

BIBLE TEXTS

Kohelet 3:1—3:8

- 3:1 For everything there is a season;
a time for every matter under the heavens.
- 3:2 A time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted.
- 3:3 A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear down, and a time to build up.
- 3:4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time of mourning, and a time of dancing.
- 3:5 A time to cast stones, and a time of gathering stones;
a time to embrace, and a time to shun embrace.
- 3:6 A time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away.
- 3:7 A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silent, and a time to speak.
- 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

Translation by Michael V. Fox, *A Time To Tear Down & A Time To Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes*.

TALMUD TEXTS 1

Kohelet chapter 3

1. A season is set for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:
2. A time for being born and a time for dying,
A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;
3. A time for slaying and a time for healing,
A time for tearing down and a time for building up;
4. A time for weeping and a time for laughing,
A time for mourning and a time for dancing;
5. A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,
A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;
6. A time for seeking and a time for losing,
A time for keeping and a time for discarding;
7. A time for ripping and a time for sewing,
A time for silence and a time for speaking;
8. A time for loving and a time for hating,
A time for war and a time for peace.
9. What value, then, can people of affairs get from what they earn?
10. I have observed the business that God gave man to be concerned with:
11. God brings everything to pass precisely at its time; God also puts eternity in their mind, but without people ever guessing, from first to last, all the things that God brings to pass.
12. Thus I realized that the only worthwhile thing there is for them is to enjoy themselves and do what is good in their lifetime;
13. also, that whenever a person eats and drinks and gets enjoyment out of all his wealth, it is a gift of God.
14. I realized, too, that whatever God has brought to pass will recur evermore:
Nothing can be added to it.
And nothing taken from it-
and God has brought to pass that people revere God.
15. What is occurring occurred long since,
And what is to occur occurred long since: and God seeks the pursued.
16. And, indeed, I have observed under the sun:
Alongside justice there is wickedness,
Alongside righteousness there is wickedness.
17. I mused: "God will doom both righteous and wicked, for there is a time for experience and for every happening."
18. So I decided, as regards men, to dissociate them from the divine beings and to face the fact that they are beasts,
19. For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so does the other, and both come from dust and return to dust.
20. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.
21. Who knows if a human being's life breath does rise upward and if a beast's breath does sink down into the earth?
22. I saw that there is nothing better for human beings than to enjoy their possessions, since that is their portion. For who can enable them to see what will happen afterward?

TALMUD TEXTS 2

Honi the Circle-Maker

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta'anit, 23a

Rabbi Yohanan said: All that righteous man's days, he was troubled by this verse: "A song of ascents. When the Lord will bring back the captives to Zion, we will be like dreamers." Honi said to himself: Is it possible for a person to dream continuously for 70 years? One day, he was going along the road, and he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi said to him: How many years does it take for this tree to bear fruit? The man replied: Seventy years. Honi asked him: Is it clear to you that you will live another seventy years? The man replied: I found carob trees in the world; as my ancestors planted for me, so too, I plant them for my descendents.

Honi sat down to have a meal, drowsiness overcame him and he fell asleep. An outcropping of rock rose around him and hid him from sight. And he slept for 70 years. When he woke up, he saw that same man gathering the fruit of the carob tree. Honi asked him: Are you the man who planted it?! He replied: I am his son's son. Honi said: It is clear to me then, that I have slept for 70 years! He saw his donkey, which had given birth to several generations of offspring.

Honi went to his house. He asked them: Is the son of Honi the Circle-Maker still alive? They replied to him: His son is not, but his son's son is. He said to them: I am Honi the Circle-Maker! They did not believe him. Honi went to the study hall. He heard the rabbis saying: Our traditions are as clear to us as in the days of Honi the Circle-Maker. For whenever he used to enter the study hall, he would resolve for the rabbis any difficulty that they had. Honi said to them: I am he! They didn't believe him, and they didn't Honi give him the honor due to him. This distressed him, and he prayed for death and died. Rava said: This is why people say: "Companionship or death."

Kohelet and Women

Kohelet 7:26 "Now, I find woman more bitter than death; she is all traps, her hands are fetters and her heart is snares. He who is pleasing to God escapes her, and he who is displeasing is caught by her."

Kohelet 7:28 "As for what I sought further but did not find, I found only one human being in a thousand, and the one I found among so many was never a woman."

Kohelet 9:9 "Enjoy happiness with a woman you love all the fleeting days of life that have been granted to you under the sun – all your fleeting days. For that alone is what you can get out of life and out of the means you acquire under the sun."

TALMUD TEXTS 3

Mishnah Avot (Pirkei Avot) 1:5 Yose ben Yohanan of Jerusalem said: Let your house be wide open, and let the needy be members of your household, and do not engage in too much conversation with a woman. They said this of a man's own wife, how much more so of his fellow's wife. From here the sages said: Whoever engages in too much conversation with a woman brings evil upon himself, and neglects the study of Torah, and ultimately will inherit Gehinom.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah, 27a Come and hear, for Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Meir: One may only sell a Torah scroll in order to learn Torah or to betroth a woman. We learn from this that a Torah for a Torah is permissible.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yevamot, 61b Rav Nahman said in the name of Shmuel, who said: Even though a man has several children, it is prohibited for him to remain without a wife, as it says: "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:1).

