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ROBERT D. BIGGS

**EBRON (PLACE)** [Heb *ēbrōn*]. A town in the territory of Asher (Josh 19:28). Assuming confusion between the Hebrew letters *bet* and *reš*, the MT form here is likely a misspelling of the place name ABDON.

**ECBATANA (PLACE)** [Aram *ʾaḥmētā*]. Place located in the Zagros mountains of NW Iran between Tehran and Baghdad which was the capital of the Median Empire (Ezra 6:2). The name derives from an Old Persian expression (*hagmatāna*; Gk *ekbatana*) meaning "gathering place." At the foot of Mt. Orontes, this city provided a cool summer retreat for the later Persian kings, subsequent to its capture by Cyrus from Astyages in the 6th century. Herodotus (1.98)—although some would dispute the accuracy of his statement—attributes its foundation to Deioces (died ca. 656 B.C.) and provides a description of its seven concentric walls of fortification. Ecbatana may have been one of the "towns of the Medes" to which Israelites were exiled by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:6).

Ezra 6:2 contains the only mention of this city in the OT. When Darius was searching for a record which would confirm Cyrus' decree (de Vaux *BANE*, 63–96) about the restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple, he could find nothing in the Babylonian archives. However, when the search was extended to the citadel of Ecbatana, a scroll was discovered and the claim of the Judeans substantiated (cf. 1 Esdr 6:23). This detail indicates the importance of Ecbatana as a government center, particularly for the Persian Empire.

Ecbatana figures in three apocryphal books—Tobit, Judith, and 2 Maccabees. In the book of Tobit (3:7; 6:5; 9:7; 14:12, 14) Ecbatana is the home of Raguel, Tobit's brother. Tobias, the son of Tobit, stops at this city while on his way to collect money from Gabael, who lives in Rages, Media. During his stay in Ecbatana Tobias marries Sarah, the daughter of Raguel. Apart from indicating that Jews had dispersed as far as Ecbatana, little additional information about the city is provided.

Ecbatana is mentioned in Judith 1:1, 2, 14 as the headquarters of King Arphaxad, "who reigned over the Medes in Ecbatana." Nebuchadnezzar destroys Arphaxad's army in battle and spoils Ecbatana before turning his attention to the region of Judea, which had refused to assist him in his fight with Arphaxad. The major preoccupation of the author of Judith is with the awesome fortifications of Ecbatana, which rival those of Babylon.

According to 2 Macc 9:3, Antiochus IV died in the vicinity of Ecbatana. After his unsuccessful attempt to loot the treasures of Persepolis (9:1–2) and subsequent ignominious retreat, Antiochus received news of the defeat of Nicanor and Timotheus and their respective armies at the hands of the Judean rebels. This occurred "near Ecbatana." No other source links Ecbatana with Antiochus IV's

death and this has caused some scholars, such as Goldstein (1 Maccabees AB) to question its accuracy.

The modern city of Hamadan occupies the site of Ecbatana. Tradition alleges that the tombs of Esther and Mordecai lie in the middle of the city. Major archaeological investigation remains to be done at Ecbatana.

L. PERKINS

**ECCLESIASTES, BOOK OF.** One of the Five Megilloth (Scrolls), this biblical book characterizes life as utter futility, like shepherding or chasing the wind.

- The Meaning of the Name
- Literary Integrity
- The Structure of the Book
- The Historical Setting
- The Literary Expression
- Qoheleth's Teachings
- The Larger Environment
- Canonization
- The Text

#### A. The Meaning of the Name

The Hebrew title of the book is "Qoheleth." The word "Qoheleth," from which the name "Ecclesiastes" derives, has been variously explained as a personal name, a nom de plume, an acronym, and a function. The difficulty of comprehending the meaning of the word "Qoheleth" is compounded by the fact that it seems to be understood differently within the book itself, where "Qoheleth" has the article at least once (12:8, although the same verse occurs in 1:2 where Qoheleth lacks the article). In all likelihood, the article also appears in 7:27, where "Qoheleth" has a feminine verb form, although the word "Qoheleth" is otherwise always construed as a masculine. The LXX supports a redimension of the consonants in 7:27, yielding *mr hqhl* ("says the Qoheleth").

The name occurs seven times:

- The words of Qoheleth son of David, King in Jerusalem (1:1).
- The ultimate absurdity, says Qoheleth, the ultimate absurdity; everything is absurd (1:2).
- I Qoheleth have been king over Israel in Jerusalem (1:12).
- Look, I have discovered this—says Qoheleth—[adding] one to one in order to find the sum (7:27).
- The ultimate absurdity, says the Qoheleth, everything is absurd (12:8).
- In addition to the fact that Qoheleth was a sage, he also taught the people knowledge (12:9a–b).
- Qoheleth sought to find pleasing words and accurately wrote down trustworthy sayings (12:10).

Although the word "Qoheleth" is understood as masculine, its form is *Qal*, feminine participle. Elsewhere the root *qhl* is always *Hip'il* or *Nip'al* (causative or reflexive/passive). It thus means "to convoke," "to assemble" (*Hip'il*) or "to be gathered" (*Nip'al*). Precedent exists for a masculine personal name with a feminine ending (Alameth, 1 Chr 7:8). This interpretation as a personal name clearly

underlies the identification of Qoheleth as son of David, which occurs in the superscription to the book (1:2), but the idea of royal authorship ultimately derives from the book itself (1:12).

Three things weaken the argument for viewing "Qoheleth" as a personal name, a substitute for "Solomon": (1) the use of the article; (2) the identification of Qoheleth as a wise man (*hākām*), presumably a technical term in this instance (12:9); and (3) the point of view from which the book is written, except for the royal fiction in 1:12–2:26. Elsewhere the author writes from the perspective of a subject powerless to redress the injustices perpetrated by higher officials. Of course, an additional factor renders impossible the identification of Qoheleth with royalty: David did not have a son named Qoheleth who succeeded him, for Solomon occupied the throne after his father's health failed.

Then is "Qoheleth" a nickname for Solomon? The link between this unusual form and "Solomon" could easily have arisen from the language in 1 Kgs 8:1–12, which reports that the king assembled the representatives of the people to Jerusalem. But the initiative to look for such a suitable text must surely have sprung from the author's self-presentation in 1:12–2:26, for Solomon's vast wealth supplies the imagined context for the royal experiment described in these verses. As we shall see, the Egyptian royal testament offers a prototype for this section of the book, but Qoheleth was not content to restrict his sayings to this literary form. Conceivably, the allusion to one shepherd in 12:11 reverts to the royal fiction earlier abandoned by the author, inasmuch as the image of the pharaohs as shepherds circulated widely in Egypt. Nevertheless, Qoheleth usually speaks as a teacher, not a king; therefore, another explanation for the name must be sought.

