

# Ecclesiastes 12:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

## Analysis

**Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high**—the elderly develop fear of heights and uneven ground due to balance issues and fragility. **Fears shall be in the way**—simple walking becomes anxiety-producing due to fall risk. **The almond tree shall flourish**—this likely refers to white hair (almond blossoms are white), a sign of advanced age. **The grasshopper shall be a burden**—even lightweight insects feel heavy; the smallest exertion becomes exhausting. **Desire shall fail**—the Hebrew aviyonah (אֲבִיּוֹנָה, desire/appetite) indicates loss of appetite, sexual desire, and general zest for life. **Because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets**—the 'long home' (בֵּית עָזָלָה) is death's permanent dwelling. Professional mourners already circulate, anticipating the funeral.

This verse brings the aging allegory near its conclusion with vivid imagery: fear, white hair, weakness, loss of desire, approaching death. The cumulative effect is sobering yet purposeful—remember the Creator before these days arrive (v. 1). The phrase 'long home' acknowledges death's permanence from earthly perspective, yet Christian hope transforms it: believers' true 'home' is with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23), and death is not the end but transition to eternal life.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Israel practiced professional mourning—hired women who wailed and lamented at funerals (Jeremiah 9:17-18; Amos 5:16). The 'mourners in the streets' vividly depicted approaching death's public recognition. The almond tree imagery was particularly apt in Israel where almond blossoms appeared early each spring, their white flowers resembling aged hair. The progression described—from trembling hands (v. 3) through failing capacities (v. 4) to imminent death (v. 5)—traced aging's full trajectory. Pre-modern medicine meant these declines were irreversible and often rapid. The passage's realism prepared readers for mortality while urging present faithfulness. Church fathers emphasized using earthly life well before entering eternity's 'long home.'

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

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

## Study Questions

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1. How does confronting mortality's reality (rather than avoiding thoughts of death) clarify what truly matters in life?
2. In what ways does Christian hope transform death from a 'long home' to be feared into transition to eternal joy?

## Interlinear Text

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מִגְבֵּרְתָּה וְאַיִלְלָה יְמִתְמִתָּה

H1571 of that which is high Also when they shall be afraid

H1364

וְאַיִלְלָה

H3372

וְמִתְמִתָּה יְמִתְמִתָּה

and fears

H2849

וְיִסְפְּתָבְלָה בְּדַבְּרָה

shall be in the way shall flourish and the almond tree shall be a burden

H1870

H5006

בְּשִׁקְדָּם

H8247

וְיִסְפְּתָבְלָה

H5445

וְבָקָר בְּקָרָבְתָּה וְתַפְתָּה כִּי וְהַלְלָה אֶל

and the grasshopper shall fail and desire goeth because man

H2284

H6565

H35

וְהַלְלָה

H1980

אֶל

H413

וְבָשָׂר וְקָרְבָּן וְעַזְלָמָן וְבְּיַתְּרָבָן

home to his long go about the streets and the mourners

H1004

H5769

H5437

H7784

H5594

## Additional Cross-References

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**Job 17:13** (Parallel theme): If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.

**Job 30:23** (Parallel theme): For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.

**Proverbs 16:31** (Parallel theme): The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

**Psalms 71:18** (Parallel theme): Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

**Job 15:10** (Parallel theme): With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father.

**Leviticus 19:32** (Parallel theme): Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

