthly matter. Were He involved, He could not be tranquil, and therefore He would not be by Epicurean definition Divine. "Gods do not participate in governments of the world or intervene in the affairs of men, for such activity would be injurious to their serenity."(26) Because of God's transcendent nature, He is completely unknowable through either reason or revelation. "Prophecy does not exist, and even if it did exist, things that come to pass must be accounted as nothing to us."(27)

Koheleth also recognized this remote, self-sufficient non-communicative God. Man's relationship to God was one of ignorance and estrangement. Man wallows in the darkness of unawareness, endlessly searching in vain for knowledge of God's plan. "(God) has made everything beautiful in its time, also He has put eternity into man's mind, so that he cannot find out what God has done from beginning to end."(28) Even the wisest of men remain in a torturous ignorance.

"However much man may toil in searching, he will not find it out; even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out."(29) Breaking with the faithful of past generations, Koheleth cries out, admitting that humans were unaware of any ultimate truths and blind to their final destinies. "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."(30) As we will see later, he then commends, just as the Epicureans do, that we enjoy our portion and not worry about unanswerable existential questions.

In an attempt to alleviate popular anxiety over retribution after death, Epicurus strove to show that death was the end. Death was not an evil to be dreaded, (as it was by the multitudes). Death simply marked the cessation of all sensation and pleasure. "Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. And, therefore, a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality. . .So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist.

Only Koheleth, out of all the Biblical texts, put forth the same notion. His work repeatedly reinforced the idea that only in life is there vitality and hope. Yet, with the coming of death all this ceases. "But he who is joined with all the

living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost. . .Whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going."(32) Such a view soundly contradicts early Biblical passages which accept some, albeit unclear, mode of existence for the departed in Sheol.(33)

In addition to having similar views on death, both Koheleth and Epicurus see the body as temporary protective housing for the perishable soul. The Greek sage explicitly remarked that when the body, a vessel for the soul breaks, the soul is released, and becomes powerless. "If the bodily structure is dissolved, the soul is dispersed and no longer has the same powers."(34) Koheleth refers also to the body as a vessel and the soul as its content, which is released when the container is ruptured. "The silver cord is snapped, the golden bowl is broken, the pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."(35)

Since both sages affirm that nothing exists after death, they both by necessity focus on finding happiness in this world. Epicurus taught that the key to individual contentment lay in the simple process of pursuing long term psychic pleasure and avoiding pain. "And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and the end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to

pleasure we return again, using the feelings as the standard by which we judge every good."(36) Similarly Koheleth supposed "I know that there is nothing better for them, than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live."(37) This pursuit of the pleasure philosophy was not a passing idea to Koheleth. It permeates his work, appearing after the author's frequent lament over the deplorable human condition. Having almost convinced the reader that life and the struggle to grow is indeed futile, he tells us not to abandon life. Life may be dark and full of grief, but "Behold, what I have seen to be good and to be fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun."(38) Refusing to acquiesce to pessimism, Koheleth echoes Epicurean philosophy, identifying the good with the pursuit of enjoyment.

We find then an overlap between Koheleth and Epicureanism. Their notions of God's relationship to man, man's capabilities to understand God, man's extinction upon death and his individual happiness arrived at through the prudent pursuit of pleasure parallel each other. So is it possible that Koheleth read Epicurean works, or at least was vaguely familiar with the major tenets of this Greek system? Did Koheleth introduce these unique concepts, nowhere else found in the Bible, as a result of his contact with the popular school of thought? Let's reserve any speculation until we complete our survey. Now on to Stoics.

Koheleth Was Influenced by the Stoics

For more than four centuries Stoicism instructed large

numbers of men regarding nature's repetitive cycles, and the ethical imperative placed on man to accept his fate as part of the cycle. Although the Stoics periodically changed many of the teachings of its founder, Heraclitus of Ephesus, the basic tenets of the philosophy remained constant. The Stoics believed that the universe is itself a rationally organized structure and is amenable to intellectual explanations. It operates on a cyclical basis; each cycle identical in detail to every other. Nothing new is ever introduced into this closed rationally ordered system. At the end of each cycle comes a great conflagration; and then as the Pythagoreans too had taught, things begin to run their course in the exact same way as before. The exact same incidents and events come round in one cycle as had happened in the previous cycle; the same people, the same experiences, the same history and achievements, the same failures are reproduced. Inexorable fate and dire necessity rule all. Since each age simply repeats itself, the power of destiny is too strong to permit history's improvement. Thus the Stoic philosophy necessitates a resolution to the permanent flawed nature of existence. Marcus Aurelius wrote, "Do not hope for the Utopia."(39)

Koheleth repeated the Stoic vision of nature. He wrote, "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See this is new?' It has been already in the ages before us . . . that which is, already has been driven away."(40) Here we find possible reflections of the Stoic notion that everything present is

a repetition of the past, as well as everything in the future having its predicate in the present. Nothing is new under the sun, all is as it was, and all will be as it is. Koheleth, like Aurelius, accepted imprisonment in a world devoid of the hope for newness and improvement. "Vanity of vanities. . . A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever."(41) The world plods on as it has for centuries and as it will for centuries to come; nothing will change. Ills will not be righted, goodness will not triumph over evil. Opposites will only continue to balance themselves out through time. Koheleth, like the Stoics, resolved himself to the unalterable imperfection of the world.

Yet the universe teaches man ethics. According to the Stoics the universe subsists as an ordered and thus benevolent system. It dispenses good and evil to man dispassionately, without bias or prejudice. Natural evils may be perceived by human beings, but they are so construed only because of man's limited perspective. Seen from a higher vantage point, "the bad" harmoniously balances with "the good." So an eternal and harmoniously balanced universe serves as a paradigm for human behavior. It teaches man to acquiesce, to harmonize and to unify difficulties in both the personal and the political arenas of life. The universe's rational plan teaches man, in short, forbearance.

The Hebrew People, long before Koheleth, have been fighters of destiny. Abraham argued with God to save the lives of Sodom's residents, and the prophets berated the Israelites for their complacent toleration of social injus-

tices. Pentateuchal history had a distinct flavor of open endedness. The characters of the Exodus, living day by day, certainly had no sense of destiny. They had no idea what would happen to them on the next day. As they encountered opponents, they fought on, hoping for newness and rebirth. Koheleth's tone, however, is completely different. Unlike earlier Hebrew writers, Koheleth advocated a style of Stoic toleration. He advised the Jew to turn inward, pursuing individual pleasure, and not to dispute with God over social injustices. "Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he. The more words, the more vanity."(42) He told the people, the more we protest injustices and fight history, like Moses and the prophets did, the more foolish we look. Appreciate the world for what it is. "If you see in a province the poor oppressed and justice and right violently taken away, do not be amazed at the matter."(43) He told his students to accept the joys and suffering of life with inner serenity, living undisturbed by the ebb and flow of fortune. "Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with merry heart: for God has already approved of what you do."(44) This abandonment of the Jewish commitment to mold history places Koheleth in a non-Jewish frame of reference.

Koheleth was Influenced by Parmenides

Several times Koheleth asserts that all existence is static at its core. There is movement, such as the coming and going of generations, but that is only on the surface.

The earth at its core remains changeless, "But the earth remains forever."(45) In Koheleth's opinion, that which is, was not created out of something which was not. Rejecting a Biblical view of continuous creation ex-nihilo,(46) he wrote, "Is there a thing of which it is said, 'See this is new?' It has already been in the ages before us."(47) In 1:15 he rejected the Biblical and Rabbinic view of personal change through repentance. He wrote, "What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered." What is wrong or lacking will eternally be in that condition. The wrongs can never be righted and there is nothing which can reduce a deficit of Being. Nothing can be created out of non-Being to fill the void. Furthermore, man has no gain in his toil. He plants and reaps, kills and heals, breaks and builds, seeks and looses, never becoming anything greater than he already is. Progress is impossible. According to this verse in Koheleth, Becoming is out of the question. There is only Being.

This view of changelessness is clearly reminiscent of the Parmenidean concept of changelessness and Being. Parmenides of Elea living in the fifth century BCE denied the possibility of change either from non-Being into Being, or from Being into non-Being. The realm of Being or existence was incapable of Becoming or perishing. It was immutable, indivisible, motionless and ingenerate. There could be no truth in a progressive process of Becoming, because such a process requires motion from a less perfect, incomplete, disjunctive state to a more perfect one. Truth is found only in

Being, which by definition, is perfect, lacking nothing and therefore authentic. Life may change, but such a transformation is actually the rearrangement of eternal elements. Invention/creativity/ movement are only terms denoting the recombination of nature's four immutable elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Thus what appears to be change is in actuality only a rearrangement of what never changes.

When studied in light of Parmenidean philosophy Koheleth's unusual views of nature become more understandable. No longer do they seem totally out of context in the Bible. In actuality, they fit in quite neatly with the Zeitgeist. 1:4, 7 and 3:9 mirror Parmenides' view of motion without change. In 1:4 he states that people come and go, suggesting a continuous process, but he continues, "the earth (with its basic elements) remains forever." In 1:7 he wrote that all of life is in motion, "All streams run to the sea," but then he admits that nothing really changes, "but the sea is not full." And finally 3:1-9 expresses the point that man's expenditures achieve nothing. After all man's toils, Koheleth asks, "What gain has the worker from his toils?"(48) Has he changed? Has his struggle brought many rewards? "No", he concludes, "Nothing has changed."

While Koheleth is in accord with the Parmenidean view of changelessness, he radically diverges from a Biblical perception. One Biblical premise is that change is the source of salvation. Having made a Covenant with God, Abram became Abraham. Jacob was transformed by his encounter with God's angel, and became Israel. Moses, once a ruler in Egypt and an oppressor of Israel, became their leader to

freedom. The people of Israel once slaves in Egypt, were transformed at Sinai into a Covenant People. And as was pointed out above, God continuously creates and changes life. Koheleth diverges from this traditional viewpoint. According to him, people cannot change or develop and the world is at its core non-generative. Such a strange non-Biblical view is only explicable when one considers the possibility of Parmenidean influence.

Conclusion

Many of Koheleth's ideas are completely foreign to previous Jewish thought and at the same time similar to various Greek philosophies. This fact has led most scholars to the conclusion that Koheleth's parallels with the aforementioned Greeks are more than coincidental. They are the result of Koheleth's contact with the Greeks.

It is unlikely that Koheleth's contact with the Greeks was with either their writings or their philosophers. Except for the singular use of the word Pardes, which comes from the Greek, no direct borrowing of Greek words or phrases is discernable in Koheleth's text. Scholars have found thematic parallels between the writings of Koheleth and those of Theognis, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Parmenides, but they have found no verbatim quotations in Koheleth. It is therefore unlikely that Koheleth had before him any of the Greek sources. Ranston believed that had Koheleth read any of the Greeks, Koheleth would have contained at least several Greek words and phrases. But since it did not, he concluded that Koheleth learned of Theognis elsewhere. It was equally

unlikely that Koheleth, in Palestine, would have come into contact with the leaders of the Greek philosophies. Tcherikover, in his work, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, wrote that the Greeks who came to live in Palestine, did not belong to the Greek intelligentsia. According to Tcherikover, the Greeks that arrived in Palestine belonged to the lower social strata, bringing little beyond the strength of their hands.(49) The philosophers were not the ones to go the untamed lands of the Greek "Diaspora." The ones who went to Hellenize Palestine were the soldiers, politicians and builders. It was, therefore, most likely that Koheleth came into contact with these individuals.

Thus Koheleth's unique world view could not have been a result of serious study of Greek philosophy. He had neither philosophical texts nor the philosophers before him. His world view must have been the result of periodic encounters with those soldiers, politicians and builders who were familiar with philosophy. Robert Gordis and Ranston both believed that Koheleth's contact with Greek philosophy must have been of a casual nature. Gordis wrote, "Though Koheleth was not a formal adherent of Greek philosophy, it is to be expected that he would be familiar with the catchwords and popular doctrines of the schools which were part of the intellectual climate of the age. One need not be an assiduous student of the writings of Marx, Veblen, Freud, or Adler today, in order to be familiar with such concepts as the class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, conspicuous consumption, the subconscious mind and the

inferiority complex."(50) Koheleth must have heard the popular notions of his day, incorporated them into his philosophy and then into his text. What we today have is not the result of intensive study of Greek philosophy, but rather the result of "weighing and studying and arranging" (51) those notions which were heard in the market place of the third century.

NOTES

(1) Bernard Anderson, Understanding the Old Testament, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975, p. 544.

(2) Morris Jastrow, A Gentle Cynic, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1919, p. 148.

(3) Robert Gordis, Koheleth-The Man and His World, New York: Schocken, 1968, p. 7.

(4) Page 709 of Anthologia Syrica of Hiller Crusius.

(5) Koheleth 1:16. See also 2:9. All translations are taken from the New Oxford Annotated Bible.

(6) Harry Ranston, Ecclesiastes and the Early Greek Wisdom Literature, London: The Epworth Press, 1925, p. 14.

(7) Koheleth 1:17-18.

(8) Ibid., 12:9.

(9) Ranston p. 16.

(10) See Koheleth 2:24, 3:13, 5:18, 9:7 for concept of good emanating from God. See 1:13, 2:26, 3:10, 6:2 for concept of evil emanating from God. See 3:14, 7:13, 9:1, 11:5 for the concept that God controls all events.

(11) Ranston p. 17.

(12) Ibid., p. 18.

(13) See Ranston, page 19 for additional Theognis passages.

(14) Koheleth 8:14. See also 2:14-16, 3:16, 4:1, 7:8, 8:10.

(15) Ranston p. 21.

(16) Ibid., p. 35.

(17) Ibid., p. 36.

(18) Ibid., p. 29.

(19) Koheleth 9:10-11.

(20) Ranston p. 30.

(21) Koheleth 3:11, 11:7.

(22) Ranston, p. 32.

(23) Ibid., p. 44.

(24) Ibid., p. 44.

(25) A. A. Long, Hellenistic Philosophy, New York: Charles Scribner, 1974, p. 44.

(26) Charles R. Whitley, Koheleth, His Language and Thought, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, p. 166.

(27) Cyril Bailey, trans., Epicurus: The Extant Remains, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926, p. 121.

(28) Koheleth 3:11.

(29) Ibid., 8:17b.

(30) Ibid., 6:12.

(31) Bailey p. 85.

(32) Koheleth 9:45 and 9:10.

(33) See Gen 37:35, I Sam 28:3-9, Job 3:17-19.

(34) Bailey p. 41.

(35) Koheleth 12:6-7.

(36) Bailey p. 87.

(37) Koheleth 3:12.

(38) Koheleth 5:18.

(39) William Davidson, The Stoic Creed, Edinburgh, T and T Clark, 1907, p. 104.

(40) Koheleth 1:9-10, 3:15.

(41) Ibid., 1:4.

(42) Ibid., 6:10-11.

(43) Ibid., 5:8.

(44) Ibid., 9:7.

(45) Ibid., 1:4b.

(46) Psalms 40:5, 74:17, 95:5, 100:3, 104:24, 30, 118:24.

(47) Koheleth 1:10.

(48) Ibid., 3:9.

(49) Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1959, p. 33ff.

(50) Gordis p. 56.

(51) Koheleth 12:9.

