

# Ecclesiastes 5:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

## Analysis

**There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun** (יֵשׁ רָעָה חוֹלָה רָאִיתִי תַחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, yesh ra'ah cholah ra'iti tachat hashemesh)—'a grievous evil I have observed.' The term cholah means 'sick' or 'diseased,' intensifying ra'ah (evil). **Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt** (עֹשֶׁר שְׁמֹר לְבַעְלָיו לְרָעָתוֹ, osher shamur liv'alav lera'ato)—wealth guarded/hoarded for its owner unto his harm.

Qoheleth identifies a tragic paradox: wealth accumulated for security becomes the source of ruin. The verb shamur ('kept' or 'guarded') suggests anxious preservation rather than generous circulation. This 'hurt' (ra'ato) can manifest physically (stress, obsession), relationally (isolation, distrust), legally (lawsuits, theft), or spiritually (idolatry of mammon). Jesus's parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21) perfectly illustrates this—the man hoarded for future security, only to lose his soul that very night. Paul warns that 'those who desire to be rich fall into temptation' (1 Timothy 6:9). Wealth hoarded becomes a curse; wealth stewarded becomes blessing.

## Historical Context

The ancient world lacked banks and secure investment vehicles, making wealth storage physically dangerous (theft, decay). Yet the principle transcends era—hoarded resources, whether gold or stock portfolios, can become spiritual poison.

## Related Passages

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

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

## Study Questions

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1. In what ways might your wealth or possessions be harming rather than helping you spiritually?
2. How does the act of hoarding itself damage character and relationships beyond the material risks?
3. What would it look like to transition from guarding wealth to stewarding it for Kingdom purposes?

## Interlinear Text

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יֵשׁ	לְרָעָתוֹ:	חֹלָה	כָּאֲיִתִּי	תַּחַת	הַשֶּׁשֶּׁשׁ
There is	evil	a sore	which I have seen	H8478	under the sun
H3426	H7451	H2470	H7200		H8121
עַשְׂרֵי	שָׁמַר	לְבָעֲלֵי יוֹ	לְרָעָתוֹ:		
namely riches	kept	for the owners	evil		
H6239	H8104	H1167	H7451		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Genesis 19:14** (Parallel theme): And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

**Proverbs 11:4** (Parallel theme): Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.

**Proverbs 1:32** (Parallel theme): For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

**Proverbs 1:19** (Parallel theme): So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

**Ecclesiastes 4:8** (Parallel theme): There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.

**Ecclesiastes 8:9** (Parallel theme): All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.

**Genesis 14:16** (Parallel theme): And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

**Luke 16:19** (Parallel theme): There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

**Zephaniah 1:18** (Parallel theme): Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.