

01-08-05b Ecclesiastes

We resume our study now in Ecclesiastes. We're in the beginning portion of Chapter 5, but we have been reviewing, just because I was struck by this article, some of the concrete things, some of the actual things that we encounter that are in view when Solomon gives this exhortation to find that end life that is permanent, that does last, and that goes beyond the moment. And it's a subtle thing because we think oftentimes that we have found... I've thought about this a lot because I'm generally pretty busy.

I have lots of things in lots of different areas. I have work things. I have things that I want to get done in studying the Word of God.

I know sometimes it seems like our studies and books are interminable and they're never going to end. I do want to try to move forward and finish and go on to other books. I have hobbies where I want to collect music on the CDs or I want to do things on the computer or I want to preserve family memorabilia.

There's time to spend with my daughters and with my wife, and there's all of these different things that compete for time. And so when I get to the end of the day or the end of a weekend and I look back and I try to evaluate, well, how satisfied am I with this day or this week or this weekend or this couple of days off that I took or whatever, I always catch myself using a time-bound human standard of measure. Well, I got this, that, and the other done.

I had my list of things, and I can check off these. Out of 12 that I had listed, I got five of them done and got partway on two more, so that was a pretty good time. And Ecclesiastes has been a real fruitful study for me because I catch myself now and I stop and I say, well, let me step back and think about something that's not just vapor.

I mean, that checklist of things that are done, that's not what God's going to be working off of. Did I have a good attitude when I did these? Was I doing it heartily as unto the Lord? Did I bear in mind that my ability to refrain from sin against those in my periphery was more important than how fast something got done or how well something got done? Did I get frustrated? Did I get short-tempered? Did I get impatient? Did I ultimately succeed in accomplishing the task but fail the test because in God's evaluation, it's not checked off the list. There was a test, and He can't check it off His list because I didn't succeed.

I didn't focus on the things that do have profit, that do have eternal merit. And that really does change. My goal now is to try to do that with foresight rather than retrospect, to not look back and say, oh, I see, well, I've got to rub out the check mark next to all these tasks because even though I got a physical task accomplished, I really wasted the opportunity.

Now, if I can move that analysis forward and think about it ahead of time and as I go into something, remember, well, don't worry if it doesn't go according to plan. The important thing is to

be pleasing in God's sight, to do what I do heartily, to remember that it is the opportunity to exhibit what God has done in my soul. God has gone to a lot of trouble.

There's those of us that have had, like we were talking about on the break, hundreds and even thousands of hours of Bible study. God has invested. God's invested all this time and expense in giving me a seminary education, and I have a better ability to go in and even feed myself and get exactly what I need from the Word of God.

Well, is it bearing any fruit in God's plan? Am I the same bumbling idiot that I was before all of that? Am I no better than someone that has had no Bible study and only knows five things from the Word of God? When God puts me in a test, do I fail it just as largely and just as completely as someone that has not been the beneficiary of all of that grace? It shouldn't be that way. From those to whom much is given, much is required. And Jesus had a higher standard for his disciples than he did for the crowds because they should have known better.

And in some cases, they were able to do more. Look at Peter. How many people besides the Lord Jesus Christ have ever walked on water? One.

And it wasn't the centurion. It wasn't the woman at the well. It wasn't the Pharisees or the Sadducees.

It was Peter. Peter walked with the Lord on a daily basis, and he reached a place where he could do supernatural things. He became one of the great apostles and one of the great communicators of God's Word.

But he had his trials. He had his spectacular failures along the way, but he kept picking himself up and moving forward. And he eventually learned, and he grew, and he is the author of inspired Scripture.

What a privilege to be an eyewitness to the Lord and be able to communicate that to others. We are all recipients of great grace, and God has great things in mind for us if we just remember who we are and to not get entangled in the cares of this life. And we can easily be deflected, and we can get concerned, well, it's all about how I feel this Chuck Ward and his self-esteem, freedom through forgiveness.

I've got to free myself. I'll free myself from the entanglements of the wrong by achieving forgiveness. I will forgive this person, and I will free myself and give myself the ability to go on.

That is not the biblical perspective. The biblical perspective is I am forgiven. I am Christ's.

I belong to Christ. I am incorporated in Christ. I am free in Christ.

I am forgiven in Christ. I am called in Christ. I share His sonship, His inheritance, His kingship, His destiny.