PLATO'S REPUBLIC and KOHELETH COMPARED

The Significance and Influence of The Republic

Some two hundred years before Koheleth's life, Plato taught Greek philosophers how to reason and speculate in metaphysics and human nature. This great sage turned philosophers away from the singular Pre-Socratic study of the forces of nature and introduced them to the science of the human soul, with its reflection in society. As a result of his endeavors, the vision of the philosopher focused for the first time on questions regarding man's capacity to know himself, his world, and his potential for influence upon it. In addition, Plato was the first philosopher to conceive of a method for acquiring knowledge and a definition of justice. Understandably, his influence extends from Aristotle, through the Neo-platonics, till today. B. Jowett of the University of Oxford believes that Plato's magnum opus, The Republic contains the seeds for Cicero's De Republica, St. Augustine's City of the Gods, Sir Thomas More's Utopia, as well as the works of Berkeley, Coleridge, Milton, Locke, Rousseau, Jean Paul and Goethe.(1) Recognizing this immense influence, this chapter will closely study Plato's Republic in order to ascertain whether or not it affected the thinking of Koheleth.

Of all the Dialogues of Plato, The Republic is by far the most important. Because of its largeness of scope, and its aim of interweaving theory/idealism with practice/politics it can be considered to be the center around which the other dialogues are grouped. Affirming the unique

excellence of The Republic, B. Jowett wrote, "There are nearer approaches to modern metaphysics in The Philebus and in The Sophist; The Politics or Statesman is more ideal; the form and institutions of the state are more clearly drawn out in The Laws; as works of art, The Symposium and The Protagoras are of higher excellence. But no other Dialogue of Plato has the same largeness of view and the same perfection of style; no other shows an equal knowledge of the world, or contain more of those thoughts which are new as well as old. . .Nor in any other of his writings is the attempt made to interweave life and speculation, or to connect politics with philosophy. . .Here (in The Republic) philosophy reaches the highest point in which ancient thinkers ever attained."(2)

The Republic is a composite of many ideas. It addresses questions regarding education, knowledge, cardinal virtues, happiness, the ideal state, the ideal individual, art and the soul's immortality. Yet Plato concerns himself with these issues only as a means to define the fourth cardinal virtue, justice. The purpose of The Republic is to define justice as it is applicable to both the state and the individual. What follows will therefore be an outline of The Republic's focus on justice.

The Republic's Focus on Justice

The book opens with the question; what is justice? Four men work with and sometimes against Socrates, to define the term. Polemarchus, the first, offers three separate definitions. First he proposes that justice means "giving

everyone his due."(3) Socrates questions this response. Surely, he says, this cannot mean returning something to its original owner if the object being returned might do the owner harm. Polemarchus agrees, and offers another remodified definition. Justice, he says means appropriate dispensation. In other words, it means giving only that which will benefit a friend. But Socrates persists, "Should one give what is due to one's enemies?"(4) Polemarchus concedes and concludes that justice involves benefitting one's friends and doing harm to one's enemies. But Socrates rejects this definition, since in matters of health it is not the just man who is best qualified to benefit a friend, but rather the doctor. So such a dispensation could not be a matter of justice, but rather an act of professional duty. Moreover, our friends may be bad people and our enemies righteous. So if we harm our enemies, who are in fact good, we would be performing injustice, not justice. For these two reasons Polemarchus withdraws recognizing his error.

Thrasymachus, the sophist, presents his definition as "nothing else than the advantage of the stronger."(5) Today we recognize this philosophy of justice in the phrase, "might makes right." According to Thrasymachus a powerful ruler has the right to make laws solely in his own interest. Justice, he continues, is then accordingly found in those laws and in the weaker party's obedience to them. What's more, Thrasymachus believes that it is the ruler who makes the laws with no fear of punishment and no regard for justice,

who is the happiest of men. Such a person can live freely and reap the fruits of life, and therefore be happy. Hence justice is defined by Thrasymachus as whatsoever the powerful choose to do to make themselves happy. Socrates disagrees. Justice does not mean "living well" and grabbing all the wealth and power available as Thrasymachus thinks. Justice, Socrates points out, is something much deeper, involving the philosophic dimensions of man. Through a series of philosophic proofs, Socrates successfully rebutes Thrasymachus, making the latter withdraw.

The last two, Glaucon and Adeimantus enter the scene wishing to see further proof that justice is superior to injustice. Glaucon begins by questioning Socrates' exaltation of justice. He states that "morality is indeed a good thing, but is only good because it secures certain external results; it is not the 'natural good' (the best thing), but a compromise between a greater good and a greater evil; the greater good is to obtain the same external reward without justice, the greatest evil is to suffer the retributions of injustice."(6) He argues this case in three parts. First, justice originated out of a mutual fear of harm from one another. Justice arose from men "who are unable to avoid (suffering) and practice (wrong)." They in turn decided "That it is profitable to come to an argument with each other neither to inflict injury nor to suffer it."(7)

Justice is merely the product of mutual convenience caused by mutual fear. Second, justice is pursued by man against his natural will. If he could do as he wished, without fear of punishment, he would gleefully follow the path of injustice. "This we could realize very clearly if we imagined ourselves granting to both the just and the unjust the freedom to do whatever they liked." In time we would "Catch the just man redhanded traveling the same road as the unjust."(8) And this proves that people behave justly only because in a society that punishes the unjust, they find it necessary to do so. Third, the just man is not always happier than the unjust one. It is quite possible for the just man to acquire a poor reputation, and the unjust one a good one, so that in the end, the just man will suffer in a society alongside his prospering unjust comrade. Adeimantus continues the assault. He argues that justice is good only because of its results. It is not good in and of itself. Interestingly, both Glaucon and Adeimantus agree with Socrates and believe that justice is to be sought and injustice to be avoided. They disagree with him only in the reasons why. The former feel that one should seek justice for the sake of the rewards. The latter believes that justice is worthwhile for its own sake.

With the questions posed and the challenge set, Socrates designs an ideal just state so that justice can later be defined as it applies to the individual, and proven to be superior. He reasons that the state should be studied first because its features are larger and thereby easier to

investigate. "Perhaps there is more justice in the larger unit, and it may be easier to grasp. So, if you are willing, let us first investigate what justice is in the city, and afterwards let us look for it in the individual, observing the similarities to the larger in the smaller."(9) Applying the economic principle of the division of labor, Plato establishes three utopian classes in his state: they are the philosopher/king or the ruling class, the guardians and the laborers. As a horse has the innate potential for speed and a mule for strength, each individual in the society has a unique capability for a particular function. Each member of society "is born somewhat different from the other, one more apt for one task, one for another."(10) So some men showing a natural tendency for craftsmenship will be placed into the class of laborers, while others showing a keen intellectual acumen will be suited for rulership.

The first class Plato mentions in depth is that of guardian. The guardian's first responsibility is to protect the city from all enemies. Therefore an individual's fighting strengths are foremost when making a selection for this class. But since this specialized group of protectors will also have power over the non-military class, steps must be taken so that they be wise and morally upright. To be truly good leaders, they must be strong and wise, or as Plato put it "a fine and good guardian of our city must be a lover of wisdom, high-spirited, swift and strong by nature."(11) To mold such an individual, great emphasis is placed on physical, intellectual and moral education. In

their youth they are to follow the conventional Greek education of mathematics, physical science, art, music, a strenuous, but not too specialized physical training and a study of current literature with stories about honorable gods and heroes. From these characters the future guardians will absorb their ideas about good and evil and about life in general. And because so much will be integrated into the young minds from this source, all harmful stories, especially, stories about jealous and warring Gods must be censored. If the guardians are to be courageous and free thinking, they must not be taught about Hades and wrathful Gods, who punish men for decisive thinking. They will be taught only a select set of stories and myths, conducive to building strong and moral characters. Plato advocated such a rigorous educational program, lest the adult guardians lacking wisdom, become intoxicated with power and abuse their privileges at the expense of the state at large. A guardian by definition must be agressive and strong, but without the philosophic temperament to control this power, he is more dangerous than protective.

The rulers of the state are selected from among the highly educated and physically trained group of guardians. "Now as the rulers must be the best among the guardians, they must have the highest degree of qualities required to guard the city."(12) Those selected from the guardians to be the rulers must be older men, since they need a great deal of experience and wisdom; they must be highly intelligent and capable, and they must always keep the interests

of the community in mind. In fact, all their actions and endeavors must be directed towards the advantage of the city. That means that they must never lend themselves to bribery and propaganda. Making such a task easier is their ability to grasp the ultimate nature of reality or the Forms. As philosophers these rulers will be guided by such an ideal of perfect reality. And in turn they will make all political decisions on that criteria. Knowing what is true and good, Plato reasoned that these men/women will find it impossible to deny their knowledge and act on self-interest. In addition, their job of working selflessly for the state will be facilitated by their lack of private property and families. Plato reasoned that if they had this facet of life removed, they would act less selfishly and competitively.

The third class, consisting of people with an aptitude for service and production is called craftsmen. These individuals produce and market materials essential to the physical survival of the state. They are the cobblers, the blacksmiths and the bakers. Obviously they fulfill an essential function, as they maintain the base mechanism of the state. Ceasing their work, through either strike or revolt, the state would crumble for lack of goods and services. Hence, Socrates advises that they be respected as equal members of society yet properly guided by the upper two classes. Although they lack the joy of knowledge belonging to the rulers, and the satisfaction of being physically conditioned due the guardians, they derive their pleasure from possessions of the material world; a delight necessarily denied to

the other classes. Furthermore, their happiness is found in the peace and security that the vigilant watchmanship of the other two classes bring them. And as most vocational therapists point out today, their contentment lies in working at a job in which one's natural capacities are suited.

Plato's tripartite state, by definition, is wise, valiant, temperate and just. Plato locates the noble attribute of wisdom in the philosophic rulers, since they alone with their knowledge of the Forms can judge what is good. Valiance is, of course, found among the military guardians. Temperance, or self-restraint is the condition in which everyone agrees as to whom shall rule and is satisfied with his own role. Temperance involves disciplining one class for the health of the whole city. Socrates states that justice translates into each person or class performing his/her own activity without meddling in that of another. It is that condition which enables a city to be wise, valiant and temperate. A city could not be wise, for example, if the cobbler was serving as its ruler, and if a philosopher, untrained in baking, was responsible for food production.

In short, justice is located in each individual doing what he is best at and letting the other do what he is best at. If a soldier is just, he necessarily will be a brave man; if a man in a subordinate position is just, he of course will accept the authority of his superiors. Injustice, on the other hand, occurs when one individual suited for one particular function interferes in an area for which he is totally unqualified. It is when the natural order of the separate three sets is upset. Plato wrote, "The meddling

and exchange between the three established orders does very great harm to the city and would most correctly be called wickedness. Very definitely. And you would call the greatest wickedness worked against one's own city injustice? Of course. That then is unjustice."(13)

Socrates' original purpose in discussing the just state was to find out what it means to be a just individual. Having defined "justice in the state" as the disposition when all parts function on their own without interference from another segment, Socrates turns to "justice in man."

Our author begins by asserting that the human being is composed of various, sometimes opposite parts. "It is clear that one thing cannot act in opposite ways or be in opposite states at the same time and in the same part of itself in relation to the same other things; so if we find this happening we shall know that we are not dealing with one thing, but with several."(14) And that is exactly how he finds the human being. He notes as examples our capacity to stand still with our feet, yet be in motion with our head and our arms, and our inclination towards mental conflict. Thus the human personality is not a single uniform entity, but rather a complex of three different elements. The first element consists of physical needs or desires. The most obvious of these are hunger, thirst and the sexual drive. Plato terms the second element the appetitive or the ambitious. He speaks of this force as that which leads us to defy danger, display courage and defend against assaults. This second part of man drives him to seek glory and power

for himself, frequently through military achievements. The highest level of man is the rational or the reasoning. G. C. Field, author of The Philosophy of Plato wrote of this element. "This is not, of course, merely the cognitive process, for it includes also the impulse or desire to use this process. Nor must we think of it as merely the desire for knowledge, though, of course, that is one side of it. We can best describe it, perhaps, as the desire or impulse to be rational, which, as applied to our conduct, leads us to try to get rid of inner contradictions and to harmonize our varying impulses into an ordered system of behavior. And trying to do this involves trying to understand ourselves, our relations to our society, and finally our relation to the whole of reality and its ultimate principle, the Form of the Good."(15)

These three parts of man, the desire, the ambition, the reason, correspond to the three classes of the state, the craftsman, the guardian, and the ruler/philosopher. The desire is to the craftsman, as the ambition is to the guardian, and as the reason is to the ruler. Moreover, as the four cardinal virtues are located in each segment of the state, they can likewise be located in man. The first two of the virtues are as easy to find in man as they were in the state. A man is wise if his reasoning element is replete with knowledge, and a man is valiant, if his appetitive element is full of courage. As a state was temperate or self-disciplined when the rulers were in control and the people were content to be ruled by them, so a man is

temperate when his reason can discipline his drive for ambition and material pleasures. And following the pattern of the just state where each of the three segments perform their respective function without interfering in the performance of another; so the just man lets each of his three parts work in their own territory, without letting one meddle in the affairs of the other. He never allows, for example, his emotions or his ambitious drives to control his entire being, because to permit such a domination would impinge on the authority of reason. And likewise, he must allow a controlled exercise of his emotions, such as love and hate, for to deny such activity is tantamount to reason's tyranny. The overall picture of the just man then, like that of the just state, is one of a healthy balance between three opposite, yet fully functioning parts.

Books eight and nine of The Republic concern themselves with the corruption of the just state and the just man. Such a corruption and fall from the ideal state occurs when the natural balance between the three elements is disrupted. Assuming that the just state of man is slowly decaying by corruption, it/he will fall through four stages of injustice. The first stage down, though close to the ideal is called timocracy. Here the ambitious element of man gains dominance over reason. On the state level, the guardians take over control from the philosophers. In such a situation, honor, valiancy, courage and military prowess will be valued over insight, knowledge and wisdom. Both the man and the state will of course be strong, but he/it will lack direction and restraint. Further away

from the ideal is the condition oligarchy. An oligarchic state, Socrates explains, is one in which wealth is considered to be the most important thing, and where all the political power is in the hands of the rich. In this form of government, rulers are chosen on account of their wealth, not in consideration of their wisdom. The oligarchic man, being dominated by his desirous element, treasures money above everything else. On the surface this man will be very successful, but on a deeper level, he will be shallow and fearful of material loss. Still further away from the ideal, is democracy. In the democratic state, temperance is lacking. Every citizen is free to do whatever he likes. No one is forced to obey anyone. No one is compelled to fight when there is a war, and no one needs to perform a productive function in peace time. In short, the democratic state is anarchistic. The democratic man, treating all his desires "democratically," lives to satisfy all his fancies. There is no order or restrain in his life. He simply chooses whatever pleasure he wishes: wine, women, or song, and pursues it. He would be happy, except for the fact that he is obsessed with the pursuit. The farthest state away from justice is tyranny. Politically, this entails one man surrounding himself with incompetent advisors and ruling the people with an iron hand. Force is absolutely necessary in this situation, lest the people rise up in rebellion against him. This society breeds fear not only among the oppressed people, but also within the heart of the tyrant. It is clearly the worst and unhappiest of communities. The tyrannical man is tyranized by his lust.

