

Bellows Family

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly | Tanakh Learning Program

In memory of HaRav Pesach Dov ben Baruch VeLeah who passed away on 23 Shevat

## Perek 3

In the first part of perek 3 (1-2), the spiritual abundance which will be granted to the entire nation is described. This spiritual abundance is the next step after the material abundance which was described in perek 2 (19-27). The second half of the perek (3-5) describes the Day of the Lord and its aftermath and the salvation which will come to those who call out to God.

### 1.

*"And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (1)*

**a** | Follow the three sets of pairs described in pesukim 1-2. What image arises from all three?

**b** | The vision of the pouring of the spirit on the entire nation reminds us of Moshe's aspiration in the story of Eldad and Meidad in Bamidbar 11:27-29. Examine the dialogue between Moshe and Yehoshua there – what was their disagreement, and what was the aspiration of Moshe, the father of all the prophets?

See also the Midrash Tanchuma there:

The Holy One Blessed be He said: In this world only individuals will prophesy, but in the world to come all of Israel will be prophets, as it says, *"And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, etc."*

### 2.

*"And it shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered... and among the survivors those whom the Lord shall call."* Pasuk 5 begins and ends with similar phrases: what is the difference between the first phrase and the second? What can the literal connection teach us about the conceptual relationship between the two phrases?

## Yoel 3-4

### Perek 4

In Perek 4 the prophet expands and interprets the vision of the Day of the Lord which was described in perek 3. The Day of the Lord is described as a day of judgment which will come to the nations of the world as retribution for the harm which they caused to Israel (1-8). God calls to the nations to come to war in the Valley of Yehoshafat, where they will be judged for what they have done (9-15). In the continuation of the prophecy the polar opposition between the fate of the nations and the fate of Israel is stressed: while the other nations are promised misfortune, the inhabitants of Zion are promised security and salvation (16-21).

### 3.

Even though the book of Yoel comprises two different sections which deal with two different topics, there is a clear system of linguistic and structural parallels between the first section of the book (perakim 1-2) which deals with the plague of locusts, and the second section of the book (perakim 3-4) which describes the Day of the Lord, the judgment of the nations and the salvation of Israel. Try to understand the connection between the two sections of the book. How does the first section contribute to our understanding of the second section? What is the overall significance of the prophecy of Yoel in light of this structure? Use the following points to help you understand:

**a** | There is a similarity between the description of the arrival of the locusts (2:7) and the arrival of the nations (4:9). Who is the enemy in each section, and how would you characterize the disaster?

**b** | Compare the calls of the prophet in the first section (1:14; 2:15) to his call in the second section (4:9). What is the purpose of the calls in each section?

**c** | The desolation of the land is mentioned in the first section (2:3) and in the second section (4:19). Which land becomes desolate in each of the two sections?

**d** | The turmoil of the natural elements on the Day of the Lord is mentioned using similar language but in the opposite order in the first section (2:10-11) and the second section (4:15-16). What is the cause which brings darkness and turmoil, and what is the fate of Israel in each of the two sections?

### 4.

*"Proclaim this among the nations, prepare war"*(9)

In pesukim 9-12 the prophet invites the nations who are enemies of Israel to come to war in the valley of Yehoshafat.

**a** | The background to Yoel's prophecy is a prophecy of the end of days in Yishayahu (2:2-4).

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## Yoel 3-4

Compare the prophecies, paying attention to the role of the agricultural tools, the nature of the judgment of the nations by God, and the status of Jerusalem in the end of days (see Yoel 4:17). In light of this comparison, what is the image of the Day of the Lord which is described in the book of Yoel?

**b |** In pasuk 13 another image from the world of agricultural implements appears. Why do you think that specifically this image was chosen to express the death of the nations, and what is the moral significance of this choice?

### 5.

Jerusalem plays a central part in the description of the disaster and the salvation in the last part of the perek. Examine the various roles which are described in pesukim 16-18, 21 and perek 3:5. Compare the purpose of the Day of the Lord in pasuk 17, to its description in the first section of the book (2:27). What is the main novelty in the second half of the book? What is the deeper significance of God sitting in Jerusalem?

## APPENDIX – The Valley of Yehoshafat

Central to Yoel's prophecy of the Day of the Lord is the Valley of Yehoshafat where God's judgment of the nations will take place. The Valley of Yehoshafat is mentioned in Tanakh only in the book of Yoel. Already in the early commentaries we find two approaches to understanding what it represents: in the first approach, which is reflected in Targum Yehonatan, the text is not referring to a real place and the name is only symbolic. This is the approach of the Midrash Shocheh Tov as well:

And there is no valley which is called Yehoshafat. What is Yehoshafat? Rather the valley where God (Yeho) will judge (shafat) all of the nations.

According to the second approach, the name matches a geographical place. The historian Eusebius, (a Christian who lived in the fourth century), dealt with identifying places in the Land of Israel. He offered two possible identifications: Gai ben Hinnom (the Valley of the Son of Hinnom) and the valley which is between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. His second interpretation was the one which was widely accepted until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Until that time there were those who identified what we call today Absalom's tomb (Yad Avshalom) as the tomb of King Yehoshafat, and called the cave next to the tomb Yehoshafat's cave.

In time, the Kidron Valley, between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives became a desirable burial place. Even today, we find famous burial monuments there, such as Yad Avshalom, the tomb of Zecharia and the tomb of Bnai Chazir. The Christian monk, Felix Fabri,

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## Yoel 3-4

who visited Jerusalem in the fifteenth century and wrote about its holy places, also tells about the Valley of Yehoshafat and the pilgrims who visited it:

They gather stones and build monuments, and believe this to ensure them of a place in the end of days on the day of the great judgment which will take place in this valley. People who cannot afford to make the pilgrimage themselves give money to the pilgrims who leave for Jerusalem, and ask them to mark a place for them in the Valley of Yehoshafat.

This common practice is seen also in the responsa of the Radbaz, the rabbi of Egypt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century:

You ask of me about the practice in Egypt to bring the bones to Jerusalem, if this is a worthy practice or not, and if one can bury another corpse in the same grave, and if one stands in lines of mourning for this, or says a eulogy. The answer is: it is a worthy practice to bring the bones to Jerusalem, for we have a tradition that the resurrection will only take place in the Valley of Yehoshafat, and there the souls will be returned to the bodies, and we find that then he will be saved from resurrection for absolution, and even the deceased from the Land of Israel are only buried there.

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**מִן מֵימֵינוּ**

מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רעננערט  
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