

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Yirmiyahu Perakim 23-24

#### Perek 23

As a continuation to the rebuke which was addressed to the kings in prakim 21 and 22, our perek rebukes the leaders of the nation. The leaders are compared to shepherds who have abandoned their flocks, just as they have not taken care of their people and thereby brought the nation to the difficult situation they are in. The rebuke ends with a prophecy of future consolation which speaks of establishing new, trustworthy shepherds, and of setting up a new king from the House of David who will embody the values of David, justice and righteousness. In the continuation, the prophet turns to a different type of leader – the false prophets, who constitute one of the most difficult obstacles in Yirmiyahu's life. The false prophets prophesize in God's name, but their prophecies are lies and foresee peace for the sinning nation. Yirmiyahu turns to them and points out the foundation of lies upon which their behavior rests and the differences between them and the true prophets. In addition, he rebukes them for leading the nation astray with their false prophecies and thereby causing the situation to further deteriorate.

- 1 Over the course of the prophecy (9-32) Yirmiyahu presents several criteria by which to distinguish true prophets from false ones:
- The personality of the prophet: see pesukim 11-12, 14. Consider the moral character of the false prophets. What can we learn from this about the relationship between the personality of the prophet and the content of his prophecy?
  - The aim of the prophecies and their results: see pesukim 13-15, 17, 32 and compare between the influence of the false prophets and the influence of the true prophets (see pasuk 22).

c) The style of the prophecy: See pesukim 30-31. What characterizes the style of the false prophets? Use **Rashi** to help you understand:

That steal my words every one from his neighbor - They have spies who spy upon the true prophets, who listen to their expressions with which they prophesy and say false prophecies with that same expression, as Hananiah son of Azzur did. He heard Yirmiyahu prophesying in the upper marketplace, "Behold I break the bow of Elam," and he prophesied in the lower marketplace, "I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon" (28:2).

d) Try to offer another interpretation based on the description of the false prophets in Melachim I 22:5-6, 12-14. See also the **Gemara in Sanhedrin 89a**:

And Yehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides that we may enquire of him? Thereupon he [Achav] exclaimed, 'But behold all these!' 'I have a tradition from my grandfather's house that the same communication is revealed to many prophets, but no two prophesy in the same style,' replied Yehoshaphat.

e) The prophet turns to the false prophets who are convinced that they have prophesied and presents another criterion by which one can separate between a true prophecy and a false one. This criterion is connected to the quality of the experience of prophecy. Look in pesukim 9 and 25-29. What differentiates a true prophecy experience from a false one? Note the prevalent use of the dream by the prophet. What does he want to emphasize with this? Why do you think there is this difference in the experience of prophecy?

2 There is a prophecy at the end of the perek (33-40) which strongly condemns the use of the term '*masa*' (burden) for the words of God which are said to the prophet.

a) Why is God opposed to the use of this term? Note the difference between the rejected term and the accepted term (pesukim 35, 37). Note also the relationship between the sin and its punishment (pesukim 33, 39). Use **Rashi** to understand:

What is the burden of the Lord? - This is an expression of derision, for his prophecy is a burden to them.

b) How can we resolve the contradiction between our source and the many prophecies which open with the term *masa*? (For example: Yishayahu 13:1, 15:1, Malachi 1:1, etc.)

\* for further reference, see the source from Rabbi Breuer brought in the Appendix at the end of the sheets.

## Perek 24

After the exile of Yehoyachin king of Yehudah, along with the elite members of society, his uncle, Tzidkiyahu, became king of the people who were left in Israel. Those who remained in Israel interpreted the fact that God had not exiled them as a sign that they were better than those who were exiled to Babylonia. Yirmiyahu, however, has a vision which shows this to be wrong: the exiles in Babylonia will merit returning to the land and reestablishing themselves while those who remain in the land will become lost.

- 3 The prophetic vision in our chapter joins two other prophetic visions which Yirmiyahu saw in his inaugural prophecy, the rod of the almond tree and the seething pot. In all three prophecies God turns to Yirmiyahu with a question: “What do you see Yirmiyahu?”. Here as well, Yirmiyahu sees a vision from nature which symbolizes the fate of the nation. Compare pasuk 6 in our prophecy with perek 1, pasuk 10. What point is emphasized in our perek? How does this strengthen the message which is found in the vision which Yirmiyahu sees?
- 4 There are some similarities between the vision in our prophecy and the dreams of Pharaoh which are interpreted by Yosef: compare the description of the figs to the description of the cows in Bereshit 41:2-3, 19. Pay attention to the dual visions, the positive and the negative. What would be the meaning of linking these two sources? Think about Yosef’s role in the divine process of the exile of Israel, and the message which Yirmiyahu receives in his prophecy about exile.

