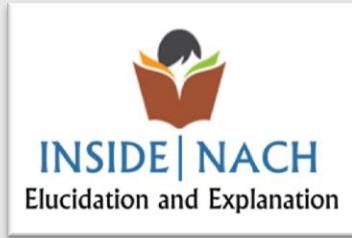


פרק ד



קהלת

PEREK OVERVIEW:

Perek 4: Shlomo deduces that death is preferable than a life of oppression. Shlomo stresses the importance of a partner to lighten one's load. Shlomo describes how a king can quickly lose his people's support and how often the new generation will reject the ruler of the generation that they outlived (Metzudas David). The wise are at a loss, for people do not allow their elders to rebuke them and correct their ways (Metzudas David 4:16). One should take measures to distance oneself from sin; if one does sin, repentance must be sincere and with complete understanding of the wrongness of the deed (Metzudos David, Rashi). Money will never bring happiness, and there is no guarantee that it will bring security or even sustenance too - just fruitless competitiveness. Wisdom is the most precious commodity; a fool does not understand that he is harming himself (Rashi 4:17).

POSSUKIM IN CONTEXT:

טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנַיִם מִיְהִיאֶחֶד (ד:ט) - Two people are better than one

- Targum Yonasan ben Uziel explains this to refer to Talmidei Chachomim, saying that it is better when there are two (or more) Talmidei Chachomim in a generation, because they can discuss their learning together, and they will be able to achieve more clarity and accuracy. Other מפרשים understand it more simply, meaning that it is very important to have friends and get married, because then they can support each other and protect each other.

ELUCIDATION

פסוק א:

וְרֵאִיתִי אֲנִי אֶת-כָּל-עֵמֶל וְאֶת
כָּל-כִּשְׁרוֹן הַמַּעֲשֵׂה כִּי הִיא
קְנֵאת-אִישׁ מֵרֵעֵהוּ גַם-זֶה
הֶבֶל וְרֵעוּת רֹחַ:

“I have seen that all labour and ‘skilful enterprise which comes from men’s envy of each other—are indeed futility and pursuit of wind!”

In this Possuk, Shlomo Hamelech talks about the root of sin. He explains “all labour,” means general sin, which is considered laborious and wicked before Hashem. “Skilful enterprise which comes from man’s envy...” refers to a good, righteous deed (כשרון according to this is from the root כשר-proper) which is not done לשמה but rather out of a person’s jealousy of another’s honour from their good deeds. Shlomo says on such acts that they are futile, like something that has no substance.

פסוק יג:

טוֹב יֶלֶד מִסְכֵּן וְחָכָם מִמֶּלֶךְ
זֶקֶן וְכֹסִיל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַע
לְהַזְהֵר עוֹד:

“Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer has the sense to heed warnings”

The Midrash gives a deeper explanation that the “poor but wise youth” refers to the יצר הטוב –who entered a person at the relative ‘young’ age of 13, and tries to give them the wisdom to stay on the correct path. It is “poor” because most people ignore it. The “old, foolish king” refers to the יצר הרע who enters a person at birth and is mostly obeyed like a king. It is called foolish because it sways people to the foolish path of sin. The Possuk is saying the יצר הטוב is best, because otherwise a person is unable to be free from the devastating effect of sin.

פסוק יז:

שְׁמֹר רַגְלְךָ (כתיב רגליך)
כְּאֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ אֶל-בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים
וְקָרוֹב לִשְׁמַע מִתֵּת הַכֹּסִילִים
זָבַח כִּי-אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים לַעֲשׂוֹת
רַע:

“Watch your feet when you go to the House of God, more acceptable is obedience than the offering of fools, for they don’t know they are doing evil”

Rashi explains the Possuk is telling people to make sure they are bringing קרבנות because of their thanks to Hashem, or the like, but not because they need a sin or guilt offering. The second part of the Possuk is saying, “it’s better to draw close to heed Hashem’s voice, rather than to offer up sacrifices like fools.” The fools think that they can sin like they want and they will be able to rectify them with קרבנות. However, in truth they are causing great harm to themselves through this. Therefore, rather a person should not sin, rather than sinning and having to fix what they have done.