

JewishTimes

SUCCOS 5772

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Succos

Succos, Fantasy & Delusion

Seeing Stars

Halacha: Aravos

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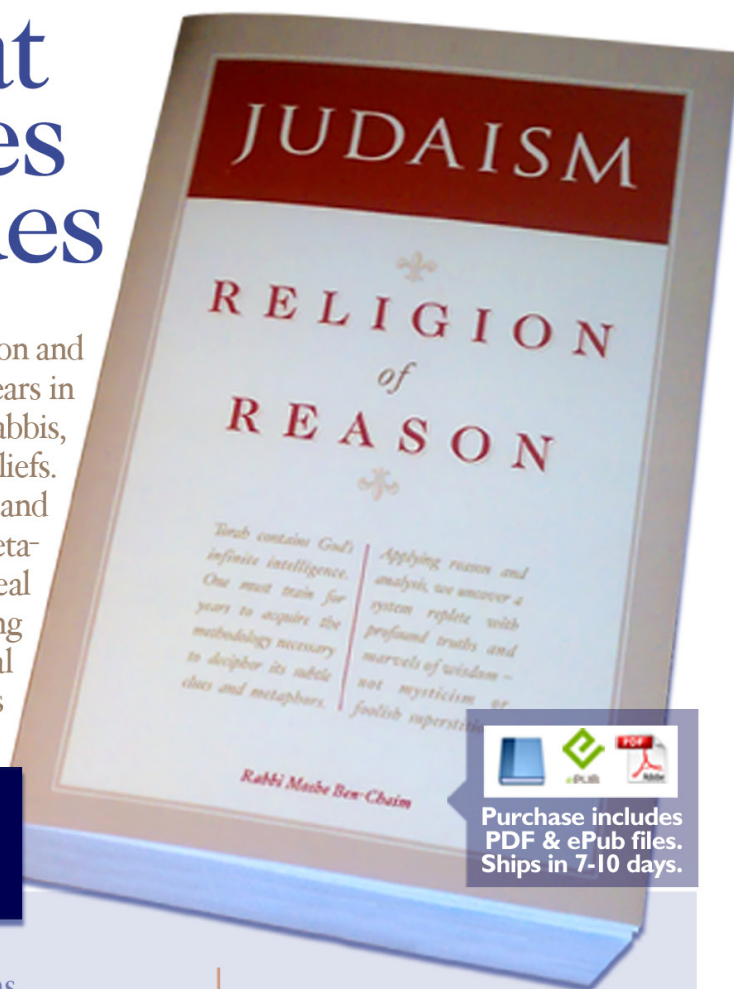
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SUCCOS

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Reader: Can you please explain the relationship of the lulav and etrog, to the succah. On most holidays, there is usually a relationship between the mitzvot and the holiday like matzoh on Pesach, or the succah and Succos. What is the purpose of the lulav and etrog? I am finding it very hard to find any information. Of the many I have spoken to, little information is known. The main response I get is “we do it because we are commanded to by God”. Well this of course is a given, but find it hard to accept as an answer.

Rabbi: In his book entitled Horeb [1] 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 minimalist structure, directs man to minimizing his material attachments; this is not the goal of our temporal, Earthly existence. The lulav too embodies the correct attitude towards the source of all physical good. We demonstrate our thanks to God for His bountiful harvest. We realize God 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 God’s do-

minion which we need to embrace. He is the Creator of all. This is why we wave up/down, referring to the heavens and Earth. There is nothing else, and within this waving, we are admitting that all creations are God's works. There is no one else.

Why do we wave these species "in/out" in all four directions? This refers to something other than heaven and Earth. But if up and down waving covers heaven and Earth, i.e., all creations, what is left to recognize about God's greatness? This waving refers not to creation, but government; His dominion over man's actions. God has complete knowledge and government of our travels on Earth; alluded to by the "four directions". These two wavings teach two distinct areas in which we must attest to God's greatness: 1) God is omnipotent; He can do all, as He created heaven and Earth. 2) God 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 we just read, "Malchyos" (omnipotence), and "Zichronos" (omniscience). Rabbi Yochanan's view is that our waving of the four species on Succos must demonstrate God's dominion in all areas; in His creation, and in His government of man.

