

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program



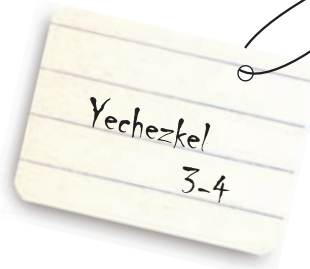
This learning is dedicated in memory of our dear parents:

Yoseph & Felice Chajmovic

### Perek 3:16-27

With the completion of his dedicative prophecy, Yehezkel remains among the people of the captivity for seven days – *“Then I came to those of the captivity who dwelled in Tel-abib on the river Chebar ... and I remained among them seven dreary days”* (3:15). After seven days, Yehezkel receives a new prophecy that concerns the prophet’s role as a watchman (16-21). The prophecy of the watchman in our perek parallels the prophecy in perek 33, and both belong to the series of prophecies dealing with the theory of reward and punishment. As the perek continues (22-27), Yehezkel is commanded to leave the captivity for the plain. There, for a second time, the vision of the Glory of God is revealed to him. He is commanded to shut himself in his house and remain silent.





1 “*Son of Man, I have appointed you a watchman over the House of Israel*” (17) – the prophet’s task is compared in the perek to the job of a watchman.

a) Examine Shmuel II 18:24-27, Melachim II 9:17, and the parallel prophecy in Yechezkel 33:1-6. Pay attention to the importance of the role of watchman in ancient times.

b) According to the metaphor of the watchman, what is the purpose of the prophet’s mission to the people? Pay attention to the similarities and differences between the role and mission of the prophet in the dedicative prophecy (especially 2:4-5) and his role in this perek. Pay attention to the specific nature of the watchman’s mission and to the ability of the prophet to influence the people.

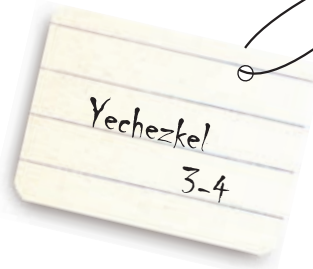
2 “*Then a spirit came to me and stood me on my feet, and He spoke to me saying to me come, shut yourself within your house*” (24)

a) In the prophecy on the plain, Yechezkel is given three commandments (24-26). Pay attention to what these three things have in common.

b) From perek 24 (26-27) and perek 33 (21-22) it is apparent that the period of Yechezkel’s silence ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. But this raises a major difficulty because we have found that Yechezkel prophesied during this period. Examine the commentaries below and see how each of them solves the problem.

#### Metzudat David:

“*and you will be silent*” – you will be as a mute and you will not confront them as a chastiser who chastises of his own will when he sees someone doing wrong. “*Because they are a rebellious house*” – therefore do not chastise them **of your own will** because they will defy you. “*But when I speak with you*” - when **I** speak with you and send you to prophesy



to them, then I will open your mouth to speak clearly ... “and you shall say” – when I send you, you will say to them “Thus says God”, meaning that I am not speaking on my own, but these are the words of God.

**Radak:** He commanded him to shut himself in his house and not go out among them so that he would not chastise them until He had spoken to him all the prophecies up to the pasuk “*And a spirit lifted me up and brought me to Chaldea*” (11:24)

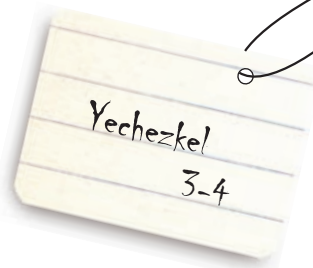
c) Another possibility is to interpret the commandment to silence as symbolic, as the precursor of the symbolic acts in the next perek. Consider the possible significance of this silence.

## Perek 4

A series of prophetic acts symbolizing the predicted fate of the nation appear in perek 4 and the beginning of perek 5. The first act – tracing on a tile (1-3) – symbolizes the siege of Jerusalem. The second act – lying on his side for many days (4-8) – symbolizes the sin of the city and its punishment. The third act – eating food by weight and drinking water by measure (9-17) – symbolizes the severe famine that will prevail in Jerusalem during the siege and the suffering of the exiles.

