



Kohelet and Ambition
Tishrei In A Day
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This event is dedicated in memory of Ben Lax ז"ל, דב בן מרדכי ז"ל,
by Michael and Marsha Lax
May his neshamah benefit from our community's learning

1. Ecclesiastes 1:2

קהלת א':ב'

Utter futility!—said Koheleth— Utter
futility! All is futile!

הַבָּל הַבָּלִים אָמַר קֹהֶלֶת הַבָּל הַבָּלִים הַכֹּל הַבָּל:

2. Ecclesiastes 1:4

קהלת א':ד'

One generation goes, another comes, But
the earth remains the same forever.

דֹּר הַלֵּךְ וְדֹר בָּא וְהָאָרֶץ לְעוֹלָם עֹמֶדֶת:

3. Ecclesiastes 1:9

קהלת א':ט'

Only that shall happen Which has
happened, Only that occur Which has
occurred; There is nothing new Beneath
the sun!

מִה־שֶׁהָיָה הָיָה וְשֶׁהָיָה וְשֶׁנֶּעֱשָׂה הָיָה שֶׁיֵּעָשֶׂה
וְאֵין כֵּל־חֲדָשׁ תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:

4. Ecclesiastes 1:14

קהלת א':י"ד

I observed all the happenings beneath the
sun, and I found that all is futile and
pursuit of wind:

רָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים שֶׁנֶּעֱשׂוּ תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וְהִנֵּה הַכֹּל הַבָּל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ:

5. Shabbat 30b:3

שבת ל' ב:ג'

Since contradictions in Ecclesiastes were
mentioned, the Gemara cites additional
relevant sources. **Rav Yehuda, son of**
Rav Shmuel bar Sheilat, said in the

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה בְּרִיָּה דְרַב שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר שִׁילַת
מִשְׁמִיָּה דְרַב: בְּקִשּׁוֹ חֲכָמִים לְגַנוּז סֵפֶר קֹהֶלֶת
מִפְּנֵי שֶׁדִּבְּרִיו סוֹתְרִין זֶה אֶת זֶה.

name of Rav: The Sages sought to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes and declare it apocryphal **because its statements contradict each other** and it is liable to confuse its readers.

6. Ecclesiastes 1:1

The words of Koheleth son of David, king in Jerusalem.

קהלת א':א'

דברי קהלת בן־דוד מלך בירושלם:

7. Rashi on Ecclesiastes 1:1:2

Koheles. [He was called Koheles] because he gathered [=קהל much wisdom, and similarly, elsewhere [Scripture] calls him, “Agur Bin Yokeh,” because he gathered אגר all the wisdom and spewed וְהִקְיָא it out, and some say that he would say all his words in public assembly [=בקהל].

רש"י על קהלת א':א':ב'

קהלת. על־שם שקהל חכמות הרבה, וכן במקום אחר קורוהו אגור בן־יכה, שאגר כל־החכמה והקיאָה ויש אומרים שהיה אומר כל־דבריו בקהל:

8. Deuteronomy 31:10-12

(10) And Moses instructed them as follows: Every seventh year, the year set for remission, at the Feast of Booths, (11) when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place that He will choose, you shall read this Teaching aloud in the presence of all Israel. (12) Gather the people—men, women, children, and the strangers in your communities—that they may hear and so learn to revere the LORD your God and to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching.

דברים ל"א:י"י-י"ב

(י) ויצו משה אותם לאמר מקץ שבע שנים במעד שנת השמיטה בתג הסכות: (יא) בבוא כל־ישראל לראות את־פני ה' אלקיך במקום אשר יבחר תקרא את־התורה הזאת נגד כל־ישראל באזניהם: (יב) הקהל את־העם האנשים והנשים והטף וגרה אשר בשעריך למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ויראו את־ה' אלקיכם ושמרו לעשות את־כל־דברי התורה הזאת:

9. Ecclesiastes 2:11

Then my thoughts turned to all the

קהלת ב':י"א

ופגיתני אני בכל־מעשי שעשנו ידי ובעמל שעמלתי

fortune my hands had built up, to the wealth I had acquired and won—and oh, it was all futile and pursuit of wind; there was no real value under the sun!

