

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yirmiyahu Perakim 7-8

Perek 7:1-28

Two painful prophecies appear in this perek. The first discusses the ideal relationship one should have with the house of God, while the other deals with the conceptual approach to sacrifices. In both prophecies, Yirmiyahu dispels the nation's erroneous understanding of the role of the Temple and its sacrifices, notions which have misguided the people by encouraging them to continue in their evil ways.

① “Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word” (2). The first prophecy in the perek is directed towards people who come to worship God in the Temple. The prophecy opens with the descriptions of two rulings (3-4), which are further explained in pesukim 5-7 and 8-12, and ends with a concluding thought (12-15).

a) What is the connection between the two rulings at the beginning of the prophecy? Upon which principle are they both based?

b) According to the explanation of the first ruling in pesukim 5-7, how do we understand the concept of ‘amending one’s ways’? What “place” is being referred to in these pesukim?

c) According to the explanation of the second ruling (8-11), what is the fundamental issue with the nation’s conception of the Temple? In contrast to the false notion which proclaims “The Temple of the Lord are these” (4), Yirmiyahu suggests an alternate name for the Temple: “This house, whereupon My name is called” (10, 11, 14). What is the essential difference between these two names?

2 The destruction of Shiloh is mentioned in the prophecy's conclusion. What is the significance of this reference, and what lesson is the nation supposed to have learned from its past? A similar comparison appears in Tehillim 78:58-69. What incorrect interpretation can be inferred regarding the difference between Yerushalayim and Shiloh? (Note the difference between the description of the Mishkan in pasuk 60 and 69.)

3 “For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices” (22). The harsh and critical phrasing of this pasuk expresses an overall rejection of sacrificial worship. How can this statement be reconciled with the many Torah commandments regarding sacrifices? Consider the explanations offered by the following commentators:

Rambam, Guide for the Perplexed (3:32): These words were difficult for anyone who saw or heard his words. They would say, “How can Yirmiyahu say that God did not command us regarding burnt-offerings and sacrifices when a majority of the commandments specifically refer to them?...He said that “The original intention was so you could conceive of Me and not worship the other (gods), and I was for you a God...the commandment to bring sacrifices was only intended for this purpose...so that they would erase the footprints of foreign worship, but you came and nullified this intent...because you doubted My existence, worshipped foreign gods, and then continued to turn to the Temple of God to bring sacrifices...”

Abarbanel: When the nation left Egypt and arrived at Mount Sinai and heard the Torah and the commandments, God did not make even one reference to sacrifices, but rather to matters of belief and praiseworthy deeds. However, when they sinned with the calf and God saw the ‘stubbornness of their evil heart’...it was necessary to create a treatment for their disease and wickedness. Therefore, the commandment to bring sacrifices came about...which would never have been commanded if they had not sinned...”

Perek 7:29 - 8

The prophet returns to describing the destruction which will punish the nation for its idol worship, and rallies for national mourning for the future deaths of the masses (7:29-8:3). Yirmiyahu makes one final desperate attempt to touch the nation's heart and bring them to repent (4-12). The continuation of the prophecy once again describes God's wrath and the future destruction, and as characteristic of Yirmiyahu, is intertwined with moments of personal pain and deep empathy (13-23).

- 4 The first prophecy (7:29-8:3), focuses on the description of the destruction in the Valley of the son of Hinnom. It opens with a description of the sin (29-31) and concludes with a description of the punishment (32-8:3). What is the correlation between the sins and the punishment?
- 5 “*The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times...*” In pesukim 6-7, the sinful behavior of the nation is compared to the natural behavior of mankind and animals. How is the function of the horse imagery different than the function of the bird imagery? Why does the prophet pick the specific image of the horse heading to battle?
- 6 In pesukim 8-9, Yirmiyahu deals with the nation's ‘wisemen.’
 - a) What is the connection between pasuk 8 and the previous pesukim? (Specifically, the end of pasuk 8.)
 - b) How does the nation's response to Yirmiyahu's accusations contrast with Yirmiyahu's reaction? Consider the explanation of **Shadal** (Samuel David Luzzatto, 1800-1865).

He depicts it as if the nation, and the priests specifically, are responding: ‘You have spoken false words, because we are all wise men and know the Torah’...Yirmiyahu answers: If it is true that you know the Torah and are distant from righteousness, than it was given for naught, and His actions have been made into lies by the pens of the scribes who write it...because His actions have not accomplished anything, and it is deeds which are most critical and not the homiletics.

Appendix

“As a horse that rushes headlong into battle”

In perek 8, Yirmiyahu gives up on his hope for national repentance and laments the unbearable and irreconcilable circumstances. Throughout the prophecy, Yirmiyahu borrows two images from the animal world to illustrate the nation’s fundamental problem. The first image compares the nation to a horse rushing into battle. In his book, “The Path of the Righteous,” Ramchal (Moshe Chaim Luzzatto) explains that the image hints to the source of the sin:

Yirmiyahu was complaining about the evils of his generation because they had become stricken with the blemish of this character trait; they would close their eyes to their deeds without paying attention to what they were...And he said about them *‘No man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying: ‘What have I done?’ Every one turneth away in his course, as a horse that rusheth headlong in the battle.’* Meaning, they would run and walk with haste, without taking time for themselves to scrutinize their actions and their ways. They became trapped in the evil without ever seeing it.

(Ramchal, The Path of the Righteous, Chapter 2, Clarification of the Trait of Watchfulness)

In the second image, Yirmiyahu contrasts the ways of the nation with bird migration: *“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the ordinance of the Lord.”* In contrast to birds, who can successfully navigate their way home across great distances, the nation does not listen to its instincts and can not sincerely repent (lit. ‘to return’).

Bird migration is an extraordinary phenomenon which almost exclusively takes place during the transitional seasons. Before winter arrives, birds migrate from their nesting sites to winter residences in warmer regions of the world. As the summer approaches, they return to their native region. This

phenomenon is noticeably recognizable in Israel’s skies due to the country’s location. Israel's small and narrow strip of land forms a critical bridge between Europe and Asia to its north and Africa to its south.