Why must the succah be temporary and frail by design? succah breaks man away from his physical security, to redirect him to rely more on God, than on creation. God wishes that man accept Him as his true benefactor; not solely relying on the work of his hands. The drive towards the physical as an end, removes God from man's life. Therefore, God commands us to leave our sturdy homes and live in frail huts for a full week. In this fashion, we abandon the view that the physical world is our ultimate security. In fact, it is God.

Lulav follows such, by asking man to redirect his security away from his home, and place it in God. Lulav emphasizes the use of the physical for the right reasons. We thank God – the Source of our bounty – replacing our faulted view of the physical, with this proper thanks to God for providing vegetation. All physical objects that we are fortunate to receive should be used in recognition of the "Supplier" of these fruits, and not to reaffirm our own physical strength. It also makes sense that succah, and not lulav, is used to demonstrate man's required break from the physical. Man's home is the one object which embodies Earthy permanence, not man's food. Therefore, a frail home is used to make the break from our security, 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. Man then redirects his energies towards the Creator.

Perhaps this is why we read Koheles (Ecclesiastes) on Succos. In this philosophical masterpiece, King Solomon presents the correct philosophy of work, wealth, happi-

ness, sadness, accomplishments and all aspects of life. King Solomon asks, "What extra is there for man in all his toil that he toils under the sun?" He even commences his work with his summary, "All is futile." The Rabbis questioned King Solomon's statement: "How can King Solomon say all is futile, when God said in Genesis that the world is very good?" Rabbi Chait taught that Solomon was referring only to the physical as an end in itself. That is futile. When God said it was good, He meant that as long as it serves as a 'means' to man's pursuit of Torah, mitzvos and wisdom. There is no contradiction between King Solomon and God.

In summary, succah breaks down man's weighty attachment to the physical. Lulav redirects that attachment towards God, 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 schach (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 and recognize your Creator, the Creator of the universe. Wave the lulav and esrog in all four horizontal directions demonstrating God's exclusive dominion over all man's affairs. Wave the lulav upwards and downwards, demonstrating God'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 false security and rely on God, 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 God. ■

1. Soncino Press, 6th English Edition 1997, pp 132

SEEING STARS

Rabbi Hesby Roth – Written by a friend

We learn that the schach (the roof of the succah) must allow gaps so we might view the stars through it's covering. This is to assist us in witnessing God's stellar creations suspended in the heavens and recall His majesty. We are to realize that God is essential to our shelter. Why then must a succah's covering exist at all? Would we not see the stars all that much clearer, had no roof existed? What is the philosophy behind the succah's partial covering, if in fact, any covering obscures what we might envision?

We are to leave our permanent homes, and dwell in the succah – a minimal dwelling – so as to demonstrate our true dependency is on God, and not the physical protection provided by a sturdy roof. Doing so, gazing through the sparse schach helps us achieve this objective. Why then have schach at all?

God does not want man to live where he rejects God's natural world and its laws waiting for miracles. God designed the natural world for a reason: that man use his mind and harness it, as God says in Genesis 1:28, "fill the Earth and subdue it." Man must act in accordance with reality. Reality teaches us that we require shelter, and that there are methods by which to procure it, and all our needs. We are to engage in these methods, be it natural science, engineering, math, etc. But we cannot depend on physical shelter alone, without God. Schach is a fundamental lesson: it combines man's attempt at sheltering himself with the realization that man's efforts always require God assistance. Schach – a structure which man creates but allows gaps to see God's stars – demonstrates the combination of man's mandatory attempts at physical shelter with God's providence (the gaps). Thereby, man reflects on God's heavenly bodies, and reminds himself that just as his shelter depends on God, so too, all else is not exclusively in our hands. The true lesson of schach is that man abandons the fallacy that he can address all his needs, without God.