This man tormented by an all encompassing passion to satisfy his cravings, runs his life for one purpose, to fill the void which his lusts have produced. He is the unhappiest of men.

Plato described the various stages of corruption because he wished to show that the farther one falls from the ideal or just state, the more unhappy one is likely to be. Book nine puts forth three separate arguments proving this point. First, in the tyrannical state, all citizens, except the tyrant himself, are enslaved. Likewise in the tyrannical man, the better parts of his personhood; his reason, his emotions and his healthy desires are forever at the mercy of his lust. Such a man, enslaved to these impulses, can hardly be free and happy. The just man, like the just state, however, is guided by reason and the knowledge of the Forms. The just man, knows how to satisfy his ambition and his desires, yet he is not their slave. He controls them. Thus he is truly free and happy. Plato's second argument that the man ruled by reason is happier than the individual ruled by ambition or desire, is that timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical men have not experienced the happiness of the just man. The just man, however, has necessarily experienced all of their pleasures. And since these lesser men do not know his pleasure, they are not as suited to judge the worth of each stage as the just individual who has. Even though the corrupt men believe they are the happiest they are nevertheless incorrect, having missed the best kind of happiness, that of the just man ruled by reason. Finally, Plato points out that the pleasure of the lower kind of life is not really pleasure at all, but actually the cessation of pain. When the body craves food or water, it signals

us by producing pain. Then as we satisfy the desire, the pain ceases; but this satisfaction is merely a temporary calming of pain, it is not pleasure. Only the pleasure of knowledge, which exists independently, not in relation to a satisfaction of a craving, is real and of value to a man's happiness. Plato wrote, "Let no one persuade us that pure pleasure is the absence of pain, or pure pain the absence of pleasure--They will not. Yet most of the so called pleasures which reach the soul through the body, and the most intense, are of this kind, some kind of escape from pain. Yes they are. . ."(16) But the pleasure derived from being filled with true opinion and knowledge is "unchanging and immortal." (17) This and only this true pleasure brings happiness to the soul of man.

Socrates paints a picture of the unjust man as one who has starved the noble element in his soul: his reason, and overfed the worst element: his lust. No amount of wealth, or power or honor can ever satisfy the monster within him. So in the end, this man is by far less happy than the just man. The latter, on the contrary, has balanced his internal being, placing reason at the head and exercising the appetite and the desires in a controlled fashion. The Republic's conclusion is that only a just man, who has a healthy, well ordered internal composition can be truly happy.

The Republic as it concerns itself with justice in the state and in the individual may be regarded not only as a philosophical work focusing on justice as an internal state of being, but also as a treatise of political reform. "It

is written," says Richard Nettleship, "in the spirit of a man not merely reflecting on human nature, but intensely anxious to reform and revolutionize it."(18) Having lived through the tumultuous period of the Peloponnesian War; having witnessed the execution of his beloved teacher, Socrates; having endured the skeptism among philosophers regarding the possibility of attaining truth, Plato criticized. He criticized Crete and Sparta for resembling a Timocracy; he criticized Athens for at various times practicing Oligarchy and Democracy; and he criticized tyrants, whom he felt were all around him. But his criticism was nonetheless constructive, for he held up an alternative to these unjust modes of existence. Hoping to improve the world, he presented a model of an utopian society, The Republic. He presented a world to which leaders and common people alike could mutually aspire. So The Republic can be studied as both a philosophical work of art and a blue print for political reform.

Koheleth's View of Justice

In his discussion of justice and righteousness, Koheleth employs conventional Israelite words in their conventional sense. He speaks of the righteous man, צדיק and the wicked man, רשע in 7:20, 8:10, 9:1, 7:15-17, 8:14, and 9:2. He refers to justice משפט, righteousness, צדק and wickedness, רשע in 7:17-25, and 3:16. He uses the word sin, חטא in 5:6, 7:20 and 10:4. All of these terms appear in Prophetic and Pentateuchal literature. Thus, relying on the definitions given to these terms by his tradition Koheleth used these popularly accepted words. He felt no need to define or

redefine them. He was satisfied with their usage and confident that his readers would be familiar with them. For this reason, the text is lacking specific definitions of the terms. Koheleth assumed that his readers would understand the meaning of righteousness and sin in 7:19. "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." Because "Sin" and "Righteousness" were working terms in contemporary Jewish vocabularies, Koheleth could use them without any philosophical explanations.

Koheleth was concerned with justice's practice, not its theory. He focused on the practical dimensions of justice; the ills of oppression (4:1-3), the importance of keeping one's word before God and man (5:2-6), the need for compassion and mutual assistance (4:9-12), and the necessity of wisdom in rulers for a righteous world (10:2, 3, 4:13, 14). He was not a philosopher of justice, he was a man who was interested in creating and sustaining a moral society. His discussions do not lead the reader to a philosophical concept of justice, but they do lead him to a moral way of life.

Sheldon Blank points out that Koheleth could not say (a) how he knew the morally good, nor (b) why he chose it, nor yet (c) how he was able to choose at all.(19) Blank maintains that Koheleth found no answers to these questions. Regarding the first question, the Bibli al author makes a possible reference to revelation in the term "to listen" in 5:1, but all in all, God is more a mystery to man than a source of knowledge of the Good. By using proverbs as a style of communication, and by using conventional

moral terms, it can be said that he was a traditionalist when it comes to moral behavior. Yet at the same time, Koheleth concedes that we have no certainty regarding the moral path. He expressed his doubts in 6:12, "For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life?" Likewise, concerning why man should choose the moral path, Koheleth could not say. There was no benefit in moral behavior. "There are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous." (20) Further on in 9:2 he wrote that there is no distinction between the righteous and the wicked in death. "Since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil." Koheleth's view on how man chooses the just path is paradoxical. On the one hand he stated that "the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God,"(21) and on the other hand maintains that man's deeds are his sole responsibility, "God made man upright but they have sought out many devices."(22) Like many Jews of his period, he held that life was predestined by God, yet man had the power to choose his ways. Thus Koheleth lacks a clear intellectual system of justice. He gives no explanations as to how many may discern the Good; he gives no definitive reason why he should pursue it and he lacks a consistent view of how he should do so. But all in all, as was stated above, his work suggests that he was a just man. He did after all, offer a moral plan of action to follow.

Koheleth admonishes his reader to be just, since he recognizes its positive affects on the external world only. He never speaks of the internal or psychic benefits of justice. Consider the following. "Again I saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive; but better than both is he who has not yet been, and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun." (23) Had Koheleth focused on the spiritual dimensions or the inner happiness of man, he surely would not have preferred death to suffering injustices. He would have taught the oppressed how to develop their inner character through travail. But seeing the intense suffering of the oppressed, believing that the purpose of life was to enjoy one's material lot and focusing on the externals rather than the internals, Koheleth thought death more desirable than oppression and poverty. Moreover he tells his reader to pursue justice, for its material benefits and avoid injustice lest one become entrapped by it, "he who digs a pit will fall into it."(24) Too often Koheleth witnessed a perpetrator setting a trap for an enemy and then falling into it. Perhaps he is referring to the Hamans of the world who built gallows for their enemies, and in the end got caught and strung up. "And a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall."(25) Snakes frequently hibernate among stones in a fence and he

who disturbs them is likely to get bitten. Here Koheleth is teaching that an unjust man who attempts to dismantle the bulwarks of society's moral fabric will in the end get punished. According to Koheleth then, injustice harms both the oppressed, so much so that the dead are more fortunate than the living, and the oppressor in the sense that they become entangled in their own unjust web and run the risk of getting caught. Injury for injustice, though, is only to man's material well being. Koheleth never spoke of the consequences to man's internal being.

Koheleth linked the performance of justice in society with the higher moral authority of God. According to Koheleth, God plays a critical role in man's pursuit of justice. God holds man accountable for all moral and immoral deeds committed in this life. "Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness. 'I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter and for every work.'"(26) The general text of Koheleth implies that during his lifetime man cannot know God's will. Yet the following verse implies that ultimately, perhaps after death, God's plan will be revealed, and man must at that time own up to his moral transgressions. "Rejoice O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. <u>But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment</u>."(27)

Reflecting an upperclass Sadducean background, Koheleth stresses the inevitability of oppression, a stoic acceptance of it and a loyalty to the ruling power regardless of right or wrong. He is at times rather complacent about social ills. Consider the following, "If you see in a province the poor oppressed and justice and right violently taken away, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them." (29) In other words, high government leaders are more responsible for oppression than low level government leaders and since God is ultimately responsible for these men, one should not feel duty bound to right their wrongs. Justice shall be the concern of the watchful "higher official" or God. Elsewhere he warns citizens to obey the king, not out of respect for sagacity, but out of fear of power. "Keep the king's command, and because of your sacred oath be not dismayed: go from his presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme and who may say to him, 'What are you doing?'"(29) The book was written in part to deplore the injustices practiced in the world, yet at the same time it advocates a humble submission to it. Man is stuck in a repetitive universe, unable to "dispute with one stronger than he."(30) Therefore man must stoi ally accept that which he cannot change and quietly tend his own garden.

Koheleth's concern for the poor was not the primary motive for his reference to them. He referred to their oppressed state in order to support one of the major premises

of his text, the vanity of life. Koheleth points to numerous human activities which in his view are vain: the striving after wisdom (1:17), human mirth (2:1-11), wisdom for wisdom's sake (2:12-17), human toil (2:18-23, 4:4-6), the acquisition of riches (4:7-12, 5:10-20), high station (4:13-16) and the failure to enjoy life (6:1-6). Oppression, like the above examples demonstrate the vanity of all things. His condemnation of it in the beginning of Chapter four is nestled among a series of facts that point to the vanity of existence. Three lines before his reference to the tears of the oppressed, he comments that man's common fate with the beasts is vanity, and then immediately following his reference to oppression comes his comment that toil (to appease envy) is vanity. Thus in all likelihood, he wrote of justice and the ills of oppression, not because he cared as the prophets did, but because he cared about life's absurdities and oppression was one more example of it.

The Two Author's Views of Justice Compared

Koheleth's understanding of justice is fundamentally different than Plato's. Plato took great pains to lay out a logically consistent definition of justice and an area of its application. Koheleth was content to use terms that his society had defined for him. Plato, in The Republic told his readers how to identify justice, why they should pursue it and then he told them how to pursue it. He carved out a neatly uniform path for all of humankind to follow. As was pointed out above, Koheleth had no definitive answers to the what's, why's, and how's of justice.

According to Plato, justice affects both man's internal being as well as the society at large. Koheleth, on the other hand, recognized justice's positive effects on the external world only. Koheleth knew only of the tangible world. Pleasure was found in the enjoyment of this world, and divine punishment was exacted on one's earthly works. "Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the works of your hand?"(31) Injury that results from injustice was to man's material well-being. It was not to the inner state as Plato believed it was. Thus it appears that Koheleth's view of justice and injustice is closer to that of Adeimantus, whom Plato refuted.

Plato and Koheleth's view of justice differ in that Koheleth linked the performance of justice with the moral authority of God while Plato did not. Plato defined the just society and the just individual using logic. All of his ideas were derived from reason alone. His notions of justice were not based on religious traditions, nor did he entreat God for guidance or inspiration. Lacking any reference to the Divine Will, he based his concepts on philosophy and psychology. This runs completely counter to Koheleth's statement that God will judge a man for his actions.(32)

Finally, the two authors differ in their tone. As was pointed out, Koheleth discussed injustice with the dispassion typical of many upperclass Sadducees. What's more he focused on it primarily to highlight life's futility.

Judging from his 12 chapters alone, his primary concern was not for changing the deplorable conditions of the oppressed, but with showing the vanity of life. Oppression pained him, perhaps as much as it pained any social activist, yet it never moved him enough to write about change. This was not the case with Plato. Plato was an idealist. He had an utopian vision of the world and how people could function in it. That is why he wrote The Republic. He wrote it with the intent of instigating massive political and social reforms. He wanted to change the injustices of Democracy, Timocracy, etc. Koheleth however was not an advocator of political or social change. Simply put, Plato was a radical reformer, Koheleth was a conservative.

A noticeable similarity does exist between Koheleth and Plato. It revolves around the issue of appropriate leadership and distributive social functions. Like Plato, Koheleth dispaired in finding frivolous oligarchs in positions destined for the wise while the words of the princely philosophers were being ignored. He wrote, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on foot like slaves."(33) This resembles the platonic form of injustice, where the wealthy, unenlightened merchants of the craftsmen class have interferred with the authority of the wise rulers. Such an interference results in the platonic nightmare of slavish men in positions of authority and princely men serving as

their valets. Pursuing this point further, Koheleth later writes, "Woe to you, O Land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning!"(34) Using a different style, Plato spoke of the identical evil. "But I think that when one who is by nature a worker or some other kind of moneymaker is puffed up by wealth, or by the mob, or by his own strength, or some other such thing, and attempts to enter the warrior class, or one of the soldiers tries to enter the group of counsellors and guardians, though he is unworthy of it, and these exchange their tools and the public esteem, or when the same man tries to perform all these jobs together, then I think you will agree that these exchanges and this meddling bring the city to ruin."(35)

The above parallel does not prove direct influence. Recognizing only this one similarity it is probable that each author developed their ideas independently of the other. Both Plato's and Koheleth's society were highly advanced with complicated hierarchies, thereby allowing unqualified leaders to either bribe or force their way to the top while enabling wise, yet less ambitious people to tumble to the bottom. Witnessing such a phenomenon, in their respective worlds, both men expressed their consternation. The fact that they had similar reaction to similar conditions is really no coincidence at all. A sage in any context Greek or Jewish would condemn the rising to power of incompetent leadership and the suppression of noble elements of society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Platonic influence on Koheleth's views of social justice is unlikely. Not only are Plato's and

Koheleth's viewpoints different, but so are their modes of investigating the subject. Plato, the philosopher, begins in theory and follows through to affect practical changes. He also concerns himself with the internal psychic state of justice as well as justice in society. Koheleth, on the other hand, as a Jew, concerned himself with justice as it affects man in his daily life. Justice is not an equation to be proven logically; it is rooted in Divine principles and therefore must be acted out in daily practice. Believing it a duty, Koheleth plainly tells the reader to be just, period. "A good name (earned by pursuing justice) is better than precious ointment. . .Surely oppression makes the wise man foolish and a bribe corrupts the mind."(36) For this Jewish sage, believing in the power of God, it was as simple as that.

NOTES

(1) B. Jowett, The Works of Plato, New York: The Dial Press, 1936, p. 4.

(2) Ibid., p. 2.

(3) G. M. A. Grube (trans.), Plato's Republic, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1974, p. 6.

(4) Ibid., p. 6.

(5) Ibid., p. 12.

(6) Richard Lewis Nettleship, Lectures on the Republic of Plato, London: Macmillan and Company, 1929, p. 50.

(7) Grube, p. 31.

(8) Ibid., p. 31.

(9) Ibid., p. 29.

(10) Ibid., p. 40.

(11) Ibid., p. 46.

(12) Ibid., p. 80.

(13) Ibid., p. 99.

(14) Ibid., p. 100.

(15) G. C. Field, The Philosophy of Plato, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 70.

(16) Grube, p. 231.

(17) Ibid., p. 232.

(18) Nettleship, p. 6.

