

This week's learning guide has been dedicated by Riva Oron in memory of her parents Liba Ahuva and Baruch Aryeh. May the learning, the charity, and the chessed be a light unto their memory.

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yeshayahu Perakim 23-24

Perek 23

Perek 23 completes the first section of prophecies addressed to the gentile nations with a final prophecy addressed to the opulent Tyre (in Hebrew, *Tzur*), the maritime trade city. The prophecy closes with God's remembrance and rehabilitation of the city after a seventy-year period.

The pronouncement to Tyre consists of two sections: *Destruction* (1-14; note the parallel verses framing this section) and *Redemption* (15-19).

- 1 In the opening pesukim (1-7) Yeshayahu addresses a few different groups of people and urges them to mourn the destruction of Tyre. Note the various expressions of mourning ("moan," "howl," etc.), the different groups singled out, and the different perspective each group has on the destruction. How does the style of this description reflect the nature of Tyre as a trade city?
- 2 Tyre's sins are not explicitly described in the prophecy, however, we can identify them based on a few hints in the text:
 - a) Review pasuk 7 (and compare to Yeshayahu 13:3) and pasuk 9. How is Tyre portrayed in these pesukim?
 - b) Review pesukim 15-17. Why is Tyre compared to a harlot and how is this connected to the city's main occupation?
- 3 *Tyre's redemption*: Why is Tyre redeemed after a period of seventy years specifically? (Compare this to the mention of "seventy years" in Yirmiyahu 29:10.)
- 4 Note the verbs relating to memory (remembering/forgetting) in pesukim 15-17 and compare this to the description of Tyre's pride in the first half of the prophecy. How is the delayed redemption meant to rehabilitate Tyre's sin?

Perek 24

Perek 24 begins a new section of the book (24-27) which includes prophecies for the End of Days regarding the destruction of the land, the salvation of Israel and the revelation of God's kingship. In perek 24 Yeshayahu describes the horrifying collapse of the land of Israel—a collapse which will reveal the kingship of God to the entire world.

- 5 a) Review the land's collapse and note the different elements included in it (2,18-19,23). What is the connection between this description and God's universal rule mentioned at the end of the perek?
b) Review pasuk 2 and divide the list of opposing pairs into two. How is this description of collapse different from the other descriptions in the perek? How is it related to God's rule?
- 6 a) What is blamed for the land's destruction? Refer to pesukim 5-6 and 20.
b) The description of the collapse invokes the description of the flood recounted in Breishit (compare pasuk 18 to Breishit 7:11). What is the correlation between the sin and the punishment, and the actions of man and the land's fate (Breishit 6:10-13)? What moral principle was affixed following the flood and how is this expressed in our perek? (For further reference, compare Bamidbar 35:33 to pesukim 5-6 in our perek.)

Appendix

“Ships of Tarshish”

Yeshayahu's prophecy regarding Tyre opens with a petition made to the “ships of Tarshish” whose seamen hear about the destruction of their homeland while away on business travels. “Tarshish” appears throughout Tanach in multiple contexts, while always relating in some way to maritime commerce: usually as the name of a place, sometimes as a specific type of ship, and occasionally as a precious stone (Shemot 28:20). The word most often appears as the name of a place on the Mediterranean coast, west of Israel, perhaps most famously recognized from the story of Yonah who attempts to escape his mission to Ninveh by boarding a ship departing for Tarshish.

Yechezkel mentions Tarshish as a rich source of metals: *“Tarshish traded with you because of your wealth of all kinds of goods; they bartered silver, iron, tin, and lead for your wares”* (27:12). The description of Shlomo’s commercial ties to Chiram, king of Tyre, is similar: *“For the king had a Tarshish fleet on the sea, along with Chiram’s fleet. Once every three years, the Tarshish fleet came in, bearing gold and silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks”* (I Melachim 10:22). The continuation of I Melachim (22:49) recounts Yehoshafat’s failed attempt to transport gold from Ophir on Tarshish ships.

It seems that the Tarshish mentioned in Tanach refers to a place rich with metals and accessed mainly by sea. In order to reach it, large ships were developed which could weather the difficult journey and bring back heavy metals to profit the ship owners. These ships were called “Ships of Tarshish” and the name was preserved even when they departed in order to bring back gold and exotic animals from Ophir. The exact identity of Tarshish is uncertain, however, the most accepted opinion is that Tarshish can be identified with Tarsus located on the western coast of Asia Minor.

The ships of Tarshish are also mentioned at the beginning of Yeshayahu among the list of the *“proud and arrogant”* symbols of power and human strength which will be defeated on the *“Day of the Lord:”* *“For the Lord of Hosts has ready a day against all that is proud and arrogant, against all that is lofty... against every soaring tower and every mighty wall; against all the ships of Tarshish”* (Yeshayahu 2:12-15).



The description of God’s power overtaking the ships of Tarshish also appears in Tehillim: *“as the Tarshish fleet was wrecked in an easterly gale”* (48:8). The mention of the ships of Tarshish at the beginning of the prophecy of destruction in our perek, serves as an expression of Tyre’s pride which will be eradicated by divine retribution.

Model of an ancient Phoenician ship from the 8th century BCE.

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