I've been given many great things. Do I keep that in mind as I go through my day, or do I fall down and get entangled in the cares of this life just like everyone else? Well, Solomon, from the Old Testament perspective, is reaching up to these things. And when you think of the unfolding progress of Revelation in the Old Testament, what do you have at this point in history? You have the five books of Moses, and that's it.

Where do you go in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and find the importance of the inner life, the importance of seizing and laying hold of eternal things? Well, it's there. It's incipient. It's encoded, if you will, in the sacrifices and in the love commands, love God, love your neighbor.

But Solomon is saying, you know, when it comes down to treading step by step through your daily life, am I just walking around in circles, going nowhere, or am I laying hold of something that goes beyond the rising and setting of the sun? And I will soon be caught up with our outline summary commentary on Ecclesiastes, and I hope to show more clearly even than we have covered thus far the progress of Solomon's communication on this subject. The more I study it and the more I go back and organize it, the more impressive it is to me. This book has been done such a radical injustice, I think, over the years.

Because people have thought it was talking about something else and thought that he was in human viewpoint and that he was a reversionist and that he was, well, eat, drink, and be merry, and he was kind of waffling back and forth between understanding things about God and falling back into human viewpoint. It isn't that at all. He is pushing the envelope of Old Testament understanding of what it means to live a life before God and to live up to the potential and the calling that God places on his people.

He had the wisdom that God gave him that excelled anyone else in his age, and that's what we're looking at. And it's going to be something. And I precede what I'm about to say with that because somebody like me is not going to be able to grasp everything that Solomon is putting forward, certainly not the first time through.

And I realized as I was studying this week that I missed something important as we were going through the earlier chapters, and it's a phrase that came up once again. It's kind of like God, you know, you remember Mr. Holland beating on that football player with the drumstick and the helmet and, you know, bang, bang, bang. You hit enough times and it will finally sink in.

But we have seen a phrase several times, and it occurs again right at the end of Chapter 4. We saw the example here, than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more. And I think about this a lot. We have all the denominations.

We have people who have sort of settled out. If you take petroleum and you do catalytic cracking, what they call cat cracking, you put a catalyst with it, and all of the different substances in the

petroleum settle out. They have different densities and so forth.

You can take and mix things of different density into solution, and if you let it sit long enough, it will settle out. You'll have the heaviest things at the bottom and other things in the middle and the lightest things at the top, and then the very lightest stuff will even float on the surface of the liquid, and it all kind of settles out. Well, believers tend to rise to grow to a certain point and then kind of plateau.

And so you have people that are totally indifferent. That would be the ones at the bottom that are completely apathetic and care nothing about the things of God. They're saved and that's it.

You have others that learn four or five things and kind of realize that morality is important and you ought to attend church at least on holidays. They, in times of great stress and so forth, will turn to God and pray and have sort of sporadic relationship with God, and then the rest of the time they waste. And you come on up and you can, up at the top somewhere, are the faithful few who are actually thinking about God and meditating on His Word and being Psalm 1, 1 and 2 people who meditate on the law day and night, who are following Christ, take up their cross, and we all fall out somewhere in this stratification.

Well, Solomon here in verse 13 of chapter 4, he says, you've got physical circumstances that would indicate one thing and you've got spiritual circumstances that indicate something else. You've got a poor and wise youth and you've got an old and foolish king. Well, the poor youth is at one end of the social and economic scale and the old king is at that scale.

But the youth has wisdom. The king is a fool. I thought about going and doing a word study on all the different things that the Bible says are foolish, but we'll get to that sometime in the future.

But it's a fascinating study if you ever want to do it yourself. Just go look at all the places where, and the reason is because we had foolish here, and remember God comes to the man with the houses and the barns and He says, you fool, tonight they will acquire your soul. Have you got that? Well, fool in the Old Testament, and then we've got to go study the fools.

But I really do want to finish Ecclesiastes in my lifetime. So just if you want to do an interesting study, just get your English concordance, find the word fool, and just look at what the Bible says is foolish or where the Bible calls someone a fool. It's a fascinating word study.

Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, and what is the nature of his folly? He will be admonished no more. He's not teachable. He's lost his ability to learn and to grow.

The youth comes out of prison to be king, although he was born poor. He's going to wind up with a kingdom, but he started out being born in that kingdom as a poor person. He grew up in a poor family, and of course you cannot help but think about David who is the youngest son of Jesse.

