

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program



Perek 24

Perek 24 includes two prophecies. The first, the prophecy of the pot and the meat, is said by Yechezkel on the tenth of Tevet – the beginning of the Babylonian siege on Jerusalem. In this prophecy, the walls of the city become a death trap for the inhabitants (1-14). The second prophecy tells of the death of Yechezkel's wife, which is symbolic of the destruction of the Temple. The prohibition to mourn her teaches us of the nation's reaction to the destruction (15-27). The first section of the book of Yechezkel closes with perek 24, and the two prophecies which are included in it symbolize the impending fulfillment of the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem.

- 1 The setting of the first prophecy is based on a saying that prevailed among the people which saw the city as a 'pot' which protected its inhabitants – the 'meat', as we saw earlier in 11:3. The prophecy is divided into three stages (3-5, 6-8 and 9-14). Each opens with a new commandment describing the stage.
 - a) The first stage (3-5) describes the normal state of putting a pot on the fire and collecting the best cuts of meat to put into it. What happens in the second stage (6-8) and why? Examine what stays in the pot and what is taken out.
 - b) How does the normal state of cooking become a symbol of disaster in the third stage (9-14), and why? Note the repetition of the verb *y.tz.a* (to go out) and *betocha* (within her) in both the sin (6-7) and the punishment (11-12).

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2 In pesukim 7-8, which are central to the prophecy, the sin and punishment of Jerusalem are described. The two pesukim parallel one another, and both are based on the laws of bloodshed in the Torah.

a) "*For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock*" (7) Bloodshed is mentioned in a number of places in the book as the central sin in Jerusalem. In order to understand the uniqueness of the description here, see the laws of covering the blood in Vayikra 17:3 and consider the explanations of the following commentators. What does not covering the blood represent according to each commentator?

Radak: as if it had been placed on a cliff top in a high place which cannot be covered, and the allegory is explained that they were so rampant in shedding innocent blood that it was not possible to forgive them and make it be as if the sin had disappeared from before God, rather it stood exposed before Him, so that he would take revenge upon them.

Metsudat David: The innocent blood which was shed was placed on the dry rock so it would remain and not poured on the dust of the earth where it would be absorbed and covered by the earth, meaning that they shed blood in public and were not careful to do it in private so it would not become known.

Rav Kook, Talelei Orot: "[*Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them*], who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust" (Vayikra 17:13) – the acknowledgement of the shame is the beginning of moral healing – "*That you may remember and be put to shame...when I have forgiven you*"(16:63) Cover the blood! Cover your shame!

b) Pasuk 8 discusses a measure for measure punishment. What is the meaning of not covering the blood in the punishment? See the portion of the blood vengeance in Bamidbar 35, especially pasuk 33. See also the words of Iyov (16:18) "*O earth! do not cover my blood, and let there be no place for my cry*" and the words of God to Cain in Bereshit 4:10-11.



- 3 "Behold I am taking from you the desire of your eyes with a plague" (16). In the second prophecy God informs Yechezkel of the impending death of his wife in a plague and forbids him from mourning as a sign to the nation. Consider Rashi's two explanations. What is the role of the customs of mourning according to each explanation, and why weren't they kept during the time of the destruction?

Rashi: You shall not observe mourning because you have no consolers, for no one among you is not a mourner, and there is no mourning except where there are consolers. Another explanation: For you will be afraid to weep before the Chaldeans in whose midst you are.

- 4 At the end of the prophecy Yechezkel is informed that the period of silence which began at the beginning of his mission (3:25-27) is ended. There is a connection between this prophecy and the previous prophecy: "*Sigh in silence*" (17) – "*and be no more dumb*" (27), "*Thus shall Yechezkel be a sign for you*"(24) – "*And you shall be a sign to them*" (27). Think about the meaning of this radical reversal in Yechezkel's prophecy from complete silence, even in mourning, to opening his mouth from the moment that the fugitive arrives.

Perek 25

Perek 25 opens a unit of prophecies about the nations, which concludes in perek 32. This unit divides between the prophecies of doom which were said before the destruction and the prophecies of redemption which come afterwards. In perek 25 Yechezkel prophesies about Ammon, Moav, Edom and the Philistines who rejoiced over the distress of Israel during the destruction.



