

# MATAN AL HAPEREK

## The Six-Year Online Weekly Tanach Learning Program

Dedicated by Dr. Stuart and Ellen Shaffren in commemoration  
of the 25th yearzeit of Israel Isaac Altman, ישראל יצחק בן יעקב קלמן



### Perek 9

Perakim 9 & 10 continue the description of Yechezkel's prophetic journey to Jerusalem. Yechezkel, who witnessed the abominations being committed in the Temple, now sees the punishment that will befall the denizens of the city. God sends his angels to kill the sinners among the Jerusalem's population. The stages by which God's glory abandons the Temple are described along with the description of the destruction of the Temple and the city.

- 1 The perek begins with a double command: the man clothed in linen is commanded to set a mark of life on those worthy of being saved; the angels are commanded to kill the people of the city.

a) Study the commentaries and find out who merited being saved, and how they were saved.

**Metzudat David:** *"and set a mark"* – Make a sign on the foreheads of the righteous who sigh and are disturbed by the all the abominations being committed within her [the city].





**Radak:** “*and set a mark*” – This is a matter of a sign and writing. He told him to mark with ink the foreheads of those who were sighing and groaning as a sign that they should not be harmed by the destroyers. The idea is similar to the meaning of the blood of Pesach in Egypt that was a sign and a symbol. This time, however, it was in a prophetic vision.

b) As stated by Radak, a similar deliverance appears in the Plague of the Firstborn, but these two episodes differ in the scope of the survivors and their identities. Focus on the differences between these episodes. See how the nature of the deliverance here corresponds to the concept of reward and punishment as it appears in sefer Yechezkel (see above 3:16-21).

c) The deliverance of the righteous of Jerusalem reminds us of the rescuing of Lot from Sodom. Focus on the similarities between these two episodes.

2 “*And He said to them: Defile the house and fill the courts with the slain; go forth*” (7)

What is the significance of the command to the angels to defile the Temple? For help, study **Radak**:

“*And He said to them: Defile the house*” – Do not be concerned about killing in the Temple and defiling the house with dead bodies, because they have already defiled it with their vile acts.

Pay attention to the first stage of departure of the glory of God from the Temple (3) and consider how this serves as the background for this command.

3 The absence of mercy in the punishment of Jerusalem – expressed by total destruction – is mentioned several times in the perek (5, 8-10). What are the primary sins for which the city is being so severely punished? What is the spiritual root of these sins (9)? Pay attention to the relationship between the supposition of the people that lay at the root of the sin (9) and the punishment (10).



## Perek 10

In the first part of perek 10 the man dressed in linen is commanded to burn the entire city (1-7). The burning and destruction of the city by the angels in the prophetic vision took place several years before its actual destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and serves as the true source of the city's destruction. "...ground meal you have ground, a burnt city you have set ablaze." (Eichah Rabbah 1:41). The second part of the perek (8-22) contains a description of the living creatures of the chariot of God (merkava) that parallels the description at the beginning of the sefer (perek 1).

- 4 Compare the command given to the man dressed in linen in pesukim 2-3 with its performance in pesukim 5-6.
  - a) Consider how the man deviated from the command and what might have been the reason for this deviation. Examine the commentary of **Radak**:

And he changed the performance – instead of his taking the fire from between the cherubs, the cherub took it. The purpose for this was not to change the command, but rather because he feared entering a place higher and more sacred than himself. He stood by the wheel to see what would happen, and behold, the cherub took the fire from between the cherubs and placed it in his hand.
  - b) A different interpretation is offered in **Talmud Bavli, Masechet Yoma** (77a): R Chana the son of Bizna said in the name of R Shimon Chasida: Had the coals not cooled while being transferred from the hands of the cherub to the hands of Gavriel, no remnant or survivor would be left from the enemies of Israel (i.e. Israel).
- 5 The description of the chariot in our perek parallels the vision in perek 1. Try to understand why the vision is also described in perek 10, the perek that describes the abandoning of the city. Pay attention to the central role of the cherubs – a prime element in the Holy of Holies of the Temple (I Melachim 6:23-28) – in perek 10. Compare this to perek 1 – the description of the arrival of the chariot of the Shechina in Babylonia – where they are not even mentioned.



## Appendix

### “And Begin with My Sanctuary”

The sharp distinction made between the righteous and the wicked by the setting of the mark, is given a different interpretation in the midrash of our Sages. The midrash also places responsibility for the destruction of Jerusalem on the righteous people who lived there, and stresses the obligation of the righteous to protest wickedness when it exists in their society.

R Acha the son of R Chanina said: A good decree is never issued from the mouth of the Holy One Blessed is He and is then exchanged for a bad one, except in this matter of failing to rebuke, as it is written: *"God said to [the angel]: Pass through the city, through Jerusalem and mark the letter tav on the foreheads of the people who sigh and moan over all the abominations that are done in its midst."* The Holy One Blessed is He said to the angel Gavriel: Go and mark a tav of ink on the foreheads of the righteous, so that the angels of destruction shall have no power over them; and on the foreheads of the wicked set a tav of blood, so that the angels of destruction have power over them. Said the attribute of Justice before the Holy One Blessed is He: Master of the Universe, what is the difference between these and these? [God] replied: These are completely righteous and these are completely wicked. [Justice] then said before [God]: Master of the Universe, [the righteous] had the opportunity to protest, but they did not protest! [God] said to [Justice]: It is revealed and known to Me that if they had protested against [the sinners], [the latter] would not have accepted [rebuke] from them. [Justice] said before [God]: If it is revealed before You, is it revealed to [the righteous]?!

And this is what is written: *"Slay utterly the old man, the young man and the maiden, children and women but do not approach any man upon whom is the mark of the tav, and begin with my sanctuary."*

And it is written: *"And they began with the elders who were before the House"*. Rav Yosef taught: Do not read *Mikdashi* as "My sanctuary", but as "My sanctified ones"; these are the people who observed the entire Torah, from alef to tav.

And immediately the verse states: *"And behold, six men came in through the upper gate, which faces northward, every man with his shattering weapon in his hand; and among them was one man dressed in linen, with a scribe's inkwell on his loin. They came in and stood by the copper altar."*

(Talmud Bavli, Masechet Shabbat 55a)

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