

# Ecclesiastes 12:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

## Analysis

**And the doors shall be shut in the streets**—the allegory continues. The 'doors' (דְּלָתִים) likely represent lips or perhaps ears, now closed and less active in speech or hearing. **When the sound of the grinding is low**—with few teeth remaining (v. 3), the sound of chewing becomes faint. **He shall rise up at the voice of the bird**—elderly people sleep lightly and wake early, roused by dawn's first birdsong rather than sleeping soundly. **All the daughters of musick shall be brought low**—the 'daughters of music' (בנות הָשֵׁיר) represent either vocal cords (voice weakening) or hearing (music appreciation fading). The phrase 'brought low' (!שׁוֹת) indicates diminishment or humbling.

The accumulating imagery paints comprehensive decline: reduced social engagement (doors shut), quieter eating, disrupted sleep, diminished musical capacity. Yet the passage isn't merely depressing—it urgently calls readers to remember God while faculties remain (v. 1). The Christian reading finds hope: though outer nature wastes away, inner nature renews daily (2 Corinthians 4:16), and bodily resurrection awaits (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Present limitations are temporary; glorified bodies will transcend aging's effects.

## Historical Context

Ancient cultures valued music highly—David's psalms, temple choirs, celebratory songs. The loss of musical capacity (whether performing or appreciating)

represented significant diminishment. Early waking was practical in agricultural societies (rising at dawn to begin work), but for the elderly it meant restless nights rather than productive mornings. The detailed observations suggest close familiarity with aging's progression—either personal experience or careful observation. Jewish interpretation often took this passage literally while also seeing spiritual lessons about maintaining devotion through life's seasons. Christian exposition emphasized preparing for eternity before death's 'doors shut.'

## Related Passages

---

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

---

1. What capacities or pleasures do you currently enjoy that aging may diminish, and how does this motivate gratitude and stewardship?
2. How can you cultivate spiritual vitality that transcends physical decline and endures into eternity?

## Interlinear Text

---

וְסַגַּר	וְשָׁלַט	בָּשָׂר	בְּשָׂפָט	לְקָרְבָּן	בְּטַחַן
shall be shut	And the doors	in the streets	is low	at the voice	of the grinding
H5462	H1817	H7784	H8217	H6963	H2913
וְיַקְרֵב	וְלָקַח	בְּאֵת	וְיִשְׁרַאֲלֵם	כָּל	
and he shall rise up	at the voice	of the bird	shall be brought low		H3605
H6965	H6963	H6833	H7817		
בְּשִׁירָה					
and all the daughters	of musick				
H1323	H7892				

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Jeremiah 25:10** (Parallel theme): Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

**2 Samuel 19:35** (Parallel theme): I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

---

From KJV Study • [kjvstudy.org](http://kjvstudy.org)