

***Trei Asar***  
***A Teachers' Guide***

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# TREI ASAR

## INTRODUCTION

“Trei Asar” means “twelve” in Aramaic, and the book of Trei Asar contains the writings of twelve prophets, in twelve separate books. Since they were all short books, they were put together into one large volume, out of fear that otherwise they would get lost. (Radak)

With twelve prophets, it is only natural that the time span will be greater than that of a single prophet, and, indeed, the prophecies in the book cover the period from the First Temple, until some time during the era of the Second Temple. Shortly after the Second Temple was completed, prophecy ceased; Malachi, the last book in Trei Asar, is also the last book of prophecy in the Tanach.

As to the order of the twelve, there are various opinions explaining it. In general, one can see that the order is chronological, but some of the books were put next to each other for associative reasons (i.e., Ovadiah follows Amos because Amos ends with a prophecy about Edom). (Da’at Mikra)

The students can refer to a time-line prepared for the study of Melachim II, and plot the time span of these twelve prophets – starting with Hoshea, and going on until Malachi. The students can refer to the opening verses of each prophet in order to see if and where they fit in.

The twelve books are part of the *Nevi'im Achronim*, namely the direct prophecies. Why are these books so short? A basic rule is that נבואה שנצרכה לדורות נכתבה – prophecies were written down and added to the Tanach only when they had lasting value. These twelve prophets may have had many more prophecies, but only those that had lasting value were recorded.

In this curriculum we will study some of these varied prophecies, and try to understand their eternal message to us.

## **Key**

Suitable for honors students

### **Underlined source**

Verses which the students should look up by themselves, using a Tanach.

### **Shaded box**

Notes to the teacher on analysis of the text, or on methodology

### **Shaded box with rippled edges**

A note about a relevant moral issue that can be developed in class, including a reference to further reading material.

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# THE BOOK OF HOSHEA

## *Introduction:*<sup>1</sup>

Hoshea ben Be'eri was a prophet who prophesied in the days of four kings of Yehudah, and the days of Yerovam II, king of Israel. His prophecies – both good and bad – comprise some of the strongest expressions among the prophets.

There are two parts to the book of Hoshea: The first part – **chapters 1-3** – which deal with Hoshea being required to marry a woman known to be unfaithful and to have children from her, and the second part – **chapters 4-14** – which contains mainly rebuke to the people of Israel, and a call for repentance. We will be studying in depth two chapters, one from each part.

In order to understand chapter 2, it is necessary to read chapter 1 – preferably out loud, in class. It is a singular story: Hashem commands Hoshea to marry an *eshet zenunim* – a woman known to be unfaithful – and to have children from her. As each child is born, Hashem tells him what to name the child – names which have negative connotations: Yizre'el (where Yehu killed all the descendants of Achav – Melachim II 9-10), Lo Ruchama (“One who has not been loved/not been shown mercy”), and Lo Ami (“One who is not my nation”).

The students will no doubt ask many questions: How could Hashem have asked a holy man, a prophet, to take a promiscuous woman as his wife? And not only that, but the prophet is commanded to love her! And how can a person give his children names that indicate tragedy?

The commentators deal with these questions in two basic ways: 1) That these deeds were not actually done, but that it was all a prophetic vision. This approach can be found in the commentary of the Radak (on Hoshea 1:2), which can be read in class. 2) That these deeds were done, and the purpose of them was to teach Hoshea a lesson. Yalkut Shimoni (section 515) brings a conversation between Hashem and Hoshea, explaining the lesson. This can also be read in class.

What is the lesson?

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<sup>1</sup>This introduction is based partly on the Da'at Mikra commentary's introduction to Hoshea.

## Hoshea

The relationship between Hashem and the people of Israel has been likened in many places in Tanach to the relationship between husband and wife. Accordingly, the imagery used for the Children of Israel worshipping idols is that of an unfaithful wife. But, as with a wife, neither the covenant nor the emotional relationship can be broken completely, once the two sides have bound themselves to it. Hashem loves the Children of Israel, no matter how wayfaring they may become. The theme of *zenut* – of straying from the path – repeats itself countless times in the book of Hoshea. Israel strays, thus angering Hashem very much, but never to the point of breaking off the relationship. Israel will always be welcomed back – *teshuva* will always be accepted – and that is the second main theme of the book of Hoshea.

Hoshea found this unconditional acceptance of *teshuva* hard to understand, and his idea of justice was that Hashem should choose Himself a different nation in place of the Children of Israel. So Hashem showed him that even in plain human relations there can be situations where “love conquers all”: After marrying this unfaithful woman, Hoshea cannot bring himself to leave her, and so he understands that he was wrong in his suggestion that Hashem leave the Children of Israel, and also wrong about the role of the prophet: the prophet should always pray for the people, and not just berate them. A prophet is always responsible for the welfare of the people.

In Chapter 2, the metaphor of Israel as an unfaithful wife is extended and elaborated upon. The text moves back and forth between this metaphor and the actual situation it is discussing, but most of the time the issues are discussed metaphorically and not literally.



## Chapter 2

### Verse 1:

והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים אשר לא יימד ולא ייספר והיה  
במקום אשר ייאמר להם לא עמי אתם ייאמר להם בני קל חי

והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים אשר לא יימד ולא ייספר

In chapter 1 there are three prophecies which describe Hashem's anger at the people of Israel, and the punishments he is going to bring upon them. This chapter begins with a promise of salvation. Why this sudden change in tone? According to Yalkut Shimoni (Section 515, as brought above), Hashem expected Hoshea to respond to these prophecies by praying that they be revoked. Instead, Hoshea suggested replacing the Jewish People with some other nation. Hashem therefore decided to teach him a lesson in the love that Hashem feels for His people, despite their sins, and Hoshea learned his lesson and changed his tone.

1. Hoshea had realized that he had sinned in his suggestion of העבירים באומה אחרת – replace them with some other nation. Therefore, this chapter starts out with a conciliatory prophecy, blessing the people. (Yalkut Shimoni 515, Rashi)
2. This good prophecy is referring to the End of the Days – to *acharit hayamim*. (Metzudat David)
- 3.\* The Children of Israel are compared to the sand beneath the sea, not to the sand on the seashore. The sand beneath the sea is endless, cannot be reached, and so cannot be counted. Likewise, it will be impossible to count the Jews because of their large number and because of their dispersion among the nations of the world (to the point of their not even being recognized as Jews). (Malbim)

After reading the Malbim, the students should note which phrase in the verse supports the Malbim's view (כחול הים).

והיה במקום אשר ייאמר להם לא עמי אתם ייאמר להם בני קל חי

1. At the time of this prophecy (as brought in chapter 1, verse 9), they were considered by Hashem to be “not My nation”; in the future, when they do

## Hoshea

*teshuva*, Hashem will return the exiles and He will once again consider them to be His nation (see Devarim 30:1-11). (Radak)

\* They will be known as the “children of the living G-d”, as opposed to being the worshippers of lifeless gods. (Radak)

2. They will be considered the most beloved nation of Hashem. (Metzudat David)
- 3.\* Instead of the experience of exile and *hester panim* – Hashem hiding His face from them – the people will begin to recognize the special *hashgacha* (Divine Providence) that enabled them to survive during this period. It will be known throughout the nations that the Jews are the blessed nation of Hashem. (Malbim)

The students should note by whom the people will be known as בני קל חי according to each commentator.

