

Bellows Family

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly | Tanakh Learning Program

Perek 12

Central to the prophecy of rebuke which appears in perek 12 are the fraud and deception which characterize the people's actions in Hoshea's time. Throughout the perek, scenes from the life of Yaakov Avinu are used as a background to the rebuke of his descendants.

1.

In pasuk 3 the prophet begins with a judgment (in Hebrew - *riv*) against the people, and tells the story of the life of Yaakov, the father of the nation (4-6). In these pesukim we see three short scenes from the life of Yaakov: the story of his birth, the struggle with the man at Maavar Yabok, and the revelation at Beit El. What is the role of these scenes in the judgment of the people? Compare to pesukim 1-2 and to Yirmiyahu 9:3.

2.

"And Yaakov fled to the field of Aram; and Yisrael worked for a wife, and for a wife he guarded." (12:13) The commentators are divided as to what the meaning of this is. See the following explanations, and examine the various proposals as to how to understand the pasuk:

Rashi: ... moreover, I did this for him; when he was forced to flee to the field of Aram, you know how I guarded him.

Radak: And they do not remember the good deed I did for their father when he ran away from his brother Eisav. And while he was there he had to work for Lavan for his wife... and I was with him and blessed him, and he returned from there with wealth and possessions.

Metzudat David: And who gave him all of that wealth? It was Me, and how can you say *"Surely I have become rich; I have found power for myself; all my toils shall not suffice for my iniquity which is sin."* (9) and *"My strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated*

Hoshea 12-14

this wealth for me.” (Devarim 8:17)?

R Yosef Kra: *And Yaakov fled* – Learn a lesson from Yaakov your father who kept the commandment of his mother to take a wife, for she commanded him “*And you shall dwell with him for a few days*” and he went there and stayed for twenty years.

Malbim: Yaakov fled from Eisav to the field of Aram because of cheating and fraud, because he tricked Eisav for the rights of the first born and the blessing. Therefore Yaakov, as well, was guilty of fraud! And afterward, when he was in Lavan’s house to find a wife, Rachel, Lavan tricked him and gave him Leah. The deception was complete as well, when afterward he had to watch the sheep for the second wife as well, and he had to watch for two wives, so we see that fraud was prevalent even in the times of our forefathers.

Perek 13

The rebuke in perek 13 is mostly devoted to an attack on the worship of the golden calves in the kingdom of Israel (2-6) and to the ingratitude which it showed. In the continuation of the perek the difficult punishment the people will receive is described, using harsh imagery in which God is compared to a predatory animal which attacks the people (7-8).

3.

“...they have made for themselves a molten image from their silver according to their pattern, deities...” (2) In the beginning of pasuk 2 the creation of the calf in the kingdom of Israel is described, using language similar to that used to describe the forming of the golden calf in the desert (Shmot 32:4, 8).

a | The second half of pasuk 2 describes the moral perversity in the perception of the people who worshipped the calf. Use the **Ibn Ezra** to help you understand:

They kiss the statues of Baal which are in the form of calves, and they spill innocent blood... and this is the opposite of most men, for a man kisses a person who is his friend and sacrifices calves to eat them.

b | Pasuk 4 is based on the first commandments of the Ten Commandments and presents the proper approach (see Shmot 20:2-3), as opposed to the approach of the people we see here. Compare this to what the calf worshippers in Shmot 32:4 and Melachim I 12:28 say. What is the basis for the relationship between God and His nation, and what is the source of the nation’s sin? Pay attention to the repeated use of the root *y.d.a* (to know) in pesukim 4-5.

c | Notice the change in the imagery used to describe the relationship between God and His nation – at first, like a shepherd and his flock (6), and then, to the image which is the basis for the punishment (7-8). See also Shmuel I 17:36.

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Hoshea 12-14

Perek 14

The book of Hoshea, which comprises mostly prophecies of harsh rebuke, ends with a prophecy of consolation which echoes the prophecy of consolation at the beginning of the book. This prophecy is a summary of the prophecies of Hoshea, showing a progression from the earlier attempts at repentance which were not received by God. Here we see the repentance of the people and God's responsiveness to it. We read this prophecy as the haftara during the ten days of repentance and it has given the Shabbat its name "Shabbat Shuva" – Shabbat of Return.

4.

In the first part of the prophecy the various stages of the repentance of the people are described (2-4). The prophet explains to the people how they should repent – *"Take words with yourselves"* (3). Compare this to the description of failed repentance in 5:6 and pay attention to the correction of the sins of the nation and the previous attempts at repentance which are alluded to in the pasuk.

5.

The second half of the prophecy (5-9) describes God's responsiveness to the people's repentance.

a | *"I will be like dew to Israel"* (6) – compare the role of the dew in the image here to its role in the description of the nation's sin in 6:4. How does the image in the prophecy of consolation correct its image in the prophecy of rebuke?

b | In pesukim 6-8, God's response is described in three progressive stages, each ending with the word "Lebanon". These stages parallel the descriptions of God's responsiveness in the prophecy of consolation in perek 2:23-24. Examine the images which appear in the pesukim, and try to explain their relevance to the descriptions of the lovers in Shir HaShirim (for example Shir HaShirim (2:2 and 4:11) in light of the acceptance of their repentance - *"I will love them freely"* (5).


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Hoshea 12-14

APPENDIX

The prophet is alone and lonely, he is called mad for he is a man of the spirit (9:7). “[For the] prophet [they lay] a fowler’s snare on all his ways” (9:8)... He is appointed to the role to scout and explore not only the impending disaster, but also the people whom can be brought to repentance through his words...However he does not just call out for repentance, he prophesies that it will come (3:5). He has the promise of God, “I will remedy their backsliding”, as an assurance. Not only the wounds that were inflicted by God as a punishment will be healed by Him (6:1), but also the backsliding caused by this punishment, for that is an illness as well. The patient must initiate before the doctor can get involved: the patient must himself turn to the doctor. To return does not mean to return to the state before the sin, for that is not possible, rather it means to turn to God with all of our being, so as to know Him. We are not returning to ourselves, rather to the one whom we have left. God makes a double covenant with Israel as they are resurrected (2:20-26). The first covenant is a covenant of peace between Israel and all of the animals and all of the nations of the world, and the second is a new covenant of marriage, in which he betroths Israel to Himself forever with the main principles of the faith which form the relationship between God and humanity on both sides.
(Free translation of Martin Buber, Torat haNeviim pp.115-116)

Chazak Chazak veNitchazek!

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