

This week's learning guide has been dedicated by Tamar Levi-Hevrony in memory of her parents, Chaim ben Shalom Yitzchak Levi and Margolit bat Anna Melamed

MATAN AL HAPEREK

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yeshayahu Perakim 25-26

Perek 25

This perek continues the description of the End of Days begun in perek 24. It opens with a psalm of praise describing the upheaval of the evil city and the salvation of the poor (1-5). The psalm concludes with a description of Israel's salvation and the defeat of Moav (9-12). The heart of the psalm describes the future annulment of death which completes the visions regarding the End of Days begun in perakim 2 and 11.

- 1 Review the psalm at the beginning of the perek. What brings about the salvation and defeat? To help elucidate this point, notice the amorphous nature of the salvation and the psalm's mention of two contrasting groups.
- 2 The main section of the perek (6-8) describes the feast God will prepare for the nations. To identify "*this mountain*," compare it to the description of Mount Tzion at the end of the previous perek (24:23). In light of this, what does the feast represent? In addition, discuss the parallel between this feast and the ascent of the elders to Mount Sinai after the Torah is given to the Jewish people (Shemot 24:9-11).
- 3 In pasuk 7, the elimination of death is compared to the removal of a mask/veil [מסכה]. This comparison is highlighted by the parallel description in pasuk 8 [בלע... פני הלוט - בלע המוות]. Why do you think death is compared to a veil? Refer once again to the parallel ascent of the elders in Shemot 24 and see Mishlei 16:15. In addition, discuss the general meaning of 'veil' [מסכה] in Tanach (for example: Shemot 32:4, 34:17).

4 In many ways, the prophecy regarding the annulment of death is parallel to previous prophecies in perakim 2:1-4 and 11:1-10.

a) What is the role of the “*mountain of God*” in all three visions? Note the repetition of the phrase *all/over all* [כל/על כל] throughout the prophecy in our perek. What aspect of the vision is emphasized by this repetition?

b) The visions regarding the End of Days in Yeshayahu serve as a symbolic correction (*tikkun*) of the sins committed in the book of Breishit. (Perek 2—Tower of Bavel; perek 11—the corrupted relationship between man and animal after the flood.) Which ‘Breishit-sins’ do you think our perek intends to correct?

Perek 26

This perek opens with a song of salvation to be sung in Yerushalayim (1-7), and continues with the yearning to see God’s justice and judgment revealed in Israel (8-12). The last section describes the difficult situation of the exiled nation and their aspirations for redemption and a revival of the dead (13-19).

5 How is the city of Yerushalayim characterized in the first section of the perek, and from where is this strength derived? Reflect on the relationship between the fortifications (wall, fortress, gate-חומה/חל/שערים) and the verbs of defense (guard/keep/trust-שמר/נצר/בטח). Note the contrast between the “*city*” (1-4) [עיר] and the “*secured city*” (5-6) [קריה].

6 This perek also discusses changes which will occur in relation to mortality (19).

a) What does the prophecy regarding death in this perek add to the related mention of death in the previous one?

b) There have been two approaches suggested regarding the description of the revival of the dead. One approach understands the description as literal, while the other understands it as a metaphoric description of the nation’s rebirth:

See Daniel 12:2 and discuss its linguistic similarity to our perek. How is the revival of the dead described in Daniel?

In contrast to this, discuss the parallel between pasuk 14 and 19 (in our perek) and read **Radak**’s explanation:

“*O Lord our God*”—Remember on our behalf how we remained steadfast while exiled. Even though the nations were our masters and abused us with backbreaking labor, even so “*only your name we will utter*”...

“*They are dead, they can never live*”—We did not turn to the gods of those nations when exiled, because they are dead and have no substance. The explanation of

“they can never live” is that they have no *life* and are like the dead who will not rise.

Refer to the vision of the “dry bones” in Yechezkel 37:1-14, specifically noting God’s words in 11-14. In light of this related prophecy, what point is Yeshayahu making about the resurrection of the dead?

Appendix

“Everlasting Life”

The meditations of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook devote deep thought to the concept of death. In fact, an entire chapter in Rav Kook’s “Orot Hakodesh” is dedicated to the discussion of this topic. In his usual style, Rav Kook bases his approach to death on sources from Tanach, Chazal, and various streams of Jewish thought, imbuing both the sources and the topic with an explanation in harmony with his broader philosophy. Yeshayahu’s wondrous vision of the annulment of death serves as the foundation for the following discussion which draws a connection between death and the first sin of mankind:

Death arrived in the wake of sin: if there had not been a first sin, if Man had not followed after his animalistic desires, the spiritual sense would have shined upon him in its full glory...

We have not begun the development of mankind upon the revealed fulfillment of a failed man. The origin of reality begins with man in his most exalted form, illuminated by a spiritual light in accordance with the essence of his soul...

If Man had not fallen into the chain of forgetfulness and in his aspiration for the highest greatness, which is the service of God, than the toil of Eden—“*to till it and tend it*”—would not have ceased...therefore, life itself would not have ceased.

Why does the soul not provide eternal life for the body? Why does the soul not find its purpose by being the conductor of the body towards the fulfillment of its destiny?

It is only because [human] will has fallen under the servitude of animalistic-servitude and man has sunken into this filth without any way out.

The value of one’s soul and its rule over the body will grow in accordance with the value of one’s [self] purification...until the day will come and the ultimate aspiration will be fulfilled...before which death will be subdued and will not be remembered and will be forever engulfed.

Death is a blemish on the creation; Israel is destined to overcome it. The shame of the world is our own, and God will “*put an end to the reproach of His people over all the earth.*”

[Orot Ha-kodesh II, pp.385-386]

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