A wise Rabbi once taught that Jacob also recognized this lesson after escaping Lavan's spoiled assault. The maniacal Lavan caught up with the fleeing Jacob and attempted to annihilate him and his family; Lavan's family. But the previous night, God warned Lavan in a dream not to speak good or evil to Jacob. When Jacob heard Lavan recount that warning, he understood the dream was prophetic. For Lavan would not have dreamt not to speak "good" had he been ridden with guilt and the dream was his own emotional reaction. In that case, he would have imagined God telling him to hold his tongue from evil alone. By the very fact that Lavan told Jacob that he dreamt that God told him not to speak even "good" to Jacob, Jacob understood that the source of this dream was Divine. He knew that his strategies to succeed over Lavan those 20 years, and now, were not his own doing. God was involved with him to grant him success. Thus, Jacob calls the place "Two Camps: Machanayim (Gen. 32:3)." Meaning, Jacob saw that two camps – his doings and God's – were responsible for his success.

We witness the Torah's lesson that man must approach life doing all that he can, but accepting that he must realize God's involvement. Both psychological extremes are addressed through schach: man must not be over-religious and rely solely on God; he must construct his schach. But man must also not err by saying "my might and the powers of my hand have rendered this success (Deut. 8:17)" and remove God from the equation. Schach is man's material construction; including the "gaps" (the absence of his labors), meaning man accepts God in connection with his labors. ■

SUCCOS, FANTASY & DELUSION

Rabbi Bernie Fox

In succot you should dwell for seven days. Every citizen of Yisrael should dwell in succot. (This is) so that your generation will know that I caused Bnai Yisrael to dwell in succot when I brought them forth from the Land of Egypt. I am Hashem your G-d. (Sefer VaYikra 23:42-43)

The succah commemorates the wilderness experience

In Sefer VaYikra, the Torah describes the commandment to dwell in succot during the celebration of Succot. The Torah explains that we are required to perform this commandment as a commemoration of the sojourn of our ancestors in the wilderness following their rescue from Egypt. The succot in which we live during the celebration of Succot recall the succot in which our ancestors dwelled during their travels.

The Sages dispute the meaning of the Torah's reference to the succot of our ancestors. According to Ribbi Eliezer, the succot of our ancestors were the cloud that accompanied and protected our ancestors in the wilderness. According to Ribbi Akiva, our ancestors fashioned for themselves shelters similar to our succot and these flimsy shelters provided them with protection from the harsh elements of the wilderness' environment. However, regardless of the specific nature of our ancestors' succot, the meaning and significance of our observance is clear. Sefer HaChinuch explains that we live in succot to recall the wilderness experience of our ancestors. Our ancestors traveled through and survived the hostile environment of the wilderness. Hashem protected and sustained them and brought them to the Land of Israel. We celebrate the festival and live in our succot in order to recall our ancestors' miraculous experience in the wilderness and, through recollection, we acknowledge Hashem and thank Him for his mercy and kindness.

However, on the fifteenth of the seventh month when you gather the produce of the land you should observe a celebration for Hashem for seven days. The first day should be observed as a Sabbath and the eighth day should be observed as a Sabbath. (Sefer VaYikra 23:39)

Succot is a harvest festival

Rashbam suggests an alternative understanding of the mitzvah of dwelling in the succah. His analysis addresses

two issues in the above passage. First, the passage indicates that the Succot festival is to be observed in the fall. The events that the festival recalls were initiated with our redemption from Egypt in the springtime. At that time, Bnai Yisrael were redeemed from Egypt and entered the wilderness. Why is the commemoration of wilderness experience postponed to the fall? Second, the above passage relates the Succot festival to the conclusion of the harvest season with the in-gathering of the grain from the fields. What is the connection between Succot and the conclusion of the harvest season?

Rashbam's response begins with a discussion of the feelings and attitudes evoked by the successful harvest. As the harvest season is concluded and the grain is gathered from the fields and stored away, a sense of accomplishment can be expected to emerge. However, this sense of accomplishment can evolve into a feeling of pride, exaggerated self-assurance, and unwarranted security. The harvest has been gathered and stored away for the season. We feel secure in the conviction that our material needs will be met. We will have food for our tables and grain for trade. We are proud that through our efforts, we have secured prosperity. We feel assured that we have the power to manipulate the forces of nature to fulfill our will and conform to our needs. The abundance of the harvest testifies to our conquest over our environment.

Lest you eat and be satiated and you will build good houses and dwell (therein). You will become haughty and forget Hashem your G-d that brought you out from the Land of Egypt, from the house of bondage... And you will say in your heart my strength and the power of my hand made for me this wealth. You should remember that Hashem your G-d, He gives you the power to create this wealth in order to fulfill the covenant that He vowed to your forefather as He (fulfills) today. (Sefer Devarim 8:12-18)

Unwarranted security leads to abandonment of Hashem and His Torah

Rashbam notes the Moshe warned that this very attitude leads to abandonment of Hashem. Moshe explained that if we adopt this inflated sense of self-reliance and mastery over our destiny, we will quickly forget that Hashem is the source of our success and accomplishments.

Rashbam suggests that it is at this moment of unrestrained self-satisfaction that we must remind ourselves of the wilderness experience. We recall that Hashem miraculously sustained our ancestors in the wilderness, and through this recollection, we will understand that the success of our harvest is not a consequence of our power to manipulate nature. It is an expression of Hashem's om-

nipotence. This explains the observance of the festival at the end of the harvest season, in the springtime. It is at this time of the year that the message of the festival is most relevant – even imperative.

Rashbam's comments require some interpretation. He identifies an issue that the festival of Succot addresses – the unfounded sense of self-sufficiency and power that may be evoked by a successful harvest. He identifies the Torah's means of addressing this issue – through recalling the miracles of the wilderness experience. However, he does not explicitly explain how this recollection corrects our misconceptions and faulty self-perception. Furthermore, Rashbam notes that this attitude of false self-sufficiency will lead to abandonment of Hashem and His Torah. Indeed, this concern was expressed by Moshe. But Rashbam does not explain how this overestimation of our own control over our fates affects a denial of Hashem.

And He afflicted you and He caused you hunger and He fed you the manna that you had not know and your ancestors had not known in order to make known to you that it is not on bread alone that man lives but on all brought forth by the word of Hashem man lives. (Sefer Devarim 8:3)

The desire for security and the delusions it induces

The above passage is from Moshe's final address to the people. He discusses with them the meaning and significance of the wilderness experience. He explains that Hashem led the nation into the wilderness. He allowed them to experience suffering and hunger and then rescued them from starvation with the mun – manna. Moshe provides an enigmatic explanation for this process of suffering and salvation. Hashem did this in order to demonstrate to the people that humankind does not require bread to be sustained. Hashem can sustain humankind with anything brought forth by His word. What does Moshe mean? What is this lesson of the wilderness experience that he is attributing to Hashem?

Moshe seems to suggest that Hashem led Bnai Yisrael into the wilderness in order to place the nation in a completely helpless situation. He allowed the people to experience affliction and even severe hunger. He then rescued the nation from agony and starvation through providing all of the nation's needs. Why did Hashem first afflict the nation and then rescue the people from the very suffering He had brought upon them? He did this in order to reduce the nation to a state of complete helplessness and despair. Then, through rescuing the people, He demonstrated their complete dependence on Hashem. In other words, Moshe seems to say that Hashem wished to strip from the people any sense of self-reliance and control over their own destiny. He wished to place the people in a situation in

which they would be clearly and completely dependent on Hashem. Only when the nation fully recognized its absolute dependency on Hashem did He rescue the nation and provide for its needs.

This seems to be Moshe's message. However, the message is completely amazing! Moshe is suggesting that Hashem deemed it necessary to demonstrate to the nation He rescued from Egypt that it is completely dependent upon Hashem. Moshe's interpretation of the wilderness experience implies that the redeemed nation harbored a false sense of security and power. This seems absurd! These people were newly freed slaves. Certainly, slaves are well aware of their vulnerability and helplessness!