(19) Sheldon Blank, Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, Ecclesiastes, p. 12.

(20) Koheleth 8:14.

(21) Ibid., 9:1.

(22) Ibid., 7:29.

(23) Koheleth 4:1-3.

(24) Ibid., 10:8.

(25) Ibid., 10:8.

(26) Ibid., 3:16-17.

(27) Ibid., 11:9, (underlining mine).

(28) Ibid., 5:7.

(29) Ibid., 8:2-4.

(30) Ibid., 6:10.

(31) Ibid., 5:6 (underlining mine).

(32) Ibid., 11:9.

(33) Koheleth 10:5-7, see also 9:13-16.

(34) Ibid., 10:16

(35) Grube, p. 99.

(36) Koheleth 7:1, 7.

THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER BIBLICAL WORKS ON KOHELETH

Methodological Concerns

The Book of Koheleth cannot be properly understood apart from its connection to the Hebrew Scriptures. In truth, many of its ideas seem to be Greek. But at the same time, it displays a uniquely Jewish perspective on life and a distinctively Scriptural style of writing. So in an attempt to understand how much Koheleth was influenced by Biblical Judaism, this chapter will explore the text's major assertions and literary forms and compare them with existing Biblical texts.(1)

In studying Koheleth's Jewishness two methodological questions arise. The first is, what in Koheleth is distinctively Jewish and what is part of neighboring cultures? When copyrighted words of one author appear in the work of another, modern literary analysts have no difficulty identifying the source and concluding that the latter was influenced by the former. In Biblical studies, however, scholars cannot be certain that one source has influenced another because an idea is rarely the unique product of one particular culture. The Hebrew Wisdom tradition, which focused on the individual's pursuit of happiness was thought by many Biblical scholars to have blossomed under the influence of the Greeks, yet scholars have recently pointed out that such an individualistic orientation was also prevalent in Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, and Palestine during the second millenium BCE. Likewise, the belief that the protection of the widow, the orphan and the poor is the will

of God is not unique to the Bible. Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic cultures also ascribed to their various gods the role of protector of the weak and judge of the oppressor. In Egypt, for example, the text of Anastasi chapter six, verse five, illustrates the Sun God, Re or Amon-Re as the protector of the weak.(2) Similarly, the famous Mesopotamian Code of Hammurabi (1728-1686 BCE) proclaimed that Shamash, the Sun-God, was called to be the judge of heaven and earth.(3) These connections between the gods of the pantheon and the moral stipulation to protect the helpless imply that religion and social ethics were strongly related in Egypt and Mesopotamia, as they were in Israel. Also of interest is the fact that the protection of society's helpless was seen as a virtue of the king, who is either God's representative in the Israelite and Mesopotamian cultures or a divine being himself in the Egyptian culture. So just as the leader of Israel made a pact with God to fight oppression, so Urukagina, the king of Mesopotamia in 2400 BCE made a similar treaty with the God, Ningirsu.(4) Included in The Instructions of Merikare, an Egyptian series of maxims on regal behavior, we find an assertion that if the king desires long life on earth, he must not oppress the widow nor annex the property which someone has inherited from his father. Thus the noteworthy Israelite premise equating G d with morality, and marking the king as God's representative on earth is not unique. Psalm 82 as well as the Covenant Code and parts of Deuteronomy have their precursors in Egyptian and

Mesopotamian literature.(5) As we compare Koheleth to the rest of the Bible, we must keep in mind that the Bible, like any document, does not have a monopoly on any one idea. Thus any parallel drawn between Koheleth and the Bible, however convincing or probable it may seem is still nevertheless inconclusive.

The second problem arises when comparing Koheleth to the Wisdom Tradition. The question is did a class of Wisdom sages who taught in the academies actually exist, or was the tradition of Wisdom an abstract intellectual movement without any social structure. Without such a class, it would be impossible to assign Koheleth a status in the order of his day; without such a class all parallels between Koheleth and Wisdom would be relegated to the realm of abstraction versus social position. Scholars debate whether or not a Class existed. Robert Gordis and Gerhard Von Rad believe that a professional class of sages taught the young in the academies and the national leaders in the courts.(6) Thus according to these scholars, Koheleth being a sage, was an accepted member of the class, working especially with the young sages.(7) Gordis is of the opinion that these schools were conducted for the upper class, reflecting a conservative mentality.(8) R. N. Whybray, on the other hand, places the Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Koheleth not in a class of wise men, teaching in the schools and the courts, but rather in a philosophic movement.(9) He bases his conclusions on the number of traditional Wisdom terms found only in the Wisdom

Books and not in the remainder of the Bible. Noting a meager nine words appearing exclusively in the Wisdom Books with only three of them being used in Koheleth, Whybray concluded that no common literary tradition existed. And without such a tradition, a professional class of teachers and counsellors seems unlikely. So according to Whybray, it is impossible to "assign (to Koheleth) a formal Wisdom role or status in the established order of his day."(10) In short, there is little positive evidence available suggesting the existence of the class of sages with which Koheleth could be identified.

These considerations do not preclude an attempt to identify Koheleth with Biblical and Wisdom thought and style. We know that most ideas in the Bible are found elsewhere. For example, hatred of oppression is universal. Yet, these ideas are also found in the Bible, and therefore, by definition are part of Jewish tradition. Hence, we can draw parallels between Koheleth and the Bible to illumine, albeit inconclusively, a common tradition and a shared belief system. Secondly, skepticism regarding the actual existence of a school of Wisdom has little direct consequence on an attempt to parallel themes and goals among Wisdom authors. Whether a society of Wisdom thinkers existed or not is not germaine to thematic studies. What is important for this study is only that the ideas of Wisdom circulated amor j Jews at the time of Koheleth's writing. And judging from the parallels between Koheleth and the other Wisdom authors, which will be discussed soon, it seems apparent that they

did.

Shared Themes With Wisdom

Israelite Wisdom Literature consisting of Koheleth, Proverbs, parts of Psalms and Job says little about the covenant made between God and Israel, it rarely refers to the Peoplehood of Israel, and it almost totally ignores the major focus of Torah and Prophets. The avoided subjects include: worship, sacrifice, and the nation's history with its heroes, villains, glories and catastrophies. Wisdom Literature balances the Biblical scales by turning away from the grand picture of Israel, painted in the Torah and the Prophets, and narrowing in on the individual's quest for meaning and happiness. The tradition of Wisdom uniquely concerns itself with the individual's pursuit of the good life. As Sheldon Blank stated, much of the Wisdom tradition is a "How to Book", guiding man to happiness. "Prudent and Moral behavior is the concern of Proverbs. . .the skill it teaches is to please God and live sensibly and well".(11) It is neither prophetic nor priestly. It is a book like the other Wisdom Books, that teaches right action and right thought.

Koheleth shares with the Book of Proverbs the desire to map out proper behavior and proper attitudes necessary for happy living. The underlying objective of both texts is to propose a "plan of action" that will guide humanki: i to soteria. Proverbs advocate that man pursue wisdom, prudence, righteousness, etc. Koheleth proposes a similar plan of action, plus one major addition. Koheleth counsels his

readers to enjoy the blessings of life with as much vigor as man can muster. "I know that there is nothing better for them (man) than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live."(12) This pleasure principle is formulated as a response to Koheleth's empty and vain experience. This negative view of life is absent in Proverbs. In 3:11 for example, Koheleth points out that our capacity to comprehend the meaning of life is severely limited by God. He wrote that the world is a place of Cosmic injustices (3:19-22, 9:2-6) and human injustices (4:1-3, 5:8-11, 8:10-13, 10:5-7). What's more, men can find no comfort in the cold insensitive cosmos. "All things are full of weariness: a man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under sun."(13) This uniquely pessimistic appraisal of life, moved Koheleth to offer his pleasure principle and his various suggestions for finding happiness. These suggestions, not his pessimism, parallel Proverbs.

Beginning our comparison, both Proverbs and Koheleth open their discourse with an authority basing link to King Solomon. Koheleth, aware of Solomon's possession of wisdom (I Kgs 3:5-14, 4:29-34 and II Chron 1:7-12) commences, "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, King of Jerusalem."(14) Proverbs authenticates its claim to wisdom with the same technique. Its author began, "The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, King of Israel."(15) Both authors, or

at least both editors, were aware of the traditional identification of Solomon with a discerning mind.

Koheleth taught that wisdom, if in moderation, empowers man beyond mere physical strength. He wrote, "Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers that are in a city."(16) Further on he spoke of the transforming power of wisdom and the joy it brings to man's face.(17) And again in 9:17 he referred to the saving power of wisdom. "Wisdom is better than weapons of war." But as he points to the futility of life throughout his writing, he reminds the reader of the dark clouds that overshadow wisdom's saving power. First, the words of the poor wise man are not heeded or remembered, perhaps because of his poverty. And second, all the benefits of wisdom can be destroyed by a few perfectly timed foolish or malicious words.(18) Wisdom is power, he agrees, but it can be weakened when confronted with wealth, sin and folly. This irony points to the futility of life in general. Koheleth's reflection on the power of wisdom does however echo Proverbs 21:22, "A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust." Here, as in Koheleth, wisdom is glorified in its own right and is viewed as powerful enough to overthrow the mighty in body.(19) In addition Koheleth's opinion that "the words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him"(20) seems to be a rephrasing of Proverbs 18:7, "A fool's mouth is his ruin and his lips are a snare to himself." Both authors point to the

constructive power of wisdom and the destructive effects of foolishness. Furthermore, by Koheleth's deferring to wisdom, he is showing a traditional element. "He is not", Robert Levy points out, "promoting his own way of living in the full passage, but Wisdom's way. A similar attitude is reflected in B. Sirah (Chapters 1 and 24) and Proverbs (8:1-9:19)."(21) Wisdom's way must be the tradition's way.

הבל הבלים an overwhelming futility, our own intransigence glares at us, complains Koheleth. At regular intervals Koheleth asks his reader, what's the point of man's labors? Why does he work so hard, foregoing his earthly pleasures, rarely finding time to enjoy his earnings and frequently leaving it behind to an undeserving inheritor? Verses 1:2, 2:11, 18, 23, 3:9, 22, 4:8, 5; 12-17, 6:7 point to man's utter lack of satisfaction derived from bitter toil, the impermanence of acquisitions and the harm that can result from being obsessed with toil and advancement. Koheleth does not believe that man should desist from his monetary endeavors, he simply points out man's foolish behavior to support his major premise: the vacuousness of man's strivings. Look how silly we are, we come into this world with nothing, work like dogs to have something, yet in the end we leave with as much as when we came in . . . הבל הבלים. "As he cam- from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil, which he may carry in his hand.(22) Proverbs also points to this tragic human condition. "Do not", it warns us, "toil to acquire

wealth: be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone: for suddenly it takes to itself wings, flying like an eagle towards heaven."(23) If only man would realize that wealth is fleeting in this world and non-transferable to the next. Both authors mourn the fact that we do not.

"He who digs a pit will fall into it: and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall."(24) This admonition against trying to ensnare an adversary is found word for word in Proverbs 26:27, "He who digs a pit will fall into it." It continues "And a stone will come back upon him who starts it rolling." Koheleth used the image of the stone to make the identical point. He wrote in 10:9. "He who quarries stones is hurt by them." Both authors warn the individual that things have a way of back-firing on you, so be careful.

Both Koheleth and Proverbs suggest obedience to higher authorities if one wishes to avoid personal ruin. Koheleth wrote, "Keep the king's command and because of your sacred oath be not dismayed, go from his presence, do not delay when the matter is unpleasant, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, 'What are you doing?' He who obeys a command will meet no harm."(25) Scholars debate whether the king that Koheleth referred to is earthly or heavenly. Since there are no capital letters in Hebrew it is impossible to know with certainty which it is. But judging from Koheleth's beliefs he probably meant king with a small "k." Never in his work, does Koheleth recognize revelation of divine will. Hence it

would be unlikely for this author to advocate obedience to the word of God since the word is never imparted. Obedience must be towards the one who wields real power over man, the king with the army. Proverbs counsels a similar compliance to authority. 24:21 reads "My son, fear the Lord and the King, and do not disobey either of them: for disaster from them will arise suddenly, and who knows the ruin that will come from both?" Here we find the conservative mentality typical of both the Wisdom tradition in general and Koheleth in particular. The only difference between this proverb and the maxim of Koheleth is that in the former obedience is rendered to God and His representative the king, while in the latter compliance is due only to the king.

Charles F. Whitley in his book, Koheleth: His Language and His Thought pointed out many verses in Koheleth that are reminiscent of phrases in Proverbs.(26) Whitley points out that Koheleth 7:1 which reads, "A good name is better than precious ointment" is clearly reflective of Proverbs 22:1 where we find, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold." Further on, Whitley observed a shared view of idleness, both authors being of the opinion that inaction breeds poverty and self-destruction. Koheleth wrote "The fool folds his hands, and eats his own flesh"(27) echoing the sentiments of Proverbs, "A little sleep, a little slumber a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a vagabond, and want like an armed man." (28) Parallels also

exist in both authors' value of patience. Koheleth wrote, "The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools." (29) Proverbs 14:29 and 16:32 states, "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly" and "He who is slow to anger is better than the might." Patience, both point out, is a more helpful character trait than pride or physical strength in our journey towards the peaceful life. Finally, Whitley parallelled the proverbial assertion that God conceals and the king reveals life's secrets (30) with Koheleth's claim that he is a king who has applied himself to seeking and searching out life's secrets.(31) It is most probable that such a royal identification on the part of Koheleth was necessitated by his awareness of tradition's association of royalty with seekers of truth.

Even the agnosticism in Koheleth with which many rabbis of the Talmud struggled, is found in Proverbs. In 30:1-4 we find a man, Agur, who at the very least questions the possibility of his attaining knowledge of God and at the very most doubts the existence of God altogether. Agur claims in a sardonic tone that he has no personal knowledge of God and no empirical evidence pointing to His invisible hand in history. "I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists?. . ." and then mocking the religious certainty of contemporary pietists he

scornfully laughs, "Surely you know!"(32) Agur opposes the traditional doctrine that Yahweh, a personal God, chose Israel, expressed His will and involved Himself in human history. Likewise Koheleth wrote, "(God) has made everything beautiful in its time, also he has put eternity into man's mind, so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."(33) Here, Koheleth is displaying his agnosticism, regarding God's ways in the world. This agnosticism, however, which troubled the rabbis so much was not new. In actuality, it has a precedent in the figure of Agur. The doubt that Koheleth exemplifies is shocking to the faithful, but it is by no means alien to Biblical Literature. We saw it in the Proverbial character of Agur and we shall see it again in Job.

