

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yeshayahu Perakim 58-60

Perek 58

Our chapter discusses the character of a fast day, and was chosen by chazal as the haftarah to be read on Yom Kippur. In the first section (1-4) the prophet criticizes the characteristic of the fast day as it was being kept at the time; a manner which caused relationships between people to worsen. Not only were their interpersonal relationships deteriorating, but they had the pretension that God would heed their prayers as a result of their fast. In the continuation of the chapter (5-7) the prophet depicts the ideal characteristic of the fast day, as a day of chessed (good deeds). Finally, the last section (13-14) deals with the nature of Shabbat; which connects to the characteristic of the fast day, as a day of cessation from Man's work. The discussion of Shabbat in this context deepens the meaning of the fast day.

- 1 What is the focus of the prophetic criticism regarding the nature of the fast? The word "eager" 'חפץ' appears three times in pesukim 1-4; how do both interpretations of the root 'חפץ' express the criticism? Read the following commentary by Radak:

How can I see your fast, while it is but for arguing; for on the fast day the nation gathers, and each one meets his creditor. Then, each one requests his loan back, for he has found him on the fast day. And if he should not give back the loan, the creditor demands it back, and urges him until he is willing to pay it back. The creditor will even strike him harshly, should the borrower not respond as wanted. This is why your fast is not for God; rather, it is for your own needs.

- 2 'Is such the fast I desire, a day for men to starve their bodies?... Do you call that a fast, a day when the Lord is favorable? No, this is the fast I desire' (5-6). Contrary to the misconception of 'the fast I desire', the prophet talks of an opposite conception of the fast day. What is the fundamental difference between the fast that the prophet

criticizes and the ideal fast that God chooses? Notice the parallel between the external actions mentioned in pasuk 5, and the moral and social actions that are mentioned in pesukim 6-7. Discuss the meaning of the connection between them.

- 3 The condition and reward are doubled in pesukim 9b-12; they express a higher level of spiritual activity and divine response. Compare to pesukim 8-9a, and note the developments that occur. Discuss the following points made by **Metzudat David** and **Radak**:

Metzudat David: If from everything around you- you banish the yoke that you have burdened the poor with.

Radak: '*And you offer your compassion to the hungry*'- These are the good deeds that you will do, that you will offer your soul and your will to the hungry, meaning that you should slice him some bread with compassion and a kind spirit. In this manner he will realize that you are providing for him out of good will, from your heart. The same goes for clothing, as was mentioned above.

- 4 The chapter concludes with an entirely different topic, which seems to be unrelated- the mitzvah of keeping Shabbat, and delighting on Shabbat. What aspect of Shabbat is emphasized in this section? Reflect on the correlation between the beginning and the ending of the chapter, expressed by the word 'affair' 'חפץ' (at the beginning of the chapter the meaning was 'eager'). In what way is the 'חפץ' different in both places? Notice the connection between the description of the Shabbat as it appears here, and the description of the ideal fast day.

Perek 59

Similarly to chapter 57, the background of our chapter is the trouble within which the nation is situated. In contrast to the previous chapter, in which the redemption came as a result of repentance, in our chapter a different process is described; a process in which the redemption arrives as a heavenly *chesed* (kindness). The prophet opens with a description of the nation's sins, which are the reason that they are not worthy of being answered (1-8). In despair, the nation responds by confessing to its sins and accepting the verdict. From their response it seems that they are currently situated in a difficult trouble, which is compared to darkness (9-15). In the conclusion, God is described as a war hero, who goes out to battle against Israel's enemies (16-21).

- 5 In the first section of the chapter the prophet compares the sins to a partition (1-2). How can the term 'hester panim' (when God's face is hidden) be explained according to this simile?
- 6 In the second section of the chapter Israel compares their own situation to darkness (9-10). Explain this simile by referring to the simile of the partition that was mentioned above. Note the reoccurrence of the words 'justice' (משפט) and 'victory' (צדק) throughout the chapter. They have a twofold meaning; that of victory and human morality, and divine salvation (4, 8,9,11, 14, 15-17). In conclusion, what is the correlation that arises between sin and punishment from our chapter?

Perek 60

Chapter 60 spreads before us a spectacular and bright picture of the redemption. In the center of this picture stands Zion, shining in bright light. Zion's redemption shines on all the nations, worldwide; and so they flow to her from all corners of the earth. The nations and their kings flow to Zion as well; bringing with them their wealth and treasures, in order to glorify its walls and the Temple situated in its heart.

- 7 In the opening pesukim (1-3) and the concluding ones (19-20) the prophet describes Zion's redemption, utilizing various verbs which describe light. Follow the manner in which the light motif develops between the opening and ending pesukim; in what way is Zion's light unique according to the ending pesukim?
- 8 The flow to Zion is described in four stages, while each stage concludes with the same highlight- the splendor of the Temple.
- Where do the nations arrive from in the first and second sections (4-7, 8-9), and what are their roles? What do they bring to the Temple?
 - What is added in the third section of the chapter (10-13) in terms of the nations' relation towards Zion and the Temple?
 - A complete opposite situation of Israel is emphasized in the fourth section (14-18). Reflect on the various aspects within which this change occurs.

Appendix

Arise, shine, for your light has dawned

Rabbi Yochanan said:

This is a parable for a passerby who was walking on a path. As twilight began, a person came and lit a candle for him, and then the candle blew out. Another person came and lit a candle for him, and it blew out as well. The passerby said: 'From now on I shall wait for the morning sunlight to rise.' Similarly, Israel said to God: 'We made you a menorah (lampstand) during the time of Moshe, and it blew out. We made another during the time of King Shlomo, and it too blew out. From now on we shall wait for your light only, as it says: *'With You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light.'* And God said to Israel: *'Arise, shine, for your light has dawned.'*



Rabbi Aha said:

Israel is likened to an olive tree: "*A leafy olive tree fair with goodly fruit*" (Yirmiyahu. 11:16). And the Blessed Holy One is likened to a lamp: "*The lamp of God is the spirit of humans*" (Prov. 20:27). What use is made of olive oil? It is put into a lamp, and then the two together give light as though they were one. Hence the Blessed Holy One will say to Israel: My children, since My light is your light and your light is My light, let us go together- you and I- and give light to Zion: "*Arise, give light, for your light has come*" (Translation by www.kolel.org)



[Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu
60:1]

The World Wide Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

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

© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים