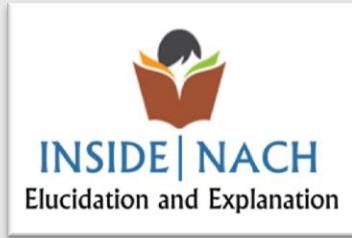


פרק א



קהלת

PEREK OVERVIEW:

Perek 1: Shlomo advises us not to centre our lives around insignificant and futile obsessive material pursuits, for they are short-lived (Metzudas David). As our lives are so short, we may not necessarily reap the fruits of our labour, our children will probably benefit from our hard work (Ralbag). The futility of attaining physical goods is best illustrated by the natural water cycle; the clouds disseminate rain which eventually evaporates, only to redistribute rain once again (Ibn Ezra). Physical pleasures do not leave one content and satisfied as one always wants more (Rashi). Shlomo adds that wisdom alone cannot prevent one from sinning, as temptation can be overpowering- thus rendering wisdom useless (Rashi). Shlomo rebukes the wicked and compares them to the setting sun – their dawn will soon end. Time is ever ebbing away; use the resources that Hashem gave us.

POSSUKIM IN CONTEXT:

הַבָּל הַבָּלִים הַכֹּל הַבָּל (א:ב) - Futility of futilities, everything is futile!

- The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel explains that when Shlomo (who authored Koheles) saw through Ruach Hakodesh that the kingship of Israel would be split between Rechavam his son and Yeravam ben Nevat; how ירושלים and the Beis Hamikdosh would be destroyed, and that Bnei Yisroel would be exiled, he proclaimed that all that he and his father Dovid had been working tirelessly for will end in failure.

ELUCIDATION

פסוק ב-ג:

הַבֵּל הַבָּלִים אֲמַר קֹהֵלֶת הַבֵּל
הַבָּלִים הַכֹּל הַבֵּל
מֵה־יִתְרוֹן לְאָדָם בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ
שִׁיעֵמֶל תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

“Futility of futilities! – Said Koheles – Futility of futilities! All is futile! What profit does man have for all his labour which he toils beneath the sun?”

The exposition of Koheles is so despondent that the Talmud debates whether Koheles should be included in Tanach, despite the fact it was written by Shlomo Hamelech. However, Kohelles ends with “The sum of the matter is, when all has been considered, fear God and keep his commandments, because that is the whole of [a] person.” Based on these words, Chazal understood that the purpose of the Koheles was to reveal the importance of fearing God. From the words “because this is the whole of [a] person”, Rabbi Eliezer learns that the whole world was created for the sake of one who has fear of God. [שבת ל.]

פסוק ח:

כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים יִגְעִים לֹא־יִוָּכַל
אִישׁ לְדַבֵּר לֹא־תִשְׁבַּע עֵין
לְרֹאוֹת וְלֹא־תִמְלֵא אָזְנוֹ
מִשְׁמַע:

“All words are tiring; a person becomes unable to speak; the eye is never sated with seeing and the ear is never filled with hearing.”

This Posuk refers to one who gives up toiling in Torah in order to engage in idle matters and discussion. Such words become tiring and he will be unsatisfied by them as he will always desire more. [רש"י]. From here Chazal learn that one who constantly engages in idle discussion transgresses an Aveirah. [יומא יט.]

פסוק יח:

כִּי בָרַב חֲכָמָה רַב־כָּעַס
וְיוֹסִיף דַּעַת יוֹסִיף מִכְּאֹב

“Because with a lot of wisdom comes a lot of anger, and he who increases knowledge increases from pain.”

“Because with a lot of wisdom comes a lot of anger.” One who has a lot of wisdom becomes angry as he sees other people doing bad deeds and not conducting themselves appropriately.

“And he who increases knowledge increases from pain.” This refers to someone who increases in knowledge and understands that there is an ultimate purpose to the world. Nevertheless, he will increase in pain due to all the bad experiences in the world.