### Verse 2:

ונקבצו בני יהודה ובני ישראל יחדיו ושמו להם ראש אחד ועלו  
מן הארץ כי גדול יום יזרעאל

ונקבצו בני יהודה ובני ישראל יחדיו

In the times of the Second Temple, only the tribes of Yehudah and Binyamin returned to the Land of Israel. Therefore, this prophecy, which tells of all of the tribes joining together and returning, must be referring to the times of the *Mashiach* (the Messiah). (Radak)

ושמו להם ראש אחד

1. This “one leader” will be *Melech Hamashiach*. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* This will be *Mashiach ben Yosef*, who will come before *Mashiach ben David*, and who will gather everyone together in order to fight Gog and Magog. (Abarbanel)
3. This is Eliyahu Hanavi, who will lead the Jews out of exile, and bring them to the Land of Israel. (Radak)

The students should note that each commentator is focussing on different stages of the redemption in the times of *acharit hayamim*. They should note which explanation best suits the phrase ועלו מן הארץ.

ועלו מן הארץ כי גדול יום יזרעאל

1. The exile is compared to the scattering of seeds. The day of the gathering of all of these scattered seeds – *kibbutz galuyot* – will be great. (Metzudat David)
2. The length of time that the Jews will be “planted” in other lands will be great. (Radak, bringing his father’s commentary)
3. The Jews’ sojourn in other lands is compared to seeds planted deeply in the ground. These seeds seem to rot and disappear, only to sprout as a fresh crop. Likewise, the Jews that seemed to be “planted” and lost will all come back to Israel, together with many converts. This day will be great because of all the miracles that will happen on it. (Malbim)

The students should explain the symbolism of יזרעאל, and the meaning of גדול according to each commentary.

#### Verse 3:

אמרו לאחיכם עמי ולאחותיכם רוחמה

אמרו לאחיכם עמי ולאחותיכם רוחמה

Yehudah and Binyamin will say to their brothers, the Ten Tribes, who were exiled quickly, that they are once again the nation of Hashem. Likewise, to their sisters, the women of the Ten Tribes, they should say that Hashem has had mercy on them. This is in contrast to the previous statements, in 1:6, and 1:9. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 4:

ריבו באמכם ריבו כי היא לא אשתי ואנוכי לא אישה ותסר  
זנוניה מפניה ונאפופיה מבין שדיה

ריבו באמכם ריבו כי היא לא אשתי ואנוכי לא אישה

1. The entire generation is referred to as the “mother”. The righteous people should challenge this generation and rebuke them for their ways. For the moment, since the generation has left the path of Hashem, Hashem will no longer provide for its needs. (Metzudat David)
2. The “sons” are the prophets who are supposed to rebuke the nation. (Malbim)

## Hoshea

- 3.\* The “sons” are all the individuals of the nation: each one is to rebuke his brothers. (Radak)

The students should note that these commentaries reflect different opinions as to who is obligated to rebuke others for misdeeds.

### ותסר זנוניה מפניה ונאפופיה מבין שדיה

1. The imagery used here for the “mother” is that of a *zonah* – a prostitute. The “sons” should tell the “mother” that she should stop this behavior, namely, that she should refrain from putting on makeup and perfume for her lovers. (Metzudat David)
2. The mother should remove the *zenut* – the external worship of idols – from her face, and the *na'afufim* – the internal desire for this idol-worship – from her heart. (Malbim)

### Verse 5:

פן אפשיטנה ערומה והצגתיה כיום היוולדה ושמתייה כמדבר  
ושתיה כארץ צייה והמיתיה בצמא

### פן אפשיטנה ערומה והצגתיה כיום היוולדה

1. If the “mother” does not improve her ways, then Hashem will disgrace her – “strip her of her clothes”. (Metzudat David)
2. When Hashem first found the “mother” – the nation of Israel – she was unclothed and wallowing in blood (see [Yechezkel 16:4-14](#)). Hashem then dressed her. Now Hashem is prepared to put her back into the original state in which he found her – that of nakedness. (Malbim)

It is important that the students read the verses in Yechezkel before learning the Malbim. The teacher should remind the students that this section in Yechezkel appears in the Passover Haggadah, as one of its ideas.

### ושמתייה כמדבר ושתיה כארץ צייה והמיתיה בצמא

1. The punishment of this sinful “mother” will be that she will be put in a state of dereliction – *hefker* – like a dry desert. (Metzudat David)

2. The desert symbolizes the exile among the nations. The nation of Israel will wallow there in the blood of persecution, since its “clothes” – the Divine Providence protecting it – will be removed from it. (Malbim)

The students can make a chart of the imagery used in the verse according to the Malbim:

| הנמשל                | הפסוק/המשל           |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| אין השגחת ה'         | פן אפשיטנה ערומה     |
| מתבוססת בדם הרוגים   | והצגתיה כיום היוולדה |
| בני ישראל יהיו בגלות | ושמתיה כמדבר         |

### Verse 6:

ואת בניה לא ארחם כי בני זנונים המה  
ואת בניה לא ארחם

1. Although the righteous people did not sin, they will be punished with the rest of the nation, just like the children of a prostitute bear the stain of their mother's behavior. (Metzudat David)

The entire nation is judged according to the behavior of its majority. (Malbim)

2. The children referred to here are the individuals, who will be punished. Or else, the prophet is saying that the individuals in later generations who will follow the practices of this generation will also be punished. (Radak)

The students should note that each commentator is explaining this verse according to his explanation of verse 4 (see above).

### Verse 7:

כי זנתה אמם הובישה הורתם כי אמרה אלכה אחרי מאהבי  
נותני לחמי ומימי צמרי ופשתי שמני ושיקויי

כי זנתה אמם הובישה הורתם

1. The majority of the nation turned away from Hashem. The “mother” of the nation (in other words, the nation as a whole) performed shameful acts. (Metzudat David)
2. The teachers of the people did shameful acts. They would teach the people not to steal, and then they themselves would steal. (Rashi)

The students should explain הוראתם according to each commentary (parent, as in הורה, or teacher, as in מורה, הוראה). The students should translate each phrase according to each commentary, and note which is closer to פשוטו של מקרא – the simple meaning of the words – and why.

כי אמרה אלכה אחרי מאהבי נותני לחמי ומימי צמרי ופשתי, שמני ושיקויי

1. The nation followed in the ways of its “lovers” – the *ma'arechet hashamayim* (the heavenly bodies), thinking that they were the ones who bestowed gifts on it. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The people put their trust in their foreign alliances – with Assyria and Egypt, whom they had bribed. This gave them the peace they needed to till the land, and so it was through these nations that the people's needs were provided. (Radak)
3. The verse lists the basic needs of mankind: food, clothing and drinks to enjoy. (Malbim)

The students should translate נותני according to Metzudat David and Radak. (“those who give us” vs. “those who allow us to have”).

### Verse 8:

לכן הנני שך את דרכך בסירים וגדרתי את גדרה ונתיבותיה לא  
תמצא

לכן הנני שך את דרכך בסירים וגדרתי את גדרה ונתיבותיה לא תמצא

1. The path, or strategy, that brings down the influence of the heavenly bodies will be blocked to the people. (Metzudat David)
2. This verse describes the various ways Hashem will try to stop the people from consorting with their “lovers”, the same way a husband sets up obstacles in the path of his wife so that she will find it hard to consort with her lover. Hashem will sabotage the various idolatrous practices that the people had been using, so that they will bring curses upon themselves instead of blessings. He will create dissonance between the Jews and their allies, so that they will not be able to trust other nations anymore, and will refrain from contact with them. (Malbim)

3. The people will not be able to leave the city because of the siege, and the allies will therefore be of no help. (Radak)

The students should define דרך according to each commentator.

