

Chag Samayach!

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Houston	6:56	Phoenix	6:03
Jerusalem	6:14	Pittsburgh	6:54
Johannesburg	5:47	Seattle	6:43
Los Angeles	6:27	Sydney	5:36
London	6:33	Tokyo	5:16
Miami	6:56	Toronto	6:52
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Holidays

Succot

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“A lulav that is stolen or dried out is disqualified.” (Tractate Succah 3:1)

One of the unique commandments of the festival of Succot is the requirement to take the four species. The four species are the palm branch, citron,

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KING SOLOMON'S PROVERBS Insecurity

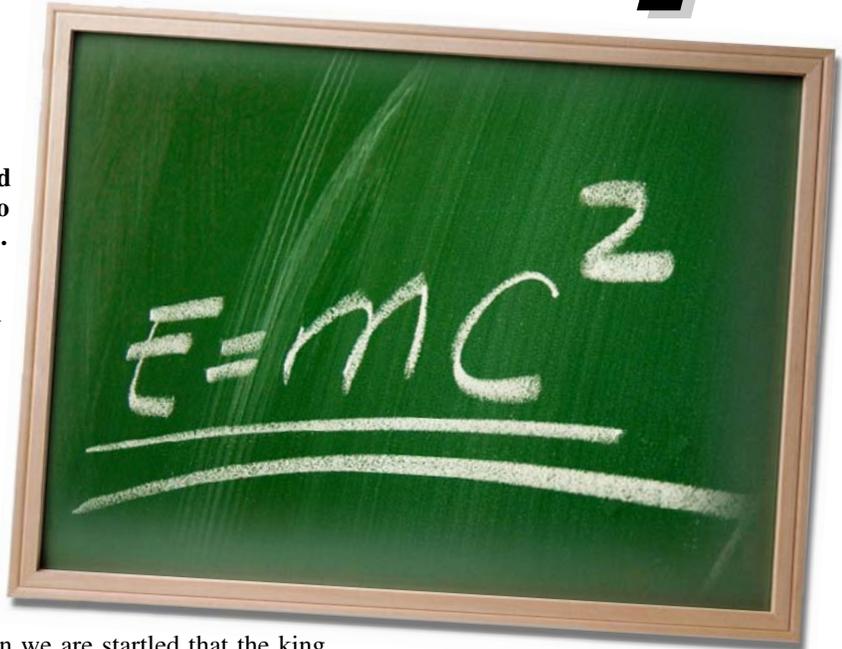
RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

"One who conceals hatred [has] lying lips; and one who brings out slander is a fool". (Proverbs 10:18)

How can King Solomon say that this person has "lying lips"? He didn't say anything, he didn't perform any action whatsoever. But to understand the king's statement, we must understand the underlying motivation of such a lie. For this is truly what King Solomon wished to transmit: the flaws of human personalities. But then we are startled that the king says if a person takes his suggestion, and doesn't conceal the hatred, that he is again criticized. This poor soul can't win! It is interesting how King Solomon describes the second case, one who "brings out" slander. Why not just say one who "speaks" slander? Furthermore, why is the critique that this person is a "fool"? Wherein lies the lack of wisdom? We have a tradition that all elements of a single verse must be connected. Therefore, what is the commonality that ties both statements in this verse?

I feel the first lesson is that inactivity is akin to action. Just because we don't act, this does not mean that we didn't "do" something evil. If one is drowning and I stand idly by, I killed that person, although I didn't act. Similarly, if I hate someone for some evil he performed, and I don't tell him as I should, then I am

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(Succot cont. from pg. 1)

Holidays

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two willow branches, and three myrtle branches. The mishne above explains that a lulav – a palm branch – that is dried-out is unacceptable. The mishne does not provide a reason for this law. However, Rashi explains that we are required to use a lulav that is beautiful, and one that is dried-out does not meet this requirement. What is the source for the requirement that the lulav be beautiful? Rashi suggests that the requirement is derived from the passage, “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.”[1]

Some background information is required to understand Rashi's suggested derivation for this requirement. In Tractate Shabbat, the Talmud explains that there is a general requirement to beautify mitzvot. The Talmud derives this requirement from the passage quoted by Rashi – “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.”[2] The Talmud explains that we should beautify ourselves before Hashem with mitzvot. The Talmud provides specific examples. Our succah should be beautiful; our lulav should be beautiful; our tzitzit – the fringes we are required to place upon the corners of four-cornered garments – should be beautiful; a Sefer Torah should be beautiful.[3] The Talmud is teaching us that we should not merely create a succah that meets the minimum requirements. We should build a beautiful succah. Similarly, when securing other objects that will be used in the performance of a commandment, we should not be satisfied with an object that meets the minimum specifications. We should try to secure an object whose beauty surpasses these minimum requirements.

Rashi's comments seem to indicate that the dried-out lulav is disqualified because it does not meet the general requirement to beautify mitzvot. Tosefot identify a number of difficulties with Rashi's explanation. We will focus on one of these objections. Tosefot notes that the general requirement to beautify mitzvot – derived from “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him” – is not fundamental to fulfilling the commandment. For example, if one builds a succah that meets the essential requirements, but does not fulfill the requirement of beautification of the commandment, one can still fulfill the mitzvah with this succah. Tosefot offer an even more compelling example in order to prove their point. The Talmud explains that the lulav, the willow branches, and the myrtle branches should be bound together. The Talmud explains that this is an expression of the general requirement derived from the passage, “This is my G-d and I will glorify

Him.”[4] Nonetheless, if one does not bind these species together, one fulfills the commandment. Clearly, even in the case of the four species, meeting the requirement of beautification is not essential to fulfilling the basic commandment. Based on these two questions, Tosefot reject Rashi's explanation for the disqualification of the dried-out lulav.[5]

How can Rashi's position be explained? It is clear that Rashi must acknowledge that meeting the general requirement to beautify mitzvot is usually not essential to the fulfillment of the commandment. But, Rashi seems to contend that in this case – the four species – this requirement is raised to a higher level and therefore, it becomes essential. According to Rashi, why is the mitzvah of the four species special?