The conclusion that must be drawn from Moshe's interpretation of Hashem's actions is that even an oppressed and subjugated slave can easily overestimate his influence over his destiny and may not fully understand his actual vulnerability and dependence on Hashem. How can this be?

Apparently, human nature compels us to seek a sense of security. We need to feel that we have some safety and stability in our lives. We are incapable of living in constant fear and anxiety. Therefore, we strive to insulate ourselves from the forces that we feel threaten our safety and security. We attempt to assert control over any and every aspect of our environment and surroundings that we regard as significant to our safety and well-being. Even a slave is subject to this aspect of human nature. He knows that he is subject to the will of his master. Yet, he attempts to assert control wherever possible and to sustain whatever stability and security possible. More significantly, our need to feel safe and secure – to alleviate our fears and anxiety over the uncertainty of our destinies – seduces us into retreating into a fantasy in which we exaggerate our influence over our destinies.

The wilderness experience as an antidote to delusion

This conception of human nature resolves two of the questions posed above. First, Moshe's interpretation of Hashem's strategy can be understood. Even the slaves, rescued from a horrid life of persecution, did not fully appreciate their complete dependence upon Hashem. In the wilderness, Hashem stripped these freed slaves from every false and fantastic delusion of control and influence over their own fate. In the wilderness, they entered into a state in which it was impossible to maintain any vestige of such fantasies. Day-to-day survival was completely a consequence of Hashem's miracles and kindness.

The pathway from personal accomplishment and success to rejection of Hashem also can be understood. If a lowly slave is susceptible to delusions of personal power and influence, then a successful, accomplished person is

even more vulnerable to such fantasies. Success and personal accomplishment provide "evidence" of our power and influence over our destinies and environment. Our successes resonate with our need to perceive our lives as safe and secure. We imagine that these successes "prove" that we are indeed in-control of our fates and that we need not fear the future. We can care and provide for ourselves and meet any challenges that we may face. In our flight into a fantasy of control and security, we obscure our fundamental helplessness, vulnerability, and dependence upon Hashem.

The contrast between human perceptions and the reality described by the Torah

This discussion can be viewed from another perspective. The message of Moshe in his interpretation of the wilderness experience and in his warning to the people is that there is a fundamental conflict between our innate perceptions and the reality described by the Torah. We seek security and safety. We strive to create stability in our lives and delude ourselves into exaggerating the degree to which we control of our destinies. To the extent that we imagine that we control our destinies, we do not need Hashem. The Torah's reality is quite different from our fantasies. In the Torah's reality, humanity is frail and helpless. We are expected to act on our own behalf and to seek to better ourselves and our world. However, ultimately the success of our effort and strivings depends upon Hashem. A person who is scrupulously conscientious in regards to his health may fall victim to cancer. A city that carefully plans its neighborhoods, transportation system, and infrastructure can, in a moment, be devastated by an earthquake. Plagues and diseases can threaten thriving cities, states, and even nations. We certainly cannot prevent a meteor from striking the earth and destroying all life! Ultimately, we are dependent on Hashem. We are relatively minor players in the drama of human advancement. One of the fundamental objectives of the Torah is to help us abandon our delusion and see reality as described by the Torah. Rashbam is suggesting that the festival of Succot is one of the measures in the Torah designed to instill within us an accurate appraisal of reality and the limits of our influence over our fates.

How does Succot accomplish this? Possibly, Succot reminds us that even our ancestors – newly freed slaves – were victims of delusions of security. They required the experience of the wilderness – an experience of total reliance on Hashem – to correct their false perceptions. If these freed slaves were capable of nurturing fantasies of control over their destinies, then we certainly need to examine our attitudes and free ourselves of fantasy and delusion.