He's got all these older strapping brothers, and they're officers in the army, and they've got

careers and things, and he's out there doing a servant's job, watching the sheep. And Jesse figures, well, I'll save having to feed and clothe a servant. I'll just send my youngest son out there.

He's not good for anything else, and so he's going to be the shepherd. He's a poor but wise youth. Many of the Psalms of David were written during his time as a shepherd and as a fugitive and a vagabond in his own country.

And he was imprisoned from time to time and lived as a fugitive, and yet he comes out of that prison to be king, although he was born poor in his kingdom. Solomon says in verse 15, I saw all the living who walk under the sun. They were with that second youth who stands in his place.

He stands in the place of the old and foolish king. So the situation is reversed. In literature, they call this the well-bucket syndrome, where one rises as the other falls.

Someone starts out at the bottom of the well, and the other at the top. Remember the pulley and the two buckets, and one bucket sinks and the other one rises. And ultimately, the one that was low becomes high, and the one that was high becomes low.

And he says, I've seen this take place. I've seen the living, all the living who walk under the sun. Of course, this is hyperbole.

He's talking about everybody. The youth becomes so popular as the king that it just seems like the whole world is flocking to his door and is waving banners and blowing trumpets and saying, you're a great king. It puts you in mind of when David became king over all Israel.

He was hugely popular. His military victories, his wisdom, his good government, his expansion and bringing prosperity to the country. There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king.

Yet, those who come afterward will not rejoice in him. Remember later in David's reign, the Absalom revolt. Later on, when David was old and feeble and he has Abishag there, he's seen as feeble and another of his sons tries to take over the kingdom and tries to hunt him to defiance and make Solomon king before he dies.

And Solomon says, this is hyperbole. This is vapor. What is vapor? He's talking about the very last thing he mentioned.

This latter, the ones who come afterward don't rejoice in him. All of his accomplishments, all of the popularity that he had, people come after, it's not remembered. It goes back to that cycle of things.

As popular as David was, as well-beloved, as the sweet solace of Israel, everybody loved him, and yet it's all largely forgotten, even within a generation of his time. Those who come afterward will not rejoice in him. This is vapor.

This popularity, this thanks to riches story. As great as that sounds, it doesn't last. It doesn't mean anything in and of itself.

And then the phrase comes, it is grasping for the wind. Well, I was sort of thinking about this and looking at the places where this phrase occurs in Ecclesiastes, and I went back and redid my study. And I need to remind you just briefly, remember in the introduction of this book we talked about the fact that everybody thinks that it's late, that it's full of Aramaic language, and this means, well, they weren't using Aramaic in Solomon's day.

It had to have been written hundreds of years after his time. It's sort of a fable that the author is posturing as Solomon to try to make his case. And none of this is right, just to put it in a nutshell.

Well, I overlooked the fact that this grasping for the wind is based on that assumption. And as I was going back and reviewing, I went back to the lexicon. And I thought, you know, I don't remember really researching the word that is translated grasping because in different translations, some of them say shepherding the wind, some of them say pursuing the wind, chasing the wind, grasping for the wind.

And I thought, how did they get this? And I looked at it the first time we encountered this phrase, which was back in Chapter 1, I think it was 114. And I thought, I need to go back and take a look at that again. Well, I did.

And I was dumbfounded to discover that I just had not done sufficient research. And, you know, you assume something. In the Marine Corps, there's a great little saying about assume.

And if you break that word down into its first three letters, assuming makes something out of you and me. And it's those first three letters. And I feel like I really missed something here.

I would like to sort of bring you along on the lexical journey that I went on as I reviewed this phrase grasping or chasing the wind. When you go to the Hebrew here, the word that is translated grasping, chasing, and so forth is raut. R-A-U-T.

R-A-U-T. You may recall that the word for evil is R-A-A-H. And there's another word that sounds just like it that's R-A-A-H, but it means to see.

But the difference in those two roots is the word that means to see, remember that it's not good for a man to eat and drink and see good in his, or see his soul good in his labor. Well, that's raah, R-A-A-H. But that's got the good letter in it.

That's got the aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, R-A. And that's an aleph a. Well, this, the word that means evil or calamity or grievous, remember it is an evil answer that God has given the sons of men to be answered with. Well, that's raah, but that's R with the ayin, which is the evil a. This word, raut, has the ayin and not the aleph.