**Verse 9:**

ורידפה את מאהביה ולא תשיג אותם וביקשתם ולא תמצא  
ואמרה אלכה ואשובה אל אישי הראשון כי טוב לי אז מעתה

ורידפה את מאהביה ולא תשיג אותם

1. Although the people will try to offer incense to the heavenly bodies, they will not be able to bring down the good they desire. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem will cause the heavenly bodies and the human allies to distance themselves. Therefore, all the efforts of the people to “catch” these possible helpers will be for naught. (Malbim)
3. The other nations will not offer the desired help. (Radak)
- 4.\* ורידפה is written in the פיעל בניין, and not in בניין קל (which would have been וירדפה), to express a constant pursuing. (Mahari Kra)

וביקשתם ולא תמצא

1. The heavenly bodies and the human allies will distance themselves to the point that the people will no longer be able to find them. (Malbim)
2. This is a repetition of the idea brought in the previous phrase, in different words. (Metzudat David)

The students should note that when the phrases are a repetition of the same idea brought in a previous phrase, the **Metzudat David** commentary will generally note: כפל הדבר במילים שונות, and not explain why this idea was repeated (the point being that the Bible engages in repetition for its literary value). The **Malbim** will generally explain that the different phrase expresses a new idea. This is one of the principles that the Malbim established in his introduction to his commentary on the Bible – the Bible comes to express ideas, and so all its words have an idea behind them, and are not merely repetitions for the sake of the beauty of the language itself.

It is important that the students be aware of these two different approaches to Biblical commentary.

ואמרה אלכה ואשובה אל אישי הראשון כי טוב לי אז מעתה

1. The people at that point will decide to put their trust in Hashem, since the times when they trusted in Hashem were the best they had ever had. (Metzudat David)
2. This statement of *teshuva* on the part of the people must be the one they will make **after** being in exile (see Devarim 30:1-2). Had the people made this statement while still in the Land of Israel, they never would have been exiled. (Radak)
3. Although the people will return to Hashem (even before being exiled), they will be doing so only because their at the moment is bad – going back to the “husband” – to Hashem, is better than remaining in their present predicament, when all the “lovers” have disappeared and do not help. But they will not regret their past misdeeds, and once they think the stars are smiling upon them again, they will go back to worshipping them. (Malbim)

The students should read the Malbim on their own, and write down how the Malbim counters the Radak’s contention.

**Verse 10:**

והיא לא ידעה כי אנוכי נתתי לה הדגן והתירוש והיצהר ובסף  
הרביתי לה וזהב עשו לבעל

והיא לא ידעה כי אנוכי נתתי לה הדגן והתירוש והיצהר

1. From the very outset, the Jews did not pay attention to the fact that it is Hashem that provides their needs, not the constellations. (Metzudat David)  
  
The Jews never realized that all the good things that they had, even when they worshipped the constellations, came from Hashem. (Malbim)
2. The “wife” acted as if she did not know that it all comes from Hashem. (Rashi)
3. The leaders and the false prophets used to deceive the people that all the blessings came from other sources, not from Hashem. (Radak)



Based on these four sources, the students should formulate the question that is bothering the commentators, and note how each one answers it differently. The students should translate into English the phrase והיא לא ידעה according to each approach.

וכסף הרביתי לה חזהב עשו לבעל

1. It was the wealth that caused them to reject Hashem. See Devarim 32:15. (Radak)
2. The Jews took the wealth that Hashem gave them and used it to adorn the Ba'al (see Yirmiyahu 10:4). (Metzudat David)

**Verse 11:**

לכן אשיב ולקחתי דגני בעיתו ותירושי במועדו והצלתי צמרי  
ופשתי לכסות את ערוותה

לכן אשוב ולקחתי דגני בעיתו ותירושי במועדו

1. As a result of the actions of the faithless “wife”, Hashem will remove His blessing from her. Plagues and hail will descend upon the people at the end of each season, and destroy their crops. (Metzudat David)
2. The manner in which Hashem chooses to punish the people is in itself a lesson: Hashem will give their rain and produce, but at the end of the process He will take it away from them. This will show them that the constellations have no control over Hashem. (Malbim)

והצלתי צמרי ופשתי לכסות את ערוותה

Hashem will kill the sheep, and have the flax crop fail, so they will not have any clothes to wear. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 12:**

ועתה אגלה את נבלותה לעיני מאהביה ואיש לא יצילנה מירי

ועתה אגלה את נבלותה לעיני מאהביה

1. Hashem will strip the clothes off the unfaithful wife. Her lovers – the heavenly bodies – will see her in all her ugliness. (Metzudat David)

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2. Hashem will hide His face from the Jews, thus exposing them, and so their ugliness and their bad deeds will be seen by all the other nations. (Radak)

ואיש לא יצילנה מידי

1. No one can bestow good on the Children of Israel, without it being the will of Hashem. The heavenly bodies will be of no help to them. (Metzudat David)
2. This was the end of the merit of the forefathers (which had protected the people up to this point). (Rashi)

### Verse 13:

והשבתי כל משושה חגה חודשה ושבתה וכל מועדה

והשבתי כל משושה חגה חודשה ושבתה

1. Hashem will abolish the joy of the holidays. (Metzudat David)
2. The people thought that the holidays were times of good fortune for them – times when they would receive the blessings from the heavenly bodies. Hashem will therefore turn the holidays into times of trouble, to show that He is in control, not the heavenly bodies. (Malbim)
3. In times of trouble there are can be no joyous holidays. The troubles that Hashem will bring upon the Jews will prevent them from celebrating any holidays with joy. (Radak)

וכל מועדה

1. The *mo'adim* referred to here are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Shemini Atzeret. These are not included among the *chagim* mentioned above. (Metzudat David)
2. This is referring to any joyous occasion (not necessarily one of the set *chagim*). (Radak)

### Verse 14:

והשימותי גפנה ותאנתה אשר אמרה אתנה המה לי אשר נתנו  
לי מאהבי ושמתיים ליער ואכלתם חית השדה

והשימותי גפנה ותאנתה

1. Hashem will destroy the vineyards and the fig trees. (Metzudat David)

Not only the produce, but the land itself will be destroyed. (Malbim)

2. Hashem will destroy the produce that the Jews claimed came from their “lovers” – that way they will know whether it came from Him or from those “lovers. (Radak)

אשר אמרה אתנה המה לי אשר נתנו לי מאהבי

An *etnan* is the payment a mistress receives from her lover. In a continuation of this imagery of the Jews being like a promiscuous woman, the good which they thought came from their benefactors, is presented as such a payment. (Metzudat David)

ושמתים ליער ואכלתם חית השדה

1. The orchards will become desolate like a wild forest, and the enemies will be able to consume the produce. (Metzudat David)
2. Literally, as a result of the destruction of the land, animals will come to live there and eat the fruits. (Rashi)

The students should be able to express in one word the distinction between the two ways to understand the words חית השדה: literally or figuratively.

#### Verse 15:

ופקדתי עליה את ימי הבעלים אשר תקטיר להם ותעד נזמה  
 וחליתה ותלך אחרי מאהביה ואותי שכחה נאום ה'

ופקדתי עליה את ימי הבעלים אשר תקטיר להם

1. Hashem will remember the times that they served the Ba'al idols and punish them for them. (Metzudat David)
2. The sins of those who worshipped idols will be added on to the sins of the exiled generations who, though they will not worship idols, will still not serve Hashem wholeheartedly. And so, the combined punishment will be a longer exile. (Radak)

The students should look up Vayikra 26:38-41, and see how these verses in Vayikra support the commentary of the Radak. They can then note the phrase in the verse that best describes the sins that the Radak is referring to, and why it is just this phrase that he quotes.