The foundation of foundations and the pillar of all wisdom is to know that there exists a primary existence that gives existence to all that existence and all that exists from the heavens to the earth and all between them only exists consequential to His absolute existence. (Maimonides, Moshe Torah, Hilchot Yesodai HaTorah 1:1)

Even our limited control over our destinies is only apparent

However, there is another possible explanation of the role of Succot in addressing our delusions of control. As explained above, human nature seeks security and this drive can encourage fantasies of control. However, to what extent do we ever have control or power over our destiny or environment? Is our control ever real or is it always merely imagined?

In order to consider this issue, it is helpful to begin with an analogy. Each weekday morning, I get into my car and I drive to school. I imagine that I arrive at school as a consequence of personal endeavor and effort. But let us consider the issue more carefully. I drive a car I neither designed nor constructed. It is fueled by gasoline I did not refine or bring to market. I travel on roads I did not build and which I do not maintain. Actually, my role in bringing myself to school is remarkably minor. I merely take advantage of the wisdom, work, and planning of so many others whom I do not even know! Without them, I would be walking to school. No, I would walk to the shore of Lake Washington and swim to Mercer Island!

The universe in which we live is Hashem's creation. He fashioned it, brought it into existence, and sustains it every moment. My every accomplishment, every act, merely utilizes the resources, properties, and natural laws which are expressions of Hashem's will. I only take advantage of the wonders He created and sustains. It is not accurate for me to describe my arrival at school as a consequence of my efforts and endeavors. Similarly, it is foolish for me to imagine that I am the source of any accomplishments; I am merely availing myself of the resources with which Hashem provides me.

In other words, although we are most aware of Hashem's omnipotence when confronted with a miracle or a breach of the natural order, it is the created universe that is the most wondrous and consistent manifestation of His omnipotence. The miracle demonstrates that Hashem is the creator and sustainer of the universe and can therefore, suspend or abrogate its laws. However, once His omnipotence is demonstrated through miracles, then His universe provides constant testimony that He is its creator and sustainer.

The miracles of the wilderness demonstrated to the nation His omnipotence. Through this demonstration, they came to understand He is Creator and He sustains all exist-

tence. We are not the cause of our accomplishments. We merely avail ourselves of the resources He places before us. The celebration of Succot reminds us of the miracles of the wilderness and the lesson of Hashem's omnipotence that they communicate. ■

Thank you to Congregation Ezra Bessarothe for its generous support of Northwest Yeshiva High School

Dear Friends:

This excerpt from "Thoughts" completes another year of its publication. With a tremendous amount of *seyata de'shmaya*—assistance from Hashem—we have succeeded in publishing "Thoughts" every week.

We began this project with a specific goal. The Yeshiva has served the Seattle Jewish community for over thirty years. Yet, we feel that the Yeshiva needs to continue to communicate the nature of the education it provides. It is difficult to describe a Torah education. It is far easier to provide examples. We hope that through this publication, we have provided concrete examples of the Yeshiva's approach to Torah learning. We have also aspired to communicate some of the essential themes that we transmit to our students. After the initial year, we broadened our goals. We have attempted to demonstrate the boundless wisdom of the Torah. Torah is not arbitrary dogma. It is a reflection of the infinite wisdom of Hashem. We have tried to provide readers a small insight into the depths of this wisdom.

Many individuals have been essential to this publication, and deserve special acknowledgement. Our beautiful layout has been designed by our Administrative Assistant, Edison Leonen. Karen Franke, our receptionist, secretary and all-around problem solver, proofreads "Thoughts" weekly and prints the hard-copy edition. Rabbi Benji Owen, our Assistant Head of School, is in charge of distribution in Seattle. Melissa Rivkin, Director of Development, coordinates this process and provides overall supervision.

During the course of the past four years, "Thoughts" has had many sponsors. Foremost among sponsors is Dr. Minnette Almoslino. We appreciate the support of all our sponsors. Through supporting "Thoughts," you share in the merit for encouraging Torah learning.

