

Ecclesiastes 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Analysis

For a dream cometh through the multitude of business—excessive activity (rov inyan, רֹב עֲיָנָן, abundance of occupation) produces confused, meaningless dreams. The Hebrew chalom (חֶלֶם, dream) represents mental chaos resulting from overwhelming preoccupation. Just as an overactive mind generates disordered dreams, **a fool's voice is known by multitude of words**—kesil (כְּסִיל, fool) reveals himself through rov devarim (רֹב דְּבָרִים, many words).

This verse appears within Ecclesiastes 5:1-7's instructions on approaching God in worship. The context warns against rash vows (5:4-6) and emphasizes reverent fear (5:1,7). Verse 3 provides supporting analogy: excessive busyness disorders thought as excessive talking characterizes fools. Before God, fewer words spoken thoughtfully prove superior to verbose emptiness. Jesus taught, 'Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking' (Matthew 6:7). James warned that the tongue, though small, causes great damage when uncontrolled (3:5-6).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature frequently contrasted the wise person's measured speech with the fool's verbal diarrhea. Egyptian instruction texts counseled silence and careful speech. Proverbs repeatedly addresses speech: 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise' (10:19). Mediterranean cultures valued rhetoric highly—Greco-Roman education

centered on persuasive speaking. However, biblical wisdom prioritizes substance over volume, sincerity over eloquence. Jewish liturgical tradition developed fixed prayers to avoid rambling presumption before God. Jesus modeled brief, focused prayer (Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13; John 17). Reformed tradition emphasized simplicity in worship against medieval proliferation of ceremonies and verbose prayers.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How much of your speech—whether in prayer, conversation, or public discourse—is driven by anxiety to fill silence rather than genuine substance?
2. What spiritual practices could help you cultivate thoughtful brevity rather than foolish verbosity before God and others?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	בָּא	הַחֵל וּם	בָּר ב	עֲנֵי	וּק וּל	כֶּס יל
H3588	cometh	For a dream	is known by multitude	of business	voice	and a fool's
	H935	H2472	H7230	H6045	H6963	H3684
			בָּר ב			דְּבָרִים:
			is known by multitude			of words
			H7230			H1697

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 15:2 (Parallel theme): The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Proverbs 10:19 (Word): In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Job 11:2 (Word): Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?

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