So I thought, well, I need to go back and look at this because the root is going to be raah. And the lexicon lists three separate roots for raah. Raah.

So I thought, well, I need to go back and review some of this for myself. So I did. And the first root that is listed for R-A-A-H with the ayin is a verb that means to pasture, to tend, or to graze.

This means to, it's used of sheep. You're going to, and this is where the translation shepherding the wind comes from because the word that is translated uniformly throughout the Old Testament as shepherd is raah, which is the gerund or the participle form of this verb. The O-E infix, any time you take a word that normally has A's in it, the Hebrew verbs all have, you know, it's asa, bara, karav, and this sort of thing.

And then you put an O-E in there instead of the A-A. Well, that makes it, that's like putting I-N-G on an English word and it turns it into a noun and it says this is a person who does this thing. So R-O-A is a person who raah, is a person who shepherds or tends or grazes sheep.

Well, that's good. But this is not the usual form for that because that is a masculine noun. And raoot is feminine.

And so we have to move forward a little bit and see other ways in which this root occurs and is used. Well, R-O-A is shepherd. Ra-E is pasture.

R-apostrophe, it's kind of hard to even render it into English, but it would be sort of like R-apostrophe-E-Y, I guess, or R-A-apostrophe-E-Y. But ra-E is a masculine noun that means pasture. And you find that in various places.

And then a lot of times you can take a word that comes from a verb and you put a main in front of it, you put the M in front, and that main is a preposition that means from. And so from pasture. And this also can make it a noun.

And this is even more common in the Old Testament. So we have pasture and pasturage. Ma- or mere-eh.

And this is M-I-R-apostrophe-E-H. And so you have the R and the apostrophe is the I. It becomes sort of a guttural. Well, that's all language and stuff.

But you have a lot of words and a lot of places where this pattern of consonants shows up as to pasture or to tend sheep in the Old Testament. Well, is that what we have here? Is it shepherding the wind? Well, the problem is it's not the O-E infix. It's not shepherding.

This is a feminine noun. And women typically weren't shepherdesses. That was a very rare thing.

Why would he say shepherdess of the wind or something? I mean, the feminine kind of throws that off. So I don't think shepherding. Shepherding is out.

We're not going to use shepherding. So we keep looking. We say, well, there is another use of that same.

Remember I told you when you have three letters and there's 22 letters in the alphabet and all your words are composed of three, you're going to have a lot of duplication and words that have the same pattern are more than one thing. Well, a second root, and it's attested in Assyrian and other cognate languages, of ra-a means to associate with or to be the companion of. And there are many places in the Old Testament.

You may remember during the Exodus when the men and women were leaving Egypt and they each gave to the other. The women gave to the women and the men gave to the men when they were leaving Egypt. They got the gold and they each gave to their neighbor.

Well, the word for neighbor there is this word. Well, to make a long story short, it does not satisfy the thing either because to be a neighbor or to be the fellow or whatever comes out as a masculine noun. And so you have a problem there because we have the feminine.

So you say, well, is there any place where there's a feminine companion? Well, guess what? We have the word for feminine companion and it shows up in Canticles or the Song of Solomon. Well, now we're getting closer to the mark because here's Solomon using this word, this pattern of consonants, but it is raya that is the feminine noun for companion. He talks about his beloved bride in the Song of Solomon 1.9 and in 1.15 and in 2.2 and in 2.10 and 13 and 4.1 and 4.7 and in 5.2 and in 6.4. So several times in the Song of Solomon you have this raya, but it's not raut.

It's a different word. Well, there are just a couple of places in the Bible where you actually find raut, which means your fellow woman. One of them is the one I mentioned in Exodus 11.2 where you have... Let me just turn there right quick.

I'll give you the English. The Lord said to Moses, I will bring yet one more plague on Egypt and on Pharaoh. He will let you go.

When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. Speak now in the hearing of the people and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor articles of silver and articles of gold. The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians and so the Egyptians are going to give Israelites these articles of silver and gold.

Well, when it says let every man ask from his neighbor, from his neighbor is the masculine form of this raya, which means companion, his masculine companion. Let every woman ask from her feminine companion. And so the women are associated with the Egyptian women, the men are associated with the Egyptian men, and they're going to get from them articles of silver and articles of gold.