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yevamot, 62b Rabbi Tanhum said in the name of Rabbi Hanilai: Any man who does not have a wife lives without happiness, without blessing, without goodness.

Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, 9:1 It is impossible for a man [to live] without a woman, and it is impossible for a woman [to live] without a man, and it is impossible for both of them [to live] without the *Shekhinah*.

Women, Time and Mitzvot

Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7

All obligations that a father must fulfill for his son, men [fathers] are obligated but women [mothers] are not.

And all obligations that a son [child] must fulfill for his father [parent], both men and women [i.e., all children] are obligated.

And all positive commandments that are time-bound, men are obligated but women are exempt. And all positive commandments that are not time-bound, the same holds for men and for women, they are [both] obligated.

And all negative commandments, whether or not time-bound, the same holds for men and for women, they are obligated...

Mishnah Berakhot 3:3 Women, slaves and minors are exempt from reciting the *Sh'mah* and from laying *tefillin*, but they are obligated for the *Amidah*, for *mezuzah* and for the blessing after meals.

TALMUD TEXTS 4

Tosefta Kiddushin 1:11 What is the obligation that a son must fulfill for his father? He must feed him, give him drink, dress him, cloak him, take him out and in, and wash his face, hands, and feet. The same applies to both men and women, except that a man has the means *at his disposal* whereas a woman does not because *she is under the control of others*.

Kohelet and Sukkot

Arthur Waskow, from *Seasons of Our Joy*, page 72:

It [*Kohelet*] is a wintry book, the summing up of a cycle of life that has revolved its way through joy and sorrow, war and peace, merry-making and boredom.

Whoever keeps watch on the wild will never sow seed; whoever scans the clouds will never reap...Sow your seed in the morning, and don't hold back your hand in the evening, since you don't know which is going to succeed, the one or the other, or if both are equally good.

[*Kohelet*] is the book of detachment, of accepting whatever you get, of learning to enjoy not only the peaks but also the chasms of an involved life – and then learning to float beyond those very hills and valleys. It is the book that says: In light of my approaching death, how disastrous is this disgrace? How wonderful this triumph?

HESCHEL TEXTS 1

A.J. Heschel's *The Sabbath*

Heschel #1

Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph frequently achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main objective. Yet to have more does not mean to be more. The power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time. But time is the heart of existence."

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Heschel #2

We are all infatuated with the splendor of space, with the grandeur of things and space. Thing is a category that lies heavy on our minds, tyrannizing all our thoughts. Our imagination tends to mold all concepts in its image. In our daily lives we attend primarily to that which the sense are spelling out for us: to what the eyes perceive, to what the fingers touch. Reality to us is *thinghood*, consisting of substances that occupy space, even God is conceived by most of us as a thing.

The result of our *thinginess* is our blindness to all reality that fails to identify itself as a thing, as a matter of fact. This is obvious in our understanding of time, which, being thingless and insubstantial, appears to us as if it had no reality.

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Heschel #3

The Bible is more concerned with time than with space. It sees the world in dimension of time. It pays more attention to generations, to events, than to countries, to things; it is more concerned with history than with geography. To understand the teaching of the Bible, one must accept its premise that time has a meaning for life which is at least equal to that of space; that time has a significance and sovereignty of its own.

Pages 6-7

Heschel #4

Judaism teaches us to be attached to *holiness in time*, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals; and our Holy of Holies is a shrine that neither the Romans nor the Germans were able to burn; a shrine that even apostasy cannot easily obliterate: the Day of Atonement. According to the ancient rabbis, it is not the observance of the Day of Atonement, but the Day itself, the '*essence of the Day*,' which, with man's repentance, atones for the sins of man. (*Mishneh Torah, Teshuvah 1,3*)

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"It is not a thing that lends significance to a moment; it is the moment that lends significance to things."

HESCHEL TEXTS 2

“We cannot conquer time through space. We can only master time in time.”

Heschel #5

At the time when God was giving the Torah to Israel, He said to them: ‘My children! If you accept the Torah and observe my mitzvot, I will give you for all eternity a thing most precious that I have in my possession.’

‘And what,’ asked Israel, ‘is the precious thing which Thou wilt give us if we obey Thy Torah?’

‘The world to come.’

‘Show us in this world an example of the world to come.’

