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## Sukkot Reflections from Ecclesiastes

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The Feast of Tabernacles is upon us, and people in the Messianic community of faith sincerely desire to participate in a meaningful and blessed way.<sup>1</sup> For many, this means taking the time to dwell in a temporary tabernacle in one's backyard, or at the very least, to build some kind of *sukkah*. As a family, we have been blessed over the years with different levels of engagement in remembering *Sukkot*. Let us review Leviticus 23:33-44 in order to understand the instructions for celebrating this feast:

"Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, "On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD—

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<sup>1</sup> This series of reflections was written by Mark Huey as part of Virtual Sukkot 2005, and has been edited to remove time-sensitive material.

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burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, *each day's* matter on its own day—besides *those of* the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD. On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It *shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD” (Leviticus 23:33-44, NASU).

As you can read above, from 15-23 Tishri, God’s people are to celebrate a festival unto Him. For seven days, the Ancient Israelites were instructed to dwell in temporary booths or *sukkahs* which would remind them that the Lord brought their ancestors out of the slavery of Egypt, and faithfully guided them through the wilderness. The timing of the Feast of Tabernacles comes at the end of the Fall appointed times, in what could also be characterized as a “harvest festival.” The commemoration of *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah* on the 1st of Tishri, and *Yom Kippur* on the 10th of Tishri, has been completed. These are times of great personal reflection and meditation as *shofars* have been blown, calling all to return toward God. The Ten Days of Awe have already culminated with the observance of *Yom Kippur* or the Day of Atonement.

Now, as the Feast of Tabernacles arrives, with the season of repentance completed, the stage is set for a much more joyous convocation. Another term often used for *Sukkot* is simply “Season of Joy” (Heb. *zeman simchatenu*). After completing the reflective times of *teshuvah*, many of the faithful are ready to be refreshed in their relationship with the Lord. The expression, “a new lease on life,” certainly comes to my mind.

### Considering Ecclesiastes

In many Jewish circles down through the centuries, there has been a tendency for some to celebrate *Sukkot* with some over zealotry. Whether it is the joy of making it through the season of repentance, or simply the fact that the work of the harvest is complete and barns are full, a “party atmosphere” can definitely be initiated by *Sukkot*. This has prompted the Rabbis to recommend the study of the Book of Ecclesiastes during *Sukkot* festivities.

By considering the wisdom of Ecclesiastes at this occasion, it allows one to be balanced in his or her approach to life. The concept of living out one’s life in a temporary tabernacle (our bodies), for whatever period of time we are allotted, makes an appropriate backdrop for contemplating the words seen in Ecclesiastes. So for the next week, we will be considering the Book of Ecclesiastes as we celebrate the Feast of Booths. Before examining the text, though, there is some background information concerning Ecclesiastes which needs to be mentioned.

The Hebrew title for Ecclesiastes is *Qohelet*. The title is taken from the very first sentence of the book: “The words of Koheleth son of David, king in Jerusalem” (Ecclesiastes 1:1, NJPS). It is derived from the Hebrew word *qahal*, meaning assembly or congregation. *Qohelet* is one who addresses the assembly. When the Septuagint translators produced the Greek version of the Tanakh about three centuries before Yeshua, they used the Greek word *ekklēsia* or “assembly,” as the root word for *Ekklesiastēs*. The book title Ecclesiastes essentially means assembly-speaker or preacher.

It must be noted that contemporary Biblical scholars are not in total agreement about the authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Many follow tradition and believe that King Solomon was its author, whereas others believe that Qohelet was someone in Solomon’s court, making the material Solomonic in origin, but not explicitly from his hand. Others believe that Qohelet comes from a later period in Israel’s history. However, rather than get into all of the arguments about this, for the purposes of my review, **I will be following tradition and recognize King Solomon as the primary author**, understanding that it is quite possible that Solomon’s words were written by scribes, or added to after the time of his death.