Does the strange form conceal an otherwise unknown identity? Is "Qoheleth" an acronym? It has been argued (Skehan 1971: 42–43) that the name for Agur's father in Prov 30:1a, Jakeh, represents the first letters of a sentence (*Yqh = yahuwēh qādōš hō?*). Following this analogy, *qhl* constitutes the abbreviation of a four-word sentence. But what would those words have been? So far, no satisfactory explanation along these lines has come to light. Some have even thought that Qoheleth stood for personified wisdom, a walking assembly of wise sayings, but elsewhere Dame Wisdom is always called *hōkmā*. The most compelling answer to the enigma of the name points to two instances of a feminine participle functioning as an office (Ezra 2:55, 57; Neh 7:59). Two different occupations lie behind the personal names in these verses (a scribe and a binder of gazelles). Accordingly, Qoheleth refers to an office that was related in some way to assembling people. The LXX renders the word in this way, associating the noun for "assembly" with the word for a public gathering (*ekhlēsia*). Jerome continued that line of reasoning in the Vulgate, but stressed the role of speaking in the presence of an assembly. Now if Qoheleth gathered people, did he summon them to a cultic assembly? This understanding led to the Reformers' use of *Prediger* ("Preacher") with reference to this book, but biblical evidence for such a meaning does not exist. Whatever else Qoheleth did, he did not preach, at least not in the modern sense of the word.

Did Qoheleth assemble people to a school? That kind of activity accords with the epilogist's description in 12:9. The difficulty remains that Qoheleth consistently opposes traditional wisdom. To be sure, school wisdom possibly possessed the capacity to criticize itself in the manner demonstrated by the book. One could even say that Qoheleth democratizes wisdom, turning away from professional students to ordinary citizens. The use of *h'm*, "the people," in 12:9, where one would naturally expect a reference to students, favors this interpretation of the situation. Furthermore, if the form *qehillā* in Neh 5:7 actually means "harangue," then the word "Qoheleth" might refer to an office of "arguer" or "haranguer." However, Qoheleth does not present his observations in a manner that would justify this particular interpretation of the word under consideration.

The verb *qhl* always occurs with reference to an assembly of people. If the sense of the word could extend to the gathering of objects, then "Qoheleth" might refer to "collecting proverbs," the task for which the epilogist remembers the teacher (12:9–11). Qoheleth kept an ear in readiness to hear something worthwhile; he searched high and low for appropriate insights; and he grouped the resulting sayings in an understandable way. This instance would not be the only one in which Qoheleth departed from ordinary usage, for he forged a language and syntax peculiar to this book. Furthermore, he saw no fundamental distinction between humans and animals with respect to death; one could therefore argue that Qoheleth assembled sayings (1:1) and that 7:27 contains a veiled allusion to this understanding of the title ("One to one to discover the sum"). In short, Qoheleth collected sayings and in doing so arrived at the complete picture that life amounts to a huge zero.

## B. Literary Integrity

We have already had occasion to mention an epilogist who commented on the achievement of the teacher. Naturally, the presence of an epilogue of this sort introduces the question of literary integrity. Did Qoheleth write the complete book, or have several authors contributed to its present form? Answers to these questions vary, but four different responses have commended themselves to interpreters: (1) the author wrote the bulk of the book, but editorial glosses entered at a later time; (2) the author cites traditional wisdom and refutes it; (3) the author enters into dialogue with an interlocutor, real or imagined; and (4) the book reflects a single author's changing viewpoints over the years, as well as life's ambiguities.

By analogy with superscriptions throughout the canon, it can be safely argued that 1:1 does not derive from Qoheleth's hand. This superscription identifies the author with David's son who held the office of king in Jerusalem. The expression "words of Qoheleth" echoes a similar superscription in Prov 30:1a, but the form also occurs in prophetic collections (e.g., Amos 1:1a; Jer 1:1a). The book of Qoheleth really begins at 1:12 ("I Qoheleth have been king over Israel in Jerusalem"). Furthermore, a thematic statement in 1:2 and 12:8 functions as an inclusio, setting off the beginning and the end of Qoheleth's teaching. Only in these verses does the superlative form *hābēl hābāllīm*

epilogist, or more probably two. To this point in analysis a virtual consensus exists in scholarly discussion.

Within the body of Qoheleth's teachings as delineated above (1:3–12:7), one searches in vain for a consistent argument. It appears that later editors have toned down the extreme views of the teacher. Theories of multiple redactors (Qoheleth, a Sadducean, a sage, a pious one, and another editor) have lost their attraction in the latest analyses, although most interpreters still reckon with at least one glossator who corrected Qoheleth's views about reward and retribution (2:26a; 3:17a; 8:12–13; 11:9b; perhaps 5:18 and 7:26b). Whether or not these glosses derive from the second epilogist, also responsible for 12:12–14, remains uncertain, but the hypothesis has plausibility.

The effort to attribute the entire book to Qoheleth lacks persuasiveness for at least two reasons. First, it overlooks the probability that the same sort of editorial activity that took place during the preservation of the other books of the Hebrew Bible would also have occurred in this one. Indeed, the radical character of Qoheleth's views invited editorial comments. Second, the claim that Qoheleth could easily have referred to himself in the third person, as he apparently did in 7:27, obscures the appreciable differences in attitude between the rest of the book and the final epilogue (12:12–14). These differences go beyond use of language such as *bēnī*, "my son," to religious views like the admonition to "fear God and keep the commandments" and the warning that the deity will bring every hidden thing into the light of day, presumably at a final judgment. One has the impression that Qoheleth's epitaph appears in 12:9–11, and that a less appreciative assessment of the teacher's unusual views about life follows.

Throughout the book one encounters teachings that stand in considerable tension with each other. A strong case has been made for understanding these contrasting opinions as instances in which Qoheleth cites traditional wisdom. An adversarial stance toward established dogma is beyond dispute, for Qoheleth actually warns against an uncritical acceptance of claims about absolute truth (8:17). In one instance Qoheleth's language almost requires the addition of something like "he asks" ("There is an individual who has no heir, whether son or brother, but there is no end to all his work, and also his eyes are never content with his wealth—for whom am I toiling and depriving myself of good things?" [he asks]; this also is absurd and grievous bother," 4:8).

Traditional sayings dot the observations of Qoheleth, as has been recognized for some time, for example, "the crooked cannot be straightened and what is missing cannot be counted" (1:15). One investigation (Whybray 1981b) has isolated eight quotations on the basis of affinities in form and content between the oldest collections in Proverbs and aphorisms in Qoheleth (2:14a; 4:5; 4:6; 7:5–6a; 9:17; 10:2; 10:12). Those scholars who believe they have found quotations in Qoheleth's observations emphasize the variety with which these traditional sayings are used. Some he quotes with full approval (7:5–6; 10:2, 12), but he gave them a radically new interpretation. Others serve to confirm the first stage in the characteristic two-part argument, the so-called broken sentence in which Qoheleth stated a truth only to qualify it by appealing to a fact of life that contradicted it. This phenomenon of quotations

tions, widespread in the ANE, has four main categories: (1) the verbalization of a speaker's or writer's unexpressed ideas or sentiments; (2) the sentiment of a subject other than the writer or speaker; (3) use in argument and debate; and (4) indirect quotations without a *verbum dicendi* (Gordis 1976).

Early Christian theologians perceived the apparent contradictions within Qoheleth's thought and attributed the different views to two persons, a speaker and an interlocutor, real or imagined. The dialogical character of the book thus came to expression, despite the strong tendency to neutralize Qoheleth's unorthodox sentiments. Thesis stands over against antithesis in such a way that all teachings are relativized. J. G. Herder endorsed this view of the book, and contemporary interpreters have sought to bolster the argument by appealing to the juxtaposition of a *bonum* and a *malum* and by an intricate analysis of polar structures in the book. Although some of the proposed 38 chiasmic structures and 60 polar structures result from much too general criteria, for instance, desirable and undesirable, one can scarcely deny the force of the hypothesis as such. After all, Qoheleth did arrange his argument in a group of 14 polarities in at least one literary unit (3:1–8).

Of course, the application of modern standards of logical consistency may bestow too much weight on the Greek heritage. Qoheleth may never actually have reconciled the disparities between faith and experience, but such a view elevates the religious dimension to a degree that Qoheleth probably never permitted. Perhaps two additional factors strengthen this particular approach to the contradictions in Qoheleth's thought. The teachings in the book may represent the fruit of a lifetime's research, having been given literary expression over a long period. Furthermore, life's ambiguities themselves may have struck Qoheleth as worthy of noting, particularly as historical situations changed from time to time. There may indeed be some truth in the claim that the confrontation between Hebraism and Hellenism produced a compromise position, best exemplified by Qoheleth. However, the Jewish tradition alone had its share of ambiguities, and these disparities between religious conviction and actual reality found expression in Qoheleth's realism.

Signs of thematic unity and a single tone largely offset these indications of tension within Qoheleth's thought, or between his views and those of later editors. Nevertheless, some segments of the book have not been successfully integrated into its logical scheme, above all the collection of sayings in 10:1–4, 8–20, which discourages the view that Qoheleth wrote a unified treatise. Although neither characterization of the book, treatise or collection of sentences, explains the situation adequately, it may be instructive to think of a kaleidoscopic image whereby apparently incongruent features of the text come together in many different meaningful configurations. Even if one accepts this reading of the disparate material, the difficult task of ascertaining the powerful force that brings a semblance of order out of apparent disarray remains. In a word, what shape does the book take; what identifies its internal structure?

## C. The Structure of the Book

One can easily recognize the outer frame of the book.

thematic refrain (1:2) and a poem (1:3–11) at the beginning, and a poem (11:7–12:7) plus a thematic refrain (12:8) at the end. Together with the superscription, the two epilogues (12:9–11, 12–14) enclose the book in a kind of envelope. The first poem demonstrates the aptness of the thematic statement in the realm of nature, and the final poem shows the accuracy of the theme on the human scene. Nature's ceaseless repetition illustrates the utter futility of things, as does the eventual disintegration of the human body.

Within Qoheleth's teachings bracketed by a thematic statement and a poem, a few distinct units stand out, either because of content or because of introductory and concluding formulas. For example, a single thread holds together the royal experiment in 1:12–2:26, specifically the idea that a powerful monarch indulges himself in a vain search for something that will withstand time's ravages. A second example, this one smaller in scope, 4:9–12, discusses the advantages of teaming up with another person. So far, however, no satisfactory scheme has surfaced to explain all the units of Qoheleth's teachings. Often determining where one unit begins and another ends cannot be done. Therefore scholars vary widely in their calculations of the number of literary units within the book.

If the text lacks clear demarcations of the several units, how can one decide on the extent of each? Perhaps a clue exists in Egyptian Instructions, clearly divided into sections or chapters. Analogy with Papyrus Insinger, roughly contemporary with Qoheleth, may suggest that refrains mark off larger units in the Hebrew text. One refrain seems especially suggestive in this regard, the sevenfold exhortation to eat, drink, and enjoy one's portion of life's good things (2:24–26; 3:12–13; 3:22; 5:17–19; 8:15; 9:7–10; 11:7–10). But the first and last of these texts illustrate the difficulty of this approach, for the refrain in 3:24–26 certainly concludes a unit, and the formula in 11:7–10 just as certainly begins a new unit.

As a matter of fact, the book has a wealth of formulaic expressions, and these repeated phrases and sentences probably function to delineate units of thought. Wright has seized these data to arrive at an arrangement of the entire book. According to his view, a single refrain sets off the different units in the first half of the book, whereas two formulaic expressions indicate subsections in the second half. The first refrain, "All [this] is absurd and a chasing after wind" occurs six times in 1:12–6:9, yielding the following literary units (2:1–11; 2:12–17; 2:18–26; 3:1–4:6; 4:7–16; 4:17–6:9). In 6:10–11:6 the repeated phrases "not find out" and "who can find out?" indicate four subsections (7:1–14; 7:15–24; 7:25–29; 8:1–17) and "cannot know" also points to four sections (9:1–12; 9:13–10:15; 10:16–11:2; 11:3–6). This theory is then reinforced by an involved numerological analysis that takes its clue from the number of uses of the Heb word *hebel*, as well as the numerical value of its three consonants.

This elaborate hypothesis appears to press a valid intuition too far. In some instances, the formulaic expression occurs in the midst of a thought unit rather than at the end (for example, 11:2). Moreover, the repeated phrases sometimes do not enter into consideration (4:4, "striving after wind"), and other formulaic expressions are ignored

and considered"). In addition, the units perceived in the analysis under discussion vary in length, forcing one to wonder about the utility of such an approach. Despite the claims for objectivity, the decision to ignore some formulaic expressions and to concentrate on just these three ("This is absurd and a chasing after wind," "not find out"/"who can find out," and "cannot know") undercuts that claim, and the many assumptions necessitated by the numerical proof weaken the argument greatly.

Not all attempts to discover the book's structure have taken refrains as the starting point. Of course, many interpreters have searched for logically consistent units. Two recent theories illustrate this approach and demonstrate the sophisticated nature of such analyses of the book. Both interpretations apply the refined methods of literary criticism to the biblical text, although such literary analysis developed as a means of understanding quite different material. Loader's approach (1979) stresses the polar structures in the book and arrives at twelve fundamental units (1:2–11; 1:12–2:26; 3:1–4:16; 4:17–5:8; 6:10–8:1; 8:2–9; 8:10–9:10; 9:11–10:11; 10:12–20; 11:1–6; 11:7–12:8). Lohfink's approach emphasizes the Greek background of the book, which he understands as a philosophical treatise. In his view, Ecclesiastes has the form of a palindrome, a complete balancing of material so that the second half repeats the substance of the first half. Such a reading leads to the following structure:

1:2–3	Frame
1:4–11	Cosmology (poetic)
1:12–3:15	Anthropology
3:16–4:16	Social Criticism I
4:17–5:6	Criticism of Religion I (poetic)
5:7–6:10	Social Criticism II
6:11–9:6	Ideology Critique (Refutation)
9:7–12:7	Ethics (poetic at the end)
12:8	Frame

Even if one conceded the far from obvious premise that the book uses Greek rhetoric, several questions remain. Why did the author allow the intruding critique of religion in 4:17–5:6 to mar the perfect palindrome? Has Lohfink chosen adequate rubrics? For example, is anthropology missing from the passage where Qoheleth offers a low opinion of men and an even lower estimate of women (7:25–29)? Can one rightly restrict ethics to 9:7–12:7 in light of persistent efforts to view the entire second half of the book as the practical, or ethical, implications of the worldview advanced in the first half of Ecclesiastes (1:2–6:9)?

