

Ecclesiastes 10:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles,
and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for
drunkenness!

Analysis

Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles (אַשְׁרֵיךְ אֶרֶץ שְׁמַלְכֶּךָ, ashreyikh erets shemalkekhen-chorim)—'happy are you, land, whose king is the son of nobles,' using ashrey (blessed, happy), the Psalms' beatitude formula. **And thy princes eat in due season** (וְשָׂרֶיךָ בְּעֵת יֹאכְלוּ, vesarekha ba'et yokhelu)—'and your officials eat at the proper time.' **For strength, and not for drunkenness** (בְּגִבּוּרָה וְלֹא בְשֵׁתִי, bigevurah velo bashti)—'in strength and not in drinking,' from sheti (drinking, intoxication).

The contrasting beatitude: a nation thrives under a king who is ben-chorim (son of nobles)—not about lineage per se, but maturity, training, and character. Such leaders, with disciplined officials who eat ba'et (at proper time—after work, not instead of it), pursue gevurah (strength, valor) rather than sheti (intoxication). The word gevurah can mean physical strength or moral fortitude—eating to maintain capacity for service. This describes leadership marked by self-control, timing, purpose. Proverbs 31:4-5 warns kings against wine, 'lest they drink and forget what has been decreed.' Disciplined leadership creates flourishing societies; indulgent leadership breeds ruin.

Historical Context

The 'son of nobles' refers to proper training and character formation—ancient royal education prepared princes for responsibility through tutors, advisors, and

structured development. David's careful preparation of Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:5) exemplifies this ideal.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does discipline in 'small' areas like eating times and purposes reflect broader leadership character?
2. What does it mean to pursue strength and purpose rather than pleasure and indulgence in your daily rhythms?
3. How can you cultivate 'noble' character formation even if not from 'noble' background?

Interlinear Text

אַשֶׁר יְיָ	אָ רָץ	שְׁמֶלֶךָ	בֶּן	חוֹר יִם	וְשָׁב יְיָ
Blessed	art thou O land	when thy king	is the son	of nobles	and thy princes
H835	H776	H4428	H1121	H2715	H8269
בְּעֵת	יֹאכֶל לוֹ	בְּגִבּוֹרָה	וְלֹא	בְּשִׁתִּי:	
in due season	eat	for strength	H3808	and not for drunkenness	
H6256	H398	H1369		H8358	