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Here are some of the reasons why I have decided to adhere to the traditional authorship of Ecclesiastes. In the opening verse, the author states that he is the "son of David, king of Jerusalem": "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:1, NASU). Later, the author indicates that he was the king of Israel in Jerusalem: "I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:12, NASU). Furthermore, the author describes the wisdom with which he was blessed: "I said to myself, 'Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge'" (Ecclesiastes 1:16, NASU).

These remarks are all reminiscent of a young Solomon, who after becoming the king of Israel, was asked by God what he wanted at his own request. God supernaturally endowed King Solomon with great wisdom, and eventually great riches, wealth, and honor:

"In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, 'Ask what I shall give you.' Solomon said to God, 'You have dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and have made me king in his place. Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?' God said to Solomon, 'Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you'" (2 Chronicles 1:7-12, NASU).

As a result of simply asking for wisdom and knowledge in order to best serve and rule the people of Israel, God responded by giving King Solomon riches, wealth, honor, and long life—plus the wisdom and knowledge to handle his responsibilities as king. As we read further in 2 Chronicles 9:22-28, Solomon's wealth was greater than all the surrounding kingdoms:

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“So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth were seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses and mules, so much year by year. Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. He was the ruler over all the kings from the Euphrates River even to the land of the Philistines, and as far as the border of Egypt. The king made silver *as common* as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland. And they were bringing horses for Solomon from Egypt and from all countries” (2 Chronicles 9:22-28, NASU).

Additionally, there is recorded evidence that Solomon’s great wisdom was known throughout the ancient world:

“Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was *known* in all the surrounding nations” (1 Kings 4:29-31, NASU).

In Ecclesiastes 2:4-6, the author describes some of his building accomplishments: “I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees” (NASU). I believe that this aligns with 1 Kings 7:1-2, attesting that Solomon built a large house for himself:

“Now Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. He built the house of the forest of Lebanon; its length was 100 cubits and its width 50 cubits and its height 30 cubits, on four rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars” (1 Kings 7:1-2, NASU).

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Similarly in Ecclesiastes 2:7-9, we see that the author not only owned considerable slaves and large herds of animals, but also had considerable wealth:

“I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines. Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me” (Ecclesiastes 2:7-9, NASU).

This aligns with 2 Chronicles 9:22-28, which details Solomon’s large number of concubines:

“So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth were seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses and mules, so much year by year. Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. He was the ruler over all the kings from the Euphrates River even to the land of the Philistines, and as far as the border of Egypt. The king made silver *as common* as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland. And they were bringing horses for Solomon from Egypt and from all countries” (2 Chronicles 9:22-28, NASU; cf. 1 Kings 11:1-4).

Hopefully, these are enough references to see why most of the ancient Jewish and Christian writers have attributed authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes to King Solomon. However, it is also important to note—and I would be remiss if I did not mention it—that many post-Reformation scholars have concluded that someone other than Solomon wrote it. This is not just limited to liberals (who often deny any kind of traditional authorship for Biblical books), but also many conservatives. So that you will be aware of some of the disputes, allow

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me to describe a few of the points of contention which have been made in more recent times.

Unlike the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs, the Book of Ecclesiastes does not mention the name of Solomon. The author calls himself "king in Jerusalem," a phrase which is never used of any king of Israel. When the writer describes himself as having been "magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me" (Ecclesiastes 1:16, NASU), it seems that he is implying more than just himself and King David. Remember that it was David who first took Jerusalem and made it his capital city. There had been no previous Israelite kings in Jerusalem prior to David. On the other hand, there were many kings over Jerusalem prior to David, some of whom are even mentioned as such in the pages of the Scripture (Melchizedek, Adoni-zedek, et. al.).

There are several places where the writer makes observations which would be unlikely coming from a king such as Solomon. But these statements speak philosophically, in order to make some astute points, so Solomonic authorship need not be denied.

