

# Introduction to Kohelet: Sanctifying the Human Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Tanakh is intended to shape and guide our lives. Therefore, seeking out *peshat*—the primary intent of the authors of Tanakh—is a religious imperative and must be handled with great care and responsibility.

Hazal recognized two major hazards inherent to learning. First, nobody can truly be objective, and some have agendas foreign to our sacred texts. Take the “plural” form of “Let *Us* make man” in the creation narrative (Gen.1:26):

*R. Shemuel b. Nahman said in R. Yehonatan's name: When Moshe was engaged in writing the Torah, he had to write the work of each day. When he came to the verse, "And God said: Let Us make man," etc., he said: "Sovereign of the Universe! Why do You furnish an excuse to heretics (for maintaining a plurality of gods)?" "Write," replied He; "And whoever wishes to err will err."*

**Bereshith Rabbah 8:8<sup>2</sup>**

רבי שמואל בר נחמן בשם רבי יונתן אמר  
בשעה שהיה משה כותב את התורה היה  
כותב מעשה כל יום ויום, כיון שהגיע  
לפסוק הזה שנאמר ויאמר אלהים נעשה  
אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו אמר לפניו רבון  
העולם מה אתה נותן פתחון פה למינים,  
אתמהא, אמר לו כתוב והרוצה לטעות יטעה  
**בראשית רבה ח:ח**

In this extreme example, some derived support for their theology of multiple deities from the Torah! This Midrash places a premium on the integrity of the Torah. God would not compromise Truth because some people are misguided. It also teaches that people can find

<sup>1</sup> A fuller version of this article appeared originally in *Sukkot Reader* (New York: Tebah Educational Services, 2008), pp. 39-54, and is reprinted with minor modifications in Hayyim Angel, *Revealed Texts, Hidden Meanings Finding the Religious Significance in Tanakh* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV-Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2009), pp. 190-204, with permission from Tebah Educational Services.

<sup>2</sup> Translations of passages from the Talmud and Midrash Rabbah (with minor modifications) from Soncino.

pretty much anything to support their agendas under the guise of scholarship. Whoever wishes to err will err.

However, a second hazard exists, even for those sincerely seeking the word of God:

*It is related of King Ptolemy that he brought together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two [separate] rooms, without telling them why he had brought them together, and he went in to each one of them and said to him, Translate for me the Torah of Moshe your master. God then prompted each one of them and they all conceived the same idea and wrote for him, God created in the beginning, I shall make man in image and likeness.*

**Megillah 9a**

מעשה בתלמי המלך שכינס שבעים ושנים זקנים, והכניסן בשבעים ושנים בתים, ולא גילה להם על מה כינסן. ונכנס אצל כל אחד ואחד ואמר להם: כתבו לי תורת משה רבכם. נתן הקדוש ברוך הוא בלב כל אחד ואחד עצה, והסכימו כולן לדעת אחת. וכתבו לו אלהים ברא ברשית, אעשה אדם בצלם ובדמות **מסכת מגילה ט.**

This narrative reflects the concern that by popularizing the Torah through translation, less learned people may inadvertently derive the wrong meaning from the “plural” form of “Let Us make man.” For this anticipated audience, God inspired the elders to deviate from Truth and translate with the singular form so that unwitting people would not err.

While this educational discussion is central to all Tanakh, Kohelet probably raised more concern by Hazal and later commentators than any other biblical book. With its inclusion in Tanakh, whatever Kohelet says is Truth in our tradition. Some will draw the conclusions they want to draw; Tanakh cannot worry about those who wish to err. However, even the most sincerely religious people may draw conclusions antithetical to the Torah. Hazal worried that Kohelet might cause greater religious harm than good, and consequently they considered censoring it from Tanakh:

*R. Yehudah son of R. Shemuel b. Shilat said in Rav's name: The Sages wished to hide the Book of Kohelet, because its words are self-contradictory; yet why did they not hide it? Because its beginning is religious teaching and its end is religious teaching.*

**Shabbat 30b**

אמר רב יהודה בריה דרב שמואל בר שילת משמיה דרב: בקשו חכמים לגנוז ספר קהלת מפני שדבריו סותרין זה את זה, ומפני מה לא גנוזהו - מפני שתחילתו דברי תורה וסופו דברי תורה **מסכת שבת ל:**

Hazal discerned *internal* contradictions in Kohelet, but they also worried that Kohelet contained *external* contradictions, that is, verses that appear to contradict the values of the Torah. They addressed this alarming prospect by concluding that since Kohelet begins and ends with religiously appropriate teachings, those verses set the tone for the remainder of its contents. If one reaches anti-Torah conclusions from Kohelet, it means that something was read out of context. A striking illustration of this principle is a midrashic teaching on Kohelet 11:9.

