

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yirmiyahu Perakim 9-10

Perek 9

This perek opens with Yirmiyahu's painful wish to abandon the immoral and corrupt nation (1-8). In the pesukim that follow, Yirmiyahu laments the land's destruction which will take place as a result of the nation's abandonment of God and His Torah.

- ❶ *“Oh that I were in the wilderness, in a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them”* (1). In a moment of complete despair, Yirmiyahu expressed his desire to abandon the nation. Upon which sin does this section focus (1-8)? Why does this particular sin so deeply disturb Yirmiyahu? Two of God's reactions are included in the section (pasuk 2 and 5). What additional facet of the nation's sin is highlighted by God's reprimands?
- ❷ *“And they bend their tongue, their bow of falsehood”* (2). *“Their tongue is a sharpened arrow, it speaketh deceit”* (7). Yirmiyahu likens the act of deceit and gossip to shooting an arrow. Which elements of the sin are highlighted by this comparison?
- ❸ *“I will punish all them that are circumcised in their uncircumcision”* (24). Pesukim 24-25 compare the inhabitants of Yehuda to their gentile neighbors.
 - a) What is the purpose of this comparison?
 - b) According to Yirmiyahu, what is the purpose of circumcision? What is the correlation between this external mark and its deeper meaning? Compare your answer to Yirmiyahu's previous mention of sacrifices (7:22-23) and the Ark (3:16-17).

Perek 10

This perek focuses on the comparison between the futility of idol worship and the eternal nature of God. It has been suggested that these prophecies addressed the inhabitants of Yehudah who had been displaced by the first wave of the Babylonian exile during the reign of Yehoyachin. Living in a completely pagan society, the exiles find themselves seduced by the surrounding culture. Yirmiyahu tries to strengthen their resolve and their belief in God. The second section of the prophecy (17-25), discusses the coming destruction and concludes with Yirmiyahu's request for God to have mercy on His nation.

- 4 “Learn not the way of the nations, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven” (2). Based on this pasuk, how are we supposed to relate to astrology? Consider the explanation of **Radak**:

Even though the gentiles are dismayed by it, you should not be dismayed, because if you serve Me, they will not have the ability to harm you... Sometimes, they do impact the small details, but that is for the rest of the nations...If you serve [God] with a full heart, He will save you from all harm the constellations can cause.

Based on the prophecy's conclusion (3-5), can you suggest an alternate explanation?

- 5 “Thus shall ye say unto them: 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, these shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens'” (11). This is the only pasuk throughout all of Yirmiyahu's prophecies written in Aramaic. Why does Yirmiyahu choose to express this particular pasuk in a foreign language? In order to answer this question, consider the opening words of the pasuk and the explanation of **Rashi**:

This was a letter sent by Yirmiyahu to Yechonya and his exiles. [It was] a response in Aramaic that they could offer the Chaldeans if they commanded them to worship pagan gods.

- 6 Two different facets of God's magnitude are highlighted in pesukim 12-13. What are they? How do they complement one another?

Appendix

“Oh that I were in the wilderness, in a lodging-place of wayfaring men” (9:1)

Yirmiyahu's desire to distance himself from the corrupt and sinful nation and escape to the desert, made a lasting impression on both Chazal and modern poets and artists. The first source we have brought is from Midrash Tanchuma, which portrays the desert period as an idyllic chapter in Jewish history. We have also brought a photo of a statue designed by the artist Israel Rabinovich. His work reflects his identification with the Yirmiyahu's desire to distance himself from the day-to-day reality and escape to a quieter, more peaceful place.

“O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: have I been a wilderness unto Israel? or a land of thick darkness? Wherefore say My people: 'We roam at large; we will come no more unto Thee'?” (2:31)

Another explanation: What does *“we roam”* [רדנו] mean?

As the idea is stated: *“For he had dominion [רדה] over all the region on this side the River, from Tiphshah even to Gaza” (I Melachim 5:4).*

They said to Him You destroyed our Temple and Your presence has left us. What more do You request? *“We will come no more unto thee.”*

He said to them: If I could have My desire, I would go to the desert, where I performed miracles for you. And so he [Yirmiyahu] says: *“Oh that I were in the wilderness, in a lodging-place of wayfaring men” (9:1).*

That is where I would disappear to, as it says, *“Let the wilderness [desert] and the cities thereof lift up their voice” (Yeshayahu 42:11).*

(Midrash Tanchuma 1:2)



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**Statue by Israel Rabinovich, 1992,
Iron and Stone, 19x40x40.**

The title of this work of art is taken from Yirmiyahu's prophecy: "Oh that I were in the wilderness, in a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men" (9:1). This pasuk reflects the prophet's longing to leave his torturous post as a prophet of the sinful nation and retreat to a simpler life in the desert.