Furthermore, grounds for denying Solomonic authorship are often made on the basis of the advanced Hebrew syntax of Ecclesiastes, which would have been foreign to the Ninth Century B.C.E., leading many scholars to conclude a later dating for the text. Yet this may only be the result of later edits were Solomon the original author.

With all this being said, when the assumption is made that King Solomon is the author, most conclude that Ecclesiastes was written in the later part of Solomon's life. One of the most common dates concluded for the book, by conservative theologians who adhere to Solomonic authorship, is 945 B.C.E.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For two relatively conservative analyses of Ecclesiastes' composition, consult R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 1072-1084; Raymond B. Dillard and Temper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp 247-265.

Do note that Messianic Apologetics editor J.K. McKee does not adhere to Solomonic authorship for Ecclesiastes, favoring a dating of 715-686 B.C.E. during the reign of a later monarch of the Southern Kingdom. This position is reflected in his essay "The Message of Ecclesiastes."

# Day One

## Ecclesiastes 1

Solomon had been one of the greatest of the Hebrew kings. His reign was largely one of peace and prosperity. It has been said that what David won through war, Solomon preserved through peace. And yet, there was a dark side to Solomon's reign. With all of his reputed wisdom, he found himself turning away from the Lord. It began very gradually. He entered into marital alliances with the surrounding countries. He took wives from the daughters of the surrounding pagan nations. And as those wives came to Israel, they brought their pagan gods with them, and they had a negative influence on Solomon:

"Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, 'You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.' Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*" (1 Kings 11:1-4, NASU).

Solomon was originally endowed with wisdom beyond the norm, and so it is quite prudent to spend some time reflecting on the summation of life that he shares in Ecclesiastes. This is why the Rabbis have recommended a review of this book during the season of joy associated with *Sukkot*. This can be a counterbalance to some of the frivolity which has a propensity to erupt during this season. For those who are taking the time away from some of the routine of the normal

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work week, during the Feast of Tabernacles, I would encourage you to read Ecclesiastes several times in its entirety so you might glean wisdom from its author.

Let us turn to the first chapter and take a look at the opening verses. Just reading the opening verses of the book are enough to snap one back to reality:

"The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem"  
(Ecclesiastes 1:1, NASU).

The opening verse essentially declares who the author is without using the name Solomon. As stated earlier, *Qohelet* or "the Preacher" (NASU, ESV), "the Teacher" (NIV, NRSV), "Kohleth" (NJPS), or "Koheles" (ATS, Ashkenazic), gives himself a title, rather than a name. Here he asserts that he is the son of David and king in Jerusalem. Further, the author echoes this introductory remark with amplification: "I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:12, NIV).

The author proceeds to summarize the book and introduce some of the themes which persist throughout the balance of the text: "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.' What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, NASU). Here we are introduced to one of the principal themes of Ecclesiastes found in the Hebrew word *hevel*, which is translated "vanity" (NASU) or "Utter futility" (NJPS). We find this word, or derivations of it, over thirty times in the text.<sup>1</sup> Reading to the end of the book we find a verse which almost acts like a bookend to what the author says: "'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'all is vanity!'" (Ecclesiastes 12:8, NASU).

From the opening verses to the concluding verses, the reader is on notice that the vanity or futility of life is going to be one of the primary subjects of this book. Additionally, in Ecclesiastes 1:3, we are also introduced to a second major theme which is stated some twenty-nine times in the text.<sup>2</sup> This is the concept of "under the sun," or *tachat*

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7f, 16; 5:6, 9; 6:2, 4, 9, 11f; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14; 9:9; 11:8, 10; 12:8.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 1:3, 9, 14; 2:11, 17ff, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:12, 17; 6:1, 12; 8:9, 15, 17; 9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 10:5.

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*ha'shamesh* in Hebrew: "What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:3, NASU).