Are there any other instances in which meeting the requirement for beautification is essential?

There is one other instance in which fulfilling this requirement is essential. The Talmud explains that in writing a Sefer Torah, the name of Hashem must be written with intention. In other words, each time the scribe writes Hashem's name, he must do so with the specific intention to write this name. If this requirement is not fulfilled, the Sefer Torah is rendered invalid. The Talmud asks whether there is a corrective measure that can be taken if the name of Hashem is written without the required intentions. Can the scribe rewrite the name – with the required intention – over the existing letters that were inscribed without the required intention? The Talmud rejects this solution. So, even if the scribe rewrites the name over the unintended original letters, the Sefer Torah is not acceptable. The Talmud continues to explain the basis for its position. It comments that the Sefer Torah must meet the requirement of beautification expressed in the passage “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.” The rewriting of Hashem's name will result in an inconsistent appearance. The rewritten name of Hashem will be darker than the surrounding text. This detracts from the appearance of the text and renders it invalid.[6]

It emerges that in some cases, beautification is essential and, in other cases, the basic mitzvah can be fulfilled without beautification. How can this distinction be explained? What determines whether the requirement of beautification is essential to the performance of the mitzvah?

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik Zt"l suggests an explanation for the law of the Sefer Torah. He explains that the issue of whether beautification is essential is determined by the level of association



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between the object of the mitzvah and Hashem. Most objects used in the performance of a mitzvah are only associated with Hashem, himself, in the sense that they are used to serve Him. A succah is associated with Hashem because we use it to fulfill a mitzvah commanded by Him. Let us compare this to the name of Hashem in a Sefer Torah. The name of Hashem is not associated with Hashem merely because the Sefer Torah is used to serve Hashem. The name is more directly associated with Hashem. It is the word that we use to refer to Hashem. Rav Soloveitchik suggests that the closeness of this association demands a higher degree of requirement for beautification. The requirement of beautification is absolute. It must be met in order for the commandment to be fulfilled.[7]

It should be noted that Rav Soloveitchik's conclusion is very consistent with the passage. The passage tells us that we must glorify Hashem. Although this is accomplished through the beautification of mitzvot, the objective is to glorify Hashem. The degree of association of the object with Hashem determines the level of the requirement of glorification. The name of Hashem is directly associated with Him. It follows that the requirement to glorify Him will express itself most fully – as an absolute requirement – in writing this name in a Sefer Torah. The beautification of other objects used in mitzvot also glorifies Hashem. However, the glorification is less direct. This is because the object is only associated with Hashem because it is used in the performance of a mitzvah. It is not a direct reference to Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik's comments explain the reason for an absolute requirement of beautification of the name of Hashem in a Sefer Torah. How can this reasoning be applied to the lulav? Rav Soloveitchik suggests that in order to answer this question, we must have a clearer understanding of the nature of the mitzvah of the four species.

Maimonides explains that the mitzvah of the four species is fulfilled with their lifting. In other words, when a person lifts up the species, he has fulfilled the commandment. However, the mitzvah is only fulfilled in its entirety when the species are waved during the recitation of the Hallel.[8] Maimonides' comments indicate that there is a fundamental relationship between the Hallel and the four species. What is this relationship? Hallel is composed of praise to Hashem. The association of the four species with Hallel seems to indicate that the waving of the four species is an act of praise to Hashem.

This insight solves another problem. We fulfill the mitzvah of the four species all seven days of the festival. However, the Torah level obligation is limited to the first day. The Sages established the obligation to perform the mitzvah of the other six

days of the festival. However, in the Bait HaMikdash – the Sacred Temple – the Torah level obligation extends to all seven days of the festival. The seven-day obligation in the Bait HaMikdash is expressed in the passage, “And you should rejoice before Hashem your G-d seven days.”[9] Our Sages explained that the term “before Hashem” refers to the Bait HaMikdash. The phrase “you should rejoice” refers to the performance of the mitzvah of the four species. This raises an important question. Why does the passage not make specific reference to the mitzvah of the four species? Why does the passage replace a direct reference with the somewhat vague instruction to rejoice?

Rav Soloveitchik explains that this problem can be resolved based on a comment of Maimonides. Maimonides explains that although we are required to rejoice on all festivals, this requirement is more extensive on Succot. Maimonides explains that this obligation is fulfilled through the special services performed in the Bait HaMikdash all seven days of the festival. In Maimonides' description of these services, the main component is the singing of praises of Hashem.[10] It is clear from Maimonides' comments that rejoicing is primarily expressed through giving praise to Hashem.

Based on Maimonides' comments, we can reinterpret the passage above. It is not merely telling us to rejoice in the Bait HaMikdash for the seven days of the festival. It is instructing us to rejoice through offering praise to Hashem.

As explained above, our Sages understood this requirement - to rejoice through praise - as the source for the mitzvah to perform the mitzvah of the seven species all seven days of the festival in the Bait HaMikdash. This indicates that the mitzvah of the seven species is clearly an expression of praise to Hashem. The Torah refers to the obligation to perform the mitzvah of the four species as an act of rejoicing in order to communicate the basic nature of the mitzvah. The Torah is teaching us that this mitzvah is an act of rejoicing – through offering praise to Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that the nature of the mitzvah of the four species accounts for the absolute requirement of beautification. The mitzvah is essentially to praise Hashem through the four species. It is only reasonable that an object used for the praise of Hashem should fulfill the requirement of, “This is my G-d and I will glorify Him.” It is incomprehensible that an object lacking beauty should be acceptable as a vehicle of praise.[11] This is consistent with the general principle of beautification. The closer an object is associated with Hashem, the more stringent is the requirement. Rav Soloveitchik notes that an object used to praise Hashem is more closely associated with Hashem than an object used in the perfor-

mance of another mitzvah. Therefore, objects used in praise are treated more stringently.

It should be noted that not all requirements of beautification of the four species are absolute. It is required to bind the lulav with the myrtle and willow branches. However, if they are not bound together, the commandment is still fulfilled. Even in the instance of the four species, some beautification requirements are absolute and others are not. Rav Soloveitchik's analysis suggests a basis for this distinction. It follows from his analysis that those beautification requirements that relate to the object used in praise are absolute. The object is not acceptable if it does not meet these requirements. Therefore, the dried out lulav is disqualified. However, it seems that the binding is not a beautification of the objects. Instead, the binding is a beautification because it facilitates the performance of the mitzvah. In other words, the mitzvah can be performed less awkwardly through the binding. Rashi seems to maintain that those beautifications that pertain to the object used in praise are essential. Those that facilitate the activity of taking the lulav – the binding – enhance the performance of the mitzvah; but they are not absolute requirements.

Rav Soloveitchik's analysis provides two important insights into the festival of Succot. First, he provides a basic understanding of the mitzvah of the four species. Rav Soloveitchik demonstrates that this mitzvah is essentially a process of offering praise to Hashem.

Second, Rav Soloveitchik explains the nature of our rejoicing on festivals, and especially on Succot. Our rejoicing is an expression of our appreciation of our relationship with Hashem. For this reason, it is expressed through the offering of praise. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on the Talmud, Mesechet Succah 29a.

[2] Sefer Shemot 15:2.

[3] Mesechet Shabbat 133:b.

[4] Mesechet Succah 11b.

[5] Tosefot, Mesechet Succah 29b.

[6] Mesechet Gitten 20a.

[7] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Harerai Kedem, volume 1, p 222.

[8] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Lulav 7:9-10.

[9] Sefer VaYikra 23:40.

[10] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Lulav 8:12-13.

[11] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Harerai Kedem, volume 1, p 222.

(Insecurity continued from page 1)

Proverbs

literally "lying". This explains why King Solomon says I have lying "lips". My lips have acted equally now, as when I speak a lie. It matters none that I was silent: the corruption of my life of lies is equal, since it is my internal values that lead me in corrupt actions. And whether a liar speaks or remains silent, his values are equally corrupt. This teaches us an important 2nd lesson, that people value the external masqueraded world, over the true, internal world of our minds and hearts.

Lesson 3 is more primary. "Why" does one lie in this case? It is because a person is quite insecure. He fears others not smiling at him, not accepting him, and thereby diminishing the person's self image. If I were to tell the person I hate that he is wrong, he might be quite angry at me. It is this need to maintain a self image of others liking me, that caused me to remain silent. This means that my happiness comes from how I feel others view me. And it doesn't even matter if they "do" feel a certain way or not: all that matters is how I "think" they feel about me. That means that I am living a fantasy. This was suggested by my

friend Adam Frankel, as we discussed this verse over Rosh Hashannah.

This is a clear case of insecurity. Our egos are always seeking satisfaction...to the point that people would rather stay silent towards one who wronged them, and sustain this relationship. It is odd: someone hurts another person. But yet, the hurt party prefers a hurtful relationship with this abusive person, instead of losing their approval. A phenomenon seen in abusive marriages. But this is how far the need for approval goes.

It is this need that also ties together the two statements in this verse. Why is a slanderer called a "fool"? And why does he "bring out" the slander? Why can't he keep his opinions to himself? "Bringing out" the slander is quite telling. One does so, since it satisfies something in him. There is a need. If a person does not speak, he feels his opinions are just that: opinions, or fleeting thoughts with little substantiation. But by speaking, these words now enter the word stage...they are now "real". And therefore, so is my opinion.

People feel that the spoken word partakes of greater reality, than mere thoughts. But why is that? It is because when we speak, it is always "to other people". Again, we see that people greatly value how others respond to them. So when I speak, and others agree, I feel substantiated, because I base my values on others, and not on God.

Now, why are we called fools if we cater to this need of "bringing out" slander? This is because we are not following wisdom and reason, but instead, our emotional needs. King Solomon is attempting to direct his reader at the realization that following emotions, ipso facto, means we do not follow reason. We are thereby fools.

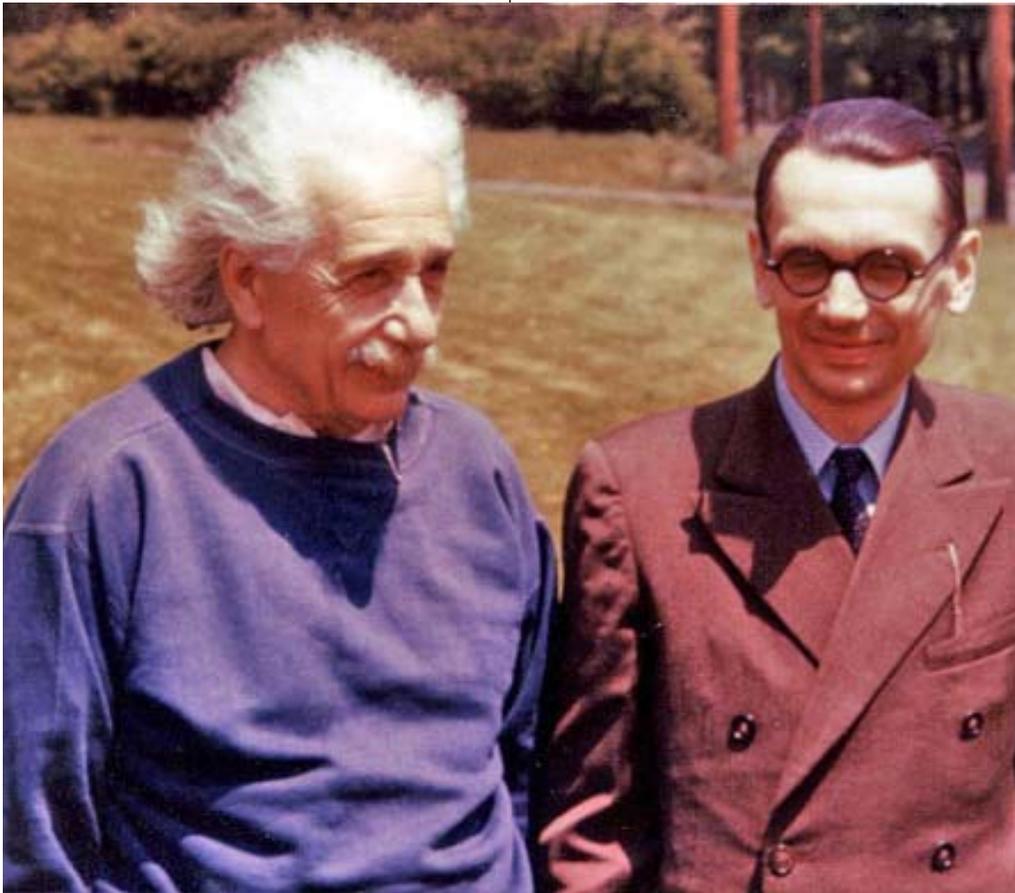
We may also ask why the abusive party performed an abusive act? It was precisely because he estimated his victim as one who cares about what he says. This means that if the victim was one who didn't care for social approval, the abuser would not have abused: he would know the reputation of this person as an independent thinker, not one concerned about the speech of others.

