

# A Messianic Jewish Sukkot Haggadah

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Mount Olive Press

\*Note: This 2009 version is an incomplete work in progress.

. . . the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when  
you gather in the results of your work from the field.  
—Exodus 23:16

May it be your will, Lord my God and God of my fathers,  
that you cause your Divine Presence to rest among us and  
that you spread over us the tabernacle of your peace.  
—The Koren Siddur

# *Biblical Readings about Sukkot*

Exodus 23:16

A festival after the ingathering.

Deuteronomy 16:13-15

A festival in booths,  
held with nothing but joy,  
shared with Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows.

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

A pilgrim festival,  
do not come empty-handed.

Leviticus 23:33-36

A sacred occasion,  
offerings,  
a Shabbat.

Leviticus 23:39-44

Branches and fruit: the four species,  
seven days in booths,  
a memorial of the exodus and wilderness.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Reading Torah every seventh year.

1 Kings 8:1-5; 2 Chronicles 7:8-10

Solomon and the dedication of the Temple.

1 Kings 12:25-27, 32-33

Jeroboam's substitute feast.

Ezra 3:1-5

The returned exiles and Sukkot.

Nehemiah 7:73 - 8:3, 13-18

Ezra reforms and reconstitutes Sukkot.

Zechariah 14:16-19

The Gentiles in the Messianic Age at Sukkot.

# *Laws and Traditions of Sukkot*

## **The Days of Sukkot and Simchat Torah**

According to tradition, the Sukkah should be built the day after Yom Kippur, even if it is the eve of the Sabbath. This is based on a principle that when it is possible to fulfill a mitzvah, one should not delay (cf. Isaac Klein, *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*, p. 160).

The four days between Yom Kippur and Sukkot are festive. Tachanun is not recited in the morning prayers. Fasting is prohibited (Klein, p. 160). Yet on the afternoon leading up to Sukkot one should refrain from eating in order to have a healthy appetite at the feast.

The first day of Sukkot is a Yom Tov. Food may be prepared but in every other respect it is a Sabbath. The eighth day, the first day after Sukkot, known as Shemini Atzeret, is also a Yom Tov.

The seventh day of Sukkot is called Hoshana Rabbah. There are various traditions which extend the days of judgment from Yom Kippur until Hoshana Rabbah. In many communities a ritual of beating five willow wands on the ground is part of the worship of Hoshana Rabbah.

The day after Sukkot is Shemini Atzeret, which is a Yom Tov. Meals are still eaten in the Sukkah. The day after Shemini Atzeret is Simchat Torah, a celebration of the Torah. Synagogue services on Simchat Torah involve a parade with Torah scrolls and reading both the end and the beginning of the scroll.

## **Laws of the Sukkah**

The Sukkah should be built on the day after Yom Kippur. Every man is traditionally obligated (in some traditions women also) to participate in the building and decorating. It is a mitzvah to beautify the Sukkah to increase the joy of the festival. The walls should be sturdy enough not to be blown over by wind and should be whole enough to keep wind from blowing out the candles on the table. It is advisable to build a removable or hinged roof to protect the Sukkah in the rain, which should be removed when it is not raining. The normal roof of the Sukkah should consist of cut branches through which the occupants can see the stars at night. The Sukkah should provide more shade than sunlight. One should dine and, weather permitting, sleep in the Sukkah.

## **Laws of the Lulav and Etrog**

The lulav and accompanying branches should be fresh, not dry. The etrog should be chosen for beauty. Hold the lulav wand in the right hand with the palm spine facing you and the etrog in the left hand. The cut stalk side of the etrog should be facing down and the protruding end facing up. Recite the blessing on taking the palm branch with the etrog upside down and then right it. After the blessing, wave the lulav and etrog east, south, west, north, up, and down. It is a common custom to circle the Torah reading table each day with the lulav and etrog adding one circuit each day (dating back to Temple times when the worshipper circled the altar).

# *A Guide to Sukkot Prayers*

## **Candle Lighting**

The first night of Sukkot (Erev Sukkot) is a Yom Tov. Candles are lit in the Sukkah with two prayers: (1) the *l'hadlikh ner shel yom tov* and (2) the *shebekhiyanu*. A Yom Tov is a holiday Sabbath which is different from a regular Sabbath in that food preparation is allowed.

