

# Ecclesiastes 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

## Analysis

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**All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full**—the hydrological cycle perfectly illustrates Qoheleth's thesis about futility under the sun. Hebrew *nachalim* (נַחֲלִים, rivers/streams) constantly flow *el-hayam* (עַל־הַיָּם, toward the sea), yet oceanic volume remains stable. The closing phrase explains why: **unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again**—evaporation, precipitation, runoff repeat endlessly.

Ancient observers lacked our understanding of evaporation and weather systems, yet accurately described the water cycle's closed loop. Theologically, this illustrates human labor's futility: immense effort, constant activity, yet no ultimate satisfaction or completion. The sea never fills; desire never satiates; accomplishment never fully satisfies. Only Christ offers 'living water' that permanently quenches thirst (John 4:13-14).

## Historical Context

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Solomon's merchant fleet (1 Kings 9:26-28, 10:22) and extensive building projects required hydraulic engineering knowledge. His observations of rivers (likely Jordan, Nile, Euphrates from his travels) and the Mediterranean Sea provided empirical data. This verse demonstrates biblical writers' capacity for accurate natural observation serving theological argument—Scripture engages both physical reality and spiritual truth.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. What 'rivers of effort' are you pouring into pursuits that never truly satisfy or fill the longing in your heart?
2. How does Jesus's promise of living water (John 7:37-39) answer Ecclesiastes' observation that natural water cycles never ultimately satisfy?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּל	שֶׁ הַנְּחָלִים	לָלֶכֶת:	אֶל	יְהִי מִ	יְהִי מִ	אֵין נוֹ	מֵלֵא
H3605	<b>All the rivers</b>	<b>come</b>	H413	<b>into the sea</b>	<b>into the sea</b>	H369	<b>is not full</b>
	H5158	H1980		H3220	H3220		H4392

אֶל	מָקוֹם	שֶׁ הַנְּחָלִים	לָלֶכֶת:	שֶׁ מִ	הֵם	שָׁב יָם
H413	<b>unto the place</b>	<b>All the rivers</b>	<b>come</b>	H8033	H1992	<b>thither they return</b>
	H4725	H5158	H1980			H7725

לָלֶכֶת:

**come**

H1980