What we should do, is approach our abusers and firmly, but properly, express how their words are wrong, sinful, and hurtful. But we should not slander, as King Solomon teaches.

King Solomon said much with few words. The true Torah life demands a person become independent and seeking only truth: that which appeals to our minds. So real are ideas and truths, that on one occasion when Einstein calculated an eclipse, he did not need to step outside or approach a window so as to witness the physical phenomenon in nature, while all others did responding "Einstein was right". Einstein's truth was based on what his mind perceived. Our exact point.

We must abandon the need for approval, if we are going to progress towards greater truths. For if our insecure needs outweighs truth, we live a life of lies. In fact, when we care only for what is real and true, we have so much less anxiety and stress. Yesterday I saw a sign posted in a store which read, "90% of daily stress comes from how people look at us". If that is true, we've all just learned how to become 90% happier! ■

Einstein & Gödel, Princeton - 1950s



Holidays

What connection exists between living in frail huts, and waving many species of vegetation?



Succot

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In his book entitled *Horeb1*, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained a close relationship between the Succah, and the Etrog and Lulav. I will mention his ideas, followed by my thoughts - stimulated by Rabbi Hirsch.

The Succah, a minimalistic structure, is to focus

man on a minimizing his material lifestyle. This teaches man that pursuit of the physical world is not the goal of our temporary, Earthly existence. The lulav too embodies the correct attitude towards the source of all physical good. We demonstrate our thanks to G-d for His bountiful harvest. We realize G-d alone has complete dominion over the world.

The Talmud states, (Succah 37b) "Why do we wave the Lulav? R. Yochanan said, we wave out and back (horizontally) to the One who owns all four directions on Earth, and we wave the Lulav up and down to the One Who owns heaven and Earth". Rabbi Yochanan - in my opinion - separated the two acts of waving "in/out" from "up/down" to teach us that there are two areas of G-d's dominion which we need to realize: G-d owning all four directions refers to something other than heaven and Earth. We see this clearly, i.e. that He is the Creator of all. This is why we wave up/down. But if up and down waving covers heaven and Earth, i.e., all creation, what is left to recognize about G-d's greatness? I believe it is to emphasize His dominion over man's actions - that G-d has complete knowledge of our travels on Earth (our actions) as alluded to by the "four directions", which is limited to Earthly activity. This subtle difference points us to the realization that there are two distinct areas in which we must attest to G-d's greatness: 1) G-d is omnipotent, He can do all, as He created heaven and Earth, 2) G-d is omniscient, He knows all, as He is aware of all our travels and actions.

Interestingly, these are the two main themes of the High Holiday prayers, "Malchios" (omnipotence), and "Zichronos" (omniscience). Rabbi Yochanan's view is that our waving of the four species on Succos must demonstrate G-d's dominion in all areas; in His creation, and in His government of man.

Why must the Succah be temporal and frail by design? Succah breaks man away from his insecurities regarding his wealth. Man continuously and falsely attempts to compensate for physical insecurity by striving for riches. Man must strive to focus on G-d as his Sole Benefactor, instead of relying on the work of his hands. The drive towards the physical as an ends, removes G-d from man's life. Lulav contrasts Succah by emphasizing the use of the physical for the right reasons. We thank G-d - the Source of our bounty - replacing our faulted view of the physical, with this proper thanks to G-d for providing vegetation. All physical objects that we are fortunate to receive should be used in recogni-

tion of the 'Supplier' of these fruits, and not to reaffirm our own physical strength.

It also makes sense that Succah - not Lulav - is used to demonstrate man's required break from the physical. Man's home is the one object which embodies Earthly permanence,...not so man's food. Therefore, I believe a frail home - a Succah - is used as opposed to fruits - which are consumed objects, and do not afford man the satisfaction of permanence. Since man does not attach himself to fruits as he does his home, the home is from where man must make his break.

Perhaps this is why we also read Koheles (Ecclesiastes) on Succos. In this philosophical masterpiece, King Solomon presents the correct philosophy for man, in relation to work, wealth, happiness, sadness, and primarily, in accomplishments. King Solomon states numerous times, "what extra is there for man in all is toil that he toils under the sun?" He even commences his work with his summary, "All is futility of futility...". The Rabbis questioned King Solomon's statement, "How can King Solomon say all is futile, when G-d said in Genesis that the world is very good?" The answer is that Solomon was referring only to the physical as an ends in itself as futile. When G-d said it was good, He meant that as long as it serves only as a 'means' to man's pursuit of wisdom. There is no contradiction between King Solomon and G-d.

