



The Holy Prophets Daniel, David and Solomon (Russia, 15th century)

MEDITATIONS ON DEATH FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Wisdom of Sirach (The Book of Ecclesiasticus)

No matter the wrong, do no violence to your neighbor.
Do not walk the path of arrogance.
How can dust and ashes be proud? Even in life, the human body decays.
A long illness baffles the physician; the king of today will die tomorrow.
When a man dies, he inherits corruption: maggots, vermin and worms.

- *The Wisdom of Sirach 10:6-7,9-11*

Remember that death does not tarry;
nor have you been told the grave's appointed time.
Do good to your friends before you die
and reach out and give to them as much as you can.
All living beings become old like a garment.
The age-old law is this: all must die.
As with the leaves that grow on a vigorous tree: one falls off and another sprouts,
so are the generations of flesh and blood: one dies and another is born.
All man's works will perish and decay
and the one who made it will pass away with it.

- *The Wisdom of Sirach 14:12-13, 17-19*

The sum of our days is great if it reaches a hundred years.
Like a drop of sea water, like a grain of sand,

so are these few years among the days of eternity.
This is why the Lord is patient with us and showers us with His mercy.
He sees and understands that our end is miserable
and so He forgives us all the more.

- *The Wisdom of Sirach 18:7-10*

Remember your last days and set enmity aside.
Remember death and decay and cease from sin!

- *The Wisdom of Sirach 28:6*

O death, how bitter the thought of you to the one at peace among possessions,
who has nothing to worry about and is prosperous in everything
and still vigorous enough to enjoy food.

O death, how welcome is your sentence to one who is needy and failing in strength,
worn down by age and anxious about everything,
with no more sight and vanished hope.

Do not fear death's decree for you.

Remember, it embraces both those before and those after you.

Thus God has ordained for all living beings.

Why then should you reject the will of the Most High?

- *The Wisdom of Sirach 41:1-4*



King Solomon and the Prophet Ezekiel (Russia, 15th century)

The Wisdom of Solomon

God did not make death nor does He delight in the death of the living.

- The Wisdom of Solomon 1:13

God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of His own eternity.

But through the devil's envy death entered the world

and those who are his possession experience it.

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment will touch them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died

and their departure was thought to be a disaster,

and their going from us to be their destruction,

but they are at peace.

- The Wisdom of Solomon 2:23-24; 3:1-3

The righteous, though they die before their time, will find rest.

Length of days is not what makes age honorable,

nor are number of years the true measure of life.

Understanding: this is a man's gray hair.

A blameless life: this is a ripe old age.

Yet, people look on, uncomprehending.

It does not enter their heads that grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord

and that He watches over His saints.

- The Wisdom of Solomon 4:7-9, 15

The righteous live forever and their reward is with the Lord.

The Most High takes care of them.

Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem

from the hand of the Lord.

- The Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16



The Holy Prophet Elijah

The Book of Psalms

I was overcome with anxiety.
The more I pondered, the more troubled I became and could not keep from asking,
Lord, how long will I live? When will I die?
Let me know the measure of my days.
How fleeting my life is!
My lifetime is as nothing in Your sight!
Surely everyone living is no more than a puff of wind, no more than a shadow.

- Psalm 39:3-6



A person can never redeem himself. No one can pay God the price for his life because the ransom for a human life is too high.

What a man could pay would never be enough to keep him from the grave, to let him live forever.

Remember this: even wise men die, as well as foolish and stupid men. They will leave all their wealth to others. Their graves become their homes forever, their

dwelling place to all generations. A man's greatness cannot keep him from death; he will still die like the animals. But God will rescue me. He will save me from the power of death.

Do not be upset when a man becomes rich, when his wealth increases.
He cannot take it with him when he dies; his wealth cannot go with him to the grave.

- Psalm 49:7-12;15-17

Lord, a thousand years to You are like one day, like yesterday already gone.
We are no more than a short hour in the night.
We last no longer than a dream.
We are like weeds that sprout in the morning, that grow and burst into bloom.
In the evening they dry up and die.
Our years come to an end like a sigh.
The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong.

Yet all they bring us is sorrow and trouble.
Life is soon over and we are gone.
Teach us how short our life is that we may become wise.
- *Psalm 90:4-6, 9-10, 12*

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.
- *Psalm 116:15*

Lord, what is man that You notice him?
Mere man, that you pay attention to him?
He is like a puff of wind and his days no more than a passing shadow.
- *Psalm 144:3-4*

The Book of Ecclesiastes

The living should always remind themselves that death is waiting for us all.
A wise person thinks about death.
No one can keep from dying or put off the day of death.
This is a battle that we cannot escape; we cannot cheat our way out.
- *Ecclesiastes 7:2b, 8:8*

Be grateful for every year that you live!
No matter how long you live, remember that you will be dead much longer!
- *Ecclesiastes 11:8*

The Book of Ezekiel

The Lord God said: Do you think that I enjoy seeing an evil man die?
No, I would rather see him repent and live!
- *Ezekiel 18:23*

The Book of Isaiah

Proclaim that all mankind is like grass; they last no longer than wild flowers.
Grass withers and flowers fade when the Lord sends the wind blowing over them.
People are no more enduring than grass. Yes, the grass withers and flowers fade but
the Word of the Lord endures forever.
- *Isaiah 40: 6b-8*