ותעד נזמה וחליתה ותלך אחרי מאהביה

1. The worship of the heavenly bodies is described as being like adorning oneself – like a woman trying to be attractive to her lover. (Metzudat David)
2. The people never learned their lesson. Even in the times of Hoshea ben Ela (the last king of Israel before the destruction of Shomron), they still sought an alliance with Egypt, and engaged in idolatry (thus continuing, in the imagery of the prophet, to pursue the “lovers”). (Malbim)

ואותי שכחה נאום ה'

She did not turn her heart to the worship of Hashem. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 16:

לכן אנוכי מפתיה והולכתיה המדבר ודיברתי על ליבה

לכן אנוכי מפתיה והולכתיה המדבר

1. After trying to show the people that the punishments coming on them come from Him, Hashem is forced to entice them into exile – to a desert, where they will suffer hunger and thirst, and be surrounded by snakes and scorpions. Under such conditions, all the nations will distance themselves from the people, and that way they will feel themselves more under Hashem’s own Divine Providence. (Malbim)
2. While in exile, Hashem will entice the Jews to do *teshuva*. He will encourage them not to run after their hearts’ desires, but rather to change their ways. (Radak)

ודיברתי על ליבה

1. Hashem will try to convince the Children of Israel to come back to Him. (Malbim)
2. Hashem will comfort them in their suffering in exile. (Radak)

It is important to discuss with the students what the purpose of exile is, according to each of the commentators brought above. The students should bring in examples from their life experiences, or the life of experiences of others, which demonstrate the idea of suffering and exile as a way of becoming a better person. Finally, the students should think about how their lives could change, based on the awareness of exile as being a place of purification.

**Verse 17:**

**ונתתי לה את כרמיה משם ואת עמק עכור לפתח תקוה וענתה  
שמה כימי נעוריה וכיום עלותה מארץ מצרים**

**ונתתי לה את כרמיה משם**

1. While in exile, the Jews lack many things, particularly material possessions. They survive only because of Divine Providence. Hashem is saying that at this point he will return the material possessions to the Jews. (Malbim)
2. Hashem will comfort those Jews who will remain after the nation has been decontaminated, promising them that they will be returned to the Land of Israel. (Radak)

**ואת עמק עכור לפתח תקוה**

1. In the depths of the exile, there is a ray of hope; for, as a result of the exile, the Jews will return to Hashem. (Rashi)
2. The valleys that became wasteland while the Jews were in exile will again be attractive places to live – like an attractive doorway beckoning people to enter. (Metzudat David)
3. At the end of the period of exile, the Jews will find favor in the eyes of the other nations, and begin to look forward to the final redemption. (Malbim)

The students should note the relevancy of the Metzudat David and the Malbim's commentaries to our times. The teacher should also mention that one of the signs of redemption is the recultivation of the land (see Yechezkel 36:8, for instance) and relate it to the reality of Israel in our times.

וענתה שמה כימי נעוריה וכיום עלותה מארץ מצרים

1. She will live there (ענתה being the same root as מעון – home) – and then, just as the Jews called out to be redeemed from Egypt, so they will call out while in exile, to be redeemed. (Rashi)
2. The Jews will sing to Hashem, praising Him for the great miracles that he will perform, like they did after the splitting of the Red Sea. (Radak, Metzudat David)

The students should note the difference in interpretation of ענתה between Rashi and the other two commentators.

**Verse 18:**

והיה ביום ההוא נאום ה' תקראי אישי ולא תקראי לי עוד בעלי

והיה ביום ההוא נאום ה' תקראי אישי ולא תקראי לי עוד בעלי

1. In the future, we will serve Hashem out of love and not out of fear. (Rashi)
2. Since *Ba'al* is the name of a type of idolatry (though also a term for husband), we will not use it at all, even to refer to our relationship with our “husband” – Hashem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 19:**

והסירותי את שמות הבעלים מפיה ולא יזכרו עוד בשמם

והסירותי את שמות הבעלים מפיה ולא יזכרו עוד בשמם

Hashem will help the Jews serve him solely: הבא ליטהר מסייעין אותו – Once a person wants to purify himself, Hashem helps him to do so. (Radak)

**Verse 20:**

וכרתי להם ברית ביום ההוא עם חיית השדה ועם עוף השמיים  
ורמש האדמה וקשת וחרב ומלחמה אשבור מן הארץ והשכבתים  
לבטח

וכרתי להם ברית ביום ההוא עם חיית השדה

1. The relationship with the wild animals will be as if a covenant of peace had been signed with them. (Metzudat David)

2. This is the same as Yeshayahu's prophecy: ...גדי ירבץ... (See Yeshayahu 11:6). (Radak)
3. This is brought as the opposite of ואכלתם חיית השדה – the wild animals will eat them (verse 14, above). (Ibn Ezra)

### Verse 21:

וארשתיך לי לעולם וארשתיך לי בצדק ובמשפט ובחסד וברחמים

וארשתיך לי לעולם

1. Hashem will be engaged to us forever, and will never send us away again. (Metzudat David)
2. Unlike the present relationship, that of an *eshet zenunim* – an unfaithful wife, this will be an everlasting, faithful relationship of marriage. (Radak)
3. It says וארשתיך three times, referring to the three exiles: Egypt, Babylon and Edom. After each exile, Hashem renews His commitment to us. (Radak)

It must be made clear to the students that the *erusin* being mentioned here is much more than a mere agreement to get married. It is actually what is known today as *kiddushin*, in which the husband presents the wife with a ring and says הרי את קדושתך לי בטבעת זו כדת משה וישראל. Today, this is generally done under the *chuppah*, as part of the full wedding ceremony. In the past, there was sometimes as much as a year between the *kiddushin* and the *chuppah*, and during this time the woman was legally bound to the husband, as if she were already married.

וארשתיך לי בצדק ובמשפט ובחסד וברחמים

1. As a consequence of our engaging in justice (צדק ומשפט), Hashem will treat us with mercy and lovingkindness (חסד ורחמים). (Metzudat David)
2. *Mishpat* means doing acts that we are required to do, while *tzedek* is doing acts which are לפנים משורת הדין – beyond the letter of the law. Accordingly, for our doing *mishpat* Hashem rewards us with having mercy on us – with *rachamim*, and for our doing *tzedek* we are rewarded with His *chesed* – goodness beyond what we really deserve. (Malbim)

**Verse 22:**

וארשתיך לי באמונה וידעת את ה'

וארשתיך לי באמונה וידעת את ה'

1. As a reward for having faith in Hashem, the people will achieve a high level of knowledge of Him. (Metzudat David)
2. As a result of having faith in Hashem, the people will reach a level of clear knowledge (ידיעה ברורה) of Him. (Malbim)

These two verses are recited as one puts on *tefillin* every morning. The class can discuss the relationship between tying the *tefillin* on, and the tying of the Jewish people to Hashem expressed in these verses.

**Verse 23:**

והיה ביום ההוא אענה נאום ה' אענה את השמיים והם יענו את הארץ

והיה ביום ההוא אענה נאום ה' אענה את השמיים

1. It will be as if the heavens are asking that it should rain, and Hashem will accede to their request. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem will send down bountiful rain that will be an expression of His will. (Radak)

והם יענו את הארץ

The land will also ask for rain, and the heavens will respond, on the order from Hashem, and send down rain. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 24:**

והארץ תענה את הדגן ואת התירוש ואת היצהר והם יענו את יזרעאל

והם יענו את יזרעאל

Because of the abundance of food and all manner of goodness, there will be many more people in the land, who will demand more food. (Radak)



**Verse 25:**

**וזרעתיה לי בארץ וריחמתי את לא רוחמה ואמרתי ללא עמי  
עמי אתה והוא יאמר אלוקי**

**וזרעתיה לי בארץ**

The Jews, who had been planted in exile, will now be planted in the Land of Israel.  
(Metzudat David)

The students should note how the theme-words in the beginning of the chapter reappear at the end of it. They should take note that names have different meanings, depending on the context (e.g. Yizre'el – see Malbim on verse 25).

This chapter is the *haftara* for *Parashat Bemidbar*. The students should try to find connections between the *parasha* and the *haftara*.