In summary, Succah breaks down man's weighty attachment to the physical. Lulav redirects that attachment towards G-d, the source of all our sustenance.

Fulfill the obligations of this Succos holiday. Adhere to the commands of eating, drinking, and certainly sleeping in the succah, even light naps. Make the scach (Succah covering) from detached plant life such as reeds, wood, or bamboo, so you may gaze through the gaps at the stars as you lie on your bed - recognizing your Creator, the Creator of the universe. Wave the lulav and esrog in all four horizontal directions demonstrating G-d's exclusive dominion over all man's affairs. Wave the lulav upwards and downwards, demonstrating G-d's exclusive creation of that which is up and down - heaven and Earth.

By living in these frail huts, may we strip ourselves of our own false security, and may our waving of the lulav and esrog redirect our security towards the One who provides a bountiful life - realizing that our ultimate protection and security comes from G-d. ■

Koheles



Koheles

The book of Koheles (Ecclesiastes) was authored by King Solomon, who was “wiser than all men...” (Kings I, 5:11). He wrote this book with Divine Inspiration. In it, he analyzes which is the best philosophy for man to follow. The Rabbis intended on hiding his book. They were concerned, lest the masses misconstrue King Solomon’s intent, and his words be gravely understood in a contradictory or heretical sense. However, the very fact that King Solomon wrote in such a fashion should draw our intrigue. As he could have written in a clear fashion, his purposeful, cryptic and seemingly contradictory style must carry its own lesson, aside from the underlying content.

Why did King Solomon write this way, and in this book only? (In contrast to Proverbs, for example.) Perhaps, when presenting a work on the correct philosophy, King Solomon wished to expose the false philosophies. To do so, he verbalizes the popular and “natural” base emotions. On the surface, it appears as though such verbalization is an endorsement. It may sound as though the King is vocalizing his own views. But in fact, he is not. He verbalizes false views so they may be exposed. Fallacy is not left unanswered, with no correction. King Solomon enunciates folly, and exposes the errors contained in these falsehoods, finally teaching the true philosophy.

Why did the Rabbis say they wished to store away this book of Koheles? Was it simply an expression of concern? Or, perhaps, this was an intentionally publicized sentiment. That is, the Rabbis wished to express this very concept; Koheles is in fact a series of statements, which only ‘sound’ like support for heresy. By making such a statement, the Rabbis meant to teach that one must understand that portions of this book must be read

as articulations of false ideas, not a support of them, and solely for the purpose of exposing their fallacy.

Pay careful attention to King Solomon’s commencing words, with them, he sets the stage for the rest of his work. If King Solomon instructs us on a correct philosophy, he imparts basic ideas on psychology. By doing so, he enables us to determine if a philosophy suits our design. Without knowledge of human psychology, we have no means to judge a philosophy as deviating or conforming to man’s design.

Koheles

Student’s notes and embellishments based on lectures by Rabbi Israel Chait

1:1) “The words of Koheles, son of David, king in Jerusalem.”

King Solomon wished to inform us of his qualifications to expose truths herein. “Koheles” is a derivative from the root “kahal”, meaning, a group. He grouped, or gathered much knowledge. He was the son of a wise man, King David. As “king”, King Solomon had all at his disposal to gather to himself the wise of his generation. His ideas were tested against the best minds; hence, his conclusions deserve earnest attention. “Jerusalem” was the seat of wisdom. (Sforno)

We are informed of the King’s outstanding circumstances to study Torah and life, and impart his refined findings.

1:2) “Futility of futilities, says Koheles, futility of futilities, all is futile.”

If we count the referred number of “futilities”, we derive the number “7”. How? Each word “futile” in the singular indicates 1, and each in the plural, 2. So the phrase, “futility of futilities” contains 3 references. Seven “futilities” are derived by adding all instances in this verse. 7 is indicative of the 6 days of Creation plus G-d’s rest on the seventh day. King Solomon associates futility with the Creation! The Rabbis asked, “How can Solomon deny what G-d said, “and G-d saw all that He made, and behold it (Creation) was very good?” (Gen. 1:31) But King Solomon did not suggest Creation is futile. His intent is that when Creation is not used properly, only then it is futile. But when used properly, G-d is correct, “it is very good.”

So we must ask, “when is Creation not used properly, and when is it used properly? Additionally, aside from numerics, this verse must make sense in its plain reading. What is disturbing is what King Solomon means by “futility of futilities”. I understand what a ‘futility’ is; if someone seeks something vain, or improper, we would call this a futility. But what is the additional futility to which King Solomon refers to as “futility of futilities”? What can be futile about a futility?

Rabbi Chait once answered this question with novel insight; King Solomon’s second “futility” is referring to “fantasy”. Not only is the pursuit of money (for itself) a futile endeavor, but also one’s fantasy about his plan - before he acts - is an additional futility. “Fantasizing” about any material pleasure is what King Solomon refers to. Not only is the acquisition a futility, but one’s energies being used for fantasy prior to the acquisition is an additional futility. King Solomon teaches that man doesn’t simply follow an emotional attraction, while his thoughts are blank. No. Man acts out his emotion as the last step in a series. Man’s first step is his arousal; he then conjures up a picture-perfect fantasy. He imagines the abundant wealth and possessions he will soon acquire. But this is all fantasy. It is a futile use of his energies, which could have been used to study what true happiness comes from. This is valuable time lost. Fantasizing is a futility, in addition to the actual amassing of wealth.