## Appendix

Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Lord, that they shall no more say: 'As the Lord lives, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt'; but: 'As the Lord lives, that brought up and that led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them'; and they shall dwell in their own land. (23:7-8)

It has been taught: Ben Zoma said to the Sages: Will the Exodus from Egypt be mentioned in the days of the Messiah? Was it not long ago said: *Therefore behold the days come, says the Lord, that they shall no more say: As the Lord lives that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As the Lord lives that brought up and that led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country and from all the countries whither I had driven them?* They replied: This does not mean that the mention of the exodus from Egypt shall be obliterated, but that the [deliverance from] subjection to the other kingdoms shall take the first place and the exodus from Egypt shall become secondary. (Massechet Brachot 12b)

The Maharatz Chayot explains why the miracle of the redemption and the return to Israel in the time of the Second Temple was greater than the redemption from Egypt and the miracles which took place in Egypt. The ingathering of different people, from different exiles, from different culture and from different traditions to one nation – that is the miracle of the redemption, and it is greater than the exodus from Egypt, for there all of the Nation of Israel were in one place and moved together to the Land of Israel. This is what he says:

“And we see that when Israel was in Egypt, all of Israel was found in one place, and they had one language and their culture was the same. And since God was helping them, and brought them out of the suffering in Egypt with a strong arm, it was easy to make them into one nation, because even while they were in Egypt they were one people and they lived together and there were no Israelites who lived in another place, and the people of the nation had the necessary qualities to be brought together as one people. This was not so at the time of the miracle of the redemption from Babylonia, where the nature of the miracle was changed, because aside from the fact that it was decreed by the king, Coresh, that they would be allowed to go to Jerusalem, **at that time the Nation of Israel was scattered between different peoples and nationalities, some in the North and some in**

**Egypt and Greece and Spain and France and Turkey and Persia, and all the other nations that Jews lived in, and therefore they had different languages and cultures, and without God's help it would not have been naturally possible to complete the ingathering to be one nation.**  
(Maharatz Chayot 1:74)

And if the miracle of the return to Zion in the time of the Second Temple was greater than the exodus from Egypt – how much greater is the present redemption in which we have returned to our land after two thousand years of diaspora in which we were scattered all over the world.

**The Burden of the Lord – From Rabbi Mordecai Breuer, Pirkei Yishayahu, pp. 66-67**

“... three names are used to denote three aspects of prophecy: Prophecy is a *davar* (word) which comes from the mouth of God, it is a *masa* (burden) spoken about a nation or kingdom, it is a *chazon* (vision) revealed to the eyes of the prophet. The text is always careful to refer to a prophecy by the appropriate name: a *davar* is always connected to God, *masa* is connected to a nation and *chazon* is connected to the prophet. Anyone who switches this order and changes the accepted designations set by the prophets perverts “the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God.” (Yirmiyahu 23:36)

At the basis of prophecy is the word of God - *davar*. It is not the word of the prophet, rather the word of God – and the word of our God is everlasting. Before it is revealed in the *chazon* (vision) of prophecy, it has been determined by God in holiness, for the vision is from the mouth of God. Before it becomes a *masa* (burden) on a nation it was the word of God which *shall not return in vain*. The prophet does not speak of a vision from his heart, rather a vision from the mouth of God. A nation does not follow its fate; rather its *masa* comes from the word of God. The word of God is the source of the burden and the vision. And just as “*davar*” relates to God, so too “*masa*” relates to the nation. The *davar* comes out of the mouth of God and becomes a *masa* on the nation. A nation which has sinned will be held culpable for its sins, its sins will be like a heavy burden. This is the burden of the nation, not the burden of God. They are not angering God, rather *do they not provoke themselves to their own disgrace?* (Yirmiyahu 7:19) It is not the burden of God which brings the decree, rather the decree of God which causes the burden. It is not the word of the people which is a burden on God, rather the word of God is a burden on the people. For the sin does not cause God's punishment, rather God brings punishment on the sinner.”

The World Wide Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

02-5944555 • טל': perek.matan@gmail.com

© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים

מִתַּן מַתָּן

מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רעננערט  
The Sadie Renner Women's Institute for Torah Studies

המרכז ללימודי תנ"ך