*O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth. Follow the desires of your heart and the glances of your eyes—but know well that God will call you to account for all such things.*

**Kohelet 11:9<sup>3</sup>**

*R. Binyamin b. Levi stated: The Sages wanted to hide the Book of Kohelet, for they found in it ideas that leaned toward heresy. They argued: Was it right that Shelomo should have said the following: O youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth (Kohelet 11:9)? Moshe said, So that you do not follow your heart and eyes (Bemidbar 15:39), but Shelomo said, Follow the desires of your heart and the glances of your eyes (Kohelet 11:9)! What then? Is all restraint to be removed? Is there neither justice nor judge? When, however, he said, But know well that God will call you to account for all such things (Kohelet 11:9), they admitted that Shelomo had spoken well.*

**Vayikra Rabbah 28:1; cf. Kohelet Rabbah 1:3**

שמח בחור בילדותיך ויטיבך לבך  
בימי בחורותך והלך בדרכי לבך  
ובמראי עיניך ודע כי על כל אלה  
יביאך האלהים במשפט:  
**קהלת יא:ט**

אמר ר' בנימין בן לוי בקשו לגנוז  
ספר קהלת שמצאו בו דברים שהם  
נוטין לצד מינות אמרו כך היה ראוי  
שלמה לומר שמח בחור בילדותיך  
ויטיבך לבך בימי בחורותיך משה  
אמר ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם  
ואחרי עיניכם ושלמה אמר והלך  
בדרכי לבך ובמראה עיניך, אלא  
הותרה רצועה לית דין ולית דיין  
כיון שאמר ודע כי על כל אלה  
יביאך האלהים במשפט אמרו יפה  
אמר שלמה  
**ויקרא רבה כח:א**

Were Hazal genuinely worried about people not reading the second half of a verse and consequently adopting a hedonistic lifestyle? Based on the midrashic method of reading verses out of their natural context, this verse likely posed a more serious threat than it would for a *pashtan* who reads verses in context. The best defense against such egregious errors always is good *peshat*. This essay will briefly consider the challenges of learning *peshat* in Kohelet, and then outline a means of approaching Kohelet as the unique book it is.<sup>4</sup>

## Methodological Considerations

At the level of *derash*, many of Hazal's comments on Kohelet appear to be speaking about an entirely different book, one that is about Torah. The word "Torah" never appears in Kohelet. Such Midrashim appear to be radically reinterpreting Kohelet to make it consistent with the rest of Tanakh. Similarly, many later commentators, including those generally committed to *peshat*, sometimes follow this midrashic lead of radical reinterpretation of verses they find troubling.

This approach is rooted in the dual responsibility of our commentators. As scholars, they attempt to ascertain the original intent of the biblical text. However, they also are students and teachers of Jewish tradition. Their educational sensitivities often enter the interpretive arena, particularly when the surface reading of Kohelet appears to threaten traditional values.

<sup>3</sup> Translations of biblical passages are taken from the New Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh* (Philadelphia, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> For this essay, I have consulted Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Seforno in *Mikra'ot Gedolot; The commentary of R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) on Qoheleth*, ed. and trans. Sara Japhet and Robert B. Salters (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985); Mordechai Zer-Kavod, *Da'at Mikra: Hamesh Megillot* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1973).

