

Bellows Family

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly | Tanakh Learning Program

Perek 3

This perek includes three prophecies of rebuke. Each of the prophecies is directed at a different social group which leads the nation and misuses its power. The first prophecy turns to the heads and officers of the nation, who are meant to enforce the laws and deal justly, but in fact they distort justice and oppress the needy (1-4). The second prophecy turns to the prophets who misguide the nation out of greed (5-8). In the third prophecy the prophet returns to the heads and officers of the nation, and includes among them the priests and prophets. From this grouping of prophecies we see a distorted social order, which is supported by the judicial and religious heads of the nation.

1.

"Hearken now, you heads of Yaacov and officers of the house of Israel! Is it not incumbent upon you to know the judgment?"(1)

a | The descriptions of oppression which we found in perek 2, come to a horrifying climax. Compare 3:2 to 2:2 and 3:3 to 2:8. Note the escalation and extremism in the descriptions of oppression.

b | How is the shocking "cannibal" image constructed so as to show how the actions of the heads and officers of the nation are the opposite of the original role intended for them? Note the linguistic connection between *"Is it not incumbent upon you to know the judgment (mishpat)?"*(1) and *"and flayed (hifshitu) their skin from upon them"* (3).

2.

In a way similar to that of the heads and judges, the prophets misuse their position as well and misdirect the people instead of guiding them and rebuking them, and thus they too are part of the system of oppression.

a | Pesukim 5-6 describe two opposite actions of the prophets: A call for peace and a call to prepare for war. What can we conclude from this about the intentions of the prophets and the meaning of prophecy to them?

Michah 3-4

b | The prophet's punishment is similar to that of the heads and officers of the nation in the previous prophecy – a lack of a divine response. Compare the two punishments (4,7). What is the meaning of the lack of divine response in each prophecy and how does it fit the sin of each group?

3.

The prophecy which ends the perek (9-12) is the first prophecy in the prophetic literature which foresees the destruction of the Temple. Michah's severe prophecy of destruction for both Jerusalem and the Temple Mount shocked the people of Jerusalem for years. One hundred years after Michah's prophecy it was still being quoted, as we see during the trial of Yirmiyahu when he prophesied similarly about the fate of the Temple (see Yirmiyahu 26:17-19). What is the purpose of the prophecy of destruction according to the elders? Note the direct opposition between the role of the prophecy of doom of Michah which is reflected in Yirmiyahu and the perception of prophecy by the prophets in Michah 3:5.

Perek 4

At the beginning of perek 4 we find the transcendent vision of the Temple Mount in the End of Days, a vision which had a deep influence on human civilization and served as a source of inspiration for generations. This vision appears in the prophecies of Yishayahu (perek 2) as well, and it prophesies world peace and the pilgrimage of the gentiles of the world to Jerusalem where they will unite under the kingdom of God (1-5). In the second half of the perek we find a few prophecies which include, among others, a prophecy of consolation which deals with the ingathering of the exiles and the renewal of the kingdom of the House of David, and encouragement and consolation to the people of Jerusalem (6-14).

4.

The vision of the End of Days includes, in addition to the redemption of Israel, the salvation of the entire world. Follow the different stages of the vision. Pay attention to who initiates going to the Temple Mount, and what its role is in each stage of the vision.

5.

The description hints at central events in the history of the nation of Israel and in world history: the tower of Babel and its consequences, the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, the going up to Jerusalem for justice as described in Devarim 17:8-11. How do these hints deepen our understanding of the prophecy?

6.

The vision of the Temple Mount is central to the book of Michah, and is connected to the prophecies before and after it. Pay attention to the juxtaposition of the vision of the Temple Mount with the end of the prophecy in perek 3 and think about how this contributes to the meaning of the prophecy of destruction in perek 3. Examine as well the movement of God in relationship to Jerusalem, as it is

For expanded content and answers to questions  perek.matan@gmail.com

מַתָּן

מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רעננערט
The Sadie Rennert Women's Institute for Torah Studies

The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanakh Learning Program
© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים | טל': 02-5944555

Michah 3-4

described in the beginning of the book (1:2-3), as opposed to the movement in our prophecy. What is the meaning of the reversal of the direction of the movement?

