

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yeshayahu Perakim 3-4

Perek 3

In contrast to the universal prophecy which appears in perek 2, perakim 3-4 detail prophecies directly toward only Yehuda and Yerushalayim. The beginning of perek 3 (1-12) describes the unraveling of Yehuda's leadership, bringing utter chaos and destruction to the kingdom. Following this section, the prophecy laments the moral corruption mentioned in previous chapters (13-15) and then includes another rebuke against the prideful and haughty (16-25). This pride is not the pride of creativity mentioned in perek 2, but rather pride exhibited by pampered and overindulged women who devote themselves to shallow pursuits of materialism. The rebuke is accompanied by a description of their fate: harsh destruction which will punish them measure for measure.

- 1 In Pesukim 1-6, Yeshayahu describes the removal of the political, martial, and religious perpetrators of corruption. Consider the different types of leadership mentioned in these pesukim. How does the dialogue in pesukim 6-7 reflect the vacuous nature of the leadership?
- 2 Pesukim 13-15, which constitute the focal point of the rebuke, describe the immorality of the nation and a divine judgment. What is the prophet's main objection to this behavior and toward whom does he direct his disapproval? Recall the rebuke in perek 1 and note the mention of Sodom which appears in both prophecies.
- 3 The prophecy regarding the daughters of Yerushalayim utilizes a detailed list. Pay attention to the types of jewelry and adornments mentioned in pesukim 18-23. Why do you think the rebuke focuses specifically on women? Compare this prophecy to Amos 4:1-3.

Perek 4

Perek 4 frames the looming tragedies as part of a process of purification which will only affect the guilty. This destructive process will leave behind a group of worthy survivors who will become the first seeds of the ideal nation and who will be deserving of God's protection. This divine protection is described using images borrowed from the nation's forty-year sojourn in the desert.

- 4 The image of the “growth/radiance of God” [צמח ה'] describes the renewal that the survivors of the great destruction will experience. The phrase “growth/radiance of God” is used by later prophets as a reference to the future king who will redeem the nation. See Yirmiyahu 23:15, Zecharya 3:8 and 6:12. How do these references reflect the influence of Yeshayahu's prophecy?
- 5 Pesukim 5-6 contain many references to the desert period and images relating to the Temple. Compare the images of the cloud and fire to the symbols of God's providence in Shemot 13:21, 14:19-24, 19:9 and in Devarim 1:33. The images in perek 4 bring the vision of the Temple Mount in perek 2 full circle. What connects these two visions?
- 6 At the end of perek 4, a “booth” [*sukkah*] represents God's protection. Recall the comparison of Zion to a *sukkah* in 1:8. How can the image in this perek represent rehabilitation after the period of destruction?

Appendix

“The Lord will create over the whole shrine and meeting place of Mount Zion cloud by day and smoke with a glow of flaming fire by night. Indeed, over all the glory shall hang a canopy, which shall serve as a pavilion for shade from heat by day and as a shelter for protection against drenching rain.”

A *sukkah* is the simplest type of dwelling man can construct with his own hands. The biblical descriptions of *sukkah* construction mention the use of building materials taken from the surrounding environment to create a simple, temporary structure which provides partial protection from harsh climates. However, the protective capability of a *sukkah* is limited. Why then is God’s protection compared to a *sukkah* which shields man against heat and rain?

In order to understand the depth of this image, we need to review the descriptions of the destruction of civilization detailed in perek 2. Yeshayahu describes the destruction of man’s technological achievements: large homes, towers, and powerful ships. With the appearance of God, these materialistic accoutrements and the corrupt leadership will disappear. The Jewish people and all of mankind will return to its pristine state, reminiscent of life prior to entry into Israel. Mankind will no longer seek refuge in large homes, but will be protected by direct divine providence.

Therefore, the prophet describes the redemption using images which recall the revelation on Mount Sinai and the protection of the *sukkot* in the desert. After the nation’s purification, the clouds of glory will reappear. A cloud will guide the nation during the day and a fire will lead them at night. Together with the *sukkot*, this future reality will mimic the reality experienced by the nation after the Exodus from Egypt. A person who abandons his foreign gods of silver and gold and who understands that inanimate objects cannot be relied upon will find himself protected by God’s *sukkah*. While this protection is compared to a temporary dwelling, it is the strongest protection man can ever desire.

It is because of this that the speaker in psalm 27 seeks refuge beneath God’s *sukkah* and tent and hopes to merit divine protection: *“He will shelter me in His sukkah on an evil day, grant me the protection of His tent, raise me high upon rock.”*