Modern scholars find a multitude of lessons in the Book of Job. They maintain that the book teaches: 1) that the old doctrine of a causal connection between suffering and evil is untenable, 2) that the splendors of creation and their marvelous sustainment (38:39-40), phenomena beyond the capacities of man, are proof of the justice of God 3) that the question of man's actual lot as contrasted with his rightful deserts is one on which God prefers to maintain silence and 4) that there are no definitive answers to the problem of evil.(34) The book offers possible solutions to the problem of Job's suffering. They are presented through the mouths of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu, but then God refutes all of their claims in His final

theophany. Through this divine refutation, scholars believe that the book rejects the common Israelite doctrines of retribution in this life and after life. Moreover, man is so limited in knowledge (Job 38 ff) that he, symbolized by Job has no right even to question the ways of God. Divine justice, Job concludes, is a concern of God, not of man. The conclusion of the book does not answer Job's questions. In fact, all of Job's inquiries are ignored by God. God's response was only to highlight His own greatness and man's complete ignorance. So when the story concludes, the reader still has not learned of the Jobian solution to the problem of evil. Thus, one of the aims of the author of Job was to challenge the existing traditions and to make man realize that no definitive answers to life's questions are available.(35)

Like Job, Koheleth was a wise man in revolt against the traditional view of retribution. As God rebuked Job's friends, for affirming the doctrine of retribution, Koheleth attacked the accepted notions that the righteous will prosper in this world and that the wicked will not. "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 evil doings. . ." Then he rejected the idea that all will be set right after death . "Everything before them is vanity, since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not

sacrifice."(36) Both texts reject the simple formulas of divine retribution found in such places as Psalm 37:25 and Deuteronomy 7:12ff. Both attack the arrogance of the fortunate and both reassure all persons perplexed by adversity. Life, according to Job and Koheleth is much more complicated than the Torah and the Psalms suggest.

Both authors base their texts on empirical evidence. Tradition from Sinai is not as authoritative as the painful experiences that Job endured or the analysis that Koheleth conducted. Life experiences were the building blocks for knowledge. Sheldon Blank wrote that both books are the product of independent, searching minds. They are the writings of men who believed that we know only what experience tells us.(37) In Job 14:1-22 the author amidst his agony observes no divine justice, no hope, no Godly compassion. With as much indifference as water wears down stones in a brook, so God destroys the hope of man. This, of course, runs contrary to Israelite dogma, but Job states it anyway. He experienced life that way and so he expressed what he experienced. Koheleth is also empirical. His work, however, was not motivated by the personal travail that pushed Job to write. Koheleth's endeavors were more intellectual and more analytical in nature. As a high and mighty king, he "Applied (himself) to seek and to search out wisdom."(38) He was a man with a keen eye and a critical mind. He observed, experienced, tested and then drew his conclusions.(39) Throughout Koheleth we find technical words

such as ולתור, לדרוש seek and search וראיתי I saw, and אנסה, I will test. In Job, however, we sense the personal sufferings of an individual. Both are empirically oriented, valuing data over dogma, yet Koheleth is more clinical in his approach; Job's writing is more concerned with the immediate experience of suffering.

As Koheleth shared with Proverbs a plan of action to help man cope with life's difficulties, so too did he share a plan of action with the Book of Job. The book of Job advises faithful endurance and reverential silence as a response to man's suffering. At first this plan of forebearance is revealed by God. "Shall a fault finder contend with the Almighty?" but then Job concurs, "Behold, I am of small account: what shall I answer thee? I lay my hand on my mouth."(40) The dialogue ends several chapters later with Job's repentance for his questions and presumptive utterances. God does not explain Himself to his righteous sufferer, rather Job responds remorsefully, "I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."(41) According to George Fohrer, Job conceptualizes the proper action to take in his final response to God. Fohrer wrote, "In his unreserved devotion to God and in his personal fellowship with him, Job bears and endures his fate. . . This is the true understanding and appropriate attitude for man towards suffering, the humble and reverential silence sustained by repose in God."(42) Neither Job nor Koheleth definitively answers the questions: why do men suffer or what is the

profit or meaning of life, yet both end optimistically, affirming a plan of action that will help us cope with our uncertainties.

Shared Style with Wisdom

Koheleth parallels the style of Wisdom Literatures by employing two literary forms found in Proverbs and Job; the allegory and the proverb. Koheleth 12:1-6 allegorized growing old the following way:

> Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them: before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men are bent, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows are dimmed, and the doors on the street are shut; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low; they are afraid also of what is high, and terrors are in the way; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel at the cistern.

Here Koheleth uses separate images to represent different parts of the human body. The "keepers" are the arms, the "strong men" are the legs, the "grinders" the teeth, the "windows" the eyes and the "doors" the ears. Through the allegory, Koheleth made his point poetically. And since the idea was expressed more artistically, it was more likely to last on the minds of sensitive listeners. Thus Koheleth's rhetoric was made more effective through the use of allegory. We also find this use of allegory in Proverbs 5:15-20. It reads:

> Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely hind, a graceful doe. Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love. Why should you be infatuated, my son, with a loose woman and embrace the bosom of an adventuress?

Only towards the end of the section does the meaning of the allegory become clear. The fountain, the spring is the man's own wife. At the same time, however, the springs and streams of water recall the power of procreation and children. Thus the lesson of this allegory is keep strange women at a distance and remain true to your wife.(43) What is significant is that both Koheleth and Proverbs use allegory to heighten the effectiveness of their rhetoric.

The proverb is usually a single balanced line, each proverb a unit in itself. It is by definition wholly independent of its neighbors. In Proverbs they are frequently strung together in a disconnected series, providing the reader with no sense of continuity.(44) Job employs proverbs to summarize the common Israelite notions which his friends imparted.(45) Koheleth however, utilizes this traditional mode of communication in a completely new way. He incorporates the proverb into the body of his prose to succintly present his beliefs, to present a position (frequently from the tradition) with which he will either agree or disagree, and finally to point out his premise of life's contradictions.

Koheleth, uses the proverb in a straight forward manner, affirming various ideas in a non-sequential order. Koheleth puts forth a proverb, one with which he agrees, and then he moves on to another subject. 10:18 for example, presents itself with unique distinction much as a rose blossoms in a corn field. The author wrote, "Through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks." Then having made his point, Koheleth moves on to other areas and different proverbs.(46) The next verse has no connection to the former. "Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything." This manner of random presentation is most prevalent in the Book of Proverbs.

Koheleth also uses the proverb as a text, on which he elaborates. In 7:2a for example, Koheleth wrote, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting." Then he explains why in part b of the verse. "For this is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart." Robert Gordis points out that like Proverbs 24:21, Koheleth 8:2-4 counsels obedience to the king, but unlike Proverbs, Koheleth tells us in prosaic style why, "For he (the king) does whatever he pleases." Koheleth's elaboration of proverbs is not always constructive. He at times, refutes the proverb's contention. In 2:13-14, he quotes "Wisdom exceeds folly as light exceeds darkness. The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness." But then he concedes that his experience tells him that all this wisdom is for naught. "And I perceived

that one fate comes to all of them." Koheleth used his proverb as a foil to highlight his own ideas.

Finally Koheleth presents one proverb in contrast to another, to illuminate life's conflicting character. In 4:5 Koheleth quotes, "All skill in work comes from a man's envy of his neighbor," but then he refutes this idiom stating that we must not be idle. "The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh." He initially claims that we work only to satisfy our envy of our neighbors, implying the vanity of life. But then he reverses himself with another proverb, stating that we must work, lest our idleness consume us. Gordis believes that Koheleth favors the latter Proverb: because of its position, because of the phrase "vanity and striving after the wind associated with the former, and because of the often repeated view of the folly of toil in a meaningless world.(47) Another example of Koheleth's use of contrasting proverbs is found in 4:16 and 18. This device is found also in Job 12:12 and 13. Gordis believes that verse 13 negates verse 12, the former stating, "Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days." But then verse 13 refutes this claim, affirming that wisdom is unassociated with age, being bound up with God, "With God are wisdom and might: he has counsel and understanding."(48)

We find that Koheleth used the proverb in ways similar to the authors of Proverbs and Job. We also find that he highlighted his own unconventional ideas through creative use of the proverbial style. Koheleth's random series of

proverbs in 7:1-14 is reminiscent of most of the Book of Proverbs. Koheleth's use of the proverb to represent traditional views is paralleled in Job. And at the same time, Koheleth broke new ground by incorporating the proverb into his prose with the intent of using the traditional form as a springboard for his expansive monologues. 5:10 for example, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money: nor he who loves wealth, with gain." served as an introduction to his discussion on wealth and satisfaction. This issue was discussed well into chapter six. In short, Koheleth used the traditional proverb in both the traditional and the untraditional way. He serialized them, he used them as proof texts to support his claims, he elaborated on them and he refuted them. By so doing "he was able to display his ties to tradition as well as showcase his own ideas."(49)

Common Themes with Torah and Prophets

Koheleth is not non-Israelite nor is he non-Biblical. His work reflects many ideas important to the people of his faith. "A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever", "The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."(50) Koheleth meant that nothing created endures forever, all of creation is as ephemeral as vapor. Second Isaiah stated the same idea some 300 years earlier. "All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades. . . but the word of our God will stand forever."(51) Both claim that our lives are brief.

But there are differences between the two verses. While Isaiah had hope in the endurance of God's word, Koheleth saw only the continuance of nature. Without knowledge of God, Koheleth could only affirm the eternity of existence. He could not affirm the eternality of God's word. In addition, Koheleth points to the brevity of life in order to remind us of life's vanity. Isaiah, on the other hand, spoke of our brevity only in order to showcase the eternality of God's concern for his people. Yet these differences do not detract from the parallel noted between Koheleth 1:4 and 12:9 and Isaiah 40:6. Both state that life is temporal.

In Koheleth's denunciation of oppression, the venality of judges and the corruption of rulers, we are reminded of the prophets. Yet the tone of and the reason behind his condemnation is noticeably different from that of the prophets. First, verses such as 4:1-3 and 5:8-9 lack the passion and anger that is so typical of Amos and Micah. Second, "(Koheleth) does not identify himself and certainly not God with the cause of the suffering as Isaiah does (3:13-15), possibly in part because he himself was one of the leisured beneficiaries of the social system."(52) And lastly, Koheleth deplores injustice, not because he hates it for the harm it causes, but rather because it points to the vanity and absurdity of life. Yet like the prophets, Koheleth is still disturbed by the oppression he observes. "And behold the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them. . . And I thought the dead more fortunate

than the living who are still alive."(53)

Robert Levy points out that Koheleth 7:15-22 comments on three issues concerning evil, all of which are found in the Torah and the Prophets.(54) He observed that: evil people often succeed in life (15c), evil people can be punished by God (17), and all people have an evil side (20, 21, 22). These concepts were fundamental to Israelite theology. Koheleth's remark for example, that there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins, is clearly reminiscent of I Kings 8:46 which reads, "There is no man who does not sin." Koheleth's observation regarding evil, sin and retribution in these passages are very much in tune with the theology in Deuteronomy 31:17, I Kings 14:10, II Kings 21:12, Jeremiah 26:19 and Amos 9:4. The Deuteronomy passage which states that troublesome times are manifestations of God's punishment parallels Koheleth's statement (17) that the wicked will die prematurely by the hand of God.

Koheleth 5:1, "To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools" echoes I Samuel 15:2, "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken is better than the fat of rams."(55) Here we find a striking parallel. Both texts urge that attentiveness and understanding is better than ritual adherence. Both, aware of the shallowness of perfunctory cultic participation, stress righteousness. There is also a noticeable similarity between Koheleth 5:4, which reads, "When you vow a vow to God, do not delay in paying it: for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you

vow. It is better that you should not vow than you should vow and not pay," and Deuteronomy 32:21, "When you make a vow to the Lord, your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you and it would be sin in you." Koheleth rephrased the Deuteronomic passage because he probably witnessed a frivolous attitude regarding the making of vows. Seeing vows rashly made and just as rashly broken, Koheleth renewed the Deuteronomic prescriptive to put a stop to the social decay.(56)

Koheleth's God concept is Jewish. He accepted in 2:25-26, 3:14, 6:1-2, 7:29, 9:1, 12:1 and 12:7 an all powerful God holding sway over man's destiny and the universe. As a Jew he assumed the traditional belief of the existence of God, His creation of the physical universe and His role as man's moral judge. God is a real force to be reckoned with. His ethics in 2:26 reveal that man is able to "Please" God with proper conduct and thought. He also hints at the Jew's proper worship posture in the House of God in 5:1-6. He tells his reader: approach to listen when you come to pray and be honest and sincere in your vows. This is more important than regular sacrifices. Yet, being the novel thinker that he was, Koheleth modified some traditional ideas regarding God. Creation, for example, did not provide a setting for God's relationship with man and Israel. Creation meant the establishment in the beginning of an unchanging physical and temporal setting of life with no possibility of divine encounter.(57) As opposed to popular Israelite views

Koheleth's God was remote and silent. In 8:17 he wrote, "Then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out." God is an inscrutable mystery. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that God listens to man's plea for compassion and that God is influenced by man's repentance. This is the lesson in Exodus 32. Koheleth's God however, has no such capacity. Koheleth's 7:13 reads, "Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked." This verse implies that God is completely inflexible. Koheleth's God is then traditional in some ways and untraditional in others. His God eternally holding sway over creation and affecting retribution on man's ways was Jewish. Yet at the same time, he reworked many of the traditional notions, rejecting the Jewish concept of Israel's choseness and God's revelation and immanence.

For all of Koheleth's rebellion and reshaping of tradition, he still maintains that man's efforts to mold and recreate new ideas, values and monuments cannot even in a measure compare with God's creative efforts. He wrote, "I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor nothing taken from it; God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him."(58) This verse reflects two verses in Deuteronomy, only one of which will be quoted. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it."(59) As we expect in Koheleth, God left his imprint on creation. He did not impart his word as other

Biblical texts suggest. But regardless of the object due reverential attention, both confirm that man must pay homage to the Creator, neither adding to nor detracting from His work.

Parallels with Genesis

Charles Forman's article "Koheleth's use of Genesis" shows numerous parallels between Koheleth and the first eleven chapters of Genesis. The purpose of showing these parallels was to show that Genesis had an important effect on the views of Koheleth.

Forman identified a common observation of nature's cyclical order. Genesis 8:21-22 confirms that God fixed, after the deluge, a predictable pattern for nature to follow. Likewise Koheleth 1:5-8 and 3:1-8 refer to the established order of creation. But as before, when Koheleth borrowed from the tradition he altered the tone. So, what is reassuring in Genesis is depressing in Koheleth. Koheleth takes the Genesis theme of constancy (also found in Deuteronomy 11:14, Jeremiah 5:24, Psalm 1:3, 31:16 and II Samuel 11:1) and reuses it to highlight the meaninglessness of the cycle. Man is not the beneficiary of the world's predictable pattern as he is in Genesis, he is rather its prisoner, trapped on an endless treadmill leading nowhere. The observations were the same, yet the conclusions that each author drew were very different.

Koheleth used the word הבל to mean vapor or breath. הבל is something like the breath that condenses as we exhale into

the cold winter air and disappears at once. The point Koheleth was making was that life is as fleeting and inconsequential as man's breath during this period. The narration of Abel's murder in chapter four of Genesis teaches that same lesson; our existence is as brief as our breath is in winter. The Bible usually ascribes to its characters names that reflect their life experiences. So Abel, who was killed at an early age through a meaningless act of passion was named הבל meaning brevity or breath. הבל was the first man in the Bible to die. Thus his life serves as an ontological symbol. His life was brief as is everyman's life. Koheleth took this word, with its powerful message and made it the central theme of his work. Our life, he wrote, is as vain and fleeting as Abel's.