## **Ushpizin Upon Entering the Sukkah**

Some follow the custom (optional) of welcoming guests from sacred history with a blessing. Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 720-723. Koren Siddur, pages 766-767.

## **Kiddush in the Sukkah for Erev Sukkot**

There is a special addition to the Kiddush for Erev Sukkot. Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 722-725. Koren Siddur, pages 768-769.

## **Kiddush on Intermediate Days (Hol HaMo'ed)**

Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 360-361. Koren Siddur, pages 580-581.

## **After the Morning Service: Blessing the Lulav and Etrog**

This is usually done before the Hallel. The etrog stem should face up during the blessing and be turned down after. Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 630-631. Koren Siddur, 730-731.

## **Waving the Lulav and Etrog**

Before reciting Hallel, it is time to wave the four species. Hold the lulav wand in the right hand with the palm spine facing you and the etrog in the left hand. The cut stalk side of the etrog should be facing down and the protruding end facing up. Wave the lulav and etrog east, south, west, north, up, and down. Each wave is a forward and backward motion which causes the leaves to shake.

## **Hallel**

Every morning of Sukkot, after the morning prayers, Hallel is recited. Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 632-643. Koren Siddur, pages 732-743.

## **Hashanot**

Every morning of Sukkot the Hoshanot are recited. The laws of Hoshanot are found in the Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 726-757. Koren Siddur, pages 852-873. On the seventh day five willow branches are beaten out on the ground during the Hoshanot.

## **Farewell to the Sukkah**

On the last day, when leaving the Sukkah: Artscroll Complete Siddur, pages 724-725.

# *Questions and Answers with Maimonides*

In his famous *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides explains the customs of Sukkot for a reader who might not understand the Jewish year or customs. Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon) lived from 1135 to 1204. He was a physician, philosopher, and Talmudist extraordinaire. *Guide for the Perplexed* was intended to reconcile philosophy and Jewish law, a thinking person's guide to Jewish theology and practice. Maimonides was part of a wave of thinkers who rediscovered Aristotle, such as Thomas Aquinas in the Christian world and Averroes in the Muslim world.

The questions that follow are intended to make it easier to follow Maimonides teachings about Sukkot. His teachings did not appear with questions in the original text (see *Guide* 3.43):

## **Why is Sukkot seven days?**

. . . in order that the idea of the festival might be more noticeable.

## **Why is Sukkot celebrated in the autumn?**

. . . as it is stated in the Torah, "When you gather in the results of your work from the field" (Exod 23:16).

## **What does Aristotle say about this?**

Aristotle, in the ninth book of his *Ethics*, mentions this as a general custom among the nations. He says, "In ancient times the sacrifices and assemblies of the people took place after the ingathering of the corn and the fruit."

## **Why else is Sukkot celebrated in the autumn?**

. . . it is possible to dwell in tabernacles, as there is neither great heat nor troublesome rain.

## **What is the moral lesson of Sukkot?**

. . . it reminds us of the miracles wrought in the wilderness. The moral lesson derived from these feasts is this: man ought to remember his dark days in the days of his prosperity. He will thereby be induced to thank God repeatedly, to lead a modest and humble life.

## **Why do we dwell in sukkahs?**

. . . as inhabitants of deserts do who are in want of comfort. We shall thereby remember that this has been our condition.

## **Why do we celebrate the eighth day without living in sukkahs?**

We join to the Feast of Tabernacles the Feast of the Eighth Day (Shemini Atzeret) in order to complete our rejoicing, which cannot be perfect in booths, but in comfortable and well-built houses.

## **Why do we use the four species (palm, willow, myrtle, and citron)?**

. . . our sages for their use by way of Aggadic interpretation . . . a symbolic expression of our rejoicing that the Israelites changed the wilderness, "a place with no grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; there was not even water to drink" (Num 20:5), for a country full of fruit, trees, and rivers.

## *Sukkot After the Bible*

**Sukkot is why Hanukkah lasts eight days.** In 2 Maccabees 10 we read: *Now it so happened that the cleansing of the sanctuary took place on the very day in which it had been profaned by aliens, on the twenty-fifth of the same month, which is Kislev. And they celebrated it for eight days with gladness like the Feast of Tabernacles, remembering how, not long before, during the Feast of Tabernacles, they had been wandering like wild beasts in the mountains and the caves [and were unable to celebrate it]. So bearing wands wreathed with leaves and fair boughs and palms, they offered hymns and praise to him who had prospered the cleansing of his own place.*

**Philo on the ethical value of dwelling in booths.** *And indeed it is well in wealth to remember your poverty, in distinction your insignificance, in high offices your position as a commoner, in peace your dangers of war, on land the storms on seas, in cities the life of loneliness. For there is no greater pleasure than in high prosperity to call to mind old misfortunes. But besides giving pleasure, it is considerable help in the practice of virtue. -Special Laws 2*

**Josephus explains Sukkot to his Roman audience.** *On the fifteenth of this same month, at which the turning point to the winter season is now reached, Moses bids each family to fix up tents, apprehensive of the cold and as a protection against the year's inclemency. Moreover, when they should have won their fatherland, they were to repair to that city which they could in honor of their temple regard as their metropolis, and there for eight days keep festival: they were to offer burnt-offerings and sacrifices of thanksgiving to God in those days, bearing in their hands a bouquet composed of myrtle and willow with a branch of palm, along with the fruit of the persea [etrog]. -Antiquities 5.10.4*

**Bar Kochba orders supplies for the lulav and etrog in the Second Jewish Revolt.** The year is around 135 C.E. in the early fall and the place is Betar, southwest of Jerusalem. The embattled leader of Israel is Simon Bar Kokhba, proclaimed a few years earlier "the Son of the Star" (see Num 24:17) by the famous Rabbi Akiba. Bar Kokhba was a messianic figure.

Bar Kokhba and his army of soldiers, many of them simple people who had taken arms in this Second Jewish Revolt, are in their last months of life. They had defied Rome and for two years maintained a kingdom independent of the greatest empire in history. It will not be long before the Romans come and slaughter hundreds of thousands.

Yet the time of year is Sukkot, and amid all the important things on the mind of this doomed commander of the people's army is the festival. Archaeologist Yigael Yadin found in the surviving papyrus fragments containing Bar Kokhba's orders one that stands out:

*Simeon to Yehuda bar Menashe . . . I have sent two donkeys . . . in order that they shall pack and send to the camp, towards you, palm branches (lulavs) and citrons (etrogs). And you, from your place, send others who will bring myrtle and willow. . . . The request is made since the army is big.*

Under siege and waiting for certain defeat, the army of Bar Kokhba celebrated one last Sukkot. They held their branches and citrons, reciting psalms and prayers. The spirit of hope in Messiah, even if their hope was misplaced on the general called Son of the Star, was stronger than fear of death.

## *Introduction to Ecclesiastes Readings*

Ecclesiastes is the legacy of an unknown figure who calls himself Qohelet. Related to the word *qehillah*, the name Qohelet has something to do with congregating or assembling. James Crenshaw suggests that the name is not about speaking to gatherings of people, the common theory, but rather is about one who assembles sayings and proverbs.

Ecclesiastes is a collection of sayings and proverbs mixed with reflection and philosophical searching.

J.A. Loader (*Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*) proposes a theory about the reason for Qohelet's pessimistic philosophy. After Israel's period of exile, God became more distant. Prophecy faded. Miracles were a distant memory. Many forms of Judaism filled the void of obvious divine presence with different ideas of mediating presences of God's work in the world. People spoke of the *shekhinah*, of mediating angels (who were named and classified in detail), and of the word of God active in worldly affairs while God himself was distant. Qohelet, says Loader, refused to fill the void of God's distance because his appraisal of reality did not allow it. Using the tools of wisdom, he found systematized wisdom empty. He concluded that God himself actively caused the vanity of life.

Loader's theory has merit. There is a strange absence of miracles, prophecy, or reference to a revealed Torah in Qohelet. Instead we find the much-repeated phrase "under the sun." If God chose to resolve all of life's difficulties in person as in the Exodus from Egypt, life would not be vanity. But the reality is that God is hidden. There is no lasting gain. Death and chance level everything so that justice cannot be seen.