For example, Kohelet opens by challenging the enduring value of the two leading manifestations of human success: wealth and wisdom. That Kohelet focuses on the ephemerality of wealth and physical enjoyment is not surprising, but his focus on the limitations and vulnerability of wisdom is stunning:

*For as wisdom grows, vexation grows; to increase learning is to increase heartache.*

**Kohelet 1:18**

כי ברב חכמה רב כעס ויוסיף דעת יוסיף מכאוב:  
קהלת א:יח

Seforno is so uncomfortable with this indictment of wisdom that he reinterprets the verse as referring to the ostensible wisdom of heretics. I often wonder if the *parshan* himself believes that a suggestion of this nature is *peshat*, that is, does he assume that Kohelet cannot possibly intend what he appears to be saying; or is he reinterpreting primarily to deflect such teachings from a less learned readership, as did the authors of the Septuagint in the talmudic passage cited above.

Some commentators attempt to resolve certain internal and external contradictions in Kohelet by attributing otherwise troubling (to these commentators) statements to other people—generally evil people or fools. Take, for example, one of Kohelet’s most life-affirming declarations:

*Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for your action was long ago approved by God. Let your clothes always be freshly washed, and your head never lack ointment. 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.*

**Kohelet 9:7-9**

לך אכל בשמחה לחמך ושתה בלב טוב  
יינך כי כבר רצה האלהים את מעשיך:  
בכל עת יהיו בגדיך לבנים ושמן על  
ראשך אל יחסר: ראה חיים עם אשה  
אשר אהבת כל ימי חיי הבלך אשר נתן  
לך תחת השמש כל ימי הבלך כי הוא  
חלקך בחיים ובעמלך אשר אתה עמל  
תחת השמש:  
קהלת ט:ז-ט

Ibn Ezra—the quintessential *pashtan*—writes, “This is the folly that people say in their hearts.” Thus Ibn Ezra maintains that Kohelet’s own view is the opposite of what this passage says. However, such attempts to escape difficult verses appear arbitrary. Nothing in the text signals a change in speaker (particularly if Kohelet wishes to reject that speaker’s views), leaving decisions of attribution entirely in the hands of the commentator.

Commentators also devote much energy to reconciling the internal contradictions of Kohelet. See, for example, the lengthy discussions of Ibn Ezra (on 7:3) and Mordechai Zer-Kavod (introduction in *Da’at Mikra*, pp. 24-33). Some reconciliations are more textually convincing than others. Regardless, it is critical to ask why there are so many contradictions in the first place.<sup>5</sup> That so many strategies were employed to bring Kohelet in line with the rest of Tanakh

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Ezra and those who followed his approach assumed that intelligent people do not contradict themselves: “It is known that even the least of the sages would not compose a book and contradict himself” (Ibn Ezra on Kohelet 7:3). However, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik considered this perspective Aristotelian. Jewish thought, in contrast,

and with itself amply demonstrates that this Megillah is unusual. Kohelet needs to be understood on its own terms rather than being reinterpreted away. *Pashtanim* also developed a methodology for confronting Kohelet's challenges directly, as will be discussed presently.

## Attempting a *Peshat* Reading: Guidelines

In order to approach Kohelet, we must consider a few of its verifiable features. Kohelet is written about life and religious meaning in this world. The expression *tahat ha-shemesh* (beneath the sun) appears 29 times in Kohelet, and nowhere else in the rest of Tanakh. *Tahat ha-shamayim* (under heaven) appears three additional times, and Rashi and Rashbam maintain that this expression is synonymous with *tahat ha-shemesh*. People are even called *ro'ei ha-shemesh* (those who behold the sun) in 7:11. Similarly, the word *ani* (I) appears 29 times, and its appearance is not grammatically necessary.

Given this starkly anthropocentric perspective, Kohelet *should* reflect different perspectives from the theocentric viewpoint of revealed prophecy. In fact, *we* perceive the same reality that Kohelet does. On the basis of this observation, R. Shimon ben Manasia maintained that Kohelet was not inspired altogether:

R. Shimon ben Manasia says: *Shir HaShirim* defiles the hands because it was composed with divine inspiration. Kohelet does not defile the hands because it is only Shelomo's wisdom.  
**Tosefta Yadayim 2:14<sup>6</sup>**

ר' שמעון בן מנסיא אומר שיר השירים מטמא את הידים מפני שנאמרה ברוח הקדש קהלת אינה מטמא את הידים מפני שהיא מחכמתו של שלמה  
**תוספתא ידים ב:יד**

Though his minority view was rejected by our tradition (which insists that Kohelet is divinely inspired), R. Shimon ben Manasia's understanding of Kohelet as being written from the perspective of human wisdom is accurate.