7.

In pesukim 9-10 Michah calls out twice to the daughter of Zion. Central to this is the image of the woman in childbirth trembling with fear. Note the contradiction in the images in the two pesukim. This contradiction can be explained by the controversy between Michah (10) and his opponents (9) about the struggle between Judah and Assyria in the days of Chizkiyahu. Try to get to the root of the two sides of the controversy: what do the opponents rely on? Why does Michah disagree with them? See the claims quoted by Michah in 3:5,11.

APPENDIX – The prophecies of Michah with the perspective of time

The difficult prophecy of Michah about the destruction of the Temple and the Temple Mount, which was still being heard in the days of Yirmiyahu, continued to echo in the days of the second Temple as well. We find mention of it in the famous Aggadot about the destruction. Rabbi Akiva, who walks with the Rabbis near the ruins of the Temple, quotes the prophecy of Michah and finds hope and consolation in it, just as the elders did at the trial of Yirmiyahu (**Massechet Makkot 24a**):

Once again they were coming up to Jerusalem together, and just as they came to Mount Scopus they saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. They began to weep and R. Akiva seemed merry. Wherefore, said they to him, are you merry? Said he: Wherefore are you weeping? Said they to him: A place of which it was once said, *And the common man that draws nigh shall be put to death*, is now become the haunt of foxes, and should we not weep? Said he to them: Therefore am I merry; for it is written, *And I will take to Me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the Son of Yeverechiah*. Now what connection has this Uriah the priest with Zechariah? Uriah lived during the times of the first Temple, while Zechariah lived during the second Temple; but Holy-Writ linked the prophecy of Zechariah with the prophecy of Uriah. In the prophecy of Uriah it is written, *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field* etc. In Zechariah it is written, *Thus says the Lord of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem*. So long as Uriah's prophecy had not had its fulfilment, I had misgivings lest Zechariah's prophecy might not be fulfilled; now that Uriah's prophecy has been fulfilled, it is quite certain that Zechariah's prophecy also is to find its literal fulfilment. Said they to him: Akiva, you have comforted us! Akiva, you have comforted us!

For expanded content and answers to questions  perek.matan@gmail.com

Michah 3-4

Rabbi Akiva attributes the prophecy to Uriah the priest. The **Baalei HaTosafot** explain in situ: **In the prophecy of Uriah it is written, *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field***: And this is difficult because we do not find in all of the Tanakh these pesukim as the prophecy of Uriah, but rather as the prophecy of Michah the Morashtite! And it must be said that this relies on the fact that Yirmiyahu prophesied destruction and the priests and prophets of the time wanted to kill him for saying this, and the princes did not agree and said that Michah spoke of the destruction as well and was not killed, and Uriah did too, etc. This indicates that Uriah spoke as Michah did, and what calamity did Michah predict? – this pasuk, and Uriah said it as well.

In his introduction to the book of Shir HaShirim, Rav Kook wrote about how these deep and insightful words of Rabbi Akiva reflect his unique and wonderful character:

One who could say as he was cruelly put to death with iron combs at the hands of the Romans, "All my life I have been troubled by this verse, '*You will love God... with all your soul*' - even if he takes your soul. When will I have the opportunity to fulfill this?" and recite the Shema and lengthen the word Echad until his soul departed, only he could say that the entire universe is unworthy of the day that Shir HaShirim was given to Israel and that all of the writing are holy but Shir HaShirim is the Holy of Holies... Pure hearts can see Rabbi Akiva's greatness, the Rabbi Akiva who laughed when he saw a fox come out of the Holy of Holies, because to his enormous soul the distant future was as real and palpable as the present reality, the Rabbi Akiva who was joyous to hear the Roman crowds, because the divine love which flowed from the depths of his wonderful, brilliant heart had shown him, as if in a living picture, that Rome and its gods would pass completely, and the light of Zion would shine forever. This love so filled his pure heart that the future was a certain reality, leaving no room to mourn over the disasters of the present. For Rabbi Akiva, the tragedies of the day were but a thin cloud, casting fleeting shadows under the brilliant daytime sun.

For expanded content and answers to questions  perek.matan@gmail.com