

This week's learning is in memory of a devoted and beloved father,  
Zoltan Sternberg, who passed away 2 Shvat, 5763

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Yirmiyahu Perakim 29-30

#### Perek 29

Yirmiyahu's war against the false prophets continues in our perek, this time describing his struggle with the false prophets in the Babylonian exile. Those exiled in the exile of Yehoyachin were influenced by the false prophets who prophesied that the exile would end soon and there would be a return to Jerusalem. In contrast to these prophecies stands Yirmiyahu, who sends a letter to the exiles to convince them to settle in and establish themselves in the exile, which will continue for a while longer. Paradoxically, it is Yirmiyahu's prophecy of the long exile which contains within it the seeds of hope and redemption. In the continuation of the perek we hear how Yirmiyahu's letter angers one of the false prophets in Babylonia, Shmayahu haNechelami, who requests that the priests in Jerusalem imprison Yirmiayhu. In response Yirmiyahu prophesies that Shmayahu's descendants will not merit seeing the consolation.

- 1 a) Yirmiyahu's letter to the exiles opens with a series of directions (5-6). Compare the directions in these pesukim to the curses in Devarim 28:30-32, and analyze the process of these actions in both sources, and the meaning of the connection between them.
- b) In pasuk 7 the nation is commanded to "*seek the peace*" of the gentile city to which it was exiled and to pray for it. In pesukim 12-15 another prayer is mentioned. Compare this to the description in Devarim 4:27-31, and contrast the meaning of the prayer in 12-15 and the meaning of the prayer in pasuk 7.
- c) Why does Yirmiyahu put so much importance on the settling in of the exiles in Babylonia and why is this long stay in the exile essential for the redemption?

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

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

המרכז ללימודי תנ"ך

- 2 In Pesukim 21-23 Yirmiyahu accuses the false prophets Achav and Tzidkiyahu of having prophesied falsely and committed adultery with their neighbors' wives. Why does Yirmiyahu connect these two accusations? See also the attitude toward the false prophets earlier in 23:14.
- 3 Read the following midrash and consider the character of the false prophets and their motives.

**Pesikta DeRav Kahana, 24** – Achav ben Kolaya and Tzidkiyahu ben Maasiyah were false prophets who committed adultery with their neighbors' wives,... How did they go about it? One of them would go to a married woman and say, "In a vision it was made known to me that my colleague would come to you and that you would give birth to a prophet in Israel."

## Perek 30

Perek 30 opens the section of prophecies of consolation in the book, which continues through perek 33. Our perek describes the Day of the Lord, the day when the great war will begin which will begin the salvation of Israel, a prophecy which seems to hint at the fall of the Babylonian empire. In the continuation of the prophecy, the stages of the redemption are described – the return of Israel to its land and to independence, the rebuilding of the desolate land and the renewal of the connection between and God and His nation.

- 4 "Write all the words that I have spoken to you in a book"
- a) Compare this to God's commandments to Moshe in Shmot 17:14 and 34:27. Pay attention to the meaning of writing in each commandment, and think about what could be the meaning of writing Yirmiyahu's prophecies of consolation.
- b) Why does this commandment come specifically about prophecies of consolation? Think about the connection between the commandment to write and the answer of Yirmiyahu to Chananya ben Azur in 28:9.
- 5 "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it" (7). The prophecy opens with a description of the Day of the Lord. In the beginning the fear and trembling on that day are described (5-7) and afterwards we hear of the salvation which will take place on that day (8-11).

a) Consider the **Yerushalmi on Massechet Taanit** and the explanation of the **Keter Shem Tov** to understand why fear precedes the salvation:

**Yerushalmi Taanit 1:1** –Rabbi Yehoshua said to him, “And is it so that if Israel should stand and not repent, they will not be redeemed forever?” Rabbi Eliezer said to him: “The Holy One, blessed be He, will appoint over them a king as harsh as Haman, and forthwith they will repent and so will be redeemed.” What is the scriptural basis for this view? “*It is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it*” (Yir 30:7)

**Keter Shem Tov 8** – And our teacher the Baal Shem Tov said... that it is written “*It is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it*” to teach us that not only will they be freed of the distress, but additionally “*yet he shall be saved out of it*”, that from this distress will come the salvation.

b) The trembling of the nation of Israel is compared in our perek to the trembling of a woman in labor (6). Consider the link between this image and the images of the Day of the Lord.

- 6 “*For it shall come to pass on that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds.*”(8) This description is very similar to the prophecy of Chananya ben Azur, the false prophet who attacked Yirmiyahu (28:2). What is the essential difference between the prophecy of Yirmiyahu and the prophecy of Chananya? Think about your answer to question 1c in considering this point.

## Appendix

“*And seek the peace of the city into which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray to the Lord for it*” (29:7)

Over the centuries, Yirmiyahu’s words to the exiles in Babylonia became a basis for the Jewish view of existence and adaptation in the exile. Throughout history and from exiles in different countries, Jewish prayers for the local governments were based on this pasuk.

An interesting and surprising explanation to this pasuk is given by Rabbi Reuvein Margolies in his book “*haMikra vahaMesora*” (free translation):

“*And seek the peace of the city into which I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray to the Lord for it: for in its peace shall you have peace*” (Yir 29:7) – Even before I knew how to read a passage in scripture correctly, these words of the prophet were known to me from the thousands of

appeals during the Austrian parliamentary elections, for the State Council in Galicia and the like, in which those who held the dominant regime based their views and their ways on their understanding of these words of the prophet, and which became a basis for their tendency to compromise in exile.

However, it is interesting to note that our Rabbis, the learned men of the Talmud, had a different understanding of these words of the prophet: **In their opinion, in these words the prophet commands that even when Israel is in exile they must ask for the peace of Zion.** See the Midrash Tanchuma Vayigash on the pasuk “*And he sent Yebuda before him*” (Bereshit 46:28) in which they say: “All that occurred to Yosef, occurred to Zion, etc.” Regarding Yosef it is written “*Go I pray of you and see whether it be well with your brothers.*” And about Zion it is written, “*And seek the peace of the city*”. And similarly in Massechet Derech Eretz at the end of Perek HaShalom it says in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: “The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, you caused my house to be destroyed and my people to be exiled. If you seek her peace (Jerusalem’s) I will forgive you. What is the reason? It is written “*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem*” (Tehillim 122:6) and “*And seek the peace of the city*”...and from their style it is clear that in saying this they do not meant to make a **commentary** connecting this to Zion, rather it is their understanding that this is the **plain meaning of the text**. And indeed, this does match the spirit of the entire section which discusses the promise of the return to Zion, as it says in pasuk 14 there, “and I will bring you back to the place from which I caused you to be driven away” ... And also the depth of the plain meaning can be understood by using the rules of linguistics in spoken language – that when you have a word which ends with the same letter as the letter which begins the next word, there is a slurring of the letters and one may be dropped, so that in the words “*vedarshu et shalom ha’ir asher higleiti etchem misham*” (which would mean “and seek the peace of the city from which I have exiled you”) the second mem was dropped and the sentence became “*vedarshu et shlom ha’ir asher higleiti etchem shama*” (which means “*And seek the peace of the city into which I have caused you to be carried away captives*”) So that the words of the prophet do not refer to Babylonia, saying that the peace of Babylonia will bring your peace, that land which is soaked in the blood of the exile, the land about which it was said, “*Happy is he who shall seize and dash thy little ones against the rock*” (Tehillim 137:9), but rather it speaks of Zion, our life source, according to the understanding of our Rabbis.