

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program



Perek 44

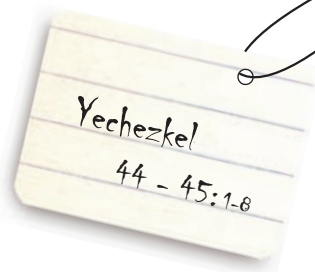
Having finished prophesying about the structure and measurements of the temple, Yechezkel turns to discuss the ritual order which will be in the future temple. The perek begins with the instruction that the Eastern Gate should remain closed (1-3). The majority of the perek is dedicated to the laws of the Priests and their work. First, aliens are distanced from the temple, and the Levites who have sinned are separated from the priests, the sons of Tzadok, who remained loyal to God. Afterward the laws of the priests, which reflect the change in the status of the priests, are given in detail.

- ❶ "*This gate shall be closed, it shall not be opened*" (2). What is special about "*this gate*" and what does its being kept closed express? See the **Malbim**:

He informed him that from now on this gate would be closed and would not be opened ever, to teach that the Spirit of God would never again exit from there.

Can you think of another reason for closing the gate, from the perspective of the people?





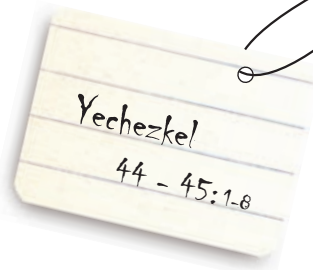
- 2 Pesukim 9-16 deal with the separation between the status of the Levites and the Priests the sons of Tzadok, and they describe the actions of the Levites and Priests during the First Temple and the implications of these actions on the future temple. Note the linguistic and substantive connections between the actions and their results for each group. Examine the difference between the role of the Levites and the role of the Priests: whom do the Levites serve (11, 14)? and the Priests (15-16)? Before whom do they stand (11-15)? What is their charge (14-16)? Notice also the concepts of approaching and distancing which repeat in these pesukim.
- 3 The laws which pertain to the Priests of the house of Tzadok (17-31) are similar to the laws of the Priests in Sefer Vayikra, but there are a number of significant differences between them. Pay attention to these differences and try to understand what characterizes the laws of the Priests in Yechezkel as compared to the commandments in the Torah:
 - a) Clothing: Compare the commandment in Yechezkel (44:17) to the clothes of the priests described in the Torah, which are made of linen, wool and other materials (Shmot 28:3-5). Compare these also to the clothing of the High Priest on Yom Kippur which are made of linen alone.
 - b) Haircut: Compare the commandment in pasuk 20 to the commandments in the Torah to the Priests (Vayikra 21:5) and to the High Priest (Vayikra 21:10).
 - c) Personal Status: Compare the forbidden marriages in pasuk 22 to the commandment of the Torah in Vayikra 21:7, and to the commandment to the High Priest in Vayikra 21:14.



Perek 45:1-8

Following the laws of the priests in Perek 44 and the offerings to the Priests in the end of the perek, Yechezkel turns in Perek 45 to a different type of offering: the offerings of the land (1-8). This offering is a part of the process of redividing the land which will be described in detail in perek 48, and is a continuation of the process of repair and protection which will take place in the future temple.

- 4 “*You shall set aside an offering to the Lord, holy from the land*” (1) Pay attention to the difference in the purpose of the lands given to the Priests (2-4) as opposed to the lands given to the Levites (5). See what is written in 44:28 – what do you think is the reason for this?
- 5 In the outer circle, outside of the “offering corresponding to the holy portion”, we find the properties of the city (6) and the prince (7-8), which are not holy. What is the connection between this separation and the other innovations which characterize the future temple? Pay attention to the additional reason given for the property of the prince and to the harsh criticism which accompanies it in pesukim 9-10.



Appendix

Our Rabbis said – “No two prophets prophesy in the same style”. Yechezkel’s vision of the future temple is not an abstract and lyrical vision, as is Yishayahu’s vision of the temple mount in the end of days; rather it is based on precise and detailed laws, as appropriate for Yechezkel’s prophetic style. And indeed, in all the books of the prophets there is no similar grouping of laws given by a prophet. At the heart of the grouping, in perakim 44-46 the laws of the Priests and the sacrifices are given in detail, in a style remarkably similar to that found in Sefer Vayikra, also known as *Torat Kohanim*, the Law of the Priests. This similarity only underscores the importance of the differences between Yechezkel and the Torah. These contradictions were so serious in the eyes of the Rabbis that they almost archived the book of Yechezkel:

Rav Yehudah said: That man be remembered for blessing, namely, Chananya b. Chizkiya: but for him, the Book of Yechezkel would have been withdrawn, for its words contradict the words of the Torah. What did he do? Three hundred garab of oil were brought up to him, and he sat in an upper chamber and expounded it. (Chagiga 13a)

Sefer Yechezkel was saved because of the dedication of Chananya b. Chizkiya who studied the book and dealt with the contradictions. In the following case as well, Chananya saved the book of Yechezkel from being archived:

The Rabbis taught: There was once a child who was reading at his teacher's house the Book of Yechezkel, and he apprehended what Hashmal was, whereupon a fire went forth from Hashmal and consumed him. So they sought to suppress the Book of Yechezkel, but Chananya b. Chizkiya said to them: If he was a Sage, all are Sages! (Chagiga 13a)

The Gemara does not tell us how Chananya b. Chizkiya resolved the contradictions, however by studying the entire section of perakim about the temple we can try to understand: In both the vision of the future temple and the vision of the ritual order, Yechezkel shows a trend of over-sanctification as a counterbalance for the behavior during the First Temple, which was destroyed because of the defilement which took place in it, and of clear, sharp separation between the holy and the secular.

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