**וארשתיך לי לעולם וארשתיך לי בצדק ובמשפט  
ובחסד וברחמים  
וארשתיך לי באמונה וידעת את ה'**

## Chapter 14

### Verse 1:

תאשם שומרון כי מרתה באלוקיה בחרב יפולו עולליהם ירוטשו  
והריותיו יבוקעו

תאשם שומרון כי מרתה באלוקיה

Shomron will be destroyed because of its sins. (Metzudat David)

The *haftara* for *Shabbat Shuva* – the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – begins with the next verse.

### Verse 2:

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ כִּי כִשְׁלַת בְּעוֹנוֹךָ

שובה ישראל

1. This is a call to Yehuda to return, so that they will be saved from the fate that befell the kingdom of Israel and its capital – Shomron. (Rashi)
2. This is a call to the Children of Israel to do *teshuva*, because the punishment for their sins is coming. (Malbim)

The students should define who **ישראל** is according to the two commentaries, and note the connection between verses 1 and 2.

עד ה' אלוֹקֶיךָ

1. “Up to Hashem” refers to the distance between Israel and Hashem. Israel needs to leave its sinful ways and return to Hashem. (Malbim)
- 2.\* One should return to Hashem while He is still dealing with one with mercy (*midat harachamim*). If not, one will be judged according to the strict law (*midat hadin*). (In Aramaic: עד דלא יתעביד סנגוריא קטגוריא). (Rashi)

Chazal say that גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד – repentance is so great that it reaches up to the Holy Throne. (Radak)

### כי כשלת בעוונך

1. As a result of one's sins, one encounters many stumbling blocks, which bring on more sins – עבירה גוררת עבירה. (Rashi, according to the Gra)
2. Since one sees that one has stumbled in sinning, one should do *teshuva*. (Radak)
3. The Children of Israel were misled by the kings of Shomron, and therefore they are considered to have sinned unintentionally, and can easily do *teshuva*. (Malbim)
4. If one does *teshuva* out of fear, then one's intentional sins become like accidental ones – זדונות נעשות לו כשגגות. (Yoma 86b)
5. A Jew is by essence good, and can never really sin. If we were really able to grasp how great Hashem is, we would never sin. Therefore, any sin we do is as if we are only stumbling – making a mistake. (Netivot Shalom II, Section 8 – “Et Ratzon”, p. 159)
6. It is precisely through our stumbling that we get the impetus to do *teshuva*. Therefore, the two parts of the verse are connected: Your *teshuva* is a result of your sins. (R. Chaim Shmuelewitz, מאמר ל"ז [חשליב] מוסר [חשליב])

The teacher can ask the students to define the word כשלת (“stumbling”) according to the different commentaries:

- You have run into obstacles because of the sins – the obstacle being the punishment (Rashi).
- The act of sinning is like stumbling over an obstacle (Radak).
- The sinner is misled (Malbim).
- The sinner is led from one sin to the next. (Gra)
- The act of sinning is made possible only through making a mistake (Netivot Shalom)

A possible project for this issue is to give the students a scenario of a sin, divide them into groups, and have each group act out the mechanism of this act of sinning and the appropriate *teshuva* according to each of the above approaches.

The teacher should learn with the students the essay *שאיפה תנאי לכל עלייה* in the book *שפתי חיים*, vol. I, by Rabbi Friedlander, which discusses the concept of גדולה טובה. This essay offers a concrete approach to the concept of *teshuva*.

**Verse 3:**

קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה' אמרו אליו כל תישא עון וקח טוב ונשלמה פרים שפתינו

קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה'

1. All that is required in order to repent is a confession of the sins (*vidui devarim*) – it is not necessary to bring sacrifices. (Metzudat David)
2. Once one has returned “up to” Hashem (verse 2 – *שובה ישראל עד ה'*), one should take Hashem’s words of Torah and *mitzvot* to heart, in order to come even closer to Him. This is the process of *teshuva* from love. And then, one’s intentional sins are actually added on in one’s favor as merits (Yoma 86b). (Malbim)

The students should note that the textual basis for Malbim’s commentary is the use of the word *עד* (up to – but not quite reaching) in verse 2, and the word *אל* (to – all the way) in verse 3.

אמרו אליו כל תישא עון

1. One has to pray to Hashem, as part of the process of repentance, asking Him for forgiveness for one’s sins. (Metzudat David)

The phrase *אמרו אליו כל תישא עון* should be inverted, reading *תישא כל עון* – forgive all sins. (Rashi)

2. Hashem should forgive everyone’s sins. (Radak)

The students should note which punctuation mark should be placed after the word *כל* according to the Radak.

וקח טוב

1. We should ask that Hashem should teach us the good way. (Rashi)

2. We should ask that Hashem should take the few good deeds that we have and judge us according to them. (Rashi)
3. Hashem should choose the good deeds and the good hearts, and not the bad ones. (Radak)

### ונשלמה פרים שפתינו

1. The people will ask for forgiveness with their lips, instead of bringing sacrifices of oxen. (Rashi)
2. The main aspect of *teshuva* – even when a sacrifice is brought – is the *vidui* – the verbal confession. (Radak)

This verse is the basis for *tefilla* – prayers – taking the place of sacrifices, when there is no Temple in which to bring them.

The teacher can learn with the students the section *חובית בדרך חיובית* in *מכתב* מאליהו, Vol. IV, p. 223. This section gives practical advice on how to work on self-growth.

### Verse 4:

אשור לא יושיענו על סוס לא נרכב ולא נאמר עוד אלוהינו  
למעשה ידינו אשר בך ירוחם יתום

אשור לא יושיענו על סוס לא נרכב

1. This is part of the confession of the people. They recognize that Assyria will not be the source of their salvation; only Hashem will be. Therefore, they will not send horses to Assyria in order to get help from them. (Radak)
2. The people state that they won't go to Assyria or to Egypt (symbolized by horses), to get help. (Rashi)

The students should be able to read Radak and Rashi by themselves, and point out the difference between the two. They should be able to note which commentary fits best with the *ta'amei hamikra* (Radak – since the *zakef katan* is found only on the word *נרכב*), and which is more in keeping with the context of the verse.

## Hoshea

ולא נאמר עוד אלוהינו למעשה ידינו

The people will state that the idol which they created with their own hands is useless. (Metzudat David)

אשר בכך ירוחם יתום

1. The people state that they put their trust only in Hashem, Who has compassion on orphans. (Rashi)
2. The people realize that it is Hashem who gives strength to weak people, exemplified by orphans; therefore He can give the people strength too. (Radak)

The students can explain the connotation of the word יתום according to each view.

### Verse 5:

ארפא משובתם אוהבם נרבה כי שב אפי ממנו

ארפא משובתם אוהבם נרבה כי שב אפי ממנו

When the people will express the above feelings, Hashem will forgive them for rebelling against Him. Although the *vidui* only removes the anger that Hashem feels toward a sinner, in this case Hashem will not only stop being angry at them, but will immediately turn to them with a love which will be given freely, similar to His original love. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 6:

אהיה כטל לישראל יפרח כשושנה ויך שרשיו כלבנון

אהיה כטל לישראל

Just like there is always dew (unlike rain), Hashem's showering of love on the people will never cease. (Metzudat David)

These verses refer to the future, when the Jews will return to the Land of Israel. (Radak)

יפרח כשושנה

1. A *shoshana* (lily) blooms quickly. (Ibn Ezra)
2. The Jewish people are compared to a beautiful lily. (Radak)

ויך שרשיו כלבנון

Although the *shoshana* has weak roots and can be uprooted easily, Hashem will implant the people on their land with strong roots, similar to those of the cedar tree. (Radak)