Our first question is “when is the physical an evil or a good?” It is a good, provided one uses it as a means for a life of wisdom. All was created for the sake of man’s search for truth. If man uses any part of Creation without this goal in mind, then the object forfeits its goal, and so does man. Of course, man has emotions, and they must be satisfied on some level. But satisfaction is so man is content enough to live a life as a philosopher. Torah does not prohibit overindulgence, but it also is not praised. “Kedoshim tihiyu”, “Sanctified shall you be” teaches that even with what is permissible, man should curb his indulgence.

1:3) “What additional (gain) is there to man, in all his labor that he labors under the sun?”

What is King Solomon referring to here? Rashi explains this to mean “earnings plus extra”. What “extra” is Rashi referring to? Is King Solomon criticizing one who labors to eat? This cannot be. But we do notice that he does not say “gain”, but

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“additional gain”. What is additional, over and above the earnings man receives for his labor? We must also ask a more primary question: what is so important about this question, that the King started his book with it?

One may view King Solomon’s verse as his own question. But you may also read it as the King’s verbalization of other peoples’ question. Meaning, King Solomon is merely reiterating the futile thoughts on man’s mind, not his own. King Solomon was exceedingly wise, let us not make the error of assuming his thoughts matched ours. In this verse, King Solomon points to an emotional need in man. This need is the “extra” which man seeks out, in addition to his earnings. What is this “extra”? It may be a feeling of honor one desires, so he works hard for decades to rise above others for this attention. He may wish to be viewed as a sophisticate, so he dons certain clothing and dines at exclusive locations. But all these needs, emotional projections, or self-images, are of no use to one seeking the correct life. King Solomon correctly states, “what extra is there?” King Solomon teaches that man should be anchored in reality, and not strive to concoct a plan for achieving imagined goals. Honor is in one’s mind, as is one’s self-image of a sophisticate. Living in fantasy is futile. Only what is real, is worthwhile. Don’t seek the “extra”, the imagined self-images.

Rabbi Chait once taught that King Solomon is exposing our base drive, underlying all others; the need for “accomplishment”. Man is seeking to accomplish much in his life. Why? After one’s needs are met, it appears that further accomplishment serves man’s desire to remove insecurity from himself. Too often though, a realistic security grows into an abundance of wealth, which is never spent. This too is yet another emotion, but it is the primary, propelling force in man leading him to other imagined goals. This need to “accomplish” takes on many faces.

“Under the sun”: The fantasy of immortality is essential, if one is to create his other fantasies. If we knew we were dying, we could not invest our energies into amassing wealth. We would admit our time is ending. The reality of our mortality would be too stark, and it would suck the air from our sails. For this reason, King Solomon ends this verse with “under the sun.” He thereby teaches that the remedy to a life of fantasy is to contemplate that we have a ‘term’. “Under the sun” means, on Earth, a place that is temporal. This dose of reality helps one to temper his energies, and accept his mortality. With this reality factor, man will not so quickly indulge his fantasies. He

will be safeguarded to keep his attention to what is truly real - G-d’s wisdom is eternal. In truth, man should be attached to what is eternal - G-d and His wisdom.

Sforno writes on this verse, (1:3) “And he (King Solomon) said this on man’s work under the sun in matters which are transient. For what use is this, that it is fitting for an intelligent being to strive at all to achieve (these matters)?” Sforno teaches that regarding matters, which are transient and temporal, man must not invest any time into them. It is a waste.

1:4) “A generation comes, and a generation goes, and the land eternally stands.”

What is the relevance of a “generation”, and why do I need to know that one comes and goes? As we read through the book of Koheles, we must determine whether a given verse is King Solomon’s advice, or is it his voicing of the ignorant opinions of others. The verses will be either King Solomon’s proper instruction, or his exposure of man’s destructive emotional counsel. Be sensitive to the issues, and be mindful that this book was written by our wisest sage, and only after he analyzed man’s behavior. Remember; he was King David’s son, he was king, he had all the sages at his disposal to discuss and arrive at decisive, intelligent, and true concepts.

Clearly, with this verse, King Solomon attacks the core of the immortality fantasy, i.e., not only do individuals expire, but also so do generations! Individual man is dwarfed by a generation. The insignificance of the self is undeniably admitted in the face of “mankind”. And in turn, mankind’s expiration dwarfs one’s individual, immortality fantasy. King Solomon wishes man to undermine this destructive fantasy of immortality. By doing so, man will not find the backdrop necessary for painting elaborate fairy tales for himself. He will be forced to confront reality, and will then be guided only by truth.

“...and the land eternally stands.” If man is to truly accept his own mortality, there must be that which he recognizes “outlives” him. For if all would expire with one’s own death, the immortality fantasy would be replaced with yet another destructive phantasm; the ego. If one was unsure whether the world continued when he was gone, he would thereby feed his ego. Therefore, King Solomon aligns man’s expiration with the realization that the world continues - even without us.

The knowledge that the universe continues without us, is the necessary measuring rod for our mortality. There must be something, to which we may contrast our lifespan, and that is the universe, which “eternally stands”. Contrasting the eternity of the universe to one’s own few decades, man is helped to confront his mortality.

1:5) “And the sun shines, and the sun sets, and unto its place it yearns (to) shine there.”

This is a prime example of the universe’s unrelenting nature. This sentiment substantiates the previous comment that only the world endures. It draws on an example of the most prominent, celestial sphere. We also learn that a created entity, undiluted with extraneous agendas, i.e., the sun, performs perfectly when it functions precisely in line with its nature, designed by G-d. Man would be wise to take this lesson to heart.

But what strikes us is the term “yearns” being applied to an inanimate object. How can the sun “yearn”?

More than others, there is one element that is essential to our understanding of human psychology: the unconscious. This is the ever-functioning but hidden part of our emotional make up. We have many desires, fears, loves, hates, and numerous other emotions, that are completely hidden from our consciousness. We are truly blind to them. These emotions, wishes and fears are manifest in our dreams; they cause our “slips of the tongue”, and continually - from ‘behind the curtain’ - motivate us. If we do not analyze our dreams, and examine our actions and feelings, we lose out greatly. We forfeit our perfection, as we allow these unconscious forces to control us, and not the reverse. Perfection requires one to be in as much control of his actions and opinions as possible. Although many emotions are elusive and remain undetected, simply not reflecting on ourselves is unacceptable.

