

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

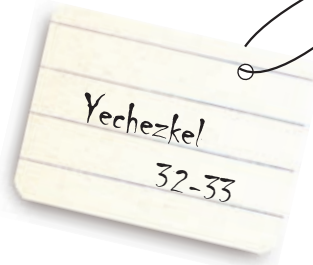


Perek 32

The two prophecies in perek 32 end the series of prophecies about Egypt and the entire series of prophecies about the nations. The first prophecy (1-16) returns to the imagery of Pharaoh as a crocodile. The second prophecy (17-32) describes the descent of Pharaoh and his men to the grave, and his lying down with the "uncircumcised" – with the empires which preceded him.

- 1 Yechezkel prophesies twice about Pharaoh as a crocodile, once in perek 29:1-15 and the second time in the first half of our perek. Compare these two prophecies and see what is added in perek 32. Pay special attention to the description of the crocodile and its main characteristic in each prophecy, and to the punishment which comes to him. Who brings the punishment and why, and what is the nature of the punishment?
- 2 In the description of Pharaoh's punishment there is a similarity to some of the ten plagues. Why do you think these plagues specifically were chosen? Pay attention to the order of the plagues as presented in Shemot. What do you think this similarity between the two disasters expresses?





Perek 33

Perek 33 begins the third unit in the book – the unit of the prophecies after the destruction, which mainly includes consolation and hope for the future. From now, the role of the prophet will be to educate and prepare the exiles for the redemption. This perek is a transition between the two periods. The first section (1-22) reminds us of two previous prophecies – the prophecy of the watchman (1-9) and the question of punishment and reward (10-20). It ends with the arrival of the fugitive from Jerusalem who tells of the destruction of the city (21-22) and thus ends Yechezkel's long mute period, as God had said would happen in Perek 24:26-27. At the heart of this section appears a folk-saying which reflects the great despair among the people, *"For our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and because of them we are melting away, so how can we live?"* (33:10). Yechezkel wants to bring hope into the hearts of the people and therefore fights against what they are saying. In the second section of the perek (23-33) the prophet deals with another saying which is prevalent among the refugees who remain in Judah after the destruction (*"the dwellers of the ruins"*) who see themselves as the inheritors of the land – and he chastises them strongly.

- 3 Compare the allegory of the watchman here to the allegory of the watchman in perek 3. What are the differences between them? Pay attention to the following points: What is added here and does not appear in perek 3? Who is the allegory intended for in each place? What do you think the role of the people is in pasuk 2, which is not mentioned in perek 3? Compare 3:19 to 33:9 – what words have been added in perek 33? Try to understand these changes in light of Yechezkel's goal for his prophecies after the destruction.



- 4 The prophecy of reward and punishment, which parallels perek 18, is added here to the prophecy of the watchman. Why were these two topics put together? What is the common denominator between them? How are they both a reaction to the people's claim in pasuk 10?
- 5 In the second section the prophet deals with the claim of the refugees: "*Avraham was one, and he inherited the land, and we are many - the land has [surely] been given to us for an inheritance.*"
- a) A similar statement appeared earlier in 11:15, said by the people living in Jerusalem after the exile of Yehoyachin. In both of these statements the people attempt to give a basis to the inheritance of the land. What differs between the statements and how is that difference dependent on the historical setting of each statement?
- b) The association of Avraham with the number one is paralleled in Yishayahu 51, in which he speaks to the despairing exiles from Babylonia. In both places there is also a comparison between Avraham and his descendents in terms of the inheritance of the land. Study the prophecy in Yishayahu. What is the fundamental difference between the two prophecies? Pay attention to how the prophecy begins and what the meaning of the connection to Avraham and his descendents is and in contrast to this, what is the basis here for the right to inherit according to the people?
- 6 In Yechezkel's claim against "*the dwellers of the ruins*" he blames them for a series of sins because of which they are denied the right to inherit the land.
- a) What is common to all of these sins? Use the **Tosefta** (Sotah 6:9) to understand:
- This is clear a fortiori, you have not kept the seven commandments given to the children of Noach and you say you will inherit the land?!



b) The prohibition to eat blood which appears in Yechezkel is first mentioned by God to Noach in the covenant after the flood (Bereshit 9:4-5). Study these pesukim to understand the connection between the prohibition to eat blood and the assurance that God will demand an account for the blood of man from the beasts. How does this covenant reverse itself in our prophecy (pasuk 27)?

Appendix

Yechezkel is familiar with the landscape and the economy of the river valleys. This knowledge is especially apparent in his seven prophecies about Egypt. In perakim 29 and 32 we find allegories about the crocodile – the symbol of Egyptian royalty – which is hunted, and about the destruction of its home, the Nile River. In perek 29 we find a description of the hunt for the crocodile whose carcass is then thrown into the desert to feed the wild birds and animals. The Nile dries up and Egypt becomes "*utter waste and desolation*". The description of the destruction of Egypt in perek 32 is even more extreme, even though it does not include a description of the Nile becoming parched. The prophet describes the Nile as the busy center of the Egyptian economy. This is the river whose waters are muddied by the feet of the animals and hands of the farmers who draw water from it. This is the home of the crocodile which symbolizes Pharaoh and his rule. The crocodile is the absolute ruler of the river: "*and you sullied the water with your feet, and you trod their rivers.*" Now that the crocodile has been hunted and his rule broken there is deathly silence on the river – now the waters of the Nile are pure and clear, for the clay has settled. Yechezkel sits in Babylonia, whose economy is rooted in its rivers, and describes the dynamics of life on the muddy and murky Nile as compared to the deathly silence in a clear river. In this picture of "restful waters" we can see the destruction even more so than in the description of the parched Nile...

(Free translation of Y. Feliks, 'Teva veNof Berik'o shel Sefer Yechezkel)