

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

This learning is dedicated in memory of our dear parents:  
Yoseph & Felice Chajmovic



### Perek 7

In perek 7 the prophecy is directed at the land of Israel and focuses on the violence that fills the land and with a description of the end and destruction that will follow as its consequence. This is a continuation of the previous prophecy to the mountains of Israel concerning the sin of idolatry. This prophecy contains phrases from the portion of disasters in sefer Vayikra and for the first time in this sefer, the destruction of the Temple is mentioned. The first part of the prophecy (1-9) contains two parallel sections and describes the end that will be visited on the land. Beginning with pasuk 10, the process of destruction is described: the disruption of the way of life (12-13), the horrors of siege and war (14-15), refugees and grief (16-19), and finally the destruction of the Temple by the enemies (20-22). This prophecy is characterized by the repetition of words, ideas, and even entire phrases.

- 1 “The end comes, the end comes upon the four corners of the land” (2). The key words in the first part of the prophecy (1-9) are ‘comes’ (seven times) and ‘end’ (six times). Focus on the idea expressed by these words.





- 2 The story of the flood which also begins with a decree “The end of all flesh comes before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them and behold I will destroy them with the earth” (Bereishit 6:13) is hinted at in psukim 1-9. ‘End’, with the meaning of ‘finality’ appears nowhere between the story of the flood and this perek. The phrase ‘filled with violence’ also appears later in this prophecy (23).

Consider the relationship between the two stories. What is the principle concerning the right of human society to exist that arises from them? Examine the words of the gemara:

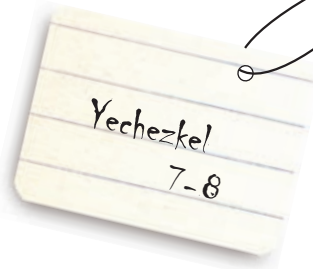
“Rabbi Yochanan said, come and see how great is the power of violence, for the generation of the flood violated everything, but their sentence was decreed only when they extended their hand to robbery, as it says “for the earth is filled with violence through them and behold I will destroy them with the earth” (Bereishit 6:13). And it says, “Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness, nought comes from them, nor from their tumult, nor from their turmoil, neither is there eminency among them” (Yechezkel 7:11). (Sanhedrin 108a).

- 3 “Behold the day, behold it comes, the turn has come forth, the rod has blossomed, malice has budded. Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness” (10-11).

a) In these psukim, the relationship between sin and punishment is described through the metaphor of a blossoming rod. Focus on the meaning of this metaphor. Let **Rashi**’s words assist you:

“Violence has risen – the violence you have committed has risen up against you as a wicked rod to destroy you.

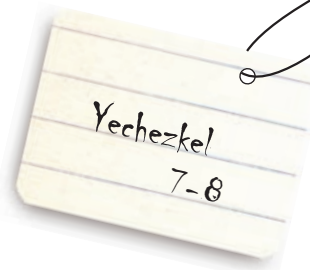
b) A description of the blossoming of a rod appears in sefer Bamidbar concerning the rod of Aharon. (Bamidbar 17: 16-24). Compare the symbolism of the blossoming of Aharon’s rod with that in Yechezkel’s prophecy, and focus on the difference between them.



## Perek 8

Perakim 8-11 describe Yechezkel's prophetic visit to Jerusalem. God's hand lifts Yechezkel while he sits with the elders of Judah, and he is taken in a vision to Jerusalem and exposed step by step to the great abominations being committed in the Temple, acts that will ultimately bring about its destruction.

- 4 "As I sat in my house and the elders of Judah sat before me, the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there" (1). The prophecy begins with a heading that includes a description of place and time.
  - a) Why are the elders of Judah sitting before Yechezkel? Turn to Yechezkel 20:1.
  - b) Consider why it is important to state that the elders of Judah are sitting before Yechezkel at the time of this prophecy. Pay attention to the description of the elders of Israel in psukim 11-12. What is the significance of the comparison between the elders?
- 5 Four abominations being committed in the Temple are revealed to Yechezkel. Between each revelation God says to him "You will again see even greater abominations" (5-6, 7-13, 14-15, 16-17). Follow the development and the worsening of the visions. Pay attention to the location, the perpetrators, and the nature of the abominations.
- 6 The second vision is the longest and most detailed of the descriptions. In it Yechezkel is given a strange command – to dig in the wall in order to see the vision. Examine the words of the elders in pasuk 12 and consider what the digging in the wall adds to the meaning of the entire vision.



## Appendix

### To weep for the Tammuz

“Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house which faced the north and behold, there sat the women weeping for the Tammuz.” (8:14). When Yechezkel arrives at the Temple in Jerusalem in the visions of God, God shows him the women who are sitting at the door to the gate of God’s house and who are weeping for the Tammuz. This is an expression of the deep penetration of idolatrous abominations into the Temple.

The Tammuz (or ‘Dumuzi’) is the name of the Sumerian god of shepherds. It means ‘the loyal son’ or the ‘legitimate son’. In ancient Mesopotamia, Dumuzi was also regarded as the god of vegetation who, along with his mate, his beloved Inana-Ashtar, performed a central role in fertility rites and in ‘marriages of the gods’. In Sumerian literature, Dumuzi is also portrayed as a tragic figure – the god who dies, goes down to the underworld and returns to life each year. While he was in the underworld, rites of lamentation and other magical rites were performed in his honor. Many chants and love songs pertaining to the god Tammuz and his mate have been preserved in Babylonian literature.

Another major motif of the Sumerian songs and myths about the god Tammuz concerns the episode of his death, his descent to the underworld, and his rising from it. Researchers surmise that these laments were part of dramatic rites during which female mourners went out to fields or deserts there to lament the death of Tammuz. It seems that in this way they hoped to encourage the god of vegetation who had gone to the underworld, to return to life and to rise from the underworld in order to fertilize the vegetation and livestock, and to bring a blessing to the land. They believed that it was his death that caused the drying out of the land and the death of vegetation during the summer months.

Beginning in ancient Babylonian times, the fourth month of the year was named ‘Dumuzi’ because according to their traditions, this was the month when Dumuzi died and went to the underworld. When the Jews who returned from Babylonia adopted the Babylonian calendar and gave the months Babylonian names, the name of the fourth month of the Jewish calendar became ‘Tammuz’. (Y. Klein, *Olam HaTanach*, sefer Yechezkel, pp. 48-50)

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