**Verse 7:**

ילכו יונקותיו ויהי כזית הודו וריח לו כלבנון

ילכו יונקותיו ויהי כזית הודו

1. Israel's branches will extend outward, and its beauty will resemble that of the olive tree, which is fresh all year round. (Metzudat David)
2. The branches of a tree symbolize the goodness that will be given to the people every day: it will always be fresh, like the moist olive tree. (Radak)
3. The sons and daughters (who suckle – יונקים) will increase, and resemble the beauty of the menorah in the Temple. (Rashi, based on the Targum)

וריח לו כלבנון

1. Lebanon is very fragrant, because of all the trees and flowers that grow there. Likewise, the Jewish People will be blessed with much goodness. (Metzudat David)
2. The good name of the Jewish People will spread throughout the world (like a fragrance). (Radak)
3. The Jewish children will be as fragrant as the incense that was brought in the Temple. (Rashi)

**Verse 8:**

ישוּבו יושבי בצילו יחיו דגן ויפּרחו כגפן זכרו כּיין לבנון

ישוּבו יושבי בצלו

1. The people will return to the land, and sit there in the “shade” of Hashem's protection. (Radak)
- 2.\* There will be many people who will choose to settle in the Land of Israel, in order to be in the shade of the *Levanon* – meaning the aura of holiness and purity that exists in the Land of Israel. (Malbim)

## Hoshea

### יחיו דגן ויפרחו כגפן

1. The people will live on *mitzvot* the same way people in general live on bread. However, the good will never end; it will not be like a wheat crop that needs to be replanted every year, but it will flourish year after year like a grapevine. (Radak)
2. The people will live on bread, which will be found in great quantities, and they will also multiply like a growing, spreading vine. (Malbim)

The students should note the basic difference between the two understandings of יחיו דגן – reading it literally (as the Malbim does), or as if it has a *kaf hadimyon* – כ-כ – (as the Radak does).

### זכרו כיין לבנון

1. The Jews will have a good reputation and name among the nations. (Radak)
2. The wine of Lebanon is known for its good quality. (Metzudat David)
3. Even the Jews who opt not to return to the Land will always have Jerusalem at the forefront of their minds, like the wine from Lebanon, the taste of which is always remembered by its drinker. They will remember החר הטוב הזה והלבנון – meaning the Temple Mount – in all their prayers, and in all times of joy. (Malbim)

It is important to discuss with the students the relevancy of the Malbim's commentary here to our times. We need to be aware of the choice we make – whether to live in Israel or not – and define our relationship to this land.

### Verse 9:

אפרים מה לי עוד לעצבים אני ענית ואשורנו אני כברוש רענן  
ממני פריך נמצא

### אפרים מה לי עוד לעצבים

1. This is the statement that Efrayim will make: “I no longer need to worship idols.” (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Hashem will say to Efrayim: How much longer must I warn you not to worship idols? (Abarbanel)



## אני ענית ואשורנו

1. When Efrayim makes this statement, Hashem will respond to His people, and give them whatever they need. He will look down and see what they are lacking. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Hashem says that He has spoken to them many times, telling them not to worship idols, and He will keep close watch to see if they revert back to their old ways. (Abarbanel)

## אני כברוש רענן ממני פריך נמצא

1. A *brosh* is a moist tree which can be bent all the way down to the earth. Likewise, Hashem watches over us from above, in order to grant our needs. All our successful endeavors are a result of Hashem's help. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Hashem never changes – like a *brosh*, which always remains fresh. The fruits of the people's efforts depend on their deeds (and not on Hashem changing his attitude). (Abarbanel)

The students should bring two textual bases for the Abarbanel's commentary:

- 1) That this is a conversation, and 2) That ענית is written in past tense.

## Verse 10:

מי חכם ויבן אלה נבון וידעם כי ישרים דרכי ה' וצדיקים ילכו בם  
ופושעים ייכשלו בם

מי חכם ויבן אלה נבון וידעם

This is a statement summarizing Hoshea's words of rebuke: The wise person will heed these words and repent.

כי ישרים דרכי ה' וצדיקים ילכו בם ופושעים ייכשלו בם

1. All the ways of Hashem are just. If one sees a righteous person suffering, it is either because we do not perceive correctly who is really a righteous person, or else he is getting punished in this world in order to get rewarded in the next. Likewise, an evil person is repaid in this world for whatever good deeds he has, so that he will not receive any reward in the world to come. (Radak)
2. The righteous people who walk in the ways of Hashem will enter *Gan Eden*, and the evil people will go down to *Gehinnom* for not following those ways. (Targum Yonatan)

3. The righteous will be able to follow the ways of Hashem without stumbling. The evil people, who follow the dictates of their inclinations, will stumble on the path of life. (Metzudat David)

The **מכתב מאליהו** discusses the concept of the ways of Hashem being opportunities that are given to us: In each case it is one's personal choice whether to act one way or another, and that choice is what defines one as a *tzaddik* – righteous person – or a *rasha* – a wicked person. See **מכתב מאליהו**, חלק ב' p. 53, 54.

**שובה ישראל עד ה' אלוקיך כי כשלת בעוונך**

**מי חכם ויבן אלה, נבון וידעם,  
כי ישרים דרכי ה' וצדיקים ילכו בם ופושעים יכשלו  
בם**

# THE BOOK OF YOEL

## ***Introduction:***

The two themes of the book of Yoel are the prophecy about the locusts, and a prophecy about *acharit hayamim* – the End of the Days.

Yoel lived during the times of Yehoram ben Achav, king of Israel. At that time, the people experienced a seven-year famine (see Melachim II 8).

He also lived during the time of Menasheh, but because of Menasheh's evil ways, he is not mentioned explicitly in the book of Yoel. (Radak)

The Da'at Sofrim posits that no specific time period is mentioned for Yoel's prophecies (unlike with most of the other prophets), in order to stress that the main theme of the book – namely, *teshuva* – is timeless. The Da'at Sofrim further conjectures that the book of Yoel is placed after Hoshea, in order to link it with the final chapter of Hoshea, which deals with *teshuva* as well.

Of the four chapters in Yoel, this curriculum covers parts of chapters 1 and 2, which describe the locust plague, and the short chapter 3, which speaks about the wonders of *acharit hayamim*.

## Chapter 1, Verses 1-12

### Verses 1-2:

דבר ה' אשר היה אל יואל בן פתואל  
שמעו זאת הזקנים והאזינו כל יושבי הארץ ההיתה זאת בימיכם  
ואם בימי אבותיכם

שמעו זאת הזקנים והאזינו כל יושבי הארץ

The *zekenim* – elders – are the people who are best suited to testify about past events. See Devarim 32:7. (Radak)

ההיתה זאת בימיכם ואם בימי אבותיכם

1. The first *heh* indicates that this is an interrogative question. (Radak)
2. Although the seventh plague in Egypt was that of locusts, and it is stated there (Shemot 10:14) that לפניו לא היה כן ארבה כמוהו ואחריו לא יהיה כן – never before was there such a plague of locusts, and never will there be such a one again –

## Yoel

the locusts in the time of Yoel were unique, since there were four species involved (see verse 4), and the plague recurred for four years running. (Radak)

The students should compare the verse here with Shemot 10:14, underlining the contradictory phrases. They should then be encouraged to read the Radak and answer the questions: Was there a precedent to the plague described in Yoel, or wasn't there? Doesn't it say specifically in Shemot that such a plague would never recur?

### Verse 3:

עליה לבניכם ספרו ובניכם לבניהם ובניהם לדור אחר

עליה לבניכם ספרו

This punishment will be remembered for a long time. (Radak)

### Verse 4:

יתר הגזם אכל הארבה ויתר הארבה אכל הילק ויתר הילק אכל  
החסיל

יתר הגזם אכל הארבה...

