Class 3: Consumerism and Spiritual Malaise

*Source Sheet by* [*Benjamin Fried*](https://www.sefaria.org/profile/benjamin-fried1)

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| [**Ecclesiastes 1:2-8**](https://www.sefaria.org/Ecclesiastes.1.2-8)(2) Utter futility!—said Koheleth— Utter futility! All is futile! (3) What real value is there for a man In all the gains he makes beneath the sun? (4) One generation goes, another comes, But the earth remains the same forever. (5) The sun rises, and the sun sets— And glides back to where it rises. (6) Southward blowing, Turning northward, Ever turning blows the wind; On its rounds the wind returns. (7) All streams flow into the sea, Yet the sea is never full; To the place [from] which they flow The streams flow back again. (8) All such things are wearisome: No man can ever state them; The eye never has enough of seeing, Nor the ear enough of hearing. | [**קהלת א׳:ב׳-ח׳**](https://www.sefaria.org/Ecclesiastes.1.2-8)(ב) הֲבֵ֤ל הֲבָלִים֙ אָמַ֣ר קֹהֶ֔לֶת הֲבֵ֥ל הֲבָלִ֖ים הַכֹּ֥ל הָֽבֶל׃ (ג) מַה־יִּתְר֖וֹן לָֽאָדָ֑ם בְּכָל־עֲמָל֔וֹ שֶֽׁיַּעֲמֹ֖ל תַּ֥חַת הַשָּֽׁמֶשׁ׃ (ד) דּ֤וֹר הֹלֵךְ֙ וְד֣וֹר בָּ֔א וְהָאָ֖רֶץ לְעוֹלָ֥ם עֹמָֽדֶת׃ (ה) וְזָרַ֥ח הַשֶּׁ֖מֶשׁ וּבָ֣א הַשָּׁ֑מֶשׁ וְאֶ֨ל־מְקוֹמ֔וֹ שׁוֹאֵ֛ף זוֹרֵ֥חַֽ ה֖וּא שָֽׁם׃ (ו) הוֹלֵךְ֙ אֶל־דָּר֔וֹם וְסוֹבֵ֖ב אֶל־צָפ֑וֹן סוֹבֵ֤ב ׀ סֹבֵב֙ הוֹלֵ֣ךְ הָר֔וּחַ וְעַל־סְבִיבֹתָ֖יו שָׁ֥ב הָרֽוּחַ׃ (ז) כָּל־הַנְּחָלִים֙ הֹלְכִ֣ים אֶל־הַיָּ֔ם וְהַיָּ֖ם אֵינֶ֣נּוּ מָלֵ֑א אֶל־מְק֗וֹם שֶׁ֤הַנְּחָלִים֙ הֹֽלְכִ֔ים שָׁ֛ם הֵ֥ם שָׁבִ֖ים לָלָֽכֶת׃ (ח) כָּל־הַדְּבָרִ֣ים יְגֵעִ֔ים לֹא־יוּכַ֥ל אִ֖ישׁ לְדַבֵּ֑ר לֹא־תִשְׂבַּ֥ע עַ֙יִן֙ לִרְא֔וֹת וְלֹא־תִמָּלֵ֥א אֹ֖זֶן מִשְּׁמֹֽעַ׃ |