What is it that “yearns” to shine? What is “shining”? Perhaps King Solomon alludes to this unconscious, which does both; it “rises” and “sets”. It “rises”, as it pushes forth its force into what is in daylight (rising), i.e., consciousness. It also “sets”, as it recedes back into its hidden realm, the unconscious. It “yearns to shine,” means that the unconscious always seek to affect man, who is functioning in a waking state. “Yearning” to shine means that the unconscious forces are relentless in their “desire” to control our actions.

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(Koheles continued from page 7)

Koheles

“And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the coming of dawn”. (Gen. 32:25) The verse says that Jacob was alone, yet he wrestled with someone - a contradiction. Rabbi Chait resolved this contradiction by explaining that Jacob was in fact alone, but was really wrestling with himself; Jacob was the “man”. Jacob was wrestling with his unconscious. “until the coming of dawn”, means that which could not exist in daylight, in consciousness. We see daylight referring to man’s consciousness, and night referring to the unconscious. Jacob was fighting with some internal, unconscious element in his personality, indicated by the struggle ending at daybreak.

I find King Solomon’s selected metaphor revealing; he uses the sun (shemesh) for this lesson. “Shemesh” also means a servant, a “shamash.” Perhaps this is fitting, as the unconscious should serve us, not control us.

1:6) “It travels to the South, and circles to the North, circling, circling, travels the wind, and on its circuit does the wind return.”

If I remember correctly, Rabbi Chait once explained this verse to mean that man continually sets his sights on new ventures. Traveling to the “South or North” means “making plans to accomplish new goals”. He wishes to “get somewhere” in life. But such a path is not favorable. Perhaps we learn that in truth, one only imagines that he is “progressing” when he meets his own, subjective goals. His desire to progress is only progress in his own terms, and not true progress according to Torah perfection. Man wishes to build empires, but in G-d’s eyes, they are meaningless, and in fact, man regresses with such activity. How does King Solomon indicate that such a desire is fruitless? “Circling, circling” describes a repeating pattern. One does not actually change his location, he circles on the same parcel of ground, not moving forward. This rotating activity is akin to one who does not see true progress in his life. Man imagines he progresses with his material successes and plans, but in truth, he keeps going in “circles”.

Here too King Solomon utilizes an appropriate metaphor; the “wind”. We too refer to man’s strength as his wind; “he knocked the wind out of me”, “he lost the wind from his sails”, “he popped your balloon”. King Solomon teaches that man directs his energies towards goals to give us a sense of worth. The underlying need for accomplishment has gone unchecked, and propels him to the “South and the North.” Instead, man should



contemplate that his energies are better used in search of truth, instead of reacting to the unconscious, pushing him to make himself great through empire building, fame and riches. Such actions are the result of the imagination, and not a thought-out philosophy, which exposes such vanity.

1:7) “All the rivers go to the sea, but the sea is not full, to the place where the rivers go, there they return to go.”

“Water” is the perfect object to embody this verse’s lesson, taught by Rabbi Chait. This verse is a metaphor for man’s libido; his energies. This great psychological, reservoir of energy is the cause for the previous verse’s teaching; that man has a great drive to accomplish.

Man’s energies are always “flowing”, and they seek to become “full”. “But the sea is not full”, that is, man does not become fully satisfied. As man’s emotions are satisfied, he again and seeks a new emotional satisfaction. Satisfaction, therefore, is temporary. Where man’s emotions flow, “there they return to go”, i.e., it is an endless process.

“All the rivers go to the sea” indicates that all man’s energies have one focus for that period. Man is usually pulled in one direction, conveyed here by “sea”, one destination. It is interesting that “rivers” are also mentioned in Genesis, also in the commencing chapters. Is there a relationship?

1:8) “All matters are wearying, man is unable to describe them, the eye does not become satisfied in seeing, the ear does not become full from hearing.”

Why are the eye and ear unable to behold their complete sensations? Is King Solomon describing the ineptitude of these organs? Or, perhaps he means to point us towards understanding that element in man, which seeks to “behold all.” The latter would indicate that man has a desire to have complete knowledge in a given field - but he cannot. This desire stems from another need; security. Man wishes to have a complete grasp on matters, otherwise, he feels inept. This wearied state; King Solomon says is due to man’s attempt to secure complete knowledge. Man desires to be secure that he has all the answers. Man is better advised to accept his limited scope of apprehension, than to deny his feeble nature and strive for the impossible. Seeing and hearing are the two major senses used in learning. Being “unable to describe them”, teaches that man wishes to behold wisdom, so much that he can competently discourse on matters - he wishes self sufficiency, the removal of insecurity.

1:9) “That what was, it will be, and what was done, will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.”

What human attitude is King Solomon responding to here? Note that he addresses both the “what”, (things), and “events” (what was “done”). This encompasses all of man’s experiences on Earth: man relates either to objects, or to events, categorized as “space and time”.

King Solomon teaches that man seeks out “novelty”, looking for that which is new in objects, or in events. Why? What satisfaction does man imagine he will experience with something new, or a new event? Rashi correctly writes that in the universe, all has been created during Creation. Nothing afterwards can be created anew. In contrast, new ideas are in fact new to us, and afford enlightenment, and the invigoration that the soul is designed to seek.

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“Novelty” is not an ends in itself, but a sought after ‘cure’ for man’s stagnation. Man inescapably seeks enlightenment, but he seeks it in the physical realm, “under the sun”, the arena which King Solomon critiques. Man will only find the rejuvenating pleasure of novelty in the area of wisdom. All Earthly attempts to fulfill this need will result in dissatisfaction.

