

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yeshayahu Perakim 15-16

Perek 15-16 details Yeshayahu's prophecy regarding Moav. His pronouncement opens with a prediction of Moav's destruction, however most of the prophecy is devoted to a description of the great mourning left in its wake (15:1-9). Scattered throughout this section are the names of Moav's main cities. The second half of the prophecy (16:1-5) describes the pleas of Moabite refugees seeking refuge in Israel. In the third section (16:6-12), Yeshayahu vividly describes the destroyed fields and vineyards of Moav as well as the destruction of its temples and high places (*bamot*). In the final pesukim of the prophecy (13-14), Yeshayahu reveals that there are only three years left until the arrival of Moav's destruction.

Perek 15

- 1 In the first section of the pronouncement (1-9) Yeshayahu tangibly illustrates Moav's mourning, and enables the audience to hear their cries of pain and suffering (2-4,8). However, at the focal point of this section (5) a different type of 'crying out' is mentioned. Who is the subject of pasuk 5? Compare this cry to the others in the section in order to understand its significance.
- 2 Trace the development of the destruction's stages (1-4, 5-8, 16:1-4). How do you understand its progression?

Perek 16

- 3 Situated at the center of the pronouncement is one pasuk relating to the Davidic dynasty (16:5). What qualities should a Davidic king embody and how does this connect with what is written in pesukim 1-4? For further study, compare your responses to II Shmuel 8:15.

4 a) Pesukim 7-10 describe the destruction of Moav's vineyards. Review the parable of the vineyard in 5:1-7 in order to gain a better understanding of Yeshayahu's description in this prophecy.

b) Note the dramatic contrast between the voices of mourning and happiness in pesukim 9-10 and refer to the explanation of **Radak** which focuses on the word “shout” [הידד]:

Ended are the shouts over your fig and grain harvests—The enemies arrived during the period of the harvest; “shout” is a type of ‘calling out’ and this is what the plunderers scream out when they suddenly approach a city; and this is also related to the grape-treaders as it is written, “*utters shouts like the grape-treaders*” (Yirmiyahu 25:30).

5 a) “*That is the word that the Lord spoke concerning Moav long ago: And now...*” In pesukim 13-14 Yeshayahu compares a prophecy uttered long ago to the prophecy he delivers in this perek. What is the source of the earlier prophecy and what is novel about the current prophecy? Study both of **Rashi**'s explanations:

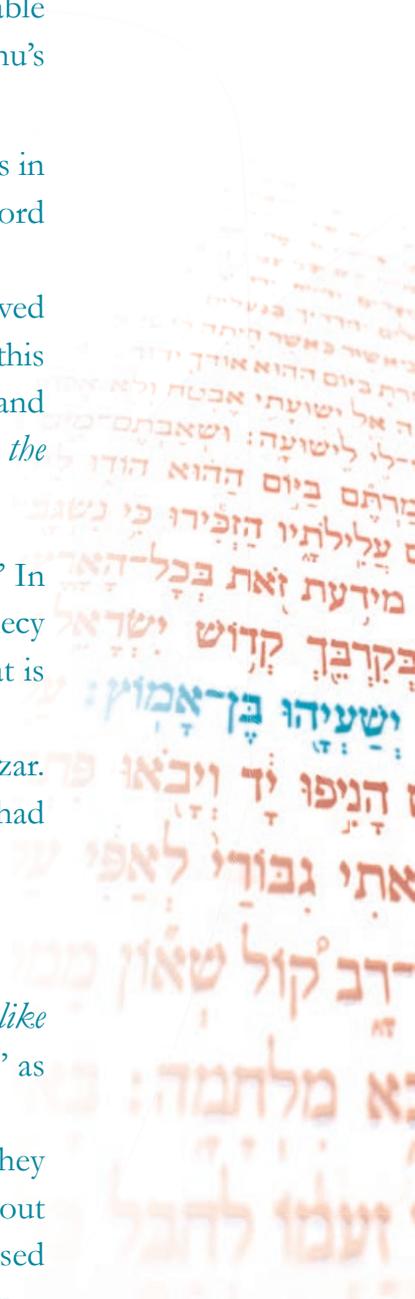
That is the word—Moav's final destruction is in the hands of Nevuchadnezzar.
that the Lord spoke concerning Moav long ago—In earlier days, Yeshayahu had prophesied [to Moav] before the destruction [lit. evil] arrived.