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| [**Ecclesiastes 2:1-12**](https://www.sefaria.org/Ecclesiastes.2.1-12)(1) I said to myself, “Come, I will treat you to merriment. Taste mirth!” That too, I found, was futile. (2) Of revelry I said, “It’s mad!” Of merriment, “What good is that?” (3) I ventured to tempt my flesh with wine, and to grasp folly, while letting my mind direct with wisdom, to the end that I might learn which of the two was better for men to practice in their few days of life under heaven. (4) I multiplied my possessions. I built myself houses and I planted vineyards. (5) I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree. (6) I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees. (7) I bought male and female slaves, and I acquired stewards. I also acquired more cattle, both herds and flocks, than all who were before me in Jerusalem. (8) I further amassed silver and gold and treasures of kings and provinces; and I got myself male and female singers, as well as the luxuries of commoners—coffers and coffers of them. (9) Thus, I gained more wealth than anyone before me in Jerusalem. In addition, my wisdom remained with me: (10) I withheld from my eyes nothing they asked for, and denied myself no enjoyment; rather, I got enjoyment out of all my wealth. And that was all I got out of my wealth. (11) Then my thoughts turned to all the fortune my hands had built up, to the wealth I had acquired and won—and oh, it was all futile and pursuit of wind; there was no real value under the sun! (12) For what will the man be like who will succeed the one who is ruling over what was built up long ago? My thoughts also turned to appraising wisdom and madness and folly. | [**קהלת