1. Each name in the verse – *gazam*, *arbeh*, *yelek*, *chasil* – is a different type of locust:
  - The *gazam* sheared off the first layer of the crops;
  - The *arbeh* was the greatest in numbers;
  - The *yelek* nibbled at the crops (*lelaklek* is to lick)
  - The *chasil* finished off (*chisel*) the rest of the crops. (Radak)
2. This decree reflected direct Divine Providence. Uncharacteristically, each type of locust ate only part of the crops, leaving enough so that the next type would inflict further damage. (Alsheikh Hakadosh)

### Verse 5:

הקיצו שיכורים ובכו והילילו כל שותי יין על עסיס כי נכרת  
מפיכם

הקיצו שיכורים ובכו והילילו...

1. Those accustomed to drink should awaken from their stupor, to cry over the loss of wine to drink, due to the locusts' consuming the grapevines. (Metzudat David)

2. There was no wheat either, but grain is a produce that is replanted each year anyway; with a grapevine, though, even if one plants a new one instead of the one that was consumed by the locusts, one may benefit from it only from its fifth year of growth (waiting the three years of *orlah* and the one year of the *neta revai*). (Alsheikh Hakadosh)

**Verse 6:**

כי גוי עלה על ארצי עצום ואין מספר שיניו שיני אריה ומתלעות  
לביא לו

כי גוי עלה על ארצי

A group of animals, appearing together, is referred to as a “nation”. (Radak)

שיניו שיני אריה ומתלעות לביא לו

1. This is an exaggerated image of the locusts. (Metzudat David)
2. *Metal'ot*, or *malte'ot* (in its more common form) are the molars, with which one chews. (Rashi)

**Verse 7:**

שם גפני לשמה ותאנתי לקצפה חשף חשפה והשליך הלבינו  
שריגיה

שם גפני לשמה ותאנתי לקצפה חשף חשפה...

The locusts ate the grapes, and made the vines barren; the dates became a curse. The locusts ate everything, including the bark, stripping it off the trees. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

אלי כבתולה חגורת שק על בעל נעוריה

אלי כבתולה חגורת שק על בעל נעוריה

1. The people should cry like a young widow, who wears a sack and cries over the husband of her youth. The love of a first marriage, which a woman enters while still a *betulah* – a virgin – is very intense. (Metzudat David)
2. The people should cry, and mourn greatly over this misfortune. (Radak)
3. The land, or the prophet himself, should do the wailing. (Ibn Ezra)

The students should note that the basis of Ibn Ezra's understanding of the verse is the word *eli* – “Woe is me” – written in the singular. The students should read the Targum Yonatan – כנסתא דישראל – and see how he reconciles this difficulty.

4.\* One can never recover fully from the loss of the husband of one's youth. (Mahari Kra)

**Verse 9:**

הכרת מנחה ונסך מבית ה' אבלו הכוהנים משרתי ה'

הכרת מנחה ונסך מבית ה'

As a result of the locust attack, there was no flour for the *korban minchah* – meal-offering – nor was there wine for the *nesachim* – the libations. Therefore, neither of them could be brought. (Metzudat David)

אבלו הכוהנים משרתי ה'

1. The priests mourned over their inability to perform these services in the Temple. (Metzudat David)
2. The priests mourned because no offerings were brought in the Temple, and therefore they had no food to eat (usually they partook of the offerings, as part of their rights as priests). (Radak)

The students should define, in two words, the difference between the two commentaries (spiritual vs. physical).

**Verse 10:**

שודד שדה אבלה אדמה כי שודד דגן הוביש תירוש אומלל  
יצהר

שודד שדה אבלה אדמה

1. The land was destroyed and desolate – it did not have any fruit. (Radak)
- 2.\* The first half of the verse is explained by the second half: The fields were desolate of grain, and the land was mourning for lack of wine and oil. (Mahari Kra)

## הוביש תירוש

1. The wine dried up (התייבש): one couldn't find any wine. (Metzudat David)
2. The wine was ashamed (התבייש), so-to-speak, for having dried up. (Radak)

## אומלל יצהר

The olive trees were chopped down. (Radak)

## דגן... תירוש... יצהר

The three foods are mentioned because they were the main staples at the time. (Radak)

## Verse 11:

הובישו איכרים הילילו כורמים על חיטה ועל שעורה כי אבד  
קציר שדה

הובישו איכרים הילילו כורמים על חיטה ועל שעורה

1. The plowers were embarrassed because of the lack of crops. (Rashi)
2. The plowers were ashamed because all their work was for naught. (Metzudat David)
3. The verse is a command: the farmers should be embarrassed that all their hard work did not produce any results. (Radak)

## כי אבד קציר שדה

There was nothing to harvest. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 12:

הגפן הובישה והתאנה אומללה רימון גם תמר ותפוח כל עצי  
השדה יבשו כי הוביש ששון מן בני אדם

הגפן הובישה והתאנה אומללה

1. These fruit-trees were chopped down (by the locusts), and were not producing any fruit. (Rashi)
- 2.\* The verse is speaking metaphorically (*derech mas*). (Ibn Ezra)

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כי הוביש ששון מן בני אדם

1. The produce of these trees is something that brings joy to people. (Radak)
2. Everything that happens is a result of Divine Providence. The lack of both food and joy was a punishment for the sins of the people. (Metzudat David)

From here on until the end of the chapter (verse 20), there is a continued description and elaboration on the theme of the destruction and despair brought on by the plague.

## Chapter 2, Verses 1-2, 11-27

This chapter is a continuation of the description of the plague of locusts, together with a call for repentance, and a delineation of the good that will come once they repent.

Verse 1:

תקעו שופר בציון והריעו בהר קודשי ירגזו כל יושבי הארץ כי  
בא יום ה' כי קרוב

תקעו שופר בציון

A Shofar should be blown, in order to arouse the people to do *teshuva*. (Metzudat David)

ירגזו כל יושבי הארץ

The people should be afraid, after hearing the blast of the Shofar. (Metzudat David)

כי בא יום ה'

It is as if the day of final retribution has already come. (Metzudat David)



**Verse 2:**

יום חושך ואפילה יום עגן וערפל כשחר פרוש על ההרים עם רב  
ועצום כמוהו לא נהיה מן העולם ואחריו לא יוסף עד שני דור  
ודור

יום חושך

Trouble is compared to darkness, just as happiness is compared to light. (Radak)

The students should be asked to think of a verse in Megillat Esther that is in accord with Radak's statement. (ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר).

כשחר פרוש על ההרים

Just as the sun covers the mountains, likewise the locusts will cover them completely. (Metzudat David)

עד שני דור ודור

“Until the years of all the generations” – namely, forever. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 11:**

וה' נתן קולו לפני חילו כי רב מאוד מחנהו כי עצום עושה דברו  
כי גדול יום ה' ונורא מאוד ומי יכילנו

וה' נתן קולו לפני חילו

Hashem sent prophets to warn the people before the arrival of the locust plague. (Metzudat David)

כי עצום עושה דברו

The destructive agent (namely, the locust plague), acting according to Hashem's will, is great. (Metzudat David)

ומי יכילנו

Who will be able to withstand the suffering, when this agent arrives? (Metzudat David)

**Verse 12:**

וגם עתה נאום ה' שובו עדי בכל לבבכם ובצום ובבכי ובמספד

וגם עתה נאום ה'

Even now, after the decree has been signed, one can still do *teshuva*. (Metzudat David)

שובו עדי

Although Hashem is distant from the people, they should still attempt to get close to him and do *teshuva*. (Malbim)

The students should refer back to the distinction of the Malbim in Hoshea 14:2-3, between -אל and -עד, in describing one's relationship with Hashem.

