



SEFER YIRMIYAHU

2019-2020 Shiur
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CHAPTER SEVEN

➤ Chapter 7 contextualized

- As Rabbi Leibtag points out, this chapter starts a new unit and is given over in a new time period, that is, early during the reign of King Yehoiakim. This is made clear from Chapter 24, which is a parallel chapter to this one.
- Upon King Josiah's death in 609 BCE, Yehoiakim's younger brother Yehoahaz (or Shallum) was proclaimed king, but after three months Pharaoh Necho II deposed him and replaced him with the eldest son, Eliakim, who adopted the name Yehoiakim and became king at the age of twenty-five. Yehoiakim reigned for eleven years to 598 BCE.
- Another important change that we see in this perek is that the scene has shifted. Rabbi Leibtag notes that the prophet is now preaching to the “observant” members of the community, or as Rav Hirsch puts it: “He now stands at the entrance gate which leads to the Temple, where the faithful must walk past him. . . . It is ‘the gate of the House of God,’ where the Sanctuary and everyday life meet, that the prophet must now proclaim the word of God to the people.”

➤ Verse 4: A rebuke of the false prophets

- The repetition of the phrase “the Temple of God” mocks the false prophets who have told the people that the Temple cannot be destroyed, that the armies of Bavel will not come, and that peace and salvation are at hand.
- The people, who willingly accepted the words of the false prophets, have seemingly put all their faith in the Temple itself and its power to protect and save them.
- As Rav Hirsh comments on this and the previous verse: “All that God finds is temples, nothing but temples! His glory is not to fill His great world; He is to be confined solely to the Temple. He expects men to serve Him with perfect obedience in their daily lives, but they hope to satisfy Him with just a few hours spent in the Temple! . . . Rarely has the woeful misinterpretation of the Jewish Sanctuary been condemned in more forceful terms than by the striking juxtaposition in which the idea expressed by הַיְכָל הַיְהוָה הַזֶּה is refuted by the words הַיְכָל הַמָּה הַזֶּה. Woe to the generation that believes it has fulfilled its obligations toward God simply by having a Holy Temple and holding ‘Divine services’ there!”

➤ **Verses 5 – 10: Spelling out the sins of the people**

- To further underscore the worthlessness of hollow Divine worship, the prophet makes clear in verses 5 – 7 what the people need to do in terms of changed behaviors. Importantly, says the prophet, what can save the people is not a return to rituals, but a renewed emphasis on and adherence to those mitzvot that are between man and his fellow men.

(ה) כִּי אִם־הֵיטִיב תִּיטְיִבוּ אֶת־דַּרְכֵיכֶם וְאֶת־מַעַלְלֵיכֶם אִם־עָשׂוּ תַעֲשׂוּ מִשְׁפָּט בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ: (ו) גַּר יְתוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּקוּ וְגַם נָקִי אֶל־תִּשְׁפְּכוּ בַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וְאַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַיִם לֹא תִלְכוּ לְרַע לְכֶם: (ז) וְשִׁכַנְתִּי אִתְּכֶם בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאַבְוֹתֵיכֶם לְמִן־עוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

- Only in verse 9 is there any mention of what we might call “spiritual sins,” namely, idol worship. However, the emphasis continues to be on mitzvot between man and his fellow men. (Interestingly, as Rabbi Leibtag notes, these come from the end of Aseret HaDibrot, which are those which specifically between man and his fellow!)

(ט) הַגִּבּוֹר וְרֵצֵם וְנֹאֵף וְהַשֹּׁבֵעַ לַשֶּׁקֶר וְקֹטֵר לְבַעַל וְהַלֵּף אַחֲרַי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִדְעֶתֶם:

- By emphasizing mitzvot between man and his fellow, the prophet is chastising the people. They so badly mistreat their brethren but mistakenly believe all will be forgiven by being “frum” in the Temple and with its rituals.
- In verse 10 the prophet seems to mock the people by stating rhetorically by putting the words “We are safe” in the mouths of the people. Really rails the prophet! You really believe you are “[Safe] to do all these abhorrent things!”

➤ **Verse 16: Proof of Hashem’s anger**

- Unbelievably, Hashem tells Yirmiyahu not to pray for the people, for He, Hashem, will not listen to his prayers.
- The fact that Hashem will not heed the prophet’s prayer further demonstrates the people’s lack of any true repentance.

➤ **Verse 18: Again harkening back to the narrative of the Torah**

- Children gathering wood. Fathers kindling fires. Women kneading bread. Does this not harken back to Avraham and his household? Yet now, rather than serving Hashem, the people are serving other gods “in order to provoke Me [Hashem].”
- Rav Hirsch describes this as follows: “The memory of Abraham will no longer inspire them to sacrifice, gladly and valiantly, even their most precious possessions if need be, to do the will of God. The example of Isaac, the son who followed his father on the path of heroic self-denial, will no longer motivate them to raise their children in the same spirit of duty eagerly performed. The noble image of Sarah, who understood how to turn her home into a holy place of God’s nearness, will no longer induce women to walk serenely on that same hallowed path of life. Instead, children will gather wood for the deluded worship of the forces of nature, when the remembrance of Isaac on his way to Mount Moriah should certainly make them recoil from such page acts.”

➤ **Verses 22 – 23: What Hashem expects from the Jewish people**

- The prophet claims in verse 22 that Hashem did not require sacrifices from the Jewish people when they left Egypt. But what about the Korban Pesach? What is going on here?

כִּי לֹא־דִבַּרְתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא צוִיתִים בְּיָוֶם הַזֶּה הוֹצִיא [הוֹצִיאִי] אֹתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל־דְּבַרִּי עוֹלָה וְנֹבַח:

- The next verse provides the answer while harkening back to the Sinai experience.

כִּי אִם־אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה צוִיתִי אֹתְכֶם לֵאמֹר שְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי לְעָם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם בְּכָל־הַדְּבָרֵי אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם לַמַּעַן יֵיטֵב לָכֶם:

- Looking back at Shmot (19:5 – 6), says Rabbi Leibtag, at what Hashem expects from the Jewish people at Sinai, makes clear that walking in the ways of Hashem involves more than sacrifices and empty rituals. Hashem needs a nation that teaches humanity about Hashem and by preserving His reputation (so to speak).

(ה) וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְהִיִּיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ: (ו) וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מִמְּלַכַת כְּהֲנָנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבַּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

- Said differently (per Rabbi Leibtag), Hashem insists that the people get the core values right first, which means caring for the poor, the widow, the stranger and pursuing justice, in other words, becoming a sanctified and holy nation, only then can the people come to God's house and offer sacrifices!

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