

# Ecclesiastes 11:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

## Analysis

**If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth**—the Hebrew *am-yimalo ha-avim geshem al-ha-aretz yariqu* (אָמַּיְמָלָא הַעֲבִים גֵּשֶׁם עַל-הָאָרֶץ) describes natural inevitability. When conditions are right, rain falls—this is simply how nature works. **And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be**—*im-yipol etz badarom ve-im ba-tzafon maqom she-yipol ha-etz sham yehu* (אִם־יַפְלֵל עַץ בְּצִדְקוֹם וְאִם בְּצִפְנוֹן מָקוֹם שְׁפֵל עַץ שָׁם יְהֻאֵן).

Both images teach that some events, once set in motion, are irreversible and beyond human control. Rain will fall when clouds are full; a fallen tree stays where it lands. These observations could counsel either fatalism ("Nothing matters since events are inevitable") or wisdom ("Accept what you cannot control and act wisely within your sphere"). Verse 4 clarifies: don't let fear of uncontrollable factors paralyze productive action.

## Historical Context

Agricultural societies depended on rain and feared storms that felled trees—both were beyond human control. Ancient Israelites prayed for rain (1 Kings 8:35-36) and feared drought (1 Kings 17:1), acknowledging God's sovereignty over weather. The fallen tree image likely refers to storm damage that destroyed orchards or blocked paths—once fallen, the tree remained where it fell, requiring adaptation to

new reality. This wisdom teaches distinguishing between controllable and uncontrollable factors. The Serenity Prayer echoes this: "God, grant me serenity to accept what I cannot change, courage to change what I can, and wisdom to know the difference." Stoic philosophy similarly counseled focusing on what lies within our control.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. What situations in your life are like filled clouds or fallen trees—beyond your control and requiring acceptance rather than anxious striving?
2. How can you distinguish between fatalistic passivity ("nothing matters") and wise acceptance of uncontrollable factors while acting decisively in your sphere of influence?

## Interlinear Text

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בָּאָרֶץ וְשָׁמְנָם עַל גַּשְׁמָם הַכּוֹנְעָן וְאַם  
be full If the clouds of rain themselves upon the earth  
H518 H4390 H5645 H1653 H5921 H776

וְשָׁפַר וְלֹא אָמַר יְמִינֵיכֶם  
they empty fall and if the tree toward the south  
H7324 H518 H5307 H6086 H1864 H518

בְּצִפון וְלֹא מִקְרָב  
or toward the north in the place fall and if the tree שָׁפַר  
H6828 H4725 H5307 H6086 H8033  
there it shall be  
H1933

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 John 3:17** (Parallel theme): But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

**Luke 13:7** (Parallel theme): Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

**1 Kings 18:45** (Parallel theme): And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

**Matthew 3:10** (Parallel theme): And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

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