So there is a usage, but that's back in Moses. Well, we're interested in... And it's used a few other

places. It is also, by the way, the basis for the name Ruth.

Ruth, what do we know about Ruth relative to Solomon? Well, she was a great-great-grandma, right? Ruth and Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David, Solomon. She's in the family line there, so he's going to be familiar with the derivation of her name. Well, Ruth is a contraction from Reut, which means friendship.

And here's the key that I'll give you that I haven't mentioned thus far. Many times when a noun is in the feminine in Hebrew, it is because it is a concept. It can have a literal usage, as we have seen.

Feminine companions giving silver and gold to ladies. But if you take something... Remember, we talked about this in Kohelet. Kohelet is a feminine noun from Kahal, which means to gather.

And Kahal is always used for gathering people, not gathering grain. We just had that passage where it says the sinner is going to be gathering and collecting. Well, one of those verbs is Asaf.

Remember Asaph, a psalm of Asaph? Asaph is a title. He's the gatherer. He's the collector of psalms for the hymnal.

And so it's a psalm of the editor, so to speak. He's the one who edited the collection. Well, the one gathering and collecting so that God can give to the one who's good in His sight is Oseph.

Gathering, collecting, O-E-N-F-I-X. Asaph becomes Oseph or O-C. And so he's gathering and collecting.

Well, same thing here. That is a concept. A gatherer or a collector of people, Kohelet.

Even though Kahal and its nouns are usually masculine, Solomon puts it in the feminine because this is in the realm of ideas. So now we know something about Ra'ut. Because we still have a choice of three roots because they have another root that is postulated for this.

And this one is from the Aramaic. And in Aramaic, Ra'ah, which actually has a Rish, an Ain, and an Aleth. There are two A's, the evil A and the good A. We call it the evil A, just to separate it.

But there's an Ain and then an Aleth. Well, that's Aramaic. And it's a word that means to take pleasure in or to desire.

And it has a carbonate in Arabic. But this is all late. Well, guess which one of these they picked to say this is chasing and pursuing something.

Ra'ah, when you take pleasure in something, when you make it your purpose or your aim, you're going after it, you're chasing and pursuing. That's what the translators chose when they said chasing the wind. They took something that was akin to Aramaic and said, well, this is Solomon's pseudonymous author, pseudonymous, his ghost letter that's claiming to be Solomon and is not,

using this Aramaic loan word to talk about chasing the wind.

Perfectly good word for chasing in Hebrew that's not in use here. This is a strange form. It's feminine.

It's ra'ud. It's a noun. It's not a gerund.

It's not an O-E word, is it? It's ra'ud. It's not row eight or any permutation of that. But they say, well, this is where ra'ud comes from.

And it's a feminine noun that means longing or striving. And it's in the construct. And all of their citations for this are out of Ecclesiastes.

They made up this definition just to fit Ecclesiastes. They don't use it anywhere else in the whole Old Testament. Well, I disagree.

I don't think it is from the Aramaic. We know that Aramaic may have been in use in Solomon's court, but it was a thousand years earlier. And this is a late word.

It's only found in late manuscripts and documents. So we're left with two choices. It is either from companion or it's from shepherd.

Well, here's the clincher. Let me take you to Hosea. Let's look first of all at Hosea 13, verse 6. God is talking about the nation of Israel.

At the beginning of chapter 13, he says that his people have Ephraim spoke trembling. He exalted himself in Israel. When he offended through Baal worship, he died.

Now they sin more and more and have made for themselves molded images, idols of silver according to their skill. All of it is the work of craftsmen. They say of them, let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves.

Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes away. They're going to be like a vapor, aren't they? Like chaff blown off from the threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney. Yet I am the Lord your God ever since the land of Egypt.

These are believers who are going to suffer this fate of their whole life is going to be impermanent, have no lasting imprint. Ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but me, for there is no savior besides me. I knew you in the wilderness in the land of great drought.

When they had pasture, they were filled. They were filled and their heart was exalted. Therefore they forgot me.

So I will be like to them a lion, like a leopard by the road. I will lurk, meet them like a bear

deprived of her cubs. I will tear open their rib cage.

I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them. Oh, Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from me.

I will be your king. Where is any other that he may save you in all your cities? And so on. But you can recognize our term here in verse 6, when they had pasture, and this is from Ra'ah.