Koheleth also seems to be influenced by Genesis' view that man is mortal and made of dust. Genesis 3:19 wrote, "You are dust and to dust you shall return." Koheleth agreed, writing, "The dust returns to the earth as it was," and "The days of darkness will be many."(60) Regarding man, however, the similarities stop there. Koheleth refutes the claims of Genesis 1:26 and 2:7b which point to man's divine origins. Genesis 1:26 said that man is created in the divine image and 2:7b suggests that God breathed into the nostrils of man that special breath of life. The contention is that humans are unique from all other living creatures. Koheleth disagreed with this opinion. He wrote, "For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same: as one dies,

so does the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts."(61) According to Koheleth, there is no difference between man and animals regarding our make-up and our fate. 7:29 which reads, "God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices" refers not to man's perfection and his fall, but rather to his potential for righteousness and how he is seduced away from it.

Koheleth parallels Genesis' contention that our ability to comprehend reality is limited. He wrote in 3:11 that it is impossible for man to comprehend God's ways, in 6:12 that man is ignorant of the good, in 7:23 that perfect wisdom is beyond man's reach, in 8:7 that the future is shrouded in mystery and finally in 8:17 that seeking to know is a futile endeavor. All of these views echo the themes expressed in the Expulsion and the Tower of Babel narrations. Preceding the Expulsion, God told Adam and Eve not to eat from the Tree of knowledge. They must live, according to the Bible, in ignorance of Absolute Truth. But when they disobeyed and ate thereof, God punished them. In the Tower of Babel narration, man built a tower to reach and perhaps to rival God. And here again, God thwarted their efforts. God wished to keep man from comprehending the ultimate reality. Thus these narrations teach that our potential to know is severely limited and that God wishes to keep it that way. Forman concluded that Koheleth had well learned these messages of Genesis. He wrote that it seems apparent that Koheleth's

"own views on the limitations of knowledge and the frustrations that come in its quest were based on Genesis."(62)

Thus it seems that Koheleth was aware of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. In places he agrees with them, in others he did not and still in others he concurred with their observations but drew different conclusions. What is significant is that he adapts its contentions to make them fit into his world view. When he could use Genesis to support his claim that the world is meaningless he did. When he could not, he either disagreed with the original or interpreted it differently.

Shared Style with Torah and Prophets

Linguistic parallels between Koheleth and Torah and Prophets are most helpful in trying to show influence. The Bible contains several unique linguistic styles within its texts. They are styles that are rarely found elsewhere. Two of these uniquely Biblical linguistic forms are the vav consecutive and the double use of the noun to produce a superlative. Locating these forms in Koheleth can prove influence.

Koheleth begins his work הבל הבלים , vanity of vanities. This repetitive form to suggest the superlative is found in the title of שיר השירים , Song of Songs, and in the phrase קדש הקדשים throughout the entire Bible. In the former case the superlative means the best of all known songs and in the latter it means either the inner sanctum of the

holy Tabernacle or very holy items.(63) Koheleth's usage of nouns in this superlative Biblical manner places him deeply within the Biblical tradition. The vav consecutive, in Hebrew scriptures, placed before a future tense verb, converts the verb to the past. Thus, ויאמר which in non-Biblical Hebrew means "And he will say," means in Biblical Hebrew "he said." This converting consecutive, found nowhere else in Near Eastern Literature is found in Koheleth. In 4:1 he wrote, "I turned and I saw." "I turned" is already in the past tense, but "I saw" is in the future tense with the vav before it. So to make ואראה flow with the tense of the first verb, it is converted to the past by means of the vav. This is typical Biblical style. This identical usage appears again in 4:7. Unfortunately, Koheleth's usage of the vav consecutive is not consistent. In 11:8 for example, Koheleth wrote "Let him remember that the days of darkness will be many." Here the vav consecutive does not convert the verb to the past tense. In this sentence, Koheleth is exhorting his students, to remember, he is not narrating a past event. This inconsistent grammatical style parallels his inconsistent philosophical notions, both being deliberate attempts to shock the reader out of complacency and into attention regarding life's absurdities.

Charles Whitley observed further grammatical parallels. He noted that the phrase of 4:17b is in the infinitive absolute. Normally should have the pointing

of the infinitive construct so it would agree with what follows and parallel מחת. But Whitley explained this unique usage by locating the parallel form in Job 25:2 and Jeremiah 10:5. The former reads הַמְמַשֵּׁל instead of הַמְמַשִּׁיל and the latter reads הֵיטֵיב instead of הֵיטִיב. Moreover, Whitley found that Koheleth 5:10 and 12 uses בעל with the plural form of the pronominal suffix although the meaning of בעל is clearly singular. He explains this anomaly by pointing out that this is in agreement with classical usage.(64) The use of the infinitive absolute to continue the force of a finite verb in 8:9 ראיתי ונתון and in 9:11 שבתי וראה is likewise parallelled in Scriptures. Examples of this style are found in Genesis 41:43 ויקראו...ונתון and in Nehemiah 9:8 ... ומצאת וכרות.

Assuming that: 1) Koheleth did not develop these writing styles independently and 2) he did not find these styles in a presently unknown non-Biblical text, one can conclude that Koheleth had large sections of the Bible before him. His use of the superlative, the vav consecutive, the infinite absolute and the plural pronominal suffix, (all unique to the Bible) point out this likelihood. He would have been unable to parallel those writing styles without said access to the original.

Conclusion

Thus it is most likely that Koheleth was influenced by the style and world view of the Hebrew Scriptures. Although no canon existed in Koheleth's time, most of the texts were

in circulation by Koheleth's time. Koheleth in turn utilized much from these classic texts. He borrowed from Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy, the Early Prophets, Song of Songs, Job and Proverbs. Yet he rarely borrowed from the texts directly. He utilized the traditions and literary forms in a creative manner to support his unorthodox views. He witnessed the emptiness of existence and the futility of man's efforts to achieve anything, so he conceived of, what I call the "futility principle." His appropriate response to this condition was the "pleasure principle." With these two unique principles in mind, he interpreted his heritage. All his observations, conclusions, ethics and his views on tradition were based on the above. Robert Gordis wrote, "What is most characteristic of Koheleth is his creative use of traditional material, his giving of the time-hallowed texts a meaning congenial to his own unconventional religious outlook."(65) "Traditional morality declared that he who fulfilled God's will would be happy. Koheleth declares that he who is happy is fulfilling God's will."(66) Koheleth 5:19 states it this way, "Every man also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and find enjoyment in his toil--this is the gift of God." Koheleth used the tradition to make his own points. He agreed with Genesis that life is patterned and predictable, yet he arrived at a fundamentaliy different conclusion than Genesis. He used the Genesis portions to underpin his "futility principle." He agreed with the

prophets that oppression was wrong, but again he spoke of it only to support the same futility principle. We find a similar reinterpretation of traditional exhortation of Wisdom. The proverb as was pointed out above, was also re-employed in unique ways to support his unique positions. In short, Koheleth gave new life to the tradition, using it to make new points in much the same manner that later Biblical exegetes did.

Yet despite the novelty of his views and his unique interpretation of tradition, he still contemplated life from a Jewish perspective. Although man cannot find out what is done on earth (3:11), it is still God who does it (8:17) and what God does is eternal. It is also God who is responsible for the beginning of life, giving and recalling the spirit of life (11:15 and 12:7). It is also God who brings on evil and goodness in our days (7:14) and it is God who grants the enjoyment of our possessions (6:2). The pleasures of eating and drinking are similarly regarded as gifts of God (2:24-25, 5:18, 8:15) and it is God's will that we take pleasure in our toil (3:13). God helps those who please him (2:26, 7:26) and also those who fear him (7:18, 8:12). Like the author of I Samuel, Koheleth was concerned over the observance of ritual without morality and understanding (5:1). Like the author of Deuteronomy, he counseled sincerity and honesty when making a vow to God (5:4-6). And like the authors of Genesis, he believed that creation is ordered by God and that man is destined for ignorance and mortality (1:4-7, 3:1-8, 11-12,

20-22). Finally, Koheleth's affirmation of life in spite of its anomalies and limitations is truly Hebraic. He does not, after asserting his futility principle, reject life nor does he counsel suicide. Rather he points out life's absurdities and our futile efforts to make meaning of it and then like a true Hebrew wiseman affirms "Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun. For if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all." (10:7-8). And just as was done in the Proverbs and the Book of Job he proposes a plan of action and a guide of behavior to help man enjoy life's sweetness. What is Jewish then, is his optimism and his constructive criticism of life and our behavior.

Koheleth shows his Hebraic colors. He at times accepts his tradition's ideas, at times elaborates on them, at times re-interprets and re-employs them and at other times totally rejects them. But all this shows that he was not alien to his tradition. He did not always agree with the Jewish world view, but he was beyond a doubt deeply immersed in it.

NOTES

(1) Although we cannot be certain of the chronology of textual development, this author, dating Koheleth in the middle to the end of the third century, assumes that all of Scripture was at Koheleth's disposal except the Book of Daniel.

(2) Charles F. Fensham, "Widow, Orphan and the Poor in Ancient Near Eastern Legal and Wisdom Literature" in Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom, New York: Ktav, 1976, p. 165.

(3) James B. Pritchard (ed), Ancient Near Eastern Texts, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, pp. 163-179.

(4) Fensham, p. 162.See also Henri Frankfort, Kingship and the Gods, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

(5) See also Deut 10:18, 14:28-29, 16:11, 14, 24:17-23,]7:19, Prov 24:14, 15:25, 14:31 and Job 24:1-4.

(6) Gerhard Von Rad, Wisdom in Israel, Nashville: Abingdon, 1972, p. 15-23.

(7) See Koheleth 11:9 and 12:12.

(8) Robert Gordis, Koheleth: The Man and his World, New York: Schocken, 1968, p. 22-38.

(9) R. N. Whybray, "The INtellectual Tradition in the Old Testament." Beiheft zur Zeitschrift fur die altestamentliche Wiessenschaft, 135. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyger, 1974, pp. 6-54.

(10) Robert Levy, "Koheleth--Did He Stand Alone?", 1979, p. 52.

(11) Sheldon Blank, "The Book of Proverbs", Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 3, p. 940.

(12) Koheleth 3:12.

(13) Ibid., 1:8-7.

(14) Ibid., 1:1.

(15) Proverbs 1:1.

(16) Koheleth 7:19.

(17) Ibid., 8:1.

(18) Ibid., 9:13-18.

(19) See also Proverbs 8:1-9:12 and 19:2,8.

(20) Koheleth 10:12.

(21) Levy, p. 56.

(22) Koheleth 5:15.

(23) Proverbs 23:4-5.

(24) Koheleth 10:8.

(25) Ibid., 8:2-5.

(26) Charles F. Whitley, Koheleth: His Language and Thought, p. 162-164.

(27) Koheleth 4:5.

(28) Proverbs 6:10-11.

(29) Koheleth 7:8-9.

(30) Proverbs 25:2.

(31) Koheleth 1:12.

(32) Proverbs 30:3-4.

(33) For a different rendition of this verse note the new J. P. S. translation. Also Graetz and Whitley render the word עולם, generally understood to mean "eternity" to mean "ignorance", based upon the usage of the root עלם in Koheleth 12:14, Job 28:21 and 42:3.

(34) Theodore Friedman, "The Book of Job," Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 10, p. 122.

(35) See Job 13:7-12.

(36) Koheleth 7:15 and 9:2.

(37) Sheldon Blank, "Wisdom" Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 4, p. 858.

(38) Koheleth 1:13.

(39) See Koheleth 2:1-11.

(40) Job 40:2, 4.

(41) Ibid., 42:5.

(42) Theodore Friedman, "The Book of Job", Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 10, p. 123.

(43) Von Rad, p. 45

(44) Proverbs 17 is a good example of this lack of progress or theme.

(45) See Job 21:22 as a paraphrase of Eliphaz's quotation in 4:17 and then the refutation in 21:23-26.

(46) See Koheleth 10:19 and 7:1-14.

(47) Gordis, p. 227-244.

(48) For more examples of Job's use of proverbs and how he refutes them, See Gordis, p. 237-244.

(49) Levy, p. 46.

(50) Koheleth 12:9.

(51) Isaiah 40:6-8.

(52) R. B. Y. Scott, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1981, p. 199.

(53) Koheleth, 4:1-2.

(54) Levy, p. 54.

(55) Whitley, p. 162.

(56) H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Ecclesiastes, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952, p. 120.

(57) Scott, p. 198.

(58) Koheleth 3:14.

(59) Deuteronomy 4:2. See also 12:32.

(60) Koheleth 11:8, 12:7.

(61) Ibid., 3:19.

(62) Charles Forman, "Koheleth's Use of Genesis", Journal of Semitic Studies, Vol. 5, 1960, p. 261.

(63) See Ex 26:34, Nu 4:4, 19, 18:10, I Kings 8:6, Ex 41:4, I Ch 6:34, II Ch 3:8, 10 and 5:7.

(64) See Ex 21:29 and 22:11.

(65) Gordis p. 43.

(66) Ibid., p. 91.

KOHELETH: A RECONCILER IN AN AGE OF CONFLICT

The Face of Palestine Changed with the Coming of the Greeks

In the spring of 332 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded Palestine. Being a missionary of Greek thought as well as a conqueror, he immediately set out to introduce the Jews of Palestine to his dream. He dreamed of a unity of the world, a universal brotherhood of man based upon a common cultural bond--Greek language and learning. So through his soldiers and colonizers, he taught the Jews, Greek art, the Greek form of government, Greek society, the Greek tongue, Greek philosophy and religion. This action of Alexander brought the Oriental world of the Jews into contact for the first time, with the Occidental world of the Greeks. This contact made an indelible imprint on the Jewish world.

With the coming of the Greeks to Palestine, there occurred a major process of urbanization, a mixture of populations and language as well as a diffusion of the Hellenic culture. To begin with in less than a century after the invasion, Hellenic kingdoms surrounded Palestine. To the South, lay the mighty kingdom of the Ptolemies. To the East and Southeast were the Nabateans, whose ruins of building, statues and paintings reveal a high level of Hellenization. And finally, along the coast to the North, lay Phoenician towns where inscriptions and coins show evidence of Greek "polis communities." In Palestine too, Hellenic urban centers and forts were springing up, and old Hebrew villages were being retitled with Greek names. There was Ascalon,

Akko (Ptolemais), Joppa (Jaffa), Sepphoris, Apollonia, Samaria, Scythopolis (previously Beth She'an), Marisa and Gadara. In these Greek polises, Jews met Greek men, institutions, art, soldiers, poets and sculptors, like the creator of the statue of the nude Aphrodite found recently in Carmel. Jews and Greeks served together in military regements.(1) They conducted business, traded oils, wines and various goods, competed athletically, studied together and loaned money to each other. To do all this they spoke Greek, the official language of business, administration and study. Greek became the dominant language in Palestine. Of the 168 inscriptions found on Jewish tombs fixed to the relevant time and place, 114 were written solely in Greek. Several Greek papyri were found, oddly enough among the scrolls of the Jewish separatists, the Essenes. Numerous letters in Greek were found among the writings of the leaders of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, who fought for Jewish independence from foreign rule. The Apocryphal Book, Ben Sirah, was translated into Greek by the author's grandson in 132 BCE because by that time few Jews could understand the original Hebrew text. Outside Palestine the Bible itself was translated into Greek in the third century BCE. This was not done for the benefit of curious Greeks, but rather for all Jews who were no longer able to speak or read Hebrew. Jews also learned the Greek system of street design and paving. In time they adopted the Greek method of forming quadrangular blocks with a large open place at the main street. As Elias

Bickerman points out, this design was "quite different from the maze that constituted an Oriental town."(2) Thus the Greek invasion brought monumental changes to the life style of Palestinian Jewry. No longer were they culturally isolated from the West. They had begun, for the first time in their one thousand year old history, an open dialogue with a people who differed in language, social norms, politics, and architecture. But 332 BCE was also a significant date in the history of Jewish thought. This date marked their introduction to Greek sciences, philosophy and religions. The results of this meeting still reverberates in the Jewish world today.

