

Ecclesiastes 7:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:

Analysis

I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom (סבָּותִי)—sabboti ani velibbi lada'at velatur uvaqesh chokhmah vecheshbon)—three verbs intensify the search: lada'at (to know), latur (to explore/investigate), uvaqesh (to seek). The term cheshbon means 'reckoning' or 'reason.' **And to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness** (וְלִדְעַת רְשָׁעָה קְסֵל וְהַסְּכָלוֹת הַוְּלָלוֹת) —recognizing evil (resha), folly (kesel), foolishness (siklut), and madness (holelot).

Despite wisdom's elusiveness (verses 23-24), Qoheleth persisted in rigorous investigation—he 'turned' (sabboti, suggesting comprehensive examination from every angle) both himself and his heart toward the quest. The pairing chokhmah vecheshbon (wisdom and reason/accounting) indicates systematic analysis. But notably, his search included understanding resha kesel (the wickedness of folly)—recognizing evil requires intentional study, not just naive assumptions. The progression from kesel (folly) to siklut (foolishness) to holelot (madness) traces sin's degenerative path. Romans 1:21-22 describes identical progression: 'claiming to be wise, they became fools.'

Historical Context

Solomon's comprehensive investigations (1 Kings 4:32-34) included natural sciences, poetry, proverbs, and moral philosophy—arguably history's most ambitious intellectual project. Yet even this couldn't produce absolute wisdom.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

James 2:17 – Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How seriously are you engaged in the pursuit of wisdom versus passively accepting cultural assumptions?
2. What does it mean to intentionally study 'the wickedness of folly'—understanding evil without participating in it?
3. How can you balance rigorous intellectual pursuit with humble recognition of wisdom's limits?

Interlinear Text

ובק ש ולת ור ולד עת אן י סב ותִי

I applied H589 **mine heart** H3820 **of things and to know** H3045 **and to search** H8446 **and to seek out** H1245

כ סל ר שע מקם ה ולד עת וחשך זו

wisdom and the reason of things and to know the wickedness of folly

הolloway • ספראן וט

even of foolishness and madness

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 10:13 (Parallel theme): The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

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