ב׳:א׳-י״ב**](https://www.sefaria.org/Ecclesiastes.2.1-12)(א) אָמַ֤רְתִּֽי אֲנִי֙ בְּלִבִּ֔י לְכָה־נָּ֛א אֲנַסְּכָ֛ה בְשִׂמְחָ֖ה וּרְאֵ֣ה בְט֑וֹב וְהִנֵּ֥ה גַם־ה֖וּא הָֽבֶל׃ (ב) לִשְׂח֖וֹק אָמַ֣רְתִּי מְהוֹלָ֑ל וּלְשִׂמְחָ֖ה מַה־זֹּ֥ה עֹשָֽׂה׃ (ג) תַּ֣רְתִּי בְלִבִּ֔י לִמְשׁ֥וֹךְ בַּיַּ֖יִן אֶת־בְּשָׂרִ֑י וְלִבִּ֞י נֹהֵ֤ג בַּֽחָכְמָה֙ וְלֶאֱחֹ֣ז בְּסִכְל֔וּת עַ֣ד אֲשֶׁר־אֶרְאֶ֗ה אֵי־זֶ֨ה ט֜וֹב לִבְנֵ֤י הָאָדָם֙ אֲשֶׁ֤ר יַעֲשׂוּ֙ תַּ֣חַת הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם מִסְפַּ֖ר יְמֵ֥י חַיֵּיהֶֽם׃ (ד) הִגְדַּ֖לְתִּי מַעֲשָׂ֑י בָּנִ֤יתִי לִי֙ בָּתִּ֔ים נָטַ֥עְתִּי לִ֖י כְּרָמִֽים׃ (ה) עָשִׂ֣יתִי לִ֔י גַּנּ֖וֹת וּפַרְדֵּסִ֑ים וְנָטַ֥עְתִּי בָהֶ֖ם עֵ֥ץ כָּל־פֶּֽרִי׃ (ו) עָשִׂ֥יתִי לִ֖י בְּרֵכ֣וֹת מָ֑יִם לְהַשְׁק֣וֹת מֵהֶ֔ם יַ֖עַר צוֹמֵ֥חַ עֵצִֽים׃ (ז) קָנִ֙יתִי֙ עֲבָדִ֣ים וּשְׁפָח֔וֹת וּבְנֵי־בַ֖יִת הָ֣יָה לִ֑י גַּ֣ם מִקְנֶה֩ בָקָ֨ר וָצֹ֤אן הַרְבֵּה֙ הָ֣יָה לִ֔י מִכֹּ֛ל שֶֽׁהָי֥וּ לְפָנַ֖י בִּירוּשָׁלִָֽם׃ (ח) כָּנַ֤סְתִּי לִי֙ גַּם־כֶּ֣סֶף וְזָהָ֔ב וּסְגֻלַּ֥ת מְלָכִ֖ים וְהַמְּדִינ֑וֹת עָשִׂ֨יתִי לִ֜י שָׁרִ֣ים וְשָׁר֗וֹת וְתַעֲנוּגֹ֛ת בְּנֵ֥י הָאָדָ֖ם שִׁדָּ֥ה וְשִׁדּֽוֹת׃ (ט) וְגָדַ֣לְתִּי וְהוֹסַ֔פְתִּי מִכֹּ֛ל שֶׁהָיָ֥ה לְפָנַ֖י בִּירוּשָׁלִָ֑ם אַ֥ף חָכְמָתִ֖י עָ֥מְדָה לִּֽי׃ (י) וְכֹל֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר שָֽׁאֲל֣וּ עֵינַ֔י לֹ֥א אָצַ֖לְתִּי מֵהֶ֑ם לֹֽא־מָנַ֨עְתִּי אֶת־לִבִּ֜י מִכָּל־שִׂמְחָ֗ה כִּֽי־לִבִּ֤י שָׂמֵ֙חַ֙ מִכָּל־עֲמָלִ֔י וְזֶֽה־הָיָ֥ה חֶלְקִ֖י מִכָּל־עֲמָלִֽי׃ (יא) וּפָנִ֣יתִֽי אֲנִ֗י בְּכָל־מַעֲשַׂי֙ שֶֽׁעָשׂ֣וּ יָדַ֔י וּבֶֽעָמָ֖ל שֶׁעָמַ֣לְתִּי לַעֲשׂ֑וֹת וְהִנֵּ֨ה הַכֹּ֥ל הֶ֙בֶל֙ וּרְע֣וּת ר֔וּחַ וְאֵ֥ין יִתְר֖וֹן תַּ֥חַת הַשָּֽׁמֶשׁ׃ (יב) וּפָנִ֤יתִֽי אֲנִי֙ לִרְא֣וֹת חָכְמָ֔ה וְהוֹלֵל֖וֹת וְסִכְל֑וּת כִּ֣י ׀ מֶ֣ה הָאָדָ֗ם שֶׁיָּבוֹא֙ אַחֲרֵ֣י הַמֶּ֔לֶךְ אֵ֥ת אֲשֶׁר־כְּבָ֖ר עָשֽׂוּהוּ׃ |

