

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Yeshayahu Perakim 29-30

#### Perek 29

The first section of this perek (1-8) prophesizes to Yerushalayim in the style of a lamentation: it describes the debased state of the city and then shifts to a description of the enemy's sudden defeat. It is suggested that this prophecy refers to the defeat of Sancherev's army at Yerushalayim's gates, an event that appears multiple times throughout the book of Yeshayahu. The second half of the perek (9-14) describes the blindness of the nation's leaders and prophets. The perek concludes with words of rebuke addressing sinners who believe that God is ignorant of their sins.

- 1 “Because that people has approached [Me] with its mouth and honored Me with its lips, but has kept its heart far from Me, and its worship of Me has been a commandment of men, learned by rote” (13). This pasuk rebukes the nation for the nature of their relationship with God. What is the essence of Yeshayahu's rebuke according to each of the following commentators?

**Rashi:** Their awe of me is halfhearted and dictated by those who teach them to make it seem as if they are subjugated before Him in order to trick him with their mouths.

**Radak:** Because someone who only does what he is commanded and does not add anything of his own is not fulfilling the commandment out of his [sincere] desire.

**Daat Mikrah** (Amos Chacham): In their eyes, their fear of me has been decreed upon them by others, placed on them like a yolk placed on an animal's back. *Learned by rote*—placed like a yolk, similar to the language of “Ephraim became a *trained* heifer but preferred to thresh” (Hoshea 10:11).

2 “...and the wisdom of its wise shall fail and the prudence of its prudent shall vanish” (14). The prophecy’s continuation details the punishment for the nation’s defective fear of God. What is the connection between the sin and the punishment? In your analysis, discuss the biblical role of the heart (for example, in Yeshayahu 6:10).

3 “In that day, the deaf shall hear even *written words*, and the eyes of the blind will see even in darkness and obscurity” (18).

a) This pasuk describes the reversals and corrections ushered in by the End of Days. The healing of the blind relates to the beginning of this prophecy (15). Discuss the contrast between these two pesukim (and include pasuk 24 in your analysis).

b) The concepts of sight, blindness, and concealment appear throughout this prophecy and the one that precedes it (9-14). Refer to pesukim 10-12, and 14, noting the connection between the “sealed document” [הספר החתום] in pesukim 11-12 and what is described in our pasuk: “written words” [דברי ספר]. In light of these pesukim, what is the significance of the rehabilitation of the blind?

See **Rashi**’s explanation: “In that day the deaf shall hear”—the curse mentioned previously will be annulled: “For the Lord has spread over you a spirit of deep sleep...so that all prophecy has been to you like the words of a sealed document” (10-11).

## Perek 30

The prophecies in perakim 30 and 31 deal with the fear of an Assyrian attack on Yehuda and Yerushalayim during the reign of Chizkiyahu. Yeshayahu, who strongly opposed dependence on Egyptian aid during the reign of Achaz (perek 7), prophesies Egypt’s failure and urges the officers of Yehuda to trust in God and bury their worries regarding the Assyrians (1-11). However, like Achaz, the officers of Yehuda refuse to listen to Yeshayahu. This perek describes the resulting crisis (12-18) which will ultimately transform into a miraculous salvation, a seeming reference to the fall of Sancherev (19-33).

- 4 “Who set out to go down to Egypt without asking Me” (2). Yeshayahu sharply rebukes the Judean officers for turning to Egypt for aid (1-7). Aside from general opposition to dependence on human power, the pesukim hint to an additional opposition connected to Egypt itself. Refer back to the commandments given to the Jewish king in Devarim 17:16. What is the significance of the prohibition to return to Egypt?
- 5 As the perek progresses, a change occurs in the relationship between the nation and the prophets. Discuss the relationship as it is reflected by the first (9-11) and second half (20-21) of the perek. Relate to the position and nature of the “*path/road*” [דרך] mentioned in both sections. What brings about this change (15-18)?

## Appendix

“Ha! Those who would hide their plans deep from the Lord” (Yeshayahu 29:15)—R. Levi said: This may be compared to a master builder who built a country with [secret] chambers, canals, and caves. Subsequently he became a tax-collector, and the inhabitants of the country hid from him in those chambers and caves. Said he to them: “It is I who built all these chambers and caves; to what purpose then is your hiding?” Similarly, “Ha! Those who would hide their plans... Should the potter be accounted as the clay?” You liken the created object to its creator, the plant to its planter! (Midrash Breishit Rabbah 24:1)

The thief owes a double payment [for a stolen animal]; and if he killed [the animal] and sold it he pays a fourth and fifth payment. Daylight robbers [גזלנים], no matter what, only pay the principle. The students of R. Yochanan ben Zakai asked him: For what reason did the Torah decide to be stricter with a thief than with a daylight robber? He said to them: A daylight robber equates between the servant and his master, [however] a thief gives more respect to the servant than to his master. The thief makes it seem as if the divine eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear, as it says “Ha! Those who would hide their plans...” (Tosefta Bava Kamma 141:7:1)