Novelty has a funny way of vanishing immediately. Something is “new”, as long as it goes inexperienced. It is a “Catch-22.” Before we attain something, or go somewhere, it is new, but we have yet to enjoy our imagined pleasure. And once we attain it, or get there, it is no longer truly new. How many times have we anticipated arriving at a new destination, only to be disappointed that when we arrive, the novel and alluring element of our vacation, i.e., being “there”, goes unrealized. We are not “there”, because once we get “there”, it is now “here”.

1:10) “There is a thing that you will say, ‘Look at this, it is new’, (but) it was already in history, that was before us.”

This verse seems repetitive. Also, what is the specific “thing” to which King Solomon refers?

Rabbi Chait taught that this verse discusses the emotion of “modernity”. Man wishes to feel that he lives in THE generation. We hear people ridicule ancient societies as backwards. We have electronics; we have something new. We live on the final frontier. We are different than all other generations.

Why do we wish to feel we are the most advanced generation? I believe such an emotion of modernity, attempts to deny mortality. If we live in the most advanced generation, this means, ipso facto, that no other generation may pass us: we will never die.

The cure for the imagined sense of modernity is to realize that others before us experienced what we do. Contemplating that other people have expired with history, forces us to recognize that what we experience as new, will also meet wit the same fate. We must identify with other generations - they have come and gone. We are no different. We too will go the way of the world. This realization, that all mankind faces the same fate, enables man to apply this truth to himself. King Solomon describes the problems and offers correct solutions. He desired the good for all mankind. This good, means knowledge of what is truth, and a dismissal of fallacy.

King Solomon describes so many of man’s pitfalls. Did G-d design man with destructive elements? No, He did not, “and behold it is very good.” He designed us with attitudes and emotions, which are to be studied, and directed towards living an extremely happy existence. “Ki yetzer lave ha-adom ra m’na-urav”, “Mans’ inclinations are evil from youth” (Gen. 8:21) means that only our “inclinations”, not our faculties, are not steered by intelligence initially. They drive towards what is evil and harmful. But with devoted study and self-application of our knowledge, we are well equipped to direct our energies, emotions and attitudes towards the good. Man’s mind is more powerful and convincing than his emotions. With intelligence and proofs, we are fully capable of attaching ourselves to the life outlined in the Torah.

By nature, man wishes to follow what he sees as true and good. This is our inherent design. As we study more and more, we abandon what is false, and naturally follow what is proven as good. Once we see a new idea clearly, we will naturally follow it. All that is required, is to devote many hours daily to study, and endure our research and analysis, until we arrive at decisively, clear and proven opinions.

Man’s drives are only evil from youth. By nature, the emotions have a head start on intelligence. This does not spell inevitable catastrophe. Our continual Torah study will refine our thoughts, to the point, that we see with ultimate clarity, how to use our energies to attain a truly enjoyable and beneficial existence.

1:11) “There is no remembrance to the first ones, and also to the later ones that will be, there will be no remembrance to them, with those that will be afterwards.”

Facing mortality, so clearly spelled out in the previous verse, King Solomon now closes the loop by addressing man’s final hope for mortality; to be memorialized in death. If man cannot achieve immortality in life, he still attempts to secure a memorial for himself. He wishes to go down in history. This fantasy strives at securing some vestige of his existence. But this will not be. How does King Solomon help man abandon such futility? He asks man to recall previous generations, and man cannot, “There is no remembrance to the first ones”. This is an iron-clad argument against hoping for memorialization - it does not happen. King Solomon wisely advances man’s

thoughts to the future, as if to say, “You think YOU will be remembered? Let us see if this happens”. The King’s response: There is no remembrance to the first ones”. It does not happen to them, it will not happen to you, nor to any future generation. Reality is the best teacher, and King Solomon places reality between man’s eyes.



The Verses Defined

- 1. King Solomon’s “Qualifications” to address this topic.**
- 2. “Fantasy”:** The subject of Koheles.
- 3. “Accomplishment”:** Man’s primary fantasy.
- 4. “Immortality”:** The backdrop necessary for fantasy.
- 5. “The Unconscious”:** The source of man’s fantasy life.
- 6. “Progress”:** the goal of accomplishment.
- 7. “Libido”:** Man’s unrelenting energies, seeking satisfaction, and propelling his search for happiness.
- 8. “Independence”:** Mans attempt to remove all insecurities by attempting to grasp complete knowledge.
- 9. “Novelty”:** Where it is, and is not found; an inherent need in man.
- 10. “Modernity”:** Striving for immortality in life.
- 11. “Memorialization”:** Striving for immortality in death.

Verse 11 concludes the first section of Koheles. With G-d’s help, we will continue. ■

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American to save Israeli Solider: How you can partake in this Mitzvah



This summer a 19 year-old Israeli Solider will get a new lease on life due to a selfless gift from Yosef Chiger, of Harrisburg Pennsylvania. Ayelet Katz, of Moshav Be'er Tuvia had been stationed in Tel Nof Air Force Base, where she worked as an assistant to the head of human resources, until she was forced to leave the IDF because of kidney failure and begin fulltime dialysis. Often Israelis in need of kidney transplants wait for years because of the shortage of organs; however with the help of the Halachic Organ Donor Society (HODS) Ayelet will be fortunate to receive an altruistic donation that will allow her to resume a healthy life in a matter of months. Chiger, married and the father of a five-year old daughter, will be traveling to Israel to donate his kidney and thereby giving Ayelet the ability to resume a full and healthy life. It was especially significant to Chiger that she is an Israeli and a solider, and that the transplant means that she will have a long productive life ahead of her.

The transplant is being facilitated by the Halachic Organ Donor Society, which facilitates altruistic kidney donations and educates Jews about organ donation and halacha.

HODS is raising \$15,000 to bring Chiger and his family to Israel. Contributions can sent to the HOD Society at 49 West 45th Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY or via their website at www.hods.org.