Without committing oneself wholly to either clue, refrain or logical coherence, one can certainly discern a semblance of structure in the book. One of the most attractive interpretations (Schoors 1982b) divides the book as follows:

1:1	title
1:2	general theme of the book
1:3–2:26	Solomon's confession
3:1–22	human beings under the law of time

4:17–5:8	the advantage of silence over unreflected speech
5:9–6:9	on wealth
6:10–12	transitional unit
7:1–9:10	the experience of life and death
9:11–10:20	wisdom and folly
11:1–6	the necessity of taking risks
11:7–12:7	the necessity of enjoying life
12:8	inclusion: the general theme of the book
12:9–14	epilogue

Attractive as this analysis may be, it still does not answer all the questions that result from general rubrics such as "life in society" and "wisdom and folly." Because other sections also deal with social relations and knowledge or its opposite, it appears that every attempt to discover the book's structure serves as little more than a heuristic device.

So far this discussion has said nothing about another unifying principle, the tone of the book. The individual units combine to give a single impression. An honest and forthright teacher observes life's ambiguities and reflects on their meaning for human existence under the sun. Furthermore, a unity of themes and *topoi* reinforces this tonal unity, as a glance at the vocabulary of the book quickly confirms. Qoheleth uses certain words with such frequency that they almost induce a hypnotic state in the listener or reader. By their frequency of occurrence these words send a distant echo through the corridors of the mind erected by this skillful teacher: do/work, good, wise, time, know, toil, see, under the sun, fool, profit, portion.

#### D. The Historical Setting

If all attempts to discern the book's structure remain inconclusive, the same verdict characterizes efforts to locate it in a particular place and time. For a brief period, scholars endeavored to demonstrate that the original language was Aramaic, but this trend has virtually disappeared. The discovery at Qumran of Hebrew fragments from the book to which a date in the mid-2d century B.C.E. seemed appropriate has hastened the demise of the theory of an Aramaic original. Such an early dating of a Hebrew version of Ecclesiastes left little time between its composition and the Qumran fragments. However, the decisive refutation of the Aramaic origin lay in the inability of its proponents to show how the present form of the book required a theory of translation to explain its peculiar style and syntax.

The fact remains that the book is written in an Aramaized Hebrew, a language with strong Mishnaic tendencies. The vocabulary contains a high percentage of Aramaisms, and in this regard it belongs alongside certain other late canonical books. Occasional Persian loan words also appear, for example *pardēs*, "park" and *mēdānā*, "province." Greek influence, once believed to lie behind the phrases "under the sun" and "to see the good," no longer seems likely; the ancient Semitic world attests to the former expression and the latter phrase is authentic Hebrew.

On the basis of certain commercial terms and usages, as well as orthography, a setting for the book in Phoenicia has been proposed (Dahood 1952). This theory of the book's origin has made little impact on the scholarly com-

largely on the allusion to natural phenomena in 1:5–7, has been less convincing. The references to reservoirs (2:6), leaky roofs (10:18), wells (12:6), farmers' attention to the wind (11:4), and the Temple (4:17; 8:10) are perfectly appropriate for a literary composition in Palestine (Hertzberg *Prediger* KAT). Nevertheless, the evidence is inconclusive, for ancient authors openly received material from various sources. The so-called historical references in 4:13–16; 8:2–4; 9:13–15; and 10:16–17 function typically. Therefore, they offer no real assistance in dating the book or in locating its cultural setting.

Many factors point to a relatively late date for the composition of Ecclesiastes. The vocabulary itself shows signs of being very late, for example *-šōp*, "end"; *pēšer*, "interpretation"; *māšāl*, "rule"; *šālat*, "rule"; *pitgām*, "decision"; *zēmān*, "time"; *šnyān*, "worry"; the relative pronoun *šē*, "that, which," attached to another word; and the personal pronoun *'ānī*, "I," used alongside *'anōkī*, "I," with almost equal frequency. Moreover, the *waw* consecutive occurs only twice, although the literary types in the book do not lend themselves to frequent use of this verbal form. A Hellenistic coloring may rest behind the vocabulary for rulers, perhaps also the observations about individuals whose responsibilities brought them in regular contact with the royal court. At least one of the rhetorical questions, a literary device that the author uses nearly 30 times, occurs only in arguably postexilic texts. This rhetorical question, *mī yōdēa'*, "who knows?", functions as a strong assertion equivalent to "no one knows." Another stylistic peculiarity of the book, the use of participles with personal pronouns, forms a late feature of the language.

The meager political data that scholars have detected in the book point to a period prior to the Maccabean revolt in 164 B.C.E., for the attitude toward foreign rulers fits best in the Ptolemaic period. The Zenon archives reflect a political situation of economic prosperity for the upper echelons of Jewish society about 250 B.C.E. It has been plausibly argued that Qoheleth belonged to the privileged class (Gordis 1968), although on the basis of highly inferential evidence. More probably his students came from privileged families, hence could act on their teacher's advice about wearing fine clothes and anointing themselves with expensive oils. The severe policies of Antiochus IV restricted such freedom to follow one's inclinations, whether personal or religious. Furthermore, Ben Sira probably knew and used the book about 190 B.C.E., although Whitley has attempted to show that Qoheleth actually used Ecclesiasticus. The bases for this late dating of Qoheleth lack cogency: that the language of Daniel is earlier, that the Mishnaic tongue was widely used, that Qoheleth wrote before 140 but after Jonathan's appointment in 152 B.C.E. and its accompanying political changes. A date for Qoheleth between 225 and 250 therefore still seems the most likely one.

#### E. The Literary Expression

What literary type best characterizes the book? Although several different types come to expression, the dominant one is reflection arising from personal observation. Qoheleth's language calls attention to both aspects, the observing and subsequent reflection ("I said in my

8:9, 16]; "I saw" [1:14; 2:24; 3:10, 16; 4:1, 4, 15; 5:17; 6:1; 7:15; 8:9, 10; 9:11, 13; 10:5, 7]; "I know" [1:17; 2:14; 3:12, 14; 8:12]; "there is" [2:21; 6:1, 12; 8:14; 10:5]). Naturally, the reflection varies from time to time, prompting some interpreters to distinguish between unified critical and broken critical reflections or meditative reflection and simple meditation. Not every critic thinks that such language adequately describes Qoheleth's dominant literary type; three alternatives have received some attention: *māšāl* (a similitude or comparison), diatribe, and royal testament. The latter of these, royal testament, occurs only in the "fiction" in 1:12–2:16 (perhaps also the conclusion resulting from the royal experiment, 2:17–26). From Qoheleth's language, "monologue" more accurately describes the material than "diatribe," for he emphasizes the debate within his own mind. The term *māšāl* has too broad, or too specific, a scope to be useful in describing the book's literary type.