Another explanation: *Long ago*—from the time Balak hired Bilaam.

And now the Lord has spoken—to bring their destruction sooner.

b) Yeshayahu declares the date of Moav's destruction: “*In three years, fixed like the years of a hired laborer.*” Why does he choose “*the years of a hired laborer*” as his comparison? Refer to **Rashi**'s explanation for further explication:

In three years, fixed like the years of a hired laborer—for the three years they aided Sancherev when he besieged Shomron and they helped him without profit as if they were his laborers. Therefore the honor of Moav was despised [most] among the rest of Sancherev's masses that shared in the captivity... And **another explanation**... is that the three year period has been decreed upon you, but [the set period] will be exact and the destruction would no longer tarry just as the laborer is exacting regarding his years of service.



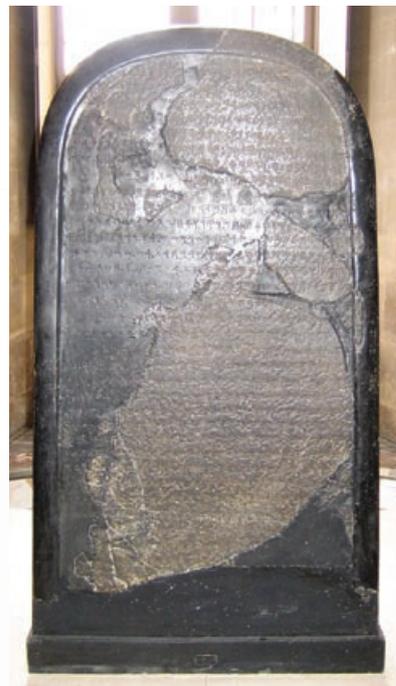
Appendix

Considering the fact that Moav was a relatively small threat to Israel during this period, it is surprising that detailed prophecies are devoted to discussion of Moav in the books of Yeshayahu (15-16) and Yirmiyahu (48). The prophecies blame Moav for its sins with unprecedented harshness: *“We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud; even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his arrogance, his ill-founded boastings”* (Yeshayahu 15:6). The exceptional naming of so many cities within a given country, here a total of twenty cities, is also strange considering the fact that none of them are located in the central area of the country but rather in its northern region. Additionally, the text emphasizes that the pronouncements to Moav are preceded by an earlier related prophecy upon which the prophet wished to expand and revitalize. In order to understand the historical context of these prophecies we must uncover the identity of the original prophet and the message he was trying to convey.

It seems that these prophecies serve as sharp rebukes uttered in response to the prideful inscriptions of Mesha, king of Moav. The Mesha Stele, found in what is today Jordan, served as Mesha’s victory stone on which he recorded the geographic sites of his military victories and his monarchy’s achievements. It is no wonder that the stele served as a symbol of haughtiness in the eyes of the prophets: the word “T” is recorded twenty-five times on the king’s tombstone in Dhiban. Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu, wishing to parallel their rebuke of Moav to Mesha’s prideful annals, parody these same geographic lists in their own prophecies.

Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu based their prophecies on one which preceded the life of Yeshayahu by a century. There is no way to ascertain the identity of this earlier prophet, however it is important to mention that Elisha led the nation in its victory against Moav (II Melachim 3). Elisha is often described in Tanach as being surrounded by students, and one can infer from this that the earlier prophecy quoted by Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu may have been first uttered by a prophet or the son of a prophet from Elisha’s disciples.

[Based on Y. Elitzur’s “Moav’s Pronouncement and Mesha’s Inscription”]



Mesha Stele
found in Dhiban, Jordan