Right from the beginning statements through the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, the reader is confronted with the vanity of life, and the reality of things done "under the sun," meaning all things which occur on Earth. The author concludes that nothing escapes the natural laws of the environment which human beings inhabit. The four elements of Creation: land, fire (sun), wind, and water—bring to mind the created order and its cyclical qualities:

"A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; and hastening to its place it rises there *again*. Blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north, the wind continues swirling along; and on its circular courses the wind returns. All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again" (Ecclesiastes 1:4-7, NASU).

Before we consider these basic elements, the inevitable reality of "generational amnesia" must be thought through. The statement "a generation goes and a generation comes" is quite profound, even given today's glut of information. Most people do not know that much about their grandparents, let alone their great-grandparents. Many would be hard-pressed to name the eight people who were the parents of their grandparents. One of the realities of life is that when you have passed on, your grandchildren might remember you, but for the most part their children or your great-grandchildren will have a vague recollection, if any, of your legacy. An epitaph on a grave marker in a remote cemetery which is rarely visited might sum up your time on Earth.

The Preacher understood this reality, because most human beings have such a time-sensitive and self-centered viewpoint, that spending any time dwelling on the previous generations (unless they were people of great accomplishment) is rarely done. Human nature is such that people are generally only concerned about their own selves, with limited concern on generations twice removed. Can you better understand the concept of a generation gap as you contemplate these words?

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After you might consider these generational issues, the elemental aspects of Creation are mentioned. First, the author mentions the timelessness of the Planet Earth. “[T]he earth remains forever” (Ecclesiastes 1:4, NASU) should remind us that we are animate and temporal, when compared to the inanimate and relative longevity of our planet. By our nature as limited mortals, we are subject to life and death, whereas the Earth does not require breath to exist in its current state, having existed for eons.

Next, the Preacher turns us to the consistency of the Sun, or the fireball of gas in our the Solar System. In the statement, “the sun rises and the sun sets; and hastening to its place it rises there *again*” (Ecclesiastes 1:5, NASU), the reader is reminded of the daily routine of the Sun as it appears to move across the sky with ascending and descending precision. Today, we understand from astronomy that the Earth is actually revolving on an axis as it circumnavigates the Sun on an annual basis. But one thing is as consistent today as it was in the time of Solomon: the pattern of the Sun’s “rising and setting” can be calculated to absolute accuracy given the consistency of the rotations. This is a marvel to consider, especially when you compare it to the capricious nature of humanity.

Third, the Preacher turns to the element of the wind and its patterns: “Blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north, the wind continues swirling along; and on its circular courses the wind returns” (Ecclesiastes 1:6, NASU). Even without the marvels of modern technology, the ancients were able to monitor the annual cycle of wind patterns as they were consistent year in and year out. While they might not have been exactly the same every year, the fact remains that in God’s Creation, the air currents follow in readily discernible patterns.

Finally, the author comments on the weather patterns of water going from the depths of the oceans, to up in the air, to over the land in clouds, only to be returned to the land via the eruption of rain, sleet, or snow: “All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again” (Ecclesiastes 1:7, NASU). Then, the inevitable occurs as water gathers by gravity and moves from streams, to creeks, to rivers, and returns to the seas, where the process repeats itself over and over again. While each of these elements has a degree of consistency, the Preacher reminds his

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audience that human beings are not like this. Mortals will eventually die, but the Earth will still be standing strong, the Sun will continue to rise and set, the winds will come and go, and the hydrological cycles of water will carry on.

In almost an aside of resignation, the Preacher makes the statement, "All things are wearisome; man is not able to tell *it*. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing" (Ecclesiastes 1:8, NASU). Here, the reality that human beings cannot speak enough, see enough, or hear enough, is somewhat wearisome to the soul. Yet it is the nature of mortals to want to speak about all things, or look at everything the eye can absorb, or listen to all that the ear can bear to hear.

Finally, these statements summarize the end of the opening chapter of Ecclesiastes:

"And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. *It* is a grievous task *which* God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with. I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted. I said to myself, 'Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.' And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge *results in* increasing pain" (Ecclesiastes 1:13-18, NASU).

