Wisdom of Solomon: Kohelet Week 8: Our Emotional Reaction to Hevel and Amal

R' Mordechai Torczyner – torczyner@torontotorah.com



The Frustration

1. Ruach raah Shoftim 9:23, Shemuel I 16:14

2. Rashi, Commentary to Kohelet 1:14

"חתו" (ישעיה ח) "רועו עמים וחתו"

A broken spirit, as in Yeshayahu 8:9, "Join together, nations, and be crushed."

3. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Kohelet 1:14

4. Everything leads to ruach raah

- 1:14, 2:17
- 1:17
- 2:11, 2:22, 4:4, 4:6
- 2:26
- 4:!6
- 6:9

5. The contradictions of kaas

What produces it?
1:18, 7:9, 2:23, 5:16

Is it bad for you? 7:3, 11:10

6. Talmud, Shabbat 30b

7. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Kohelet 7:3

אשים שמות להם למען לא אאריך בתואר כל אחת. ויהיה השם הנפש המתאוה לאכול ולשמוח וחשק המשגל "נפש", ויהיה שם נפש בעלת ההרגשה המבקשת שררה וגדולה "רוח", ויהיה שם נפש החכמה "נשמה", ג"כ חלקם רבינו סעדיה גאון ז"ל.

וידוע כי בהתגבר הנפש תחלש הנשמה ואין לה כח לעמוד לפניה בעבור היותה גוף וכל יצריו עוזרים אותה, על כן המתעסק באכילה ושתיה לא יחכם לעולם. ובהתחבר הנשמה עם הרוח תנצחנה הנפש, אז תפקחנה מעט עיני הנשמה להבין חכמות הגויות, לכן לא תוכל לדעת החכמות העליונות בעבור כח הרוח המבקשת שררה, והיא המולידה הכעס...

I will set names for them so that I will not go on at length in describing each one. The spirit which desires to eat, rejoice, and desires sexuality is *nefesh*. The spirit which feels and seeks power and greatness is *ruach*. And the spirit of *chochmah* is *neshamah*. Rav Saadia Gaon also split them up.

And it is known that when the *nefesh* becomes great then the *neshamah* becomes weak, and it lacks strength to stand before it, because it is a body and all of the *yitzrim* help [the *nefesh*]. Therefore, one who is involved in eating and drinking will never become wise. And when the *neshamah* joins with the *ruach* then they defeat the *nefesh*. Then the eyes of the *neshamah* are opened a little, to understand the *chochmah* of physicality. Therefore it cannot know the higher *chochmah*, because of the strength of the *ruach* that seeks power, and that produces *kaas*...

Satisfaction

8. Appearances of simchah in Kohelet

Multiple times in 2:1-11
The failed attempts to find satisfaction in this-worldly pursuits

2:26 Gd gives simchah to good people

• 3:12-13 All has a time. Have *simchah*, which is what Gd has given you.

3:22 Best you can do is to have *simchah* with your deeds/portion

• 4:16 The nation won't be *sameiach* with its leader, ever

• 5:18-19 If you have *simchah* in your wealth and work, it's a gift from Gd

• 7:3-4 The fool is in the house of *simchah*; the sage is in the house of mourning

9 8:15 Just be happy in your Gd-given *amal*

• 9:7 Be sameiach in your feast, Gd has accepted your deeds

• 10:18-19 Work to get bread and wine and money and you will find *simchah*

• 11:8-9 Eat drink, and be merry, and you will be judged for it

9. Similar terms

• Nefesh Tov, Lev Tov 2:24, 9:7, but not 7:3

Schok

Emotional stateOvert expression2:2, 10:193:4, 7:6

10. The apparent contradictions 2:26 and 9:7 vs. 7:3-4 and 11:8-9

11. Talmud, Shabbat 30b

12. The world is not a satisfying place 2:1-11, 11:8-9

13. But simchah does happen

- 10:19
- 2:26, 3:12-13, 5:18-19, 8:15

14. Prof. Robert Gordis, Koheleth: the man and his world, pg. 127

All that is certain is that man has an innate desire for happiness. Since Gd has created man, He has also created this impulse. It thus becomes clear that Gd's fundamental purpose for mankind is the furthering of man's pleasure.

15. Be sameach, don't pursue simchah

• Be in that state 3:12-13, 3:22, 8:15

• Don't pursue it 7:3-4

16. Rashi, Commentary to Kohelet 8:15

כל מי שאינו שמח בחלקו ושטוף אחר הממון בא לידי עבירות גזל ואונא' ורבית, ושאינו שמח בחלקו לענין אהבת אשתו שטוף אחרי הנשים להרהר אחרי אשה איש:

Anyone who is not *sameiach* in his portion and who is consumed with pursuing money comes to transgressions of theft, *onaah* and usury. Anyone who is not *sameiach* in his portion regarding love of his wife is consumed with pursuing women, contemplating married women.

17. Rashi, Commentary to Kohelet 9:7

אבל אתה הצדיק שכבר רצה הקב"ה מעשיך הטובים ותזכה לעולם הבא לך אכול בשמחה:

But you are the righteous person whose good deeds Gd has accepted, and you will merit the next world, go eat in *simchah*.

18. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Kohelet 3:12-13

הזכיר פעם שנית זה הענין בעבור העתים, והענין הנה דבר העתים לכל דבר לעלות אל עושר או לרדת ממנו ועליו אין להוסיף וממנו אין לגרוע על כן אין לגרוע על כן במותו: שיחיה חיים טובים או יהיה פירושו שיעשה טוב בחייו שיקבל עליו שכר טוב במותו: שיחיה חיים טובים או יהיה פירושו שיעשה טוב בחייו שיקבל עליו שכר טוב במותו: It mentioned this a second time because of the "times" (3:1-11). The topic here is the matter of the "times" for everything to ascend to wealth or to descend from it, and one cannot add to it or subtract from it. Therefore, there is nothing good for the one who struggles other than to find simchah in his portion or his wealth, to do good in his lifetime, living a good life, or it means to do good in his life to receive good reward in his death.

19. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Kohelet 8:14-15

יש צדיקי' שמגיע אליהם מה שהיה ראוי להגיע לרשעים על מעשיהם והפך הדבר, וכאשר ראיתי זה אמרתי הכל הבל... אז שבחתי את השמחה כי אין טוב לאדם רק האכילה והשתיה...

There are righteous people who receive that which the wicked should receive for their deeds, and the opposite. And when I saw that I said that all was *hevel*... Then I praised *simchah*, for the only good thing for a person is to eat and drink...

20. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Kohelet 9:7

"לך אכול" - זה דבור לב בני האדם והוא הוללות...

"Go eat" - This is the speech of the heart of people, and it is emptiness...