Qoheleth also uses such literary types as autobiographical narrative, example story, anecdote, parable (often called an allegorical poem), antithesis, and proverb. The last of these occurs in many of its forms: truth statements (or sentences), "better" sayings, numerical sayings, instructions, traditional sayings, malediction and benediction. Qoheleth had particular fondness for "better" sayings, for they enabled him to pretend to endorse conventional wisdom but actually to challenge its veracity by introducing a wholly different consideration (4:3, 6, 9, 13; 5:4 [—Eng 5]; 6:3, 9; 7:1, 2, 3, 5, 8; 9:4, 16, 18). He also used the emphatic form, "nothing is better" (2:24; 3:12, 22; 8:15).

#### F. Qoheleth's Teachings

What did Qoheleth communicate by means of these diverse literary types? According to the thematic statement in 1:2 and 12:8, he sought to demonstrate the claim that life lacked profit and therefore was totally absurd. In support of this thesis, Qoheleth argued: (1) that wisdom could not achieve its goal; (2) that a remote God ruled over a crooked world; and (3) death did not take virtue or vice into consideration. Hence (4), he advocated enjoyment as the wisest course of action during youth before the cares of advancing years made that response impossible.

(1) *Wisdom could not achieve its goal.* The purpose of being wise, according to Qoheleth, was to discover the good for men and women. In other words, sages searched for ways to ensure success, specifically of living long, prosperous lives surrounded by children and admired by friends and neighbors. For many generations this quest for success had occupied the thoughts of Qoheleth's predecessors, whose conclusions the book of Proverbs preserves. In general, they considered it possible to achieve the goal of wisdom, although reckoning with incalculable divine actions now and again. Consequently, these early sages exuded optimism about the chances of living well. They based their hope on the conviction that a moral order existed, having been established by the creator who continued to guarantee it. These sages went about their work with confidence that the wise would prosper and fools would experience ruin.

But something happened that dashed such comforting thoughts, which had hardened into dogma. Mounting



and intellectual crisis. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes surfaced from this turmoil and offered a different perspective on the universe. The wisest man in the East underwent horrendous suffering that defied explanation, and wisdom possessed only limited value. It appeared that the moral order had collapsed, and this event had serious religious implications, making it no longer clear whether or not the deity turned toward humans benevolently.

Qoheleth recognized the futility of striving for success, because he saw such efforts being frustrated on every hand. The fastest runner did not always win the race, nor did the strong warrior necessarily achieve victory. The intelligent person did not always receive food, and the skillful were sometimes overlooked. Chance became the supreme factor in human experience, and none could exercise control over it. Qoheleth examined all those things thought to offer happiness—sensual pleasure, achievement, fame, fortune—but dismissed them as utterly absurd.

Whereas earlier sages had believed they could achieve wisdom, Qoheleth thought it impenetrable. Human resolve to possess her only enabled them to discover Wisdom's remoteness and profundity. Of course, limited bits of insight were accessible, enabling their possessors to walk in light rather than darkness. Nevertheless, no one could really discover wisdom's hiding place, however much he or she claimed to have done so. Consequently, the future remained hidden and mysterious, even for the wise, who could not discern the right moment for any given action. Although Qoheleth characterized the natural universe and the human scene by monotonous repetition, he noted that none could profit from this element of predictability. In this respect, Qoheleth refused to yield a toehold to practitioners of the science of predicting the future, a technique of wisdom, popular in Mesopotamia, that used omens to discover what lay in the immediate future.

(2) *God was remote and the world crooked.* A devout Job directed his complaint to God in heated dialogue, but Qoheleth refused to address the deity at all. He warned those who approached the holy place that since God dwelt in heaven and they resided on earth, their words should be few. Qoheleth noticed that religious vows were a source of danger, inasmuch as some people forgot their promises once the occasion for the original vows had passed. He thus advised caution with respect to religious obligation. Qoheleth had the same attitude toward deeds of morality that he did toward acts of piety. He suggested that individuals adopt a moderate lifestyle, being neither excessively devout nor extremely virtuous. The suffering of Job indicated what could happen when a person became too good. Although Qoheleth did not refer to Job by name, he did counsel against striving with a stronger person, which some interpreters have plausibly taken as an allusion to Job's fruitless struggle with God.

Although Qoheleth freely referred to God's activity, he seemed unclear about the nature of the divine work. It appears that he thought the deity tested human beings in order to demonstrate their kinship with animals. Hence God showed individuals that they would die just like animals, with the implication that decomposition awaited as the final event for all creatures. Although Qoheleth men-

way of talking about death. Some references to judgment must imply a forensic setting, presumably after death, but they probably constitute glosses in the spirit of the second epilogue.

In any event, oppression had gained the upper hand on earth, and the hierarchy of authority ultimately reached the sovereign of the universe, also implicated by such tyranny. Utter mystery characterized God's actions, both in the enlivening of a fetus and in the granting of power to enjoy the fruits of one's labor. Although Qoheleth freely talked about divine gifts, he did not know what disposition characterized the deity, whether love or hatred. To be sure, God bestowed generous gifts on human beings, but no apparent rationale for these acts of kindness existed. Instead, God dispensed these gifts with complete disregard for character. Consequently, nobody could ever ensure that the deity would grant only good things as reward for faithfulness.

Earlier sages had also believed that the High God transcended the universe, which owed its origin to the deity. But they proclaimed nearness as well, for they believed that God sustained a moral order. Qoheleth agreed that God created the universe; the language, however, differs sharply from the Priestly account of creation that seems to provide the source for Qoheleth's observations. God made everything appropriate for its time. This declaration substitutes a nontheological expression and an aesthetic category for the language in Genesis 1. Nevertheless, the created universe cannot be faulted, for human beings have perverted the beautiful and appropriate creation.

Qoheleth recognized an order inherent to things, but he denied that anyone could discover the right time for action. The creator placed some unknown gift in the human mind but made it impossible to use the divine mystery profitably. A time to laugh and a time to cry existed, but how did one know when those different moments presented themselves? What if a person looked for peace when the occasion called for war? Perhaps this anomaly prompted Qoheleth to spy out and explore all knowledge, for only by embracing the many polarities of existence could one ever hope to know the proper time for anything. Nevertheless, Qoheleth conceded that nobody really knows the meaning of a thing.

It made little difference that the universe had integrity, so long as human beings had an innate disposition to do evil. God's achievements could not be changed; the crooked could not be straightened and the straight could not be made crooked. This popular proverb, which Qoheleth quoted with approval (1:15; 7:13), hardly accords with Qoheleth's statement that men and women have used their ingenuity in the service of evil—unless, that is, God bears indirect responsibility for human contrivance.