The word *adam* appears 49 times in Kohelet, referring to all humanity (except for one instance in 7:28, which refers specifically to males). Kohelet speaks in a universal language and does not limit its discourse to a Jewish audience. Torah and other specifically Jewish themes do not appear in Kohelet, which focuses on more universal *hokhmah* (wisdom) and *yirat Elokim* (fear of God).

Similarly, God's personal name—the Tetragrammaton—never appears in Kohelet. Only the generic name *Elokim* appears (40 times), signifying both the universalistic discourse of Kohelet and also a distant, transcendent Deity, rather than a close and personal relationship with God. In Kohelet, God appears remote, and it is impossible to fathom His means of governing the world. For example, Kohelet warns:

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accepts dialectical understandings of humanity and halakhah (*Days of Deliverance: Essays on Purim and Hanukkah*, Eli D. Clark et al. [eds.] [Jersey City, NJ: KTAV, 2007], p. 29).

<sup>6</sup> See discussions of sacred scriptures ritually defiling the hands in Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1991), pp. 104-120; Michael J. Broyde, "Defilement of the Hands, Canonization of the Bible, and the Special Status of Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs," *Judaism* 44 (1995), 65-79.

*Keep your mouth from being rash, and let not your throat be quick to bring forth speech before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth; that is why your words should be few.*

**Kohelet 5:1**

אל תבהל על פיך ולבך אל ימהר להוציא  
דבר לפני האלהים כי האלהים בשמים  
ואתה על הארץ על כן יהיו דבריך מעטים:  
**קהלת ה:א**

Since God is so infinitely superior, there is no purpose (and much harm) in protesting against God (cf. 7:13-14). Contrast this approach with the venerable history of prophetic protests, beginning with Avraham and Moshe and proceeding through the entire Tanakh! Moreover, Kohelet never speaks directly to God; he speaks *about* God and the human condition in a sustained monologue to his audience.

Tying together these strands of evidence, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin (Netziv) attempts to explain why Kohelet is read (primarily by Ashkenazim<sup>7</sup>) on Sukkot:

*It is written in Zechariah 14 that in the future the nations of the world will come [to Jerusalem] on Hol HaMo'ed Sukkot to bring offerings... And this was the custom in King Shelomo's time. This is why Shelomo recited Kohelet on Hol HaMo'ed Sukkot in the presence of the wise of the nations... This is why it contains only the name Elokim, since [non-Jews] know only that Name of God.<sup>8</sup>*

Needless to say, this means of justifying a custom is anachronistic from a historical vantage point. Nonetheless, Netziv's keen perception of Kohelet's addressing all humanity with universal religious wisdom captures the unique flavor of this book. All religious people—not only Jews—struggle along with Kohelet.

From a human perspective, life is filled with contradictions. Kohelet's contradictions reflect aspects of the multifaceted human condition. Significantly, Kohelet's inclusion in Tanakh elevates human perception into the realm of the sacred, joining revelation and received wisdom as aspects of religious Truth.

While Kohelet is the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, it is but one aspect of Truth rather than the whole Truth. For example, Kohelet considers oppression an unchangeable reality:

*I further observed all the oppression that goes on under the sun: the tears of the oppressed, with none to comfort them; and the power of their oppressors—with none to comfort them. Then I accounted those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living; and happier than either are those who have not yet come into being and have never witnessed the miseries that go on under the sun.*

**Kohelet 4:1-3**

(א) ושבתי אני ואראה את כל העשקים אשר  
נעשים תחת השמש והנה דמעת העשקים  
ואין להם מנחם ומייד עשקיהם כח ואין להם  
מנחם: (ב) ושבח אני את המתים שכבר מתו  
מן החיים אשר המה חיים עדנה: (ג) וטוב  
משניהם את אשר עדין לא היה אשר לא ראה  
את המעשה הרע אשר נעשה תחת השמש:  
**קהלת ד:א-ג**

<sup>7</sup> In Tractate *Soferim* chapter 14, the practice of reading Kohelet is not mentioned when the other Megillot are. The first references to the custom of reading Kohelet on Sukkot are in the prayer books of Rashi and *Mahzor Vitry* (eleventh century).