The Greeks made broad inroads in the sciences. Euclid, Appolonius of Perge, Pythagoras of Samos and Archimeds developed sophisticated systems of geometry and mechanics. Erastosthemes applied mathematics to geography. Aristarchus developed the heliocentric theory. Hipparchus, years later, convinced his people otherwise with his geocentric system. In Alexandria and Pergamum, medicine, anatomy, and physiology flourished under the tutelage of Herophilus, Erastratus and Hippocrates. Posidonius explained why the tides rise and fall in a rhythmic fashion.

In the field of philosophy, many Greeks rejected the other worldliness that is so prominent in Plato. The concepts of personal gods who protect man, and an immortal soul which abides with said gods were foreign not only to the Epicureans and the Stoics, but also to the Atomists:

Leucippus and Democritus (fifth century BCE). These thinkers repudiated the above ideas for the philosophical reason that it could not be understood how the immaterial could either affect or be affected by the material. According to these thinkers one was radically separate from the other. Within the academies this issue was continuously debated.(3)

Other Greeks did recognize a cosmic force at work on their lives. To many ancients it seemed that knowledge, prudence, skill and insight mattered little when it concerned securing one's fortune. To many, it appeared that Chance (Tyche) ruled the world. According to the Stoics, Tyche was a name that represented a force that lay beyond human control. To the popular mind, it meant much more; it was a powerful force that deserved people's reverence and worship. It "was a capricious goddess, lifting a man to the heights today and dashing his pride tomorrow. There was no security for the wise in his wisdom, for the rich in his wealth, for the righteous man in his integrity or for the mighty in his strength."(4) All were at the mercy of Chance. In many cities, Greeks instituted cults of Tyche which replaced the cults of traditional gods. By the third and second centuries BCE Tyche had become the city goddess almost everywhere.(5) Aristotle, opposed to this devotion and respect of Chance, asserted that public reverence was directed erely towards an accident or coincidence. These forces which the people were venerating did in fact shape the outcome of events, but they were not one of the four Major Causes which he enumerated in

his Natural Philosophy. Chance, he concurred may affect the lower order of reality, referring to accidents and unplanned occurrences, but it was not a major Cosmic Mover. Thus, in his eyes, the faith of the people was misdirected.(6)

Still other Greeks put their trust in the ruling power of Fate (Moira). According to their views man's decisions, as well as his life in total, are governed by a hand other than his own. Man is helpless, subject to the decrees of a power that no supplication could move and no wisdom could circumvent. Diodorus Cronus, Chrysippus, Posidonius and the Stoics subscribed to this idea. Socrates and Plato were in accord with the above, yet only concerning man's ethics. They contended that man's moral behavior was determined solely by his level of knowledge. If a man, for example, had knowledge of the good, he could not prevent himself from pursuing it. Evil or bad behavior was not a result of choice or free will, it was a consequence of man's ignorance concerning the virtuous thing to do. The former thinkers held that every man's destiny was revealed through signs, omens and portents. Once revealed, nothing man could do, could alter his future. If any prediction was not fulfilled, it meant that the sign itself was false, and not that man had exercized his free will. Thus, life was predetermined and man could do little to change his fate. What man did in his past was predetermined, what he is doing presently was predetermined and what he will do in the future was likewise predetermined. That which has been set can never be altered.

The differences between the Greek culture with the beliefs and sciences aforementioned and the Jewish culture were far reaching. The Greeks were predominantly humanistic and secular. This was true even when ritual was performed, as by Socrates before his death and by the cults of Tyche.(7) The majority of Greeks were interested in a better understanding of their world and the human condition. This desire motivated the Atomists, Theognis, Epicurus, Lucretius and Plato. Their culture although it had supernatural elements and religious movements was primarily rational in its orientation. Classical Greek society, like the society of the early nineteenth century had its religious pietists, yet both these periods were renowned for their inquisitive and empirically oriented rationalism. Jewish life, on the other hand, was permeated by a profound religious consciousness and a preoccupation with moral issues that even secular minded Jews could not escape. Life for the Jews consisted of fulfilling by means of the mitzvot, Israel's responsibilities in the covenant with God. Ultimate Truth was not discovered through man's reasoning faculties, but rather through God's word, His prophets or Himself, directly. One performed a mitzvah, not because its observance was reasonable, but because God commanded it. Most educated Greeks on the other hand, acted on the impetus of facts and reason. Thus, the world views of each group were radically different from each other.

Jewish Responses to Hellenism

When these religiously minded Jews were confronted with the proselytizing efforts of the rationally oriented Greeks, Jews responded in one of three ways. They retreated from contact with the foreigners, advocating retrenchment in the old traditional ways, totally assimilated or syncretized their culture with Greek ways. Throughout the Hellenistic period, we find evidence of all three responses.

Ben Sirah was a retrencher. Following Koheleth by a few decades he adamantly fought against the spirit of Greek civilization. He believed that its appeal to Jews was a danger to Jewish survival. Concerned that its constant focus on, and glorification of the human being might undermine the Jew's fear of God, he wrote, "The nobleman, and the judge and the ruler will be honored, but none of them is greater than the man who fears the Lord."(8) He insisted that Jews should not be seduced by the pomp and glory of the Greeks, and that they should not see the Greeks as better than the God fearing Jews, for the greatest man in this world of nobility and glamour is the Jew who fears the God of Israel. Ben Sirah held in utter contempt those Jews, who seeing the Greek's way of life as superior, left the Jewish fold. "What race is worthy of honor? Those who fear the Lord. What race is unworthy of honor? The human race. What race is unworthy of honor? Those who transgress the commandments."(9) He censured the Jews who rejected the Laws of Moses and sought wisdom among the Greek people. According to Ben Sirah, wisdom was not found among their rationalizations. "All wisdom

comes from the Lord." Nor was it uncovered as man progressed in knowledge and experience, "Wisdom was created before all things, and prudent understanding from eternity."(10) In response to the popular notions of Fate and Chance, he wrote, "The gift of the Lord endures for those who are godly and what he approves will have lasting success."(11) Here we find the traditional view of retribution. A few lines later, he makes it simpler to understand, "Stand by your covenant and attend to it and grow old in your work."(12) He claimed that by remaining loyal to the covenant, one will grow old in happiness. Chance and Fate were inconsequential when compared to God's work in history. This author showed little sympathy for Greek ways or for Jews who were attracted to them. He valued the cult, respected its holy priesthood, revered the creative and sustaining power of God, believed in His Covenant and treasured the divinely directed history of his people.(13) Finally, this author told Jews to stop challenging their faith by considering the foreign notions. He told his readers that the human mind was not meant to comprehend Greek philosophic abstractions and that to try to understand them would only lead to confusion and wrong opinion. Concerned for Jews who tried to understand Greek ideas such as the tragic figure of the Talmud, Elisha Ben Abuya, he wrote, "Seek not what is too difficult for you, nor investigate what is beyond your power. Reflect upon what has been assigned to you, for you do not need what is hidden. Do not meddle in what is beyond your tasks, for matters too great for human understanding have been

shown you. For their hasty judgement has led many astray, and wrong opinion has caused many to stray."(14) He warned Jews not to seek them out, not to reflect upon them, not to attempt harmonization with Jewish teaching. Why? Because such attempts corrupt Jewish civilization and hasten the abrogation of the mitzvot. Hence Ben Sirah advised complete separation from the foreigners. Other retrenchers were the Hassidim, who separated from the Hellenized Hasmoneans with their corrupt Priesthood and the rabbinic authors of Avot 1:1 who advised placing a high and protecting fence around the Torah.

The second alternative response to Hellenization was complete assimilation. The first Book of Maccabees describes those who took this path. "In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many saying, 'Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separate from them many evils have come upon us.' This proposal pleased them, and some of them eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom and removed their mark of circumcision, and abandoned the holy Covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil."(15) In this trusted historical source, we learn of Jews living the lives of Greeks. In the gymnasia they competed against and studied alongside of their Greek comrades. They removed their

circumcision, thus abandoning the holy covenant. They became for all intents and purposes Gentiles. They assimilated because they feared physical annihilation at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes and because they knew that prosperity lay in conducting business with Greek caravans who traded only with Greeks. Their adoption of the Hellenic culture enabled them to participate in the economic boom. In time, their transformation became more than skin deep. Soon they were indistinguishable from the Greeks. "There were Jews, like the magician spoken of by Clearchus, who 'not only spoke Greek, but had the soul of a Greek.'"(16) There is no accurate way of knowing how many Jews totally abandoned their Jewish heritage. Perhaps there were not too many because there was a third alternative, an alternative that enabled a Jew to keep his feet in both worlds.

This third group of Jews learned the Greek language, Greek thought, and Greek practice while maintaining their Jewish identity. They syncretized Judaism's old ways with the new ways of the Greeks. Judging from the Book of Maccabees, Ben Sirah, Tobit, Judith, the Testament of Joseph, the historian Diodorus, the philosophy of Philo, the need for Greek translations of the Bible (Septuagint, Theodotion and Aquila's Bible) and the acquisition of Greek names by Palestinian rabbis (Abtolemus, Alexander, Antigonus, Symmachus and Theodosius) it is apparent that there were many syncretist Jews. II Maccabees 4:9 relates that Jason the High Priest wished to syncretize Judaism with Hellenism by

transforming Jerusalem into a typical Greek City. "He promised to pay one hundred and fifty more (talents of silver) if permission were given to establish by his authority a gymnasium and a body of youth for it and to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch." Jerusalem would still be the center of Judaism's faith, and he would still conduct the sacrificial cult. Yet, at the same time Jerusalem would also become a center of Greek athletic competition and learning. It would be a syncretized city. Even the anti-Hellenistic book of Ben Sirah shows elements of syncretization. A number of aphorisms, which seem to be derived from Aesop, Theognis and Euripides are discernable in the text. The Testament of Joseph, preserved in Greek quotations by Origen, and The Book of Judith show Greek influence in the introduction of erotic motifs like those found in Greek romances. Similarly, The Book of Tobit composed either in Palestine or Antioch in the second century BCE show Hellenistic influence in the form of its romance between Tobias and Sarah.(17) A compromise between Greek and Jewish elements can also be found in IV Maccabees. According to Julius Guttman, "This book purports to be 'a true philosophic discourse' and is composed according to the rules of Greek rhetoric. The introduction offers a philosophic disquisition on the subject of the rule of the intellect over the emotions. . .But here. . .it is the form of expression rather than the substance of the book that is influenced by philosophy. In its fundamental religious doctrines, which,

of course, are not developed systematically within the book itself, IV Maccabees remains essentially and distinctively Jewish."(18) In this text the author provided a Greek philosophical form for the intellectual content of Judaism. In an attempt to appear philosophical among the Greeks he clothed Judaism in philosophic modes of expressions and used philosophical arguments to support religious doctrines. Years later, however, Jews struggled to justify their faith by syncretizing revelation with reason. They no longer disguised Biblical notions of revelation and a caring God in philosophical language. They reconciled reason and revelation, in some cases arriving at rational conclusions and in others maintaining a religious perspective. This attempt to reconcile religion with philosophy took its most pronounced form in the Hellenistic period with Philo Judaeus of Alexander.

Philo, The Syncretist

Philo's aim was to blend Judaism's belief in revelation and its reverence for the Pentateuch with the Greek focus on rationalism. Living in the Diaspora of the first centuries, where contact with the two cultures was high and philosophic debate most probable, Philo endeavored to make the two systems compatible with each other by interpreting one in light of the other.

He blended the two cultures for the benefit of both his co-religionists and his Greek neighbors. Through his extensive commentaries on Genesis 2-20 and his shorter

exegetical commentaries in the form of "Questions and Answers" on Genesis and Exodus, he showed his co-religionists that Judaism can be harmonized with Greek philosophy. Judaism need not be embarrassing. He addressed the gentiles in his books, "On the Virtues," "On the Decalogue," "On Special Laws," "On Rewards and Punishments," "On the Contemplative Life" and "Apology for the Jews" (fragments). In these texts he explained Jewish history, legislation, morals and beliefs. His major thrust in doing so was to show Judaism's contribution to philosophy. He showed that Judaism is reconcilable with the philosophies of Plato and the Stoics.

His primary tool for reconciliation was the allegory. Developed by the Stoics, to reconcile the grossness of Greek mythological theology with their philosophy, the allegory enabled Philo to interpret the Bible as a narration of a spiritual journey all humans take. Philo did not see the Bible as an account of the historical development of a Chosen People. He saw it as a cryptic text of morals and metaphysical truths couched in a historical text which could only be understood through allegory. Hence each personality in Genesis was regarded as a special moral quality or the embodiment of a certain way of life. Abraham represented any man who has gained true comprehension through instruction. Isaac symbolized any man who has gained knowledge through intuition or inspiration. Jacob symbolized any man who comprehends through ascetic exercise. Abraham's sexual

relations with Hagar and Sarah represented his personal growth towards wisdom. His joining with Hagar represented his study of the lower encyclical studies. His union with Sarah, meant his attainment of complete wisdom. The result of this union was blissful joy, symbolized by Isaac. Whether or not these unions ever occurred was of little consequence to Philo. The significance of the stories lies only in what Abraham's life can teach the reader concerning the soul's journey towards the perfection of God.

Philo interpreted Judaism in light of the Platonic separation of the world into lower realms of matter and higher realms of spirit. He described God as transcending virtue, knowledge, The Good and The Beautiful. God was for Philo, as He was for Plato, wholly separate from physical existence. This differentiation was necessary for, as God was pure, matter was base.(19) But since in Jewish Scripture, God personally created nature, Philo needed to develop a concept of His immanence. But rather than developing a concept de novo, he borrowed the notion of the Logos, or the Mind of God from the Stoics. The Logos mediated between the pure spiritual domain of God and the base physical world of nature. Through this mediating presence, God could be indirectly involved in the creation of the material world, while not getting defiled by His contact with it. Thus, by means of the Logos, Philo reconciled his problem. Through the Logos, he could believe in both God's utter transcendence and His immanence.

Platonism not only influenced Philo's view of God's transcendance, it also contributed to his view of creation, man, the soul and prophecy. Plato in The Republic divided knowledge into three levels. The lowest level was opinion, the second level was knowledge derived from sensation, and the third level was knowledge of the Forms. Philo applied these three levels of knowledge to the Jewish notion of prophecy. For Philo, the lowest level of divine communication was related through angels, the second level was communicated by Divine Voice and the highest level was imparted through the Divine Spirit. In this way, prophecy was reconciled with the Platonic division of knowledge.