3 “*And you, Son of Man, take you a tile and lay it before you and trace upon it a city, even Jerusalem*”

a) The first act is comprised of two stages each opening with the words “and you” (pesukim 1 and 3) and each is on a different plane. Pay attention to the significant differences between these actions.



b) Compare **Rabbi Elazar's** comments in the gemara in Berachot and **Radak's** commentary on the symbolic significance of the iron griddle:

**Rabbi Elazar** said: From the day the Temple was destroyed, an iron wall divided Israel from their Father in heaven, as it says, *'And take for yourself an iron griddle and set it for a wall of iron between you and the city'*. (Bavli, Berachot 32b)

**Radak:** The wall of iron represents two ideas. One is the strength of the iron, for the heart of Israel is as strong as iron. The blackness of the iron represents their sins that are ugly and black, as they were likened to black figs, and they are far from whitening, and they divide between themselves and God like a wall dividing between two houses. (According to Yishayahu 59:2 – *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God"*)

- 4 The second act – lying on his side – is the most unclear in the series of acts. Opinions are divided concerning the meaning of this act, and especially concerning the length of time it lasted (390 and 40). Study the way that **Seder Olam Rabbah** deals with the question of how long this symbolic act lasted:

This teaches us that Israel angered God from the time they entered the land until they left it – three hundred and ninety years ... This teaches that Judah angered God from the time the Ten Tribes were exiled until Jerusalem was destroyed – forty years, the total being four hundred and thirty years. (Seder Olam Rabbah chapter 26)

- 5 With the third act, Yechezkel is commanded to demonstrate the dire suffering predicted for the people during the siege. In addition to the limited food and drink that symbolize the hunger and thirst during the siege, another commandment appears in pesukim 12-13. What aspect of the siege and exile is demonstrated in this commandment?



## Appendix

### Symbolic acts in the prophecy of Yechezkel

Our sages have told us: Several prophets received the same prophetic message, but no two delivered it in the same style. This assertion is especially obvious in the prophecies of Yechezkel. No other book of prophecy compares to our book in the multiplicity of symbolic acts or in the wealth of description about them. Yechezkel frequently expresses God's message through symbolic acts and graphic descriptions that appear to us as real actions. There are different kinds of symbolic acts in the book: There are the acts that are done to him while he remains passive such as the scroll of the book that he is commanded to eat. As opposed to those, there are the acts in which he takes a more active part such as the tracing of the city on the tile and eating the bread baked on cattle dung, and others. In addition to these acts, there are visions and prophecies similar to those found in other prophets, but the careful and detailed descriptions of each aspect of the visions of Yechezkel bring them to life and present them as if they are occurring before our very eyes. Finally we will mention the images and metaphors in the book that only Yechezkel, with his unique style, excels in carefully and methodically describing.

continued >

For expanded content and answers to questions:  מתן על הפרק • perek.matan@gmail.com

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים • טל': 02-5944555

מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רינגברט

The Sodie Rennet Women's Institute for Torah Studies

המרכז ללימודי תנ"ך



There is disagreement among the commentators and early thinkers as to the degree of symbolism in Yechezkel's descriptions. The Rambam (in Moreh Nevuchim, part 2, chapter 46) posits that everything took place in prophetic vision. See the Rambam's text and Abarbanel's response. What are the arguments raised by each side? The **Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 2:46)**:

... but all these things are only processes of a prophetic vision, and not real things that could be perceived by the senses of the body ... also the passage, "Thus I arose and went into the plain" (3:2-3), refers to a prophetic vision ... the same may be said of the following passages: "And you take for yourself a tile," etc., "and lie you also on your left side," etc.; "Take you also wheat and barley," etc., "and cause it to pass over your head and upon your beard" (perakim 4-5) It was in a prophetic vision that he saw that he did all these actions which he was commanded to do. God forbid [for us] to assume that God would make his prophets appear as objects of ridicule and sport in the eyes of the ignorant, and order them to perform foolish acts.

As opposed to this, **Rabbi Yitzchak Abarbanel** distinguishes between different acts in all the books of the Prophets:

... and I wonder if we have the right to contradict the simple meaning of the stories and to say that it was in a prophetic vision and the product of imagination or if it really happened, each man according to his own view ... and here, we have seen prophets performing acts so that people will ask what these are and they will answer them all that God has spoken, because things that are seen with the eye make greater impressions than those which are heard ...

Y. Z. Moskowitz, Introduction to the Da'ath Mikra commentary on Yechezkel (pages 17-18)

For expanded content and answers to questions:  מתן על הפרק • perek.matan@gmail.com

Tali ilan Studio 052-5513437

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים • טל': 02-5944555

מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רינגברט

The Sodie Rennet Women's Institute for Torah Studies

המרכז ללימודי תנ"ך