

Bellows Family

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly | Tanakh Learning Program

Perek 9

Perek 9 is divided into two sections – the first section (1-9) predicts the cessation of happiness and holidays in Israel because of the exile. In the second section (10-17), the historical events which brought the nation to this predicament from the time of the founding of the nation are listed. These types of references are made in the coming perakim as well.

1.

The first section begins with a comparison between the joys of the holiday, the harvest, the sacrifices and libations and the exile. Pay attention to the negative language which is repeated in the section. Follow the series of contrasts in it which create a connection between the sin and its punishment: the role of the threshing floor (1,2), the two times eating is mentioned (3,4) and the two types of bread (4).

2.

Three key historical events in the nation's past are alluded to in the perek. These events are a "negative prototype" of the nation's sins in the present.

a | The first event is mentioned in pasuk 9 – *"They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Giv'ah"*. The sin of Giv'ah is mentioned in 10:9 as well: *"Since the days of Giv'ah, you have sinned, O Israel!"*. Examine the two main stories which are connected with Giv'ah in the Tanakh – the story of the concubine in Giv'ah (Shoftim 19-20) and the kingdom of Shaul (Shmuel I 10:26; 11:4). Think about how the mention of Giv'ah is a criticism of the people in light of each of these stories.

b | The second event is mentioned in pasuk 10 and is related to the beginning of the relationship between God and the nation of Israel and the sin of Baal Pe'or. See the description of the sin

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in Bamidbar 25:3. Examine the stages and character of the sin, and think about its connection to the sins which are characteristic of Israel in the book of Hoshea.

c | The third event is Gilgal – where a central altar was built (15). The sins of Gilgal are mentioned also in Hoshea 4:15 and 12:12 (See also Amos 4:4 and 5:5). Note how Gilgal is mentioned along with Beit El (which is disparagingly called Beit Aven, meaning house of iniquity). What additional criticism can we understand from this about what happened in Gilgal?

Perek 10

The first section of perek 10 (1-8) continues the comparison of Israel to a vine which appears in the previous perek. It then describes the sins of the people in the present: the abundance of the harvests that has led to many altars and monuments being built, and the lack of fear of Heaven in the people, so that they are not hesitant to break oaths and alliances. The second section of the perek (9-15) returns again to the sin of Giv'ah, which is perceived as the root of the sins of Israel, and continues with images from the world of agriculture, in which the desired state is compared to the state of the nation today.

3.

In pasuk 3, Hoshea quotes a saying which was common among the people: *“For now they shall say, “We have no king, for we did not fear the Lord; now what shall the king do for us?”*” The background to this saying seems to be in the disintegration of the institution of monarchy in the kingdom of Israel because of the frequent changes in kings. See the story of Mikha's idol (Shoftim 17:6 and 18:1) and the story of the concubine at Giv'ah (Shoftim 19:1). Explore the additional answer to the question of monarchy in Israel which we see in these sources.

4.

In pesukim 10-13 there is an image from the agricultural world.

a | The allegory opens with a vision that the nations will soon come to chastise Israel, who are compared to a work animal, and subjugate them for their own needs (10). It continues with a vision of the desired state, where the people give their necks into the yoke of God (11). Pay attention to the positive characteristics found in this description.

b | In pesukim 12-13 the positive and negative aspects of working the land are compared: examine the role of man and God in this work in both the allegory and its explanation, and pay attention to the double meaning of the word *yoreh* (which can mean both to rain and to instruct in Hebrew).

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Perek 11

The prophecies in perek 11 have a soft and conciliatory tone, full of love and compassion for Israel. This tone is contrary to the difficult language of the prophecies of rebuke in the previous perakim. The perek moves between two extremes: on the one hand God's deep love of Israel, which is expressed in His relationship with them, and on the other hand a deep disappointment in their ungrateful behavior.

5.

The prophecy is characterized by a series of pairs of contrasts between God's attitude to Israel and Israel's response:

a | See pesukim 1-2, and note the tone of the description of the exodus from Egypt in pasuk 1 and the image on which it is based. Also, note the contrast of the reaction of the nation in pasuk 2. Pay attention to the repetition of the verb *kra* (to call), and how this repetition contributes to the contrast between the two pesukim.

b | Another pair of contrasts appears in pasuk 3. To understand the image which appears in the pasuk, use the **Radak**:

Since the comparison was made to a child this language was used - just as one teaches a child to walk slowly without troubling him, so too when God took them from place to place after the exodus from Egypt, He took them slowly from place to place without troubling them. The pillar of cloud went before them during the day, and the pillar of fire at night.

Note both the large discrepancy between God's actions and Israel's response, and the repetition of the central theme of lack of knowledge.

c | In pasuk 4 Ephraim is compared to a calf, continuing the image used in the previous perek (10:10-13). How is the relationship of God with Ephraim characterized in this image? See **Rashi**:

with cords of a man: I constantly drew them with tender cords with which a man draws his son; i.e., drawing mercifully.

and I was to them like those who lift the yoke on their bridles: I.e., like the good farmers who lift the yoke with their hands through bridles to lighten it for the cow that is plowing. So was I with them in every trouble, to make it lighter for them.

and I extended to him the ability to bear: I extended him the strength to bear the yoke of the torments.

In contrast, which feature characterizes the relationship of Israel in pasuk 5?

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6.


The perek ends with pesukim 10-11 which describe God's call to the people to return from the exile and their return using terms from the animal kingdom. These pesukim parallel the call in the opening of the perek (1-2), and create a clear framework. Compare the parallel language and content in the opening and closing of the perek. Note the tone of closure and repair which the ending gives in contrast with the beginning.

APPENDIX – “But I sent to train Ephraim, he took them on his arms “ (11,3)

In the prophecy of Hoshea in perek 11 we have a description of the exodus from Egypt and the travels through the desert using the imagery of a father calling to his beloved son and taking loving care of him along the way. This special image is described in the midrash:

“And the angel of God who had been going in front of the camp...” R Yehudah says, this is a rich text. To give a parable, to what is this like? To a man who is walking on the road with his son walking in front of him. If robbers who might seek to capture the son come from in front, he takes him from before himself and puts him behind himself. If a wolf comes from behind him, he takes his son from behind and puts him in front. If robbers come from in front and wolves from behind he takes the son up in his arms. When the son begins to suffer from the sun, his father spreads his cloak over him. When he is hungry he feeds him, when he is thirsty, he gives him to drink. So did the Holy One, blessed is He, do, as it says, *“But I sent to train Ephraim, he took them on his arms, but they did not know that I healed them.”* (Hoshea 11:3). When the son begins to suffer from the sun, his father spreads his cloak over him – as it says, *“He spread out a cloud for shelter, and fire to illuminate the night.”* (Tehillim 105:39) When he is hungry he feeds him, as it says, *“Behold! I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven”* (Shemot 16:4). When he is thirsty, he gives him to drink, as it says, *“He drew flowing water from a rock”* (Tehillim 78:16). And these waters are the living waters, as it says *“A garden fountain, a well of living waters etc.”* (Shir haShirim 4:15) and it says, *“Drink water from your own cistern and running water from your own spring.”* (Mishlei 5:15)

(Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishmael Beshalach 4)

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