Did Qohelet believe in more than what is under the sun? There are a few indications he must have. Even discounting the final epilogue of the book which was likely written by someone else, Qohelet indicates in several places that he believes in the end wisdom will be better than folly and fearing God is the wise thing to do even if there is no evidence under the sun for reward and punishment. Qohelet, it should also be said, is no deist. He attribute the simple joys of life as well as the vanities of life directly to the activity of God. Rather than solving life's difficulties, God actively makes vanities happen.

Suppose with me that Qohelet did believe in more than what is under the sun. Is there still value in writing of a painfully honest philosophical search resulting in the conclusion of vanity?

Absolutely there is value. In the first place, Qohelet gives us practical wisdom about how to live in the world where God is distant. Second, Qohelet helps us understand how to use wisdom critically to deconstruct false wisdom. Third and most important, Qohelet obliterates all the easy answers of his time and of later times which present a false optimism about life and lasting meaning. In our time, for example, Qohelet's words are an impenetrable challenge to atheistic humanism.

Using wisdom, Qohelet gives an unwelcome dose of reality. He teaches us a way to practically face the hiddenness of God. He turns us away from easy answers. Without saying it, he leads us to look beyond the realm under the sun, beyond the realm where God is distant, to a time when God will be present in a tangible way. There is no satisfaction in anything else.

## *Day 1: Ecclesiastes Reading*

Ecclesiastes is the *megillah* or scroll for reading during Sukkot. Starting in the 11th century, the custom of reading Sukkot on the Shabbat of Sukkot was solidified. The likely reasons for Ecclesiastes being associated with Sukkot are its emphasis on the impermanence of life which we remember as we live in sukkahs, its recommendation of feasting and joy which we take to heart in this season, and perhaps its theme of death which autumn brings to mind (Fox, *JPS Torah Commentary: Ecclesiastes*).

### **Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-6.**

J.A. Loader (*Polar Structures in the Book of Qohelet*, see “Introduction to Ecclesiastes Readings”) calls this section, “Risk and Assurance.” Loader has concluded that Qohelet uses wisdom in his philosophical search by playing polar opposites against each other. The ideas of risk and assurance are polar opposites in life that we regularly understand to affect us in many ways. We take risks but we want assurances. If we believe too much in assurances we fail to prepare for the down side of risk.

Compare three different translations of 11:1. Note that many translations say “you will find it,” but another interpretation is “you may find it.”

Now compare 11:1 and 2. What seems to be the common thread in these difficult proverbs? 11:1 might be about ancient commerce in grain by use of ships. There was always risk in such commerce. The ships might sink or be pirated or the receivers might or might not pay. Sending away grain was a risk. Yet to not send away the grain is also a kind of risk. Nothing ventured, nothing gained is a modern proverb with the same meaning. 11:2 is also about risk and investment. Don’t put all your eggs in one basket, we now say. Qohelet’s proverb recommends seven or eight places. Why is it important in business to have multiple resources? It is because, Qohelet tells us, we never know what disaster may come.

*Which is more optimistic of the first two verses? What is the similarity between them? How are they the converse of one another?*

11:3 is still about risk and assurance. It considers our observation and desire to predict. Our ability to predict is not sufficient to avoid risk. Trees fall where they may and we can do nothing about it. 11:4 is more wisdom about risk and assurance. If we misuse our limited ability to predict, then we will miss opportunities.

*What are practical examples in which we try to minimize risk by prediction the future course of events?*

11:5 is the philosophical principle and 11:6 is the practical conclusion about risk and assurance.

*How would you restate the philosophical principle of 11:5? How is God involved in the uncertainty of life?*

Since God’s ways are hidden to us, the only assurance we have is that if we do nothing, we will reap nothing. The opposing ideas of risk and assurance present us with vanity. If there were no assurances at all, no ability to reasonably predict the future, we would take no risks. There is just enough

assurance to lead us into risk. This is one of the vanities of life. Our bread does not always come back over the waters. The assurance we desire is out of our reach. Yet there is still a place for wisdom and the one who follows 11:6 will more often than not reap more than the one who fears to sow because a storm is approaching.

*What assurances do you demand from God? How much uncertainty can you live with and keep your faith?*

## *Day 2: Ecclesiastes Reading*

### **Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-22.**

The logic of this section can be hard to follow and much depends on the translation of verse 18, which is very difficult as well as ambiguous in Hebrew.