I must acknowledge the influence of my teacher, Rabbi Israel Chait. For too few years, I had the remarkable good fortune to study under Rabbi Chait. Each shiur—class—was characterized with the Rosh HaYeshiva's overwhelming love for Torah and learning. This love was ex-

pressed through a pure joy which flowed from our teacher and filled the room. Rabbi Chait also encouraged us to grow in our own unique manner. Students have different strengths. Each must learn how to best apply his or her talents to Torah study. I hope that, to some modest extent, I have succeeded in transmitting these messages to my own students.

I dedicate this publication to my beloved mother. May she be blessed with good health and happiness!

Sincerely,

Rabbi Bernie Fox

HALACHIK INSIGHTS INTO THE ARAVOS

Rabbi Dr. Darrell Ginsberg

The day of Hoshana Rabba is an extremely distinctive yom tov, as it is part of the holiday of Sukkos, yet has its own unique identity. Much attention is paid to the various issues related to hashkafa and teshuva that present on this day. Yet there is also the singular activity involving the taking of the aravos, a fixture in the tefilah of the day. We are faced with a myriad of halachik issues that emerge with this performance, a few of which will be discussed in this article.

A little background is in order. The Mishneh (Succah 45a) describes how the “arava” was done in the Bais Hamikdash. Certain extremely tall aravos were brought to the Bais Hamikdash and attached to the mizbeach. Afterwards, there were some shofar blasts, and the kohanim proceeded to walk around the mizbeach one time. During this hakafa, they would recite various verses from Hallel. On Hoshana Rabba, there were a total of seven hakafos around the mizbeach. The Mishneh also relates the opinion of R’ Yochanan Ben Beroka, who explains that certain aravos were brought and beat (chavit) on the ground at the sides of the mizbeach.

Due to the significance of this halachik performance, the later neviim (Chagai, Zechariah, Malachi and the Anshei Keneses Hagedolah) instituted that, zecheir lemikdash, the mitzvah of arava be performed on the day of Hoshana Rabba. There is a debate in the Talmud whether this was an actual takana, or merely the introduction of a minhag for Bnai Yisrael. The consensus amongst poskim

is that it is treated as a minhag, thereby eliminating the recitation of a bracha prior to its performance (although there are several poskim who maintain a bracha should be made when the mitzvah arava is done be’tzibur).

The Shiur – The Talmud (ibid 44b) offers some more details as to the requirements of this mitzvah. According to R’ Nachman, one must take three aravos, while R’ Sheshes maintains one can fulfill his obligation with just one branch. How do we understand this maklokes? Both sides agree that a differentiation must be established between this mitzvah of arava and the role of the arava with the four species. According to R’ Sheshes, the mere existence of such an obligation, replete with its own performance (the specifics to follow), creates this differentiation. However, according to R’ Nachman, this is not adequate. As we know, the minimum shiur of aravos for the four species is two branches. If so, then it would seem the very differentiation is imbued in the number of aravos taken. In other words, taking three, which is more than the minimum requirement for the four species, indicates this is a different performance altogether.

On a more practical level, the Shulchan Aruch (OC 664:4) indicates that one may fulfill his obligation with just one branch. However, the Rema stresses that this is not the ideal way to perform this mitzvah. The Ari was of the opinion that one should have five branches when performing the mitzvah. In general, though, one would seem to have fulfilled his obligation with just one branch.

Aravos Bound to the Lulav – Another question that comes up concerns using aravos bound to the lulav. There is a debate whether or not one could fulfill his obligation of arava on Hoshana Rabba using the aravos of the four species. According to R Ami, one cannot pick up a lulav with the aravos attached to it, and have in mind to use those aravos for this particular mitzvah. However, as the poskim point out, if one physically removed the aravos from the lulav, there is no question he could then use them for the mitzvah. On the other hand, R Chisda indicates one indeed may make use of the aravos of the four species while still bound to the lulav. R Chisda would maintain that one should first fulfill his obligation of netilas lulav, and then raise the lulav with the attached aravos again to demonstrate their use for the mitzvah of arava. The argument here seems to be based on our understanding of the binding together (agud) of the four minim. The idea of the four minim is more than just a physical binding together of these objects. There is an additional halachik definition that emerges once they are bound together, where these four minim are viewed as an entity (this does not mean the individual minim lose their identity). According to R Chisda, netila allows for the expression of four minim. Once one completes his mitzvah of netilas lulav, the challos shem of four minim is no longer relevant. Therefore, he just needs to pick the lulav up again to designate those

aravos for the mitzvah of arava. However, according to the R. Ami, the abstract definition of four minim exists as long as the objects are physically bound together. Therefore, the aravos are both individual objects, as well as components of the chaloshes four minim – they are imbued with this characteristic of “four minim”. As such, they cannot be used for the mitzvah of arava unless removed from the lulav.

