

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Yeshayahu Perakim 65-66

#### Perek 65

The two concluding perakim of Yeshayahu include both rebuke of the nation's sinners and discussion of the goodness bestowed on the righteous. The first section of our perek (1-7) harshly rebukes the nation for its addiction to idolatry. In the second section (8-15), the prophet contrasts the punishment of the evil doers to the reward of the righteous. In the third section (16-25), the prophet describes the hidden remuneration saved for the righteous. He likens this reward to the creation of a new world, a description which is parallel to the prophecies regarding the end of days in perakim 2 and 12. The prophecy of consolation in our perek, unlike the previous prophecies regarding the end of days, describes the refinement of Yerushalayim's reality which will occur within the framework of the natural order.

- 1 God's words in this perek appear immediately after the nation's plea in perakim 63-64. How do these pesukim constitute a response to Israel's plea (note 64:10-11)? What solution to the challenge of the redemption is suggested by this perek? (Specifically note pesukim 8-16)
- 2 *'For Behold! I am creating a new heaven and a new earth'* - The two main characteristics of this perek's prophecy is the repeated contrast between past troubles ('shall not'... 'never'--'לא...ולא') and the corrected future ('but'--'כי אם'), and the various elements of happiness which will overtake Yerushalayim.
  - a) *'Never again shall be heard there the sounds of weeping and wailing'*. In pesukim 19-20 the prophecy details a change that will occur regarding death. Does Yeshayahu mean to say that death will be nullified? Where does the weeping stem from, and how will it cease in the future?

b) In pesukim 21-22, the prophet moves on to describe planting and building. Compare these pesukim to Devarim 20:5-7 and 28:30-33. Note the identity of the 'other' in both sets of pesukim. On the basis of this comparison, what *tikkun* (restoration) can you identify in our perek? What is the relationship between this *tikkun* and the *tikkun* mentioned in pesukim 18-19?

c) In conclusion, what is the nature of the perfected reality envisioned in this perek?

## Perek 66

While harsh criticism was hurled at the idol worshippers in the previous perek, our perek opens with a criticism of those who worship God in His *mikdash* (temple). Despite their loyalty to God, their understanding of the purpose of the mikdash and its sacrifices is mistaken. In direct opposition to this population are members of the nation '*who are concerned about His word*', and who are promised a quick and sudden consolation likened to a quick birth without contractions (5-17). The prophecy which concludes our perek and the entire book (18-24) is another prophecy addressing the end of days. This prophecy depicts an era of universalism in which the mikdash will be visited by all the nations while still retaining its unique connection to the prayers and sacrifices of the Jewish people.

3 The first prophecy harshly criticizes the common conception of the mikdash and its sacrifices, and puts forth a ideal model of worship.

a) The prophecy opens with a paradox within the role of the Temple (1, 2a). What two arguments are brought against the mistaken perception of the Temple as a house built for God by man?

b) In the continuation of his words (2b) the prophet offers an explanation of this paradox. This principle is described in great detail in Shlomo's prayer at the dedication ceremony of the mikdash. See Shlomo's wonder (I Melachim 8:27) and his response (ibid, 29-30). According to Shlomo and our perek, who is the mikdash designated for, and what is its role? Read the following commentary offered by **Radak**:

I did not command for the house to be built so that I could dwell in it; nor did I command for sacrifices to be brought so that I could consume them; if not to have Israel bring their hearts closer to Me; and that they should have a special place to come and pray, and offer *olot* and *zevachim*, and to awaken their hearts to extinguish any evil thoughts, and to burn them just as the burning sacrifice. Therefore, if you do evil and then come to My home and sacrifice before Me, you have missed the purpose; this is not what I commanded. You are not fulfilling my wishes, rather the opposite; you infuriate Me by doing so.

c) In pasuk 3 the prophet refers to those who offer sacrifices in the Temple and details four pairs of verbs which include a desired and undesired action. See the explanations offered by the following commentators and note their understanding of the contrasting verbs and the subject of the prophet's criticism:

**Metzudat David:** *Yet to such a one I look...*but not to those who bring sacrifices while their hearts are distant from Me... for sacrifices brought by the evil are not accepted by Me; and he who slaughters an oxen is considered as if he struck a man, for this is considered as shedding blood, not as something desired. [He who sacrifices a sheep] is considered repulsive in My eyes, as one who decapitated a dog. (See Vayikra 17:3-4)

**Da'at Mikra:** Woe he who slaughters oxen as a sacrifice for God while at the same time he strikes and murders men, or brings sacrifices to idols. Woe to the one who sacrifices sheep to God while offering the blood of swine for idol-worshipping.

4 Our perek concludes with a prophecy regarding the end of days, when there will be 'the new heaven and the new earth' (18-24). However, in contrast to perek 65, here its universal nature is emphasized. Our perek gradually reveals the future roles of the nations. Trace the development of the three stages of this description (18-19, 20, 21). In pasuk 23 the prophet continues to describe the nations' ascent to Yerushalayim, however, in between we find a pasuk which speaks of Israel (22). What could be the significance of this pasuk's placement, and what can it teach us about future relationship between Israel and the nations?



## Appendix

*“And when you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass”*  
(66:14)

Archeological excavations conducted by Binyamin Mazar in the old city of Yerushalayim, uncovered a five-word Hebrew inscription on one of the stones of the eastern wall, five meters above the paved roads from the Second Temple period and beneath Robinson’s Arch. The inscription brings a pasuk from Yeshayahu with minor changes: *And when you see this, your heart will rejoice and your bones like grass* (shall flourish).

Scholars date this inscription to the 4th century CE, and there are some who specifically connect it with the period of Julius Caesar. In his battle against the Christians, Julius Caesar saw the Jews as allies and as a result wanted to see Yerushalayim returned to Jewish hands and the destroyed Temple rebuilt. The Emperor did not simply express kind sentiments but rather it seems that he began the restoration [process], permitted the Jews to return to Yerushalayim, and even appointed one of his officials as head of the project. Within Jewish sources this failed effort to rebuild the Temple is only faintly hinted at. It has been suggested that one of the Jews who took part in the preparations for the rebuilding during the short-lived reign of Julius Caesar carved this inscription as an expression of his feeling that the redemption had arrived.

Other scholars view this inscription as additional testimony to the continued activity of Jewish pilgrimage after the destruction of the Temple. The pilgrims would encircle the walls and gates of the Temple Mount. According to this hypothesis, the inscription is the handiwork of one of the pilgrims, who during his journey, may have quickly and perhaps clandestinely, inscribed this pasuk [ as an expression of] his hopes and beliefs.

(from Mordechai Naor’s Jerusalem: City and Nation)



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