*Compare at least four different translations of Ecclesiastes 3:18. Discuss how diverse the meaning of the verse is in different translations. Do any of them fit well with this paragraph?*

Loader refers to this section as “The Inhuman Human.” What is the essence of what makes us human? Qohelet notes that we are like animals in many ways. His searching out wisdom on this topic may be a sort of counterpoint to the Genesis story that we are separate from and higher than animals. Perhaps Qohelet would say, “Yes, but.” Leaving unmentioned the view from Genesis, Qohelet observes only the animalistic nature of man. We humans are inhuman (and inhumane).

Qohelet’s observations about humanity’s inhumanity begin with a quintessential issue for ancient people: justice. The element that would really make society rise above the animalistic world would be goodness and justice in the gates of the city. But Qohelet observed that in the places of justice and righteousness, wickedness was always present.

Against the relativism of human justice, Qohelet expresses faith in God’s ultimate justice. The righteous and the wicked, traditional wisdom says, will be judged by God.

From these two thoughts (corrupted human justice and ultimate divine justice), Qohelet takes his quest in an unexpected direction. For all our pretension, we are really like animals (vs. 18). The JPS translation has much to commend it: “So I decided, as regards men, to dissociate them from the divine beings and to face the fact that they are beasts.” In other words, seeing the injustice in human courts, Qohelet notes that we are more like animals than God, since we do not judge in the same way he does.

Vss. 19-21 are not about justice anymore, but form a second and more easily understood point about the animalism of man. From the standpoint of wisdom, and not from the view of revelation in which the afterlife is well-known, people die like animals.

Qohelet looks at both sides of life. In this section he is apparently having a discussion with a common idea in Israelite religion: that man is made like God (or like the gods in the broader world surrounding Israel). But Qohelet shows us the other side. We are like animals, deficient in justice and dying with no seeming purpose.

Wisdom cannot answer this dilemma. We want to think we are more, but observation and reason can see nothing else. So, wisdom would be to simply enjoy the simple pleasures we do have, not being able to determine with wisdom if there is anything after this life.

Why does Qohelet explore this topic? Was it necessary for the integrity of his wisdom quest to consider the faithless view of humanity? Was it part of his method to explore polar opposites, with the animal-like nature of man affirmed alongside the unspoken view of Genesis that we are god-like?

Or does Qohelet have an agenda, by showing the view from under the sun, to lead his readers to a quandary? Without accepting the story of man's origin in Israel's Torah, we would be compelled to admit we are nothing more than animals. Qohelet's observations of humankind force a kind of honesty that excludes godless optimism.

*What do you see as Qohelet's purpose in this section? Does Qohelet's sage exploration nullify influential philosophies of our time? Do you realistically see people as animal-like or god-like? How and why?*

## *Day 3: Ecclesiastes Reading*

**Read Ecclesiastes 4:17 - 5:6 (5:1-7 in a Christian Bible).**

Loader calls this section "Talk and Silence." Again we see Qohelet consider polar opposites, both of which seem good in their context and time and which present us with a quandary.

Is it better to be more proactive, to talk more and make things happen? Or is it better to listen and let the silence dominate? This is a fundamental question of life. It matters in relationships with people and with God. Must we answer every question and challenge? Must we fill the void with words?

Frequent talking to God seems good, but this is not always so. Qohelet demonstrates this by pointing out that hasty vows made to God do harm and not good. It is better in many cases to listen rather than to speak.

*Consider the JPS translation of part of 4:17 (5:1): "more acceptable is obedience than the offering of fools." What are some examples of the offering of fools in a modern religious context?*

Perhaps the same could be said about prayer. Reading Psalms and liturgical prayers is one thing, when we are repeating the words of scripture and of the community that are tried and tested. But in spontaneous prayer there are many traps waiting for us. We ask wrongly, with wrong motives. We ask for all illness and suffering to stop immediately upon our request and it is rarely in the plan of God to grant such requests. Are we doing more harm than good in speaking too much, with God, family, and friends?

Qohelet says God is in heaven and we are on earth, so our words should be few. If we actually saw God enthroned among us, would we utter many of the inane prayers that casually come off our lips?

Many concerns in life make troubled dreams (5:2(3)) and many words make foolish talk. Thoughtless action is the source of many human troubles. What you say before God, do.