In this oppressive world Qoheleth recognized a need for companionship, although he judged others on the basis of the contribution they could make to his comfort. A friend would rescue him from a pit, fight off robbers and brigands, and keep him warm on a cold night. Although Wisdom Literature usually moves within the general area of self-interest, that feature of Qoheleth's thought comes to prominence in the royal fiction, with indulgence the operative word. Only once did a pained conscience speak

the cry "There was no comforter" reveals the impact of their suffering on Qoheleth.

(3) *Death did not take virtue or vice into consideration.* Qoheleth was not the first person to reflect on the finality of death, but he dwelt on it so much that it became central to his thought. Indeed, he once expressed hatred of life because he lacked the power to control his fate. Nevertheless, he stopped short of encouraging suicide, a natural consequence of his disdain for life. In this regard, Qoheleth differed from the unknown author of the *Dialogue between a Master and a Slave* (ANET, 437–38).

The thought that death cancels all human achievements prompted Qoheleth to consider life pointless. When one's accumulated wealth fell into the hands of a stranger or a fool, it seemed to mock personal ambition and frugality. Qoheleth imagined that memory of persons disappeared almost as quickly as their bodies decomposed. Furthermore, death's clutches caught some people even before they breathed that last breath, so that they could not gain any pleasure in life. Faced with such grim prospects, these unfortunate individuals would be better off dead, and better still if they had never been born. Qoheleth characterized the stillborn's condition as rest, whereas those who have entered this world undergo buffeting from all directions. Although he quoted a proverb that "a living dog is better than a dead lion," Qoheleth made it clear that the living have a dubious advantage. Knowing that one must die seems hardly worthwhile information; in this instance, as in most, knowledge brings suffering. Critics therefore generally assume that Qoheleth spoke ironically when citing the proverb.

Qoheleth's predecessors had also recognized death's inevitability, but they had assumed that a positive correlation existed between one's virtue and the manner and time of death. In addition, they had managed to deal with exceptions by appealing to the larger entity, the community. Neither source of solace remained for Qoheleth, who recognized death's arbitrary nature and who rarely transcended egocentrism. The same fate befell wise and fool, humankind and animals. Moreover, no one knew what happened after death, but the prospects did not look promising.

The concluding poem (11:7–12:7) depicts this common fate in unforgettable images. The decline of one's powers in old age resembles the collapse of a stately house, and the restrictions on activity contrast with nature's annual rejuvenation. The darkness of approaching death falls on humankind, but nature stands unmoved. Then comes the final silencing of men and women, depicted in two images. The first describes an expensive lamp that falls from the wall and experiences ruin; the second portrays a well at which the pulley breaks and the container for drawing water falls to the bottom and shatters. The language emphasizes the priceless commodities that come to ruin or cease to benefit anyone—silver, gold, light, water. The brief existence under the sun seems to constitute a single act of breathing on the part of the creator, who now takes back the vivifying breath. The death angel takes flight, bearing its reluctant burden into the realms of the night. Qoheleth may have despised life and envied the condition of the aborted birth, but he still did not welcome this destruction of personal identity.

(4) *The wisest course of action was to enjoy life during youth before the cares of advancing years made that response impossible.* Of course not everyone had the capacity to enjoy good food, women, expensive clothing, and perfumes. Qoheleth seems to have addressed young men who had adequate resources, enabling them to indulge in pleasure. Unless his advice was entirely divorced from reality, Qoheleth probably taught individuals from the privileged class. In any case, he implies that they had access to persons in important positions of authority and that they possessed sufficient resources for living comfortably.

Qoheleth did not encourage total abandon to sensual desire, for such behavior carried too many risks. Instead, he advised young people to enjoy the simple pleasures available to them without resorting to extremes of austerity or debauchery. Although the language about enjoying "the woman you love" is unusual, Qoheleth may not have meant someone other than the young man's wife. However, Qoheleth warns of a future judgment, and a moment's reflection on this sober prospect may explain why he praised those who visited the house of mourning rather than the ones who chose to frequent places of levity.

Such somber warnings detract from Qoheleth's positive counsel, for he seemed unwilling to believe that anything really softened the impact of this conclusion about life's utter futility. Therefore he encouraged enjoyment and reminded those practitioners of pleasure about life's ephemerality and absurdity. Presumably, the little joys available to humans merely made an otherwise intolerable situation bearable. On the other hand, Qoheleth's view that God has already approved one's actions has a remarkably emancipating effect. Life introduces enough risks without the additional factor of a scrupulous conscience. Qoheleth thus left no room for anxiety about religious duty, for life was complex enough without complicating things by becoming a religious zealot. The truth of Qoheleth's observations about human existence speaks for itself. One can hardly escape the wisdom in his advice to enjoy the simple pleasures of daily existence while the strength and financial means to do so endure.

To sum up, Qoheleth taught by means of various literary types that earlier optimistic claims about wisdom's power to secure one's existence have no validity. No discernible principle of order governs the universe, rewarding virtue and punishing evil. The creator, distant and uninvolved, acts as judge only (if at all) in extreme cases of flagrant affront (for example, reneging on religious vows). Death cancels all imagined gains, rendering life under the sun absurd. Therefore the best policy is to enjoy one's wife, together with good food and drink, during youth, for old age and death will soon put an end to this "relative" good. In short, Qoheleth examined all of life and discovered no absolute good that would survive death's effect. He then proceeded to report this discovery and to counsel young people on the best option in the light of stark reality. It follows that Qoheleth bears witness to an intellectual crisis in ancient Israel, at least in the circles among whom he taught.

### G. The Larger Environment

An intellectual crisis struck other cultures also, but not at the same time. One expects, therefore, to find some

common themes throughout the ANE. This expectation has led to exaggerated claims of literary dependence on Qoheleth's part. Given the probable date of the book, Hellenistic influence has seemed most likely. Qoheleth's concept of chance (*mqirēh*) has been related to *tyche*; absurdity (*hebel*) to *typhos*; profit (*yitrōn*) to *ophelos*; portion (*hēleq*) to *hyph*; "under the sun" (*tahat hāssemēš*) to *hypō ton helion*. One recent critic (Lohfink 1980) has postulated competing places of learning in Jerusalem, private schools in which the Greek language was spoken and Temple schools using Hebrew. This author argues that Qoheleth struck a compromise with Hebrew wisdom as the background and Greek—especially Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, and contemporary philosophers—the inspiration. Other interpreters plausibly suggest that Qoheleth's knowledge of Greek thought amounts to no more than what any Jew would have absorbed simply by living in Jerusalem during the late 3d century.