לַעֲשׂוֹת וְהָיָה הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ וְאִין יִתְרוֹן
תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ:

10. R' Yaakov Medan

Kohelet argues over and over again that amassing wealth is not a worthy objective. It does not lead to true happiness, and a more worthy objective should be sought. Similarly, leaving one's permanent home for a *sukka*, a temporary dwelling, expresses this idea of abhorring property, or at least reducing its weight in the order of one's priorities.

11. Ecclesiastes 7:6

For the levity of the fool is like the crackling of nettles under a kettle. But that too is illusory;

קהלת ז':ו'

כִּי כְקוֹל הַסִּירִים תַּחַת הַסִּיר כֵּן שִׁחֻק הַכֶּסֶל
וְגַם־זֶה הֶבֶל:

12. Genesis 4:1

(1) Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD."

בראשית ד':א'

(א) וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד
אֶת־קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קִנִּיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־ה'.

13. Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

(1) Send your bread forth upon the waters; for after many days you will find it. (2) Distribute portions to seven or even to eight, for you cannot know what misfortune may occur on earth. (3) If the clouds are filled, they will pour down rain on the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, the tree will stay where it falls. (4) If one watches the wind, he will never sow; and if one observes the clouds, he will never reap. (5) Just as you do not know how the lifebreath passes into the

קהלת י"א:א'-ו'

(א) שְׁלַח לַחֲמֶה עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם כִּי־כָרֵב הַיָּמִים
תִּמְצָאֲנֻהוּ (ב) תִּן־חֶלֶק לְשִׁבְעָה וְגַם לְשִׁמוֹנָה כִּי לֹא
תֵדַע מַה־יְהִי רָעָה עַל־הָאָרֶץ (ג) אִם־יִמְלְאוּ
הָעָבִים גֶּשֶׁם עַל־הָאָרֶץ יִרְיָקוּ וְאִם־יִפּוֹל יַעַץ בַּדְּרוֹם
וְאִם בַּצָּפוֹן מִקוֹם שִׁיפּוֹל הָעָץ שָׁם יִהְיֶה (ד) שִׁמֶר
רוּחַ לֹא יִזְרַע וְרָאָה בַּעֲבִים לֹא יִקְצוֹר (ה) כַּאֲשֶׁר
אֵינָהּ יוֹדֵעַ מַה־דֶּרֶךְ הָרוּחַ כַּעֲצָמִים בְּבֶטֶן הַמַּלְאָה
כֹּכָה לֹא תֵדַע אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹקִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה
אֶת־הַכֹּל: (ו) בִּבְקֶרֶךְ יִזְרַע אֶת־זֶרְעוֹ וְלַעֲרֹב אֶל־תִּנָּח
יָדוֹ כִּי־אֵינָהּ יוֹדֵעַ אִי זֶה יִקְשֹׁר הַזֶּה אוֹיָהּ
וְאִם־שִׁנִּיתָם כְּאַחַד טוֹבִים:

limbs within the womb of the pregnant woman, so you cannot foresee the actions of God, who causes all things to happen. (6) Sow your seed in the morning, and don't hold back your hand in the evening, since you don't know which is going to succeed, the one or the other, or if both are equally good.

14. Kohelet Rabbah 11:2:1

R' Levi says: Distribute portions to seven - these are the seven days of sukkos, and even eight - this is shimini atzeret

קוהלת רבה י"א:ב:א'

רבי לוי אומר: תן חלק לשבעה, אלו שבעת ימי הסוכה. וגם לשמונה (במדבר כט, לה): ביום השמיני עצרת.

15. R' Yaakov Medan

Indeed, after much soul-searching, Kohelet, along with the reader who is accompanying him, reaches the sense of insecurity of one who will be sowing his field immediately after Sukkot, but does not know whether God will bless it so that it will grow. It is precisely there that Kohelet tries to provide the sower with a sense of security. But this sense of security is not by virtue of his knowing everything. It is precisely by virtue of his lack of knowledge that a force emerges that is stronger than knowledge – the power of faith in God, the life of all worlds, in His lovingkindness and in His mercy.

16. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

(13) The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind: (14) that God will call every creature to account for everything unknown, be it good or bad. The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind.

קהלת י"ב:י"ג-י"ד

(יג) סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האלקים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי יזה כל האדם: (יד) כי את כל מעשה האלקים יבא במשפט על כל נעלם אם טוב ואם רע: סוף דבר הכל נשמע את האלקים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם