

Bellows Family

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly | Tanach Learning Program

Perek 4

Perek 4 begins the second unit in Sefer Hoshea (perakim 4-14), which mostly deals with the moral sins of the people and their leaders. These sins are rooted in the fact that the people have forgotten God – *“for there is no knowledge of God in the land”* (1). At the beginning of the perek there is a “subpoena” for the people of the land, which includes a detailed “indictment” which describes the difficult moral situation in the land. The prophet cries out against the sins of the people, and points out the poor condition of the spiritual leadership of the priests and prophets (4-10), the atmosphere of debauchery and drunkenness amongst the people, and the *“spirit of harlotry”* which influences the people to perform pagan rites (11-19).

1.

“...for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land” (1) Follow the different context of the word “land” (in Hebrew *Eretz*) which is mention three times in the first section, and think about its importance in the description of the sin and punishment. You can use the **Radak**:

I have a judgment with the inhabitants of the land of Israel, for I gave them the land with a stipulation – that they should do charity and justice, and with this stipulation I would have my eyes on the land from the beginning of the year until the end of the year. Since they have done the opposite, *“there is swearing and lying...”* etc., so I will do the opposite of what I promised and I will hide my face from them *“Therefore shall the land mourn, and all that dwell therein shall be cut off”* *“for there is no truth”*.

Hoshea 4-6

2.

Pasuk 1 shows the values which are missing in the land, among them “*there is no knowledge of God in the land*”. In contrast, we see in pasuk 2, a list of the sins which are prevalent in the land, which are closely connected to the Ten Commandments. What do you think characterizes these sins, and what is the relationship between them and the values in pasuk 1, especially “*the knowledge of God*”? See also the description of the ideal betrothal in 2:21-22.

3.

In pesukim 4-10 the prophet points an accusing finger at the spiritual leadership. Note the two roles of the priest which are misused (4-6; 8). Try to explain the sins of the priests in light of the story of the sons of Eli in Shmuel I 2:12-17, which is the background to this prophecy. Compare pasuk 6 with pasuk 1 – how does the leadership cause the dire situation of the people?

Perakim 5-6


Like perek 4, perek 5 begins with a call to hear a harsh accusation; however this accusation is not against the people, but rather against the leadership alone – the priests, the princes and the “house of the king”. Hoshea condemns the spiritual and political leaders for their moral corruption and for the ritual prostitution which they have instilled in the people (1-7), as well as for their political sins which are connected to their relationship with Assyria (5:8 through perek 6). These two perakim describe failed attempts of Judah and Israel to return to God, and therefore the verbs to go and to return (in Hebrew *Lech* and *Shov*) are repeated many times.

4.

In perek 5:6-7, the first attempt of the people to return to God is described. This attempt fails for two reasons. What is the explicit reason? What is the implied reason? Compare to 6:6.

5.

In Pesukim 12 and 14 the punishments of the people from God are described. See what occurs between the two punishments and think about the bitter mistake of the people in their reaction to the first punishment (13) which causes them to receive the second punishment. See the background to this rebuke in Melachim II 15:19-20 and 16:7.

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

מִתַּן 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 Tanach Learning Program
© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים | טל': 02-5944555

Hoshea 4-6

6.

In response to the people going to Assyria (13) God returns to His place (15). In the wake of God's hiding His face, the people understand their mistake and regret it (6:1-3).

a | Read the people's words of repentance and examine the regret in them. Compare this to 5:4 and 13-14.

b | This attempt at repentance is rejected by God (4-11). Note the parallelism between the images used by the people (3) and the imagery in the words of God (4). What does each of the images express, and what is the criticism of the people's attempt at repentance? Pay attention as well to the use of "loving-kindness" (*chessed*) in the words of God.

APPENDIX – And there is no knowledge of God in the land

At the beginning of perek 4 Hoshea gives us a bleak description of the moral situation at that time. *"For there is neither truth nor loving-kindness nor knowledge of God in the land. There is swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and blood touches blood."* There are temples, altars, statues, idols and priests. There are sacrifices and libations, holidays and events. The people make pilgrimages to holy places to celebrate and sacrifice. He swears *'As the Lord lives.'* Even so – *"there is no knowledge of God in the land."* *"For a spirit of harlotries is within them, and they do not know the Lord."* They live without God and therefore their lives are pagan. Worshipping God without loving-kindness is not the worship of God. However, his rebuke mostly reflects the corruption in the upper classes. He especially rebukes the house of the king, the princes, the priests, and the upper class who lead the nation astray. The exploitation and corruption are expressions of the root evils: forgetting God, living without loving-kindness and truth and without knowledge of God. The prophet mentions Sodom-like sins – murder and adultery, he rebukes Israel for idol worship and for violating justice and law. In fact, he is actually threatening destruction because of one basic sin, religious and moral – the sin of the heart, the lack of true faith in God and His word. God's disagreement with the nation of Israel is because *"there is neither truth nor loving-kindness nor knowledge of God in the land."* That is the beginning of his rebuke, and also its end, in a word: *"For I desire loving-kindness...and knowledge of God..."* While truth and loving-kindness, justice and law are found on everyone's lips, are carved in stone, written in books, and sung about... they do not exist. They are not in the land, in life or in the hearts of the people. Therefore there is the outpouring of rage at Israel – they did not fulfill truth

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


מִתַּן מַטָּן

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

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

Hoshea 4-6

and loving-kindness in their lives...It was with this in mind that Hoshea looked at the reality in Israel in his time and saw one depravity: they had forgotten God. The focus had shifted from God to man. Man had become the center of the world - he and his sensual pleasures, he and the power of his hands. A spirit of cynical debauchery had overtaken Israeli society. *"Harlotry and [old] wine and new wine"* – these became the ideals. *"Their drinking bouts have become strange; they have led them to harlotry"* – meaning, wake up from your drunkenness in order to go to prostitutes. Everyone has become licentious, the fathers and sons, the brides. The king is drunk and so are the princes. The priest's desire is determined by his greed. *"They feed on the sin offerings of My people, and set their heart on their iniquity."* The purpose of the sin offering is no longer the cleansing and atonement of the sin but the meat for the priest to eat. Therefore, the priest desires that the people sin – the more sin, the more meat.
(Free translation of Y. Kaufmann, Toldot HaEmunah HaYisraelit 7, 121-128)

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

מִתַּן 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 Tanach Learning Program
© כל הזכויות שמורות. מתן על הפרק. מתן ירושלים | טל': 02-5944555