As the Preacher concludes his opening statements in Ecclesiastes ch. 1, one can almost sense a state of despair or depression. Comments like, "all is vanity and striving after wind" (Ecclesiastes 1:14, NASU), almost lead one to wonder why he should participate in life if the results are going to result in vanity. The final acknowledgement that in much wisdom there is much grief, while increasing knowledge results in increasing pain, does not give one much of an incentive to strive for many things in life.

However, for Believers in Yeshua the Messiah, we have a different perspective which takes into account the reality of what the Book of Ecclesiastes discusses. Our great advantage is found in the revelation

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of Yeshua and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul describes, perhaps in concert with the conclusions of Ecclesiastes, that the Creation is subjected to futility. Here, we find an answer to how Believers should be handling the vagaries of life:

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it” (Romans 8:18-25, NASU).

We need to identify with how the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared to the glory which will be revealed to us in the future. While the Creation was subjected to futility as a result of the Fall of Adam and Eve, eventually it will all be set free from its corruption, as will the children of God who have been born again and indwelt with the Holy Spirit. We have a hope which overcomes the rather depressing statements of the Preacher, who is trapped by the futility of life as he sees it. This is the faith which we have in our Messiah Yeshua and His accomplished work at Golgotha (Calvary). While we can understand the vanity of life apart from Him, we can also appreciate the life which is totally devoted to serving Him and loving Him with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and strength.

During this season of joy, those who believe in the efficacious grace of God can look to Him to answer the perplexing questions of life. We have something which is beyond the conclusions of the Preacher, because we have some knowledge about the Messiah who sets us free from the bondage of sin! We even have some answers to

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the complexity of life when we follow some of the logic as seen in Paul's instruction:

"In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8:26-30, NASU).

With the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, Believers have the presence of God to actually intercede for them in prayer. But even beyond this, when problems of the generations erupt, or when the Earth, wind, or precipitation changes to the point of disrupting life as we know it—we have the comfort to know that everything happens according to God's will for our lives. Beyond all that, we even have the knowledge that "in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28, RSV).

This should give our lives some meaning and purpose, which clarifies the idea claimed by the Preacher of *all* being vanity. In fact, Paul's words "to those who are called according to His purpose" should stick in the hearts and minds of all those who are truly born again. Even though the word "His" may be implied in Ecclesiastes in various places, the fact remains that there is a purpose for our existence which is well beyond the futility of life which the Preacher expresses.

Many years ago, I was reading a book that was written in 1956 by Arthur Wallis, entitled *In the Day of Thy Power*. The book was about revival from Scripture and history, and was very thought provoking when I read it. But what stuck out more than the contents of the book, was an anonymous statement which was sandwiched between the table of contents and the second forward to the edition I was reading. In this book was a simple statement which defined the concept of success for a Believer:

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*If you would make the greatest success of your life, try to discover what God is doing in your time, and fling yourself into the accomplishment of His purpose and will.*

This simple statement has had a profound impact on my life, and I believe it is having a profound impact on the lives of many who are currently embracing a Messianic lifestyle and Torah obedient walk of faith. I believe with all of my heart that at this point in time one of the most critical things which the Holy One is doing with His people is restoring them to the roots of their faith. Many people all over the world are celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. This is an incredible reality when you consider that perhaps within the scope of only a few years previously, many of them did not even know what *Sukkot* was or had even heard of it. But today, perhaps many thousands of people are committing themselves wholeheartedly into the purposes and will of our Heavenly Father!

Now in congregations and fellowships around the world, people are looking at Scripture texts like the Book of Ecclesiastes, and learning through the promptings of the Holy Spirit, exactly what the Father wants them to know.

I pray that your time in this season of joy will be enhanced as you follow the patterns established by our forbearers in the faith. The wisdom present in Ecclesiastes is available for all to receive, as we know that James instructs Messiah followers to ask for wisdom. Our Heavenly Father will faithfully dispense it at His good pleasure: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5, NASU).