

Ecclesiastes 11:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

Analysis

Give a portion to seven, and also to eight—the Hebrew *ten cheleq le-shiv'ah ve-gam li-shemonah* (תֵּן-חֵלֶק לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לְשִׁמּוֹנָה) uses numerical parallelism (seven...eight) to indicate generosity that goes beyond typical expectations. This idiom appears in wisdom literature (Proverbs 6:16, 30:18) to mean "several" or "many." The counsel: diversify your investments and sharing—don't put all resources in one venture.

For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth—*ki lo teda mah-yihyeh ra'ah al-ha-aretz* (כִּי לֹא תֵדַע מַה־יְהִיֶּה רָעָה עַל־הָאָרֶץ) acknowledges life's uncertainty. Since the future is unknown and disaster may strike, wisdom counsels both diversification and generosity. Spread risk across multiple ventures; share generously with multiple recipients. When calamity comes (and it will), diversified investments and generous relationships provide resilience. Luke 16:9 echoes this: "Make friends by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you."

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern economies were vulnerable to localized disasters—drought, warfare, or plague could devastate specific regions while sparing others. Maritime trade spread risk across multiple shipments (thus "cast thy bread upon the waters," 11:1). Agricultural diversification protected against crop failure—planting multiple fields, storing grain in different locations. The wisdom of generosity to

multiple people created social capital—those helped in good times might reciprocate during hardship. Jesus's parable of the talents teaches similar diversification through productive stewardship (Matthew 25:14-30). Modern portfolio theory validates this ancient wisdom: diversification reduces risk.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How diversified are your investments—financial, relational, and spiritual—and what vulnerabilities does concentration create?
2. Where is God calling you to greater generosity toward multiple people as both spiritual obedience and practical wisdom?

Interlinear Text

תֵּן	חֵלְקַ	לְשִׁבְעָה	וְגַם	לְשִׁמוֹנָה	כִּי	אֵל
Give	a portion	to seven		and also to eight		
H5414	H2506	H7651	H1571	H8083	H3588	H3808
יָדָע	מָה	הָיָה	כָּעֵת	עַל	הָאָרֶץ:	
for thou knowest			not what evil		shall be upon the earth	
H3045	H4100	H1961	H7451	H5921	H776	

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 6:16 (Parallel theme): These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

Psalms 112:9 (Parallel theme): He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

Job 5:19 (Evil): He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.

Daniel 4:27 (Parallel theme): Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

Hebrews 13:3 (Parallel theme): Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Ephesians 5:16 (Evil): Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Nehemiah 8:10 (Parallel theme): Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Matthew 5:42 (Parallel theme): Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Matthew 18:22 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Luke 17:4 (Parallel theme): And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.