Again, on a practical level, the majority of poskim require the use of aravos separate from the lulav.

To Beat, To Shake, or Both – Without a doubt, the climactic moment of the Hoshana Rabba tefillah is when the tzibbur take their aravos and beat them on the ground (this author is convinced, based on watching the incredible force people put into this action, that there are those who spend extra time in the gym in preparation for Hoshana Rabba). This is clearly based on the opinion of R. Yochanan in the Mishneh.

The Rambam, in addressing this particular action, writes as follows (Hilchos Lulav 7:22):

“How is it [the mitzvah of arava] done? He takes a branch or many branches, excluding the arava that is part of the lulav, and beats it on the ground or on a kli two or three times without a bracha as this is minhag neviim”

However, Rashi seems to have a completely different, and difficult to comprehend, interpretation of this performance. The Talmud explains (ibid) that R. Eleazar Ben Tzadok took the aravos and was “chavit chavit bli bracha”. Ostensibly, this proves that he maintained the mitzvah of arava today is minhag neviim. However, Rashi, when defining the term “chavit”, writes that it refers to naanua, or shaking of the lulav. He provides no source for this opinion, and many other Rishonim and Acharonim are baffled at this explanation. How do we understand Rashi’s opinion and this overall debate?

Let’s take a closer look at the Rambam. What is interesting about this particular halacha is its formulation. The Rambam seems to be telling us what the halachik performance, or the maase hamitzvah, of arava entails. The main action is the taking of the arava, which is a form of netilah. However, as the Rav (Harirei Kedem 1:252) notes, the gemar mitzvah of arava is beating it on the ground. This makes sense in light of the overall underlying objective of this minhag neviim. As we know, we are utilizing the arava as a zeicher lemkidash. Therefore, just like the maase in the Bais Hamikdash involved beating the aravos against the ground, so too today. The question, though, is how we understand Rashi. The Rav (ibid) indicates that Rashi agrees that the primary obligation is the netilah, and the naanua is the gemar mitzvah. One possible answer is that since the primary action is netilah, naanua is the natural gemar mitzvah of picking something up – exactly as it is by lulav. In other words, it partakes of the same tzuras hamitzvah as netilas lulav. How does this fit into zeicher

lemkidash? The idea of shaking the lulav is tied into the concept of the four minim being vehicles to shevach Hashem, offering praise to God. We see this clearly in the timing of the shaking of the lulav – both when we do netilah, and when we recite hallel. And as we see from the Mishneh, the kohanim recited verses from Hallel while walking around the mizbeach. This could be how the naanuim fit in. Shaking the aravos function as a vehicle to shevach, reflecting the very shevach that was enunciated during the hakafo of the Bais Hamikdash.

Interestingly enough, the Tur (ibid) cites the opinion of the Rambam and Rashi. As a result, the Rema (ibid 4) writes that one should shake the aravos as well as beat them against the ground. However, the Aruch Hashulchan (ibid 3) questions the source to do both.

Chag Sameach. ■

KOHILES

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

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 fully, 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 con-

cept; 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.

The following is based on lectures by Rabbi Israel Chait.

KOHILES

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 beheld 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 answered this question with a brilliant 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 a 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 "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 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.

“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 day-break.

I find King Solomon’s selected metaphor revealing; he uses the sun (shemesh) for this lesson. “Shemesh” also means a servant, a “shamashe.” 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.”

Rabbi Chait 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.

"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.