- 5 The first two sections in the perek describe the happiness of the Ammonites at the distress and punishment of Israel. In several places in Tanach we see that the Ammonites wanted to spread out into the borders of the destroyed kingdom of Israel – see, for example, Yirmiyahu 49:1. Additionally, the Ammonites wanted to use Yishmael ben Netanya to exterminate the remaining Jews in Judah who were led by Gedalya – see Yirmiyahu 41. Examine the development from the first section (1-5) through the second (6-7) in terms of the sin and its punishment. Pay attention to the connection between the sin and the punishment within the second section.
- 6 In the case of Moav, the happiness at the distress of Israel was on religious grounds (8). In order to understand this, read the **Radak**:
Since the house of Judah remained after the exile of Israel they thought that Judah would not be exiled because the Temple was in their borders. And now that they saw that they were exiled like all the other nations they said: See how the house of Judah was afflicted like all the other nations! - For all the nations were afflicted by Sancheriv and Nevuchadnezzar and now Judah is like them as well, and the spirit of their blessed God who was among them did not protect them.
- 7 The prophecies for Edom and the Philistines parallel each other in the description of the sin (12, 15) and the punishment (13-14, 16-17). In what way is this pair of prophecies more severe than the previous pair about Ammon and Moav? Pay attention to the repetitive use of the verb n.k.m. (revenge) throughout the prophecy. For a detailed description of Edom's actions during the destruction see Ovadia 1:10-15 and Tehillim 137:7.



Appendix

The murder of Zecharia ben Yehoyada

In the description of the sins of Jerusalem there is a unique description of the bloodshed in Jerusalem: "*For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock, she did not pour it out on the ground for dust to cover it*". The midrash explains this description as a hint to the shocking murder which occurred in the Temple, which is described in Divrei Hayamim II (24:20-22):

And the spirit of God enveloped Zecharia the son of Yehoyada the priest, and he stood above the people and said to them, "So said God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord? You will not succeed because you have forsaken the Lord, and He has forsaken you." And they conspired against him and stoned him by the king's command, in the forecourt of the House of the Lord. And King Yoash did not remember the loving-kindness that Yehoyada his father had done with him, but he killed his son, and upon his death he said, "May the Lord see and requite."

The midrash describes the connection between the murder of Zecharia ben Yehoyada, who was a priest and a prophet, and the destruction of the Temple, in light of the prophecy of Yechezkel:

Said R Yochanan, "Eighty thousand apprentice priests were killed because of the shedding of the blood of Zecharia." R Yudan asked R Acha, "Where did they kill Zecharia, in the Women's Court or in the Israelites' Court?" He said to him, "It was neither in the Women's Court nor in the Israelites' Court, but in the courtyard reserved for the priests." And they did not treat his blood either as one does with the blood of a ram or as one does with the blood of a deer. There it is written, "[*Any man also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be*]



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eaten] shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust" (Vayikra 17:13) But here it is written , "*For the blood she has shed is still in the midst of her; she put it on the bare rock, [she did not pour it upon the ground to cover it with dust]"* (Yechezkel 24:7) And why? "*To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed, that it may not be covered.*" (Yechezkel 24:8) Seven sins did the Israelites commit on that day. They killed priest, prophet and judge. They spilled innocent blood. They contaminated the courtyard. And it was a Sabbath that coincided with the Day of Atonement as well. Now when Nevuzaradan came here, he saw the blood bubbling up. He said to them, "What is this?" They said to him, "It is the blood of the bullocks, sheep, and rams that we offer on the altar." Forthwith he brought bullocks, rams, and sheep and slaughtered them on it, and still the blood was bubbling up. Since they did not confess to him, he [ordered them] suspended on the gallows [for torture]. They said, "It appears that the Holy One, blessed be He, wants to exact from our hand vengeance for his blood." They said to him, "It is the blood of a priest, prophet and judge, who prophesied against us concerning everything that you are now doing to us, and we rose up against him and killed him." Forthwith he brought 80,000 apprentice priests and slaughtered them on it, and still the blood bubbled up. At that moment he grew angry [at the blood], saying to it, "What do you want? Should we destroy your entire nation on your account?" Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be he, was filled with mercy, and he said, "Now if this one, who is a mere mortal and cruel, is filled with mercy for my children, I concerning whom is written, '*For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers[which he swore to them]"*' (Devarim 4:31) - how much the more so [should I have mercy on them]!" Forthwith he gave a sign to the blood, and it was swallowed up where it was.

(Yerushalmi Taanit 4:5)

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