What about literary relationships with ancient Egypt? To be sure, Qoheleth issues a *carpe diem* similar to the advice contained in the Harper's Songs, but this determination to enjoy sensual pleasure seems universal. The preoccupation with death in Qoheleth recalls a similar emphasis in the *Dialogue of a Man with His Soul* (ANET, 405–7) and the royal testament must surely correspond to this literary type in such instructions as those for Merikare (ANET, 414–18). Nevertheless, Qoheleth does not offer a legacy for a successor, and the royal fiction disappears after chapter 2. Verbal similarities do occur with late Egyptian texts, particularly *Papyrus Insinger* (AEL 3: 184–217) and the *Instruction of 'Anksheshonq* (AEL 3: 159–84). For example, the hiddenness of God and divine determination of fate characterize both Insinger and Qoheleth, whereas Anksheshonq and Qoheleth advise casting bread (or a good deed) on the water and promise a profitable return, and both use the phrase "house of eternity." However, the counsel about casting bread on water has a different sense, and the euphemism for the grave occurs widely.

Perhaps the most striking verbal similarity occurs in a Mesopotamian text, the Gilgamesh Epic (ANET, 72–99, 503–7). The alewife Siduri's advice to Gilgamesh that he enjoy his wife, fine clothes, and tasty food finds an echo in Qoheleth's positive advice. Qoheleth omits one significant thing, the allusion to the pleasure that Gilgamesh would receive from his child. The Gilgamesh Epic also deals with the themes of death, life's ephemerality, the importance of one's name, and memory of a person after death. According to *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom* (ANET, 596–600), divine decrees are hidden from humans, a view that Qoheleth advocates in 3:11, 8:12–14, and 8:17. The *Babylonian Theodicy* (ANET, 601–4) has a fundamentally pessimistic mood, whereas Qoheleth shrinks from blaming all evil on God (cf. 7:29). The *Dialogue between a Master and His Slave* recognizes the threat posed by women and sets up polarities in a way that commends neither alternative. Qoheleth also voices a low opinion of women (7:26) and juxtaposes positive and negative activities (3:1–8).

### H. Canonization

Qoheleth's radical views have branded his teachings an alien body within the Hebrew Bible. How, then, did the

the attribution to Solomon paved the way for its approval as Scripture, does not take sufficiently into account the fact that a similar device failed to gain acceptance in the canon for Wisdom of Solomon or for the Odes of Solomon. Their use of Greek may have canceled the effect of the claim to Solomonic authorship. A better answer to the question, that the book received two epilogues, the last of which removed the sting from Qoheleth's skepticism and advocated traditional views concerning observance of Torah, presents itself. Evidence from the 2d century C.E. indicates that the book of Ecclesiastes was mentioned, along with Song of Songs, Esther, Ezekiel, and Proverbs, in a discussion about books that "defile the hands" because of their sacred character, but the attitude of Hillel prevailed over the Shammaite contingency. On the Jewish side, Akiba recognized Qoheleth's canonical authority just before the middle of the 2d century. The book appears in the list drawn up by the Christian Melito of Sardis about 190 C.E., but in the 5th century Theodore of Mopsuestia first raised objection to its sacred character.

Precisely how early Qoheleth became canonical cannot be determined. A few verbal similarities between the book and Sirach exist (for example, "everything is beautiful in its time" [3:11; 39:16], "God seeks" [3:15; 5:3], "wise of heart" and "change of face" [8:1; 13:24], "either for good or for evil" [12:14; 13:24]). In addition, verbal echoes also occur in "one in a thousand," and "the end of the matter," but these comprise stock expressions in Wisdom Literature. Although Sirach was probably familiar with the book of Ecclesiastes, the evidence remains inconclusive. A similar situation exists with regard to Wisdom of Solomon, often thought to attack Qoheleth's views about enjoying life's sensual pleasures. If the author of chap. 2 has Qoheleth in mind, it clearly implies a misreading of his teachings, for Qoheleth did not advocate robbery.

### I. The Text

The Hebrew text of Qoheleth is in good condition. Fragments dating from the middle of the 2d century B.C.E., discovered at Qumran, include part of 5:13–17, substantial portions of 6:3–8, and five words from 7:7–9. The Greek version may be the work of some disciples of Aquila, whereas the Syriac translation in the Peshitta may rest on a Hebrew text very similar to the Masoretic one. The Vulgate strove for faithfulness to the Hebrew, although Jerome hastily completed the translation of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs ("in three days").

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## ECCLESIASTICUS, BOOK OF. See WISDOM OF BEN-SIRA.

**ECSTASY.** Ecstasy may be defined as “an abnormal state of consciousness, in which the reaction of the mind to external stimuli is either inhibited or altered in character. In its more restricted sense, as used in mystical theology, it is almost equivalent to trance.” The term has been used to explain certain phenomena in connection with biblical prophecy, but it seems that it is here rather a question of what has been recently termed “possessional trance,” i.e., “a condition in which a person is believed to be inhabited by the spirit of another person or a supernatural being.” During this possession, the person is in an altered state of consciousness and may speak and act like the inhabiting spirit, lapse into a coma-like state, and/or exhibit physical symptoms such as twisting, wild dancing, frothing at the mouth, and so on. This kind of trance may be an individual or group phenomenon. In many societies it is more or less institutionalized.

The biblical accounts of such phenomena are inadequate for a thorough psychological analysis, partly because they lack the necessary details, partly because they are not contemporary documents. Some examples, however, in the OT seem to fit into this pattern.

What the elders in the camp in the wilderness do when they “prophesy” (*hitnabbeʿ*; Num 11:16f., 24f.) is not described, but we learn that they receive something of the spirit that is upon Moses. Saul meets the “prophets” coming down from the high place at Gibeah, obviously in a state of ecstasy or trance induced by music (1 Sam 10:5f.), the spirit of Yahweh comes upon him, and he behaves like the prophets. He is also given “another heart.” At another occasion (1 Sam 19:20–24) the men whom Saul had sent to kill David were confronted with a group of “prophets”

himself was seized by the spirit of God and behaved like the prophets: he stripped off his clothes and lay naked for a long time. In none of these cases is there any kind of prophetic proclamation.

The same expression is used of the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18:26–29). They danced, cried aloud, and cut themselves with swords and lances, but no one answered. Here again, the word *hitnabbeʿ* is used, but no prophetic activity is involved; it should rather be translated “they raved.” This kind of ecstatic behavior was obviously deemed typical of Canaanite religion.

Although the words *nabiʿ* “prophet” and *hitnabbeʿ* or *nibbaʿ* are used of the scriptural prophets, there is no obvious sign of such possessional trance in them. The vision Isaiah had at his call (Isaiah 6) seems to have been induced by what he really saw in the Temple; Amos’ fruit basket (Amos 1–3) and Jeremiah’s almond twig and boiling pot (Jer 1:11–19) seem to be real perceptions given a symbolical meaning. There may be some literary connection between Isaiah 6 and the story of Micah ben Imlah in 1 Kings 22, where, however, we learn that a lying spirit enters the prophets (v 22). The great vision of Ezekiel (chaps. 1–3) may be partly inspired by Isaiah 6, but here it is also told that the prophet was seized by the spirit (2:2) and carried away (3:14). Here we may be close to an ecstatic experience. On the other hand Ezekiel’s lying paralyzed for 390 days (Ezek 4:4–8) is rather a symbolic action. Isaiah’s description of his panic and deaf-mute state after receiving a terrifying revelation (Isa 21:31) describes his reaction to what he has seen, not the process of receiving his message. The same probably applies to Ezekiel’s being mute and paralyzed after his vision (Ezek 3:22–27); it is the prophet’s reaction, not the process of inspiration, that is described.