‘The Sabbath is an example of the world to come.’ (*Kad ha-Qemah, Shabbat, end*)
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Heschel #6

It is incumbent on every man to be very, very zealous in making the Sabbath day preparations, to be prompt and diligent as a man who has heard that the queen is coming to lodge at his house, or that the bride and her entire entourage are coming to his home. What would such a man do? He would rejoice greatly and exclaim: ‘What a great honor they do me by their coming to dwell under my roof!’ He would say to his servants; ‘Arrange the house, clean and tidy it, and prepare the beds in honor of the arrival, and I will go to purchase the bread, meat and fish—whatever I can obtain in their honor.’ Such a man will busy himself in the preparation of the Sabbath food, even though he have a thousand servants.

Now who is greater than the Sabbath which is both bride and queen and who is called delightful. A thousand times more so should the master of the house himself be busy in making the preparations, even though he may have a hundred servants.
(*Sefer Hasidim*) Page 65

Lekha Dodi from the Kabbalat Shabbat service

Come, Beloved, meet the Bride!
Let us go and welcome the shabbat!

Come in peace, crown of God
Come with joy and cheerfulness,
Amidst the faithful and precious people
Come, Beloved, meet the Bride.”

HESCHEL TEXTS 3

Heschel #7

Rabbi Shimeon and the Cave

Rabbi Judah ben Ilai, Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Shimeon ben Yohai were sitting together, and with them was a man called Judah ben Gerim. Rabbi Judah opened the discussion and said: *“How fine are the works of this people [the Romans] ! They have made roads and market palaces, they have built bridges, they have erected bathhouses.”*

Rabbi Jose was silent. Then Rabbi Shimeon ben Yohai replied and said: *“All that they made they made form themselves. They made roads and market places to put harlots there; they built bridges to levy tolls for them; they erected bathhouses to delight their bodies.”*

Judah ben Gerim went home and related to his father and mother all that had been said. And the report of it spread until it reached the government. Decreed the government: *“Judah who exalted us shall be exalted; Jose who was silent shall go into exile; Shimeon who reviled our work shall be put to death.”*

When Rabbi Shimeon heard of the decree, he took his son Rabbi Eleazar with him and hid in the House of Learning. And his wife came every day and brought him stealthily bread and a jug of water. When Rabbi Shimeon heard that men were searching for them and trying to capture them, he said to his son: *“We cannot rely upon a woman’s discretion, for she can easily be talked over. Or perhaps she may be tortured until she discloses our place of concealment.”* So they went together into the field and hid themselves in a cave, so that no man knew what had become of them. And a miracle happened: a carob tree grew up inside the cave and a well of water opened, so that they had enough to eat and enough to drink. They took off their clothes and sat up to their necks in sand. The whole day they studied Torah. And when the time for prayer came, they put their clothes on and prayed, and then they put them off and again dug themselves into the sand, so that their clothes should not wear away. Thus they spent twelve years in the cave. When the twelve years had come to an end, Elijah the prophet came and, standing at the entrance of the cave exclaimed: *“Who will inform the son of Yohai that the emperor is dead and his decree has been annulled?”*

When they heard this, they emerged from the cave. Seeing the people plowing the fields and sowing the seed, they exclaimed; *“These people forsake eternal life and are engaged in temporary life!”* Whatever they looked upon was immediately consumed by the fire of their eyes. Thereupon a voice from heaven exclaimed: *“Have you emerged to destroy My world? Return to your cave!”*

So they returned and dwelled there another twelve months; for they said, the punishment of the wicked in hell lasts only twelve months. When the twelve months had come to an end, the voice was heard from heaven saying: *“Go forth from your cave!”* Thus they went out. Where ever Rabbi Eleazar hurt, Rabbi Shimeon healed. Said Rabbi Shimeon: *“My son, if only we two remain to study the Torah, that will be sufficient for the world.”*

It was the eve of the Sabbath when they left the cave, and as they came out

HESCHEL TEXTS 4

they saw an old man carrying two bundles of myrtle in his hand, a sweet-smelling herb having the perfume of paradise. “*What are they for?*” they asked. “*They are in honor of the Sabbath*”, the old man replied. Said Rabbi Shimeon to his son: “Behold and see how dear God’s commands are to Israel...At that moment they both found tranquility of soul. *Shabbat 33b*”

Heschel #8

The glorification of the day, the insistence upon strict observance, did not, however, lead the rabbis to a deification of the law. ‘The Sabbath is given unto you, not you unto the Sabbath.’ (*Mekhilta 31:13*) The ancient rabbis knew that excessive piety may endanger the fulfillment of the essence of the law. (*Genesis Rabbah, 19:3*) ‘there is nothing more important, according to the Torah, than to preserve human life...Even when there is the slightest possibility that a life may be at stake one may disregard every prohibition of the law.’ One must sacrifice mitzvot *for the sake of man* rather than sacrifice man ‘for the sake of mitzvot.’ The purpose of the Torah is ‘to bring life to Israel, in this world and in the world to come.’ (*Otzar ha-Geonim, Yoma: 30*) Page 17

“It is a day of harmony and peace. The Sabbath is a profound conscious harmony of man and the world, a sympathy for all things and a participation in the spirit that unites what is below and what is above.”