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| [**Numbers 11:1-11**](https://www.sefaria.org/Numbers.11.1-11)(1) The people took to complaining bitterly before the LORD. The LORD heard and was incensed: a fire of the LORD broke out against them, ravaging the outskirts of the camp. (2) The people cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. (3) That place was named Taberah, because a fire of the LORD had broken out against them. (4) The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, “If only we had meat to eat! (5) We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. (6) Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!” (7) Now the manna was like coriander seed, and in color it was like bdellium. (8) The people would go about and gather it, grind it between millstones or pound it in a mortar, boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes. It tasted like rich cream. (9) When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall upon it. (10) Moses heard the people weeping, every clan apart, each person at the entrance of his tent. The LORD was very angry, and Moses was distressed. (11) And Moses said to the LORD, “Why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that You have laid the burden of all this people upon me? | [**במדבר י״א:א׳-י״א**](https://www.sefaria.org/Numbers.11.1-11)(א) וַיְהִ֤י הָעָם֙ כְּמִתְאֹ֣נְנִ֔ים רַ֖ע בְּאָזְנֵ֣י יְהוָ֑ה וַיִּשְׁמַ֤ע יְהוָה֙ וַיִּ֣חַר אַפּ֔וֹ וַתִּבְעַר־בָּם֙ אֵ֣שׁ יְהוָ֔ה וַתֹּ֖אכַל בִּקְצֵ֥ה הַֽמַּחֲנֶֽה׃ (ב) וַיִּצְעַ֥ק הָעָ֖ם אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֑ה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּ֤ל מֹשֶׁה֙ אֶל־יְהוָ֔ה וַתִּשְׁקַ֖ע הָאֵֽשׁ׃ (ג) וַיִּקְרָ֛א שֵֽׁם־הַמָּק֥וֹם הַה֖וּא תַּבְעֵרָ֑ה כִּֽי־בָעֲרָ֥ה בָ֖ם אֵ֥שׁ יְהוָֽה׃ (ד) וְהָֽאסַפְסֻף֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר בְּקִרְבּ֔וֹ הִתְאַוּ֖וּ תַּאֲוָ֑ה וַיָּשֻׁ֣בוּ וַיִּבְכּ֗וּ גַּ֚ם בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וַיֹּ֣אמְר֔וּ מִ֥י יַאֲכִלֵ֖נוּ בָּשָֽׂר׃ (ה) זָכַ֙רְנוּ֙ אֶת־הַדָּגָ֔ה אֲשֶׁר־נֹאכַ֥ל בְּמִצְרַ֖יִם חִנָּ֑ם אֵ֣ת הַקִּשֻּׁאִ֗ים וְאֵת֙ הָֽאֲבַטִּחִ֔ים וְאֶת־הֶחָצִ֥יר וְאֶת־הַבְּצָלִ֖ים וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִֽים׃ (ו) וְעַתָּ֛ה נַפְשֵׁ֥נוּ יְבֵשָׁ֖ה אֵ֣ין כֹּ֑ל בִּלְתִּ֖י אֶל־הַמָּ֥ן עֵינֵֽינוּ׃ (ז) וְהַמָּ֕ן כִּזְרַע־גַּ֖ד ה֑וּא וְעֵינ֖וֹ כְּעֵ֥ין הַבְּדֹֽלַח׃ (ח) שָׁטוּ֩ הָעָ֨ם וְלָֽקְט֜וּ וְטָחֲנ֣וּ בָרֵחַ֗יִם א֤וֹ דָכוּ֙ בַּמְּדֹכָ֔ה וּבִשְּׁלוּ֙ בַּפָּר֔וּר וְעָשׂ֥וּ אֹת֖וֹ עֻג֑וֹת וְהָיָ֣ה טַעְמ֔וֹ כְּטַ֖עַם לְשַׁ֥ד הַשָּֽׁמֶן׃ (ט) וּבְרֶ֧דֶת הַטַּ֛ל עַל־הַֽמַּחֲנֶ֖ה לָ֑יְלָה יֵרֵ֥ד הַמָּ֖ן עָלָֽיו׃ (י) וַיִּשְׁמַ֨ע מֹשֶׁ֜ה אֶת־הָעָ֗ם בֹּכֶה֙ לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָ֔יו אִ֖ישׁ לְפֶ֣תַח אָהֳל֑וֹ וַיִּֽחַר־אַ֤ף יְהוָה֙ מְאֹ֔ד וּבְעֵינֵ֥י מֹשֶׁ֖ה רָֽע׃ (יא) וַיֹּ֨אמֶר מֹשֶׁ֜ה אֶל־יְהוָ֗ה לָמָ֤ה הֲרֵעֹ֙תָ֙ לְעַבְדֶּ֔ךָ וְלָ֛מָּה לֹא־מָצָ֥תִי חֵ֖ן בְּעֵינֶ֑יךָ לָשׂ֗וּם אֶת־מַשָּׂ֛א כָּל־הָעָ֥ם הַזֶּ֖ה עָלָֽי׃ |

**Abraham Joshua Heschel**

Wonder, or radical amazement, is a way of going beyond what is given in thing and thought, refusing to take anything for granted, to regard anything as final. It is our honest response to the grandeur and mystery of reality our confrontation with that which transcends the given. (Who Is Man?, 1965)

Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. ... get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed. (God in Search of Man, 1955)

Never once in my life did I ask God for success or wisdom or power or fame. I asked for wonder, and he gave it to me.

(Found in Take Your Soul to Work by Erica Brown, 2015)

People of our time are losing the power of celebration. Instead of celebrating we seek to be amused or entertained. Celebration is an active state, an act of expressing reverence or appreciation. To be entertained is a passive state--it is to receive pleasure afforded by an amusing act or a spectacle.... Celebration is a confrontation, giving attention to the transcendent meaning of one's actions. (1975)

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