Another indication for ecstasy in Israelite prophecy has been found in the use of *mšuggāʿ*, “mad” or “crazy,” with reference to prophets (2 Kgs 9:11; Jer 29:26; Hos 9:7). However, this is not an objective description of a prophet’s behavior—no details are given—but rather a derogatory statement from the side of enemies. Furthermore, the word *hitpāp* is sometimes used to denote prophetic speech; it may be derived from a root meaning “to drip” and has been taken to refer to an ecstatic way of speaking (cf. frothing above). However, the actual use of the word in context does not allude to any such phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the fact that both possession trance and prophecy are expressed with the same term seems to imply that there were points of similarity between the two. One such point may be that the spirit of God was supposed to be at work in both cases, another that the visionary experience of the prophets sometimes was reminiscent of the state of trance or ecstasy. There is, however, one fundamental difference: the one believed to be possessed by a spirit usually forgets all about the spirit on awakening, while the OT prophets were fully conscious of the message they had received.

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**ED-DALIYEH, WADI.** See DALIYEH, WADI ED- (M.R. 189155).

**EDDINUS (PERSON)** [Gk *Eddinous*]. See JEDUTHUN (PERSON).

**EDEN (PERSON)** [Heb *ʿēden*]. Son of Joah, and a Levite of the Gershonite family, participated in the cleansing of the Temple during the first year of Hezekiah, king of Judah, taking about nine days (2 Chr 29:12). A person with the same name also assisted in the distribution of Temple funds in various Levitical towns, caring for families whose male head was serving in Jerusalem (2 Chr 31:15), obtaining the Chronicler’s approval for being “faithful,” that is, distributing without favoritism (2 Chr 31:18). The fact that other names besides Eden occur in both contexts (Shimei, Jehiel, Mahath, and Shemaiah) argues for their identity as persons, although this evidence is not conclusive. The name “Eden” is etymologically related either to the name given the birthplace of man, the Garden of Eden, meaning “delight” or “finery” (i.e., jewelry) or, less likely, to the Akk *edimu*, meaning “open field” (*HALAT* 748–49).

KIRK E. LOWERY

**EDEN, GARDEN OF (PLACE)** [Heb *gan-ʿēden*]. The place where the first humans are placed by Yahweh and from which they are later expelled. In Genesis 2–3 it is described as a place of beauty and abundance. Elsewhere it is designated as Yahweh’s own garden (e.g. Isa 51:3; see GARDEN OF GOD) and even in Genesis 2–3 it is probably meant to be understood primarily as a dwelling place of Yahweh rather than simply a place of human habitation. Scholarly debate over Eden has concerned the etymology of the name, the various biblical references, and the location of Eden. See also BETH-EDEN (PLACE).

## A. Etymology

Two explanations have been proposed for the origin of the name *ʿēden*, “Eden”: (a) that it derives from the Akkadian word *edimu*, “plain, steppe,” which in turn is a loan word from Sumerian *eden*; (b) that it is connected with the West Semitic stem *ʿdn* occurring in several languages, having to do with “luxury, abundance, delight, or lushness.”

Explanation (a) was first proposed after the discovery of parts of a cuneiform tablet from Nineveh containing a syllabary of Sumerian logograms and Akkadian equivalents. It has been adopted with varying degrees of caution by scholars such as H. Zimmern, H. Gunkel, J. Skinner, and S. R. Driver. The attractions of such a derivation are obvious. There is phonological similarity and the possible

placement of Eden “in the East.” However, several objections have been raised. First, Genesis 2–3 refers to Eden in terms of a fertile garden or oasis. The transference to this meaning from a Sumerian word for “plain” or “steppe” is obscure. Secondly, while the word *eden* is common in Sumerian, the Akkadian equivalent *edimu* is attested only once on the syllabary referred to above. The usual Akkadian equivalent to Sumerian *eden* is *šēru*. Several synonyms also exist for *šēru*. From available evidence it seems that *edimu* was an extremely rare word in Akkadian and it is not a likely candidate for further borrowing into biblical Hebrew. The craft of a narrator or scribe in adopting such a word would be lost to nearly all hearers or readers. Thirdly, there is the problem that the Sumerian word begins with *el*, while biblical Hebrew *ʿēden* begins with the guttural *ayin*. Some scholars would argue that the initial phoneme *el* in Sumerian corresponds to Heb *ʾalep*. This is the basis for the proposed correspondence between Sum *ed*, Akk *id*, “river,” and biblical Hebrew *ʾed* (Gen 2:6). However this argument is not conclusive. One should compare also Sum *idiglat*, “Tigris,” with the Heb *hiddeqel*, where the initial *il* in Sumerian corresponds to another Hebrew guttural, *het*.

Explanation (b) has been the traditional etymology. The LXX translates *gan-ʿēden* by *ho paradeisos tēs truphēs*, “the garden of luxuries,” in Gen 3:23, 24 and elsewhere. This is clearly based on the connection of the name of the garden with the biblical Hebrew, *ʿēden*, “luxury, delight.” This connection would have been missed neither by those who narrated the story nor by those who read or heard it. After all, the garden contained every tree which was “delightful to look at and good for food” (Gen 2:9). The question remains, however, whether or not the garden’s name arose in this connection.

The stem *ʿdn* is known in Syriac and Talmudic Aramaic, and the cognate *ḡdn* occurs in Arabic. In languages contemporary with biblical Hebrew only two examples of possible cognates exist. The first is in Ugaritic. In the mythological text, CTA 12.2.53–54, the phrase *bʿdn ʿdnm* can be connected with a stem *ʿdn*, indicating “delight” or “abundance,” although some scholars would disagree. In CTA 3.3.30; 4.2.17; 4.5.68–69 and elsewhere other meanings or explanations must be given to *ʿdn*.

The second example is in Old Aramaic, in an inscription on a statue of *Haddu-yisʿi*, King of Guzan. The statue is from Tell Fekheriyeh in N Syria. The bilingual inscription contains the Aramaic phrase *mʿdn mt kln*, which is parallel to the Assyrian expression *mutaḥḥidu kibraṭi*, “the provider of the regions,” also inscribed on the statue. It would seem that the Aramaic expression is to be translated “one who provides for all the land,” but whether the participle *mʿdn* is meant to carry the implication of “abundance” and “great delight” as the Hebrew *ʿēden* might suggest, or whether it is meant to indicate provision in general as the Assyrian parallel *mutaḥḥidu* suggests, is a matter for debate. Since, however, both expressions occur in a list of epithets of the deity Hadad (Adad) who is described as the giver of plenty to both heaven and earth, including pasture and watering places, the use of *mʿdn* cannot be separated from the notion of earthly abundance and delight.

The etymology of *ʿēden* is therefore still a matter for