People make vows to God in order to obtain something, usually protection or rescue. But whatever gain you hope to make by vows will be a greater loss if you incur judgment by insincerity.

5:6(7) is virtually impossible to translate with any certainty. The gist seems to be that many dreams indicate a life of worries (for stress causes troubled dreams) and in the same way many words will bring troubles. Thus, fear God by being silent more often.

The vanity of thoughtless speech is another example of labor without product. We want to speak often to make things happen that benefit us. But when Qohelet considers talk versus silence, the result is more one-sided than many of his investigations. The near-universal human belief that more talking brings more gain is simply wrong.

The same Qohelet who can see both sides of many issues, sees only one here. Wisdom is good but ultimately useless since the wise and the fool die alike. Risk is good because it is the only hope for

gain, but risk is also bad because there are no assurances. Wealth makes life good but is more apt to cause misery. Toil is to be enjoyed but there is no real profit in any of it. In all these issues, there are two sides. But if there is one thing Qohelet is sure about: silence is almost always better than talking.

*How does too much talking harm family relationships? Friendship? Relations with God?*

*When is silence bad?*

## *Day 4: Ecclesiastes Reading*

Much of Ecclesiastes is a denial of the myth of progress in every arena of life. We think our work makes some lasting good. Qohelet is the deconstructor of all easy answers. No treasured belief is safe from his prying wisdom.

### **Read Ecclesiastes 3:10-15.**

Loader refers to this section as part of the larger theme in the book, “Labor without Product.” Ecclesiastes 1:14 introduces one of the repeated themes of the book: “I found that all is futile and pursuit of wind.” Another related theme is introduced in 1:3, “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?”

*What sort of gain are people looking to find in ordinary life? In terms of enjoyment, satisfaction, enduring value, and so on, how are they like the wind?*

This section begins after a famous poem about the eventualities of life in 3:1-9 (again to use Loader’s term). Although many interpretations have been suggested for “a time to love and a time to hate” and so on, the interpretation that best fits the themes of Ecclesiastes is the lack of control we have over these eventualities. Not only birth and death, but even things we theoretically should be able to control, like love and hate, happen to us beyond our control.

3:10-15 is a corollary of our impotence. We have a business or a burden to occupy ourselves, but nothing we do lasts. Everything is beautiful in its time (the JPS translation “brings everything to pass precisely at its time” is doubtful), but it does not last. So we have a sense of eternity or duration (*olam*) placed in our heart by God. Yet we cannot fathom the scheme of time.

Perhaps what is remarkable about verse 11 is Qohelet’s insistence that God is the author of this dilemma. Is this a wisdom observation purely from viewing life’s frustration? Or is Qohelet reflecting the view of Torah that humans were made to live forever (Gen 3:22) but instead inherited death (Gen 3:19). In either case, Qohelet tells us the frustration we have over duration, over time, is deliberately set before us by God.

*How much of life is touched by the problem of impermanence? How do people react to the fleeting nature of life?*

Qohelet’s advice, repeated in a refrain in slightly different forms in six places (2:24-26; 3:12-15, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-9) is to enjoy the pleasure we have. Though it may not last, we can enjoy our work. We can be contented without finding lasting satisfaction. If we focus on what we cannot have, if our expectations of life exceed reality, all we have is vexation.

Qohelet is the quintessential realist, some might say pessimist. He finds what we are reluctant to admit, that life offers disappointment and frustration as long as we seek control. Yet God has along with frustration given the gift of simple enjoyment. And those who perceive God understand that he is not subject to the same frustration. His works endure forever while ours crumble to dust.

The section closes with another frustrating realization about time. Time is a repeating cycle. God repeats what has been done in the past. Nothing truly new happens. People conquer and people experience defeat. Innovations come and go. Our desire for permanency is never achieved and no innovation brings lasting change.

Therefore, we are to content ourselves with simple pleasure and fear God. His works are permanent while ours are chasing wind. The balance Qohelet suggests is to work anyway, because in its time, in its fleeting time, our work matters and brings enjoyment. So, if we give up a futile pursuit of the unobtainable, we can enjoy the simple pleasure God has given us. Whether there is something more, Qohelet does not say. He has limited his pursuit of knowledge to wisdom, to what is under the sun.

*Does a relationship with God do away with the futility of impermanence? Why or why not?*