<sup>8</sup> Harhev Davar on Bemidbar 29:12

Kohelet never calls on God to stop this oppression, nor does he exhort society to stop it. He simply laments that human history repeats itself in an endless cycle of oppression. Kohelet sets this tone in chapter 1 by analogizing human existence to the cyclical patterns in nature (Ibn Ezra, Zer-Kavod).

In contrast, prophecy is committed to changing society so that it ultimately matches the ideal messianic vision. Prophecy insists that all of human history is a line (and not a cycle) from the Garden of Eden to the messianic era, and we should be doing everything in our power to move that process along. While a human perspective sees only repetitions of errors in history; prophecy persistently reminds us that current reality need not mimic past history.

Kohelet grapples with the realities that wise/righteous people do not necessarily live longer or better lives than the foolish/wicked and that wisdom itself is limited and fallible:

*Here is a frustration that occurs in the world: sometimes an upright man is requited according to the conduct of the scoundrel; and sometimes the scoundrel is requited according to the conduct of the upright. I say all that is frustration.... For I have set my mind to learn wisdom and to observe the business that goes on in the world—even to the extent of going without sleep day and night—and I have observed all that God brings to pass. Indeed, man cannot guess the events that occur under the sun. For man tries strenuously, but fails to guess them; and even if a sage should think to discover them he would not be able to guess them.*

**Kohelet 8:14-17**

יש הבל אשר נעשה על הארץ אשר יש צדיקים  
אשר מגיע אלהם כמעשה הרשעים ויש רשעים  
שמגיע אלהם כמעשה הצדיקים אמרתי שגם זה  
הבל: ושבתתי אני את השמחה אשר אין טוב  
לאדם תחת השמש כי אם לאכול ולשתות  
ולשמוח והוא ילוננו בעמלו ימי חייו אשר נתן לו  
האלהים תחת השמש: כאשר נתתי את לבי  
לדעת חכמה ולראות את הענין אשר נעשה על  
הארץ כי גם ביום ובלילה שנה בעיניו איננו  
ראה: וראיתי את כל מעשה האלהים כי לא יוכל  
האדם למצוא את המעשה אשר נעשה תחת  
השמש בשל אשר יעמל האדם לבקש ולא ימצא  
וגם אם יאמר החכם לדעת לא יוכל למצא:  
קהלת ח:יד-יז

Kohelet maintains both sides of the classical conflict: God is just, but there are injustices. While Kohelet cannot solve this dilemma,<sup>9</sup> he discovers a productive response absent a solution. Once we can accept that the world appears unfair, we can realize that everything is a gift from God rather than a necessary consequence for our righteousness (Ramban quoted in Zer-Kavod on 9:11; cf. Rashbam on 3:12-13).<sup>10</sup> We ultimately cannot fathom how God governs this world, but we can fulfill our religious obligations and grow from all experiences. Wisdom always is preferred to folly,<sup>11</sup> even though wisdom is limited and the wise cannot guarantee themselves a better life than fools, and everyone dies regardless.<sup>12</sup>

On a deeper level, Mordechai Zer-Kavod (on 3:14) observes that the human psyche is profoundly attracted to being godlike. This tendency lies at the heart of the sins of Eve (Gen.

<sup>9</sup> The Talmud (*Berakhot* 7a) debates whether Moshe Rabbenu was able to fathom this contradiction at the level of revealed prophecy.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g., Kohelet 2:24; 3:12, 22; 5:17; 8:15; 9:7; 11:9.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. e.g., Kohelet 7:12, 19; 8:1; 9:18; 10:10; 12:9.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. e.g., Kohelet 1:18; 2:13-15; 6:8; 7:15-16, 23; 8:17; 9:1, 11, 16.