This is the place where they feed. And they fed on something and were filled, and then they forgot the Lord. Well, Hosea uses this same word in another portion of his book, Hosea 12.2, Hosea 12.2. Once again, beginning at the beginning of the chapter, Ephraim feeds on the wind and pursues the east wind.

Well, guess what phrase is used here? It is our word, Ro'eh, or Ra'ah, with the evil ion. And the word for wind is Ru'ach. Very same word that we have in Ecclesiastes is used here.

It is Ro'eh Ru'ach. Ro'eh is the, remember the infix ing? Ephraim is feeding on the wind. Well, if you want to take feeding on the wind and make it a concept, make it an idea, in Hebrew a lot of times you take that word and make it feminine, just like we did with Kahal, to make it Kohelet.

And that T on the end is one of the signs that it is a feminine noun. And so you take Ra'ah and make it Ra'oot, and you have either friendship as a concept, using one root, or you have a pastrage, or what I would say in English is this is a diet, because it is not just one meal. If you use the word Akal, which means to eat, or you talk about eating and drinking, well, these are episodes.

This is where you sit down and have a meal. And you could say, well, eating the wind, that is not the concept. This is a diet.

This is feeding on over time. This is something that you have made your substance and your support. So this is a perfect root to use, not for chasing after the wind, because this has all come from their view that this is late and that it is from the Aramaic, and that Hevel means vanity, which is a waste of time, it is futility.

Well, what is futile? Chasing the wind is futile. But what are we really talking about? Hevel means it is impermanent, it does not last. And what do you do if you are feeding on the wind? You are puffing yourself up.

You know how you can feel full, and then you burp, and you realize, well, I was not full after all. I have been gulping air. But Ra'a, meaning pasturage, when you talk about pasturing a flock, you are not talking about giving them one diet.

You did not throw out some bales of hay or feed them cubes or something. You know, you feed cattle cubes, you come in a bag. This is something that takes place over a long period of time,

kind of like the difference between sin and evil in the Bible.

Sin looks at specific acts of disobedience, specific acts of omission or commission. Evil talks about a pattern, a long-standing practice. It is the same thing here.

This is what you feed on and what you make your substance over time. Where do you pasture? Are you a Psalm 23 kind of believer? The Lord is my shepherd. He leads me in the paths of righteousness.

He leads me in green pastures and beside still waters and restores my soul. Is that what we are pasturing on, what we are feeding on? The Lord is my shepherd. That word shepherd is Ro'eh, from this very same root, Ra'ah.

Or are you pasturing, are you feeding on the wind? And when I give you my revised translation, I've got to go back and correct this in the first few passages where we encountered this phrase because I believe, contrary to what the lexicon says, this is not from the late Aramaic root, Ra'ah. This is from the old Hebrew root, Ra'ah, the one used by Solomon's father, David, the one used by Solomon himself. There is a great passage.

I was just talking to my dad yesterday and he was saying, well, when are you going to teach Song of Solomon? And I said, not any time soon. That's not one I want to tangle with because it's very graphic and I just haven't psyched myself up for that yet. But if you look, I'm not even sure I'm going to take you to that passage now.

Well, I guess I will. Take a look at Song of Solomon chapter 4 and verse 5. And once we go here, you'll see why I don't want to teach this right away. It talks in verse 4, Your neck is like the Tower of David, built for armory on which hang a thousand bucklers, all the shields of mighty men.

Then in verse 5 it says, Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies. Well, ignoring all the other nouns and things in that verse, the twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies, that is Royim from Ra'ah. They are ones who feed among the lilies.

And the lilies, you may remember Jerry Seinfeld had a girlfriend a year or two ago, a dark-haired gal and her name was Shoshanna. Shoshanna something or other. You encounter that in Jewish families.

It's a beautiful name that they give to girls in Jewish families. Shoshanna is a fairly common name. Well, the lilies here is Shoshanim.

Shoshanna means lily in Hebrew. And they're feeding, they're Royim among the Shoshanim. Well, so Solomon is well aware of the feeding or pasturing idea.

I could take you to many other places where this is also used in the Song of Solomon. I'll just mention them to you. 2, 16, 6, 2, and 3, you'll find that same root used.

Very common in the Old Testament. And that, I believe, is what is used here. So, certain things are declared to be feeding on the wind.