The theories mentioned above show that Philo was a syncretist. His concepts were an amalgam of Platonic doctrines of knowledge and Forms, the Stoic use of allegory and Logos, and Hebrew piety. Thus Philo saw Judaism through spectacles of Greek philosophy. The result of his vision was the beginning of a "Jewish Philosophy."

Koheleth Reveals Dual Influence

Koheleth was also a syncretist. His work reveals a contact with the Bible as well as with Greek philosophy. He echoes the Stoic theory of perpetually repeating world cycles, the Parmenidean notion of changelessness, and the Epicurean concern with pleasure. He parallels the popular Greek view of Chance. 9:11 which reads, "Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the

intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all" seems reminiscent of the popular Greek notions of Chance. Koheleth's statement in 7:13, "Consider the work of God; who can make straight what he has made crooked" implies an unapproachable and inflexible God quite similar to the Greek notion of Fate. There are many ideas in Koheleth which are more than coincidentally similar to Greek concepts. Yet Koheleth also wrote in Biblical style and appeared to be familiar with both its verses and its religious tenets.

Koheleth's syncretization of Jewish heritage with Hellenism was noticeably different than Philo's. Philo made clear references to Platonic, and Stoic theory, thereby making it easy to identify him with the various schools of thought. Koheleth, on the other hand, was not a formal adherent of any Greek school. Nowhere did he mention any philosophers or philosophies by name. He simply incorporated various ideas in his text, much as a casual speaker might quote popular lines without formally crediting them to their author. Also, rather than consistently interpreting scripture in light of Greek thought as Philo did, Koheleth at times presented contrasting views. One verse would reveal his alliance to the tradition, and another section would contradict it.

Koheleth contradicted himself in discussing God's nature, wisdom, death, retribution, the merits of toil, the value of youth, women, and joy. For Koheleth, God was

arbitrary, fickle, unpredictable, morally neutral, and completely above an encounter with man.(20) Yet while he saw God in light of the Greek notions of Chance and Fate, he also spoke of God anthropomorphically. In 2:26, Koheleth wrote that man can please God. "For to the man that pleases Him, God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy." In 3:14, 5:6 and 7:18 Koheleth asserts that man should fear God. 3:14 reads, "God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him." This implication that God is very close to man, directly contradicts his earlier assertions that God is indifferent to the lives of men. The most glaring inconsistency is between his faith in God and his lack of faith in the purpose of life. Koheleth mentions God's name thirty-eight times in the text, suggesting his faith in a power beyond our vision. Yet he also repeats thirty-nine times that all of existence is vanity. Thus, he accepts tradition with its reliance on God and at the same time doubts its value.

Koheleth has contradicting views of retribution. 9:1b-5 reads, "Everything before them is vanity, since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good man, so is the sinner; and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to them all...The dead know nothing and they have no more reward." The sentiment of this passage is

that all life ceases to be at death, that all are equal at this time, and that during one's lifetime one need not fear retribution. Since our fate is as the fate of beasts, as he stated earlier, one need not fear punishment after death for one's transgressions. Then, having said that it doesn't ultimately matter how one behaves because all are equal in death, he advises the youth in his academy to be moral because God will in the end judge them for their misdeeds, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. <u>But know for all these things God will bring you into judgement.</u>"(21) Hence, once again a contradiction exists within the writing.

Koheleth lacks a consistent view of death. Throughout most of his book he purports that there is no life after death.(22) But as he concludes his book, he intimates that the soul is immortal. He states that upon the death of the body the soul returns to God. "Dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to God who gave it."(23) Not only is this view of after life inconsistent with his view of total extinction, it also contradicts his agnosticism in 3:21 which reads, "Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth."

There are numerous contradictions among his writings. Wisdom is both extolled in 2:26, 7:11-12, 19, 9:17, 10:2, and 10:12 and rendered valueless in 1:18, 2:14 and 12:11. After having emphasized that one should not put too much stress

upon the acquisition of material gain in 4:4-8, Koheleth bemoans the fact that upon his death he is going to have to leave his hard earned wealth to unworthy inheritors. In 9:9 he bids his reader to enjoy life with the woman whom he loves. Yet in 7:26 he complains that women are conniving creatures seeking to ensnare men. The man who pleases God is fortunate enough to elude a woman's traps, while God punishes the sinner by being bound to a woman. In 7:28 he comments that women are incapable of straight and deep thought. He also lacks a consistent view of joy. 2:2 reads, "I said of laughter, 'It is mad; and of pleasure, 'What use is it.'" 7:3-6 is in agreement, "Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad...It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." These passages are totally incongruous with the pleasure principle of the book. 2:24, 3:12, 5:18, 7:14, 8:15 and 9:7-10 all advocate the complete enjoyment of life which must include a little gaiety. Thus the reader of Koheleth's writings is faced with contradictory advice. The book recommends enjoying life while pursuing sorrow.

These contradictions have bothered critics for centuries, and have spurred much interpretation with the goal of reconciliation. The Septuagint changed, wherever possible, the syntax of troublesome verses. By so doing it transformed the skepticism of 3:21 which reads, "Who knows

whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth," into an affirmation of faith in immortality. The Greek translation reads, "The spirit of man does ascent..."(24) Koheleth Rabbah reconciled Koheleth's hedonistic insinuations through allegory and eisegesis. "Whenever eating and drinking are mentioned in Koheleth, the reference is to the enjoyment of Torah and good deeds."(25) His unrabbinic futility principle was reconciled with rabbinic Judaism in a Midrash. Commenting on Koheleth's words, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind," the rabbis interjected, "except repentance and good deeds."(26) Believing that repentance and the performance of kindness was not vain, the rabbis added these last five words to Koheleth. Koheleth's comment that misdeeds cannot be corrected disturbed the rabbis who greatly believed in the power of repentance. So, in response to 1:15 which states that wrongs cannot be righted, they wrote, "In this world he who is crooked can be made straight and he who is wanting can be numbered; but in the Hereafter he that is crooked cannot be made straight and he that is wanting cannot be numbered."(27) Further on, the midrash stated that this harsh warning referred to the observance of time bound mitzvot such as the recitation of the Shema or various prayers.(28) Through hermeneutic interpretations, the contradictions concerning joy are reconciled. "Thus the laughter that is condemned is God's temporary favoring of the

wicked in this world as a prelude to their punishment in the world to come, while the joy that is praised is His abiding delight in the righteous of the world."(29) Thus by adding to Koheleth's text and by eisegesis they alleviated the tension they perceived.

Modern scholarship has also provided various explanations for the contradictions. The nineteenth century scholar Gustov Bickell stated that the book originally consisted of leaves of 525 letters, each randomly arranged. The Documentary Hypotheses was applied by Karl Siegfried who divided the text into nine different sources, Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, R1, R2, E1, E2. Morris Jastrow assumes that of the 222 verses, 120 are interpolations. George Barton and A. H. McNeile find two glossators at work on the book. One was a Chakam, who added proverbs of a conventional style, and the other, a Chasid, who added pious sentiments. Others believe that the introduction and final chapters of the book were later additions to the book. Thus the pious words of these sections were not a part of Koheleth's original text. Still others maintain that the conflicting ideas are not at all contradictory. They are rather maxims that are appropriate for different times and situations. Just as "Haste makes waste," is fitting in some situations, and "The early bird gets the worm" is fitting in others, Koheleth's maxims are addressed to the changing environment in which man finds himself. Thus his depiction of God's remoteness is expressive of one of God's postures at one instance, while

his reference to God's immanence is expressive of another posture at another time. Sometimes it is good to enjoy, while at other times, serious sobriety is more condusive to growth.

Koheleth's Philosophical Civil War

Koheleth's contradictions point to his confusion regarding Jewish values in a Greek world. Koheleth lived at a time when Greek thought and Hebrew thought were beginning to converge. He lived at a time when sophisticated Greeks were preaching ideas that ran contrary to everything that Judaism stood for. While Biblical Judaism taught of divine retribution in this world, Greek culture taught of Chance and Fate. While Biblical Judaism advocated faith in a personal God, most Greeks subscribed to a god that was distant and indifferent to man's individual plight. God for them was a concept or a Prime unfeeling Mover. Thus living on the frontier between two cultures, it is possible that Koheleth was conflicted. Such an attitude would be expected because for the first time in history, Jews were confronted with a multitude of alternative world views. Although Jews had come in contact with foreign cultures before, such as the Egyptians, Canaanites, Babylonians and Persians, never before had a culture confounded Jews to the extent that the Greeks did. The Greeks presented ideas that were harder to reconcile with their faith. The Greeks criticized everything held sacred by the Jews. They reduced God to a concept and split his divinely united human being into body and soul.

Koheleth's book contains a philosophical civil war. On the one hand he was very Jewish, believing in God's existence and his sovereignty, etc. On the other hand, he was troubled with his tradition having heard the intriguing rational arguments of the Greeks. The battle manifests itself in the form of contradictions, foreign notions and intense skepticism (vanity of vanity, all is vanity). Philo's works do not represent conflict. In a sense his books represent the armistice agreement. Philo reconciled himself to Greek thought and interpreted his beloved Judaism in light of it. Koheleth, on the other hand, was writing some two hundred years earlier, when the confrontations and challenges between Jews and Greeks were fresh. Koheleth's writings represent the agony of a man struggling to hold on to his faith yet succumbing to doubt and foreign influence. Thus we see a lack of a neat synthesis of views. We see a Jew who jumped around from topic to topic, at times appearing Greek, at times Jewish, at times contradicting himself and always claiming that all this effort to make sense of it all was vain.

Indeed his book represents the struggle of a man who, on the one hand, seems reluctant to abandon traditional Israelite beliefs, and on the other hand, seems intensely skeptical about it. But he was a man of faith. The book would never have been written had he no faith. Without his faith in God he wouldn't have struggled so with the Greek

world. He would have just succumbed to it. But he did not succumb to it. He struggled with his faith and his skepticism and in the end he emerged victorious. He found an answer to the tension he was living with. His answer was not, however, a philosophical one.

Koheleth, A Reconciler of A Conflict

His answer to the struggle that he, and probably many contemporary Jews were waging was two fold. First, he claimed that man will never know which culture is right. Man is bound in ignorance of ultimate reality. He will never know God's work. "However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out."(30) Second, he responded to this dilemma by advocating the enjoyment of one's חלק, one's portion. Although Koheleth's writings are filled with debates, questions, and ambiguity, a positive viewpoint for life can be deduced. According to Koheleth, man does have a purpose, a portion to hold on to, and that is to enjoy life. But enjoyment is not the only step to the reconciliation of the struggle. He advocates moderation, moral integrity and the fulfilling of the mitzvot. Amidst all of the confusion and despair, he tells his reader that obsessive behavior which tends to surface during mental anguish is inappropriate. "Be not righteous overmuch, and do not make yourself overwise; why should you destroy yourself? Be not wicked overmuch, neither be a fool; why should you die before your time? It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand; for he who fears God shall come forth

from it all."(31) Don't, he warns his readers, pursue either Greek philosophy or Judaism with excessive vigor. Why? Because it will lead to a nervous breakdown or radical and sometimes dangerous behavior. In a world where opposite views are so striking, seek not total immersion in either. Seek to syncretize the views. Seek a moderate well balanced position, and in the end "you shall come forth from it all." He also counselled his readers to be as morally pure as possible. In Chapter 9 he advises that one's garments should always be white as one pursues pleasure. "Let your garments be always white; let not oil be lacking on your head."(32) Pleasure, symbolized by oil libations must be coupled with integrity, or white garments. 11:9 tells his youth that they should walk in the ways of their own desires, but in the same breath he warns them against immorality. "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgement." Finally in 12:13 he sums up man's proper action in the performance of mitzvot. "Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." Thus Koheleth reconciled the two traditions, not through philosophical synthesis a la Philo, but by counselling the Jews to face the inconsistencies and conflicts of life through moderation, morality, mitzvot and the pursuit of pleasure.

His efforts at reconciliation cast his work as essentially optimistic. Koheleth gave the Jew something to hold on to. He gave the Jews a purpose. He comforted the people by being honest with his confusion and then showing

them a way out. He gathered together a despondent people who were lost in the inexplicable perplexities of the age, showed them the wrong path to happiness (wealth, power, industry, wisdom) and then pointed them towards the calm and moral enjoyment of one's portion. Koheleth's book was in no way a manual of pessimism as some have called it. It is rather a sympathetic book designed to lead Jews to reconciliation of life's conflicts.

The power of the Book of Koheleth lies in the fact that he confronted the problems of his day with candor and clarity. He recognized his faith and his skepticism regarding it. For this reason it has spoken to both pietist and skeptic. The pietist can find comfort in his tenacious faith amidst the Classical Age of Enlightenment. The skeptic can find solace in Koheleth's struggle with his heritage and in his reconciliation with pure reason.

This genius of an author has a message for the modern Jew living amidst a myriad of confusing philosophies and religious outlooks. Be open to the various outlooks, he tells us, and learn from them. But, know that in the end, we will never know which one is True. This should not, however, confound us. Our peace is not found in the answers to life's questions. Our peace is found in: balancing whatever strikes us as true, pursuing God's moral and ritual commandments, enjoying the blessings before us and not taking life's questions too seriously. The relevance of this advice to all people of heterogenuous societies, the comforting

effect it must have had on past and present generations, and its reconciliation of and toleration for differences, makes Koheleth a work of monumental import for all humankind.

NOTES

(1) Elias Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees, New York: Schocken Books, 1975, p. 58.

(2) Ibid., p. 58.

(3) Joseph Owens, A History of Ancient Western Philosophy, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1959, all.

(4) F. W. Beare, "Greek Religion", The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 2, p. 494.

(5) Ibid., p. 494.

(6) Owens, p. 312.

(7) To study the final moments of Socrates' life see the Phaedo.

(8) Ben Sirah 10:24.

(9) Ibid., 10:19.

(10) Ibid., 1:1, 1:4.

(11) Ibid., 1:17.

(12) Ibid., 11:20.

(13) See Ben Sirah 7:29, 15:18-19, 16:26-17:10, 35:1-20, 36:12-17, 44:1-50:29.

(14) Ibid., 3:21-24.

(15) I Maccabees 1:11-15.

(16) Bickerman p. 52.

(17) Louis Harry Feldman, "Hellenism", Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 8, p. 298.

(18) Julius Guttman, Philosophies of Judaism, New York: Schocken Books, 1973, p. 15.

(19) God was transcendent in Jewish Scripture also. His transcendence however was frequently balanced with a notion of His nearness. This was not the case in most of the Greek philosophies and religions. Among the Greeks, god was rarely felt on a personal level. Thus Philo's notion of God's complete transcendence must have been at least indirectly, influenced by the Greeks.

(20) Koheleth 3:10, 7:13, 8:17, 9:1-6.

(21) Koheleth 11:9, underlining mine.

(22) See Koheleth 3:19-22, 6:4-6, 12, 9:4-6.

(23) Koheleth 12:7.

(24) Gordis, p. 69, underlining mine.

(25) Ecclesiastes Rabbah, 2:24:1, p. 71.

(26) Ibid., 1:14:1, p. 42.

(27) Ibid., 1:15:1, p. 42.

(28) Ibid., 1:15:2, p. 45.

(29) Gordis, p. 69

(30) Koheleth, 8:17.

(31) Ibid., 7:16-18.

(32) Ibid., 9:8.

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