3:5, 22) and the builders of the Tower of Bavel (Gen. 11:1-9). Kohelet blames God for creating us with this desire while limiting us, rendering this innate drive impossible (7:14; cf. Rashbam, Ibn Ezra on 1:13). Confrontation with our own limitations leads to the extreme frustration manifest in Kohelet. However, once we can accept that we really cannot be God, this realization should lead to humility and awe of God:

*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 men revere Him.*  
**Kohelet 3:14<sup>13</sup>**

ידעתי כי כל אשר יעשה האלהים הוא  
 יהיה לעולם עליו אין להוסיף וממנו אין  
 לגרע והאלהים עשה שיראו מלפניו:  
**קהלת ג:יד**

While Kohelet challenges us at every turn, he simultaneously provides us the opportunity to find meaning beneath the unsolvable dilemmas.

Similarly, the universality of death tortures Kohelet. Once Kohelet accepts death, however, he concludes that it is preferable to attend funerals rather than parties, since focusing on our mortality will encourage us to live a more meaningful life:

*It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting; for that is the end of every man, and a living one should take it to heart.*  
**Kohelet 7:2, cf. Rashbam**

טוב ללכת אל בית אבל מלכת אל בית  
 משתה באשר הוא סוף כל האדם והחי  
 יתן אל לבו:  
**קהלת ז:ב**

In the words of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik:

*The finite experience of being arouses man's conscience, challenges him to accomplish as much as possible during his short life span. In a word, finiteness is the source of morality.... For orgiastic man, time is reduced to one dimension; only the present moment counts. There is no future to be anticipated, no past to be remembered.<sup>14</sup>*

Certain paradoxes and limitations are inherent to human existence, and not even the wisest of all men can make them disappear. Instead, Kohelet teaches us how to confront these challenges honestly and then embark on a process of intense existential frustration that ultimately leads to a greater recognition of the infinite gap between ourselves and God, leading in turn to humility and fear of God, leading in turn to living more religiously in every sense.

## Conclusion

*A further word: Because Kohelet was a sage, he continued to instruct the people. He listened and tested the soundness of many maxims.*  
**Kohelet 12:9**

ויתר שהיה קהלת חכם עוד למד דעת את  
 העם ואזן וחקר תקן משלים הרבה:  
**קהלת יב:ט**

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g., Kohelet 5:6; 7:18; 8:12; 12:13.

<sup>14</sup> *Days of Deliverance: Essays on Purim and Hanukkah*, p. 33.

Kohelet relentlessly challenges received wisdom rather than blindly accepting it. This process is accompanied by formidable dangers and responsibilities; but ignoring that pursuit comes with even greater dangers. Kohelet never abandons his beliefs nor his normative sense of what all God-fearing people should do; yet he also never abandons nor solves his questions and his struggles with human existence. By presenting this process through a personal account with inspired wisdom, he becomes the teacher of every thinking religious individual.

One Midrash suggests that Shelomo made the Torah accessible in a manner that nobody had done since the Torah was revealed. He taught those who are not prophets how to develop a relationship with God:

*He listened and tested the soundness (izzen ve-hikker) of many maxims (12:9)—he made handles (oznayim) to the Torah... R. Yosei said: Imagine a big basket full of produce without any handle, so that it could not be lifted, until one clever man came and made handles to it, and then it began to be carried by the handles. So until Shelomo arose, no one could properly understand the words of the Torah, but when Shelomo arose, all began to comprehend the Torah.*

**Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:8**

ואזן וחקר תקן משלים הרבה ואזן דברי  
תורה וחקר דברי תורה עשה אזנים לתורה  
... א"ר יוסי לקופה גדולה מלאה פירות  
ולא היה לה אזן ולא היתה יכולה להטלטל  
ובא פקח א' ועשה לה אזנים והתחילה  
להטלטל ע"י אזנים, כך עד שלא עמד  
שלמה לא היה אדם יכול להשכיל דברי  
תורה וכיון שעמד שלמה התחילו הכל  
סוברין תורה  
**שיר השירים רבה א:ח**

Ultimately, Tanakh needed Kohelet to represent the human perspective; and it needed prophecy so that we could transcend ourselves and our limited perspectives to aspire to a more perfected self and world—and to reach out across the infinite gulf to God. Kohelet teaches us how to have faith from the human perspective, so that we may grow in our Fear of Heaven and observe God's mitzvot in truth.