Well, how does this work itself out? Let's go back and look at Ecclesiastes 1, verse 14 and see if our revised translation holds up. He's talking about the first place where this phrase occurs. He says, I was king over Israel and Jerusalem.

I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven. This grievous answer that God has given the sons of men to be answered with. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun and indeed all is vapor and feeding on the wind.

So, people are attempting to satisfy themselves on something that is insubstantial. The second place Solomon used this was in 2, 11. How does it look there? Verse 10, Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them.

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure. My heart rejoiced in all my labor. And this was my reward from all my labor.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled and indeed all was vapor and feeding on the wind. There was no profit under the sun. There was no yitron under the sun.

This is a part of the first great conclusion that Solomon draws from what I'm going to call the royal experiment. The next place it occurs is just six verses down in 2, 17. Verse 16, There is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever since all that is now will be forgotten in the days to come.

How does a wise man die? Just like the fool. Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me for all is vapor and feeding on. I hated my labor in which I toiled.

There is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill but he has to leave it to someone who is not labored. What does a man have for all of his labor? His days are sorrowful. His work is burdensome.

Verse 24, There is nothing good in a man eating and drinking and seeing his soul good in his labor. This I saw was from the hand of God. Who can eat or have enjoyment more than I? God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to the man who is good in his sight.

But to the sinner he gives this answer, gathering, collecting, that he may give to the one who is good before God. This is vapor and feeding on the wind. Being the sinner who is simply doing his work so that God can give it to the one that's good in his sight.

If you're satisfied with that answer, you're feeding on the wind. You go forward to chapter 4 and

verse 4. The next place we saw this phrase occur. I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor.

This also is vapor and feeding on the wind. We go to chapter 6 and verse 9. What does the wise man have more than the fool? What does the poor man have who knows how to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vapor and feeding on the wind.

We go back to verse 7 where he says, The labor of man is just for his mouth and yet the soul is not satisfied. You labor and you're reaching for some form of satisfaction. This is why we have people reaching the pinnacle of accomplishment in their various fields and yet they don't find it satisfying.

They don't find it fulfilling. Why? Because they're just feeding on the wind. Chapter 4, verse 16, you have a related phrase.

A man whose riches may perish through misfortune or his son doesn't have anything to inherit. As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came. He shall take nothing from his labor, which he may carry away in his hand.

This also is translated here as severe evil. Just exactly as he came, so shall he go. What profit has he who has labored for the wind, who has fed on the wind? What does he have to show for it? All his days he eats in darkness as much sorrow and sickness and anger.

You see the idea of eating carried forward in verse 17 from that. Well, what conclusion do we draw from this revised understanding? What's the difference between chasing the wind or grasping the wind and feeding on the wind? Well, there is one difference that suggests itself to my mind and that is that you can think that you are full. If you have a big air bubble in your belly, you think for a time that you are satisfied.

You think that you are full. But it doesn't last. There is no nutritional value.

This is worse than eating soup. You eat soup and think you're full and a half hour later you're hungry again. Well, feeding on wind is even worse.

You're pumping air into something, but we all know that that's going to leave one way or another. It isn't going to last, but there is a period of time where you think that you're full. People start eating a meal and think that they're stuffed.

Then, like in Japan where a belch is a sign of polite manners, well, then you suddenly realize, hey, I can hold some more because they were there taking up the space where food ought to be. That is the deceptive nature. This is what we saw in Colossians.

There are traditions. There are human viewpoints that seem to make sense. There's Chuck Ward

and his self-esteem, freedom through forgiveness.

There are things that seem to make sense, seem to satisfy. Man sees good in his labor. I think that this phrase that Solomon coined and this use of the word that is almost exclusive to Solomon in the Old Testament where he takes this idea of feeding and makes it a concept, feeding on the wind, is necessary because it has the appearance of substance and it's really not.

It's a lot like the vapor. That's why it's in parallel so often. This is vapor and feeding on the wind.

It's one thing to see a vapor and then it disappears. It's something else to have the equivalent of vapor in your stomach or in your soul and have that disappear and realize that there is no substance. It is a reminder of how deceptive human life is.

We think that the good opinion of people is going to satisfy. We think that accomplishment is going to satisfy. We think that the pursuit and achievement of a goal is going to satisfy and it may for a moment, but then we burp and it's gone.