בכל לבבכם

It is not sufficient to do external acts of *teshuva*. Rather, the *teshuva* must penetrate into the recesses of one's heart. (Radak)

ובצום ובבכי ובמספד

1. The fasting, weeping and mourning are, in essence, confession (*vidui*) and a resolve to change one's ways (*azivat hachet*). (Malbim)
2. The public fasting and crying can affect people who would not repent on their own accord, and influence them to do *teshuva*. (Radak)

**Verse 13:**

וקרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם ושובו אל ה' אלוקיכם כי חנון ורחום  
הוא ארך אפיים ורב חסד וניחם על הרעה

וקרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם

1. It is the heart that should be ripped and torn – namely, subdued – not one's external clothes. (Metzudat David)
2. If the people repent, there there will be no need for them to rip their clothes in mourning over bad news. (Rashi)
3. The important thing to do is to rip one's heart; Hashem does not really concern Himself with one who just rips his clothes. (Rashi)

Yoel

והשאיר אחריו ברכה מנחה ונסך לה' אלוקיכם

1. Although the locusts will come, they will leave enough over to bring the meal offerings and the libations (if the people do *teshuva*). (Metzudat David)
2. The little that is left after the locusts leave will be blessed and will be brought to the Temple for use for the meal-offerings and the libations, in contradiction to the previous statement – 1:9 – ה' הכרת מנחה ונסך מבית ה'. (Radak)

**Verse 15:**

תקעו שופר בציון קדשו צום קראו עצרה

תקעו שופר בציון

1. The blowing of the Shofar is in order to arouse people to do *teshuva*. (Metzudat David)
2. This verse begins a new section: Until now, the prophet was exhorting people to do *teshuva* before the onset of the locust plague; now the locusts have already arrived, and the people want it to stop. The call here is in order to gather the people, who are already afraid, and not in order to convey a sense of alarm to them. (Malbim)

The students should compare this to 2:1, and see how that verse supports the idea of the Malbim.

קדשו צום קראו עצרה

This is a call to the people to gather in the Temple. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 16:**

אספו עם קדשו קהל קבצו זקנים אספו עוללים ויונקי שדיים יצא  
חתן מחדרו וכלה מחופתה

אספו עם קדשו קהל קבצו זקנים

The entire People of Israel should gather for the fast. (Metzudat David)

אספו עוללים ויונקי שדיים

The children should also fast. (Metzudat David)

Why should they also fast, when generally they are exempt from fasts?

- a) The adults will be aroused to do *teshuva* when they see the distress of their children. (Radak)
- b) Hashem will have mercy, when he hears the cries of the children. (Radak)

יצא חתן מחדרו וכלה מחופתה

1. The bridegroom should gather with the rest of the people, and so will not be rejoicing with his new bride. (Metzudat David)
2. The sight of a newly-wed couple in the group will break the hearts of those who see them crying instead of rejoicing as they should, and that will induce everyone to do *teshuva*. (Radak)
3. When Hashem sees the couple, He will have mercy on them. (Radak)

וכלה מחופתה

The bride is to leave her jewelry, which was draped around her at the wedding, in order to join this gathering. (Radak)

Verse 17:

בין האולם ולמזבח יבכו הכוהנים משרתי ה' ויאמרו חוסה ה' על  
עמך ואל תיתן נחלתך לחרפה למשול במ גויים למה יאמרו  
בעמים איה אלוקיהם

בין האולם ולמזבח יבכו הכוהנים משרתי ה'

The priests usually stood between the *ulam* and the altar, in order to bring the sacrifices. When they can't bring the sacrifices (because of the plague), they should stand there and cry, asking Hashem to have mercy on the Jews. (Radak)

ויאמרו חוסה ה' על עמך ואל תיתן נחלתך לחרפה

Because of the famine, the Jews will be forced to go to other nations to get food. The nations will then treat them in a demeaning manner, as strangers. (Metzudat David)

למה יאמרו בעמים איה אלוקיהם

The nations will ask why Hashem left His people without bread. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 18:**

**ויקנא ה' לארצו ויחמול על עמו**

ויקנא ה' לארצו ויחמול על עמו

The prophet is assuring them that after they repent, Hashem will accept their prayers. He will then act zealously on behalf of His land. (Radak)

**Verse 19:**

**ויען ה' ויאמר לעמו הנני שולח לכם את הדגן והתירוש והיצהר  
ושבעתם אותו ולא אתן אתכם עוד חרפה בגויים**

ויען ה' ויאמר לעמו

1. Hashem responded to the cries of the people. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem responded to the cries of the prophet. (Radak)

הנני שולח לכם את הדגן והתירוש והיצהר ושבעתם אותו

The produce of the land will be blessed. (Metzudat David)

ולא אתן אתכם עוד חרפה בגויים

Since there will no longer be a fa, they will not have to suffer the humiliation of being strangers in a foreign land, as they go there to get food. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 20:**

**ואת הצפוני ארחיק מעליכם והדחתיו אל ארץ צייה ושממה את  
פניו אל הים הקדמוני וסופו אל הים האחרון ועלה באשו ותעל  
צחנתו כי הגריל לעשות**

ואת הצפוני ארחיק מעליכם

1. The locusts, that came from the north, will no longer come. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* This is understood by Chazal to be the *yetzer hara* – the evil inclination – which is hidden (*tzafoon*) in a person's heart. It will be thrown far away. (Radak)

## והדחתיו אל ארץ צייה

1. The locusts will be banished to a faraway place, and will die there. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Hashem will banish the evil inclination to a place from where it won't be able to influence people negatively. (Radak)

## ושממה את פניו אל הים הקדמוני

1. The first part of the locusts will be pushed eastward – towards the Dead Sea. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The evil inclination targeted the First Temple, and destroyed it. (Radak)

## וסופו אל הים האחרון

1. The latter part of the locusts will be pushed into the Mediterranean Sea. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The evil inclination then targeted the Second Temple and destroyed both it and the Torah scholars – the *talmidei chachamim*. (Radak)

## ועלה באשו ותעל צחנתו

After the demise of the locusts, all who will go by the area will be able to smell their putrid smell.

## כי הגדיל לעשות

This plague caused great harm to the land, and therefore the locusts will die and will never reappear. (Metzudat David)

As mentioned above, the Radak is quoting Chazal, who view these phrases בדרך הדרוש – not according to the simple meaning of the words. It is important that the students learn this approach, particularly since these verses are part of the *haftara* for *Shabbat Shuva*, when we should be repenting from our evil deeds, caused by our evil inclinations.

**Verse 21:**

אל תיראי אדמה גילי ושמחי כי הגדיל ה' לעשות

אל תיראי אדמה

This is an assurance that the locust plague will not reappear. (Metzudat David)

גילי ושמחי כי הגדיל ה' לעשות

The Jews should rejoice, since Hashem now promises to do wonderful things for them. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 22:**

אל תיראו בהמות שדי כי דשאו נאות מדבר כי עץ נשא פריו  
תאנה וגפן נתנו חילם

אל תיראו בהמות שדי כי דשאו נאות מדבר

The animals should not be anxious: grasses will sprout in the desert oases, providing them with ample food. (Metzudat David)

תאנה וגפן נתנו חילם

The fig trees and the grapevines will give “their strength” – meaning, their produce. (Metzudat Tzion)

**Verse 23:**

ובני ציון גילו ושמחו בה' אלוקיכם כי נתן לכם את המורה  
לצדקה ויורד לכם גשם מורה ומלקוש בראשון

כי נתן לכם את המורה לצדקה

Hashem will give the rain charitably, as a present, not according to how much the people actually deserve. (Metzudat David)

מורה ומלקוש בראשון

1. They will have rain at the proper times, as it was originally, before the drought began. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Although the *yoreh*, the first rain, usually comes in the fall, in the month of *Cheshvan*, in that year it fell in the month of *Nissan* (the first month) – in the

spring. There was a miracle, and the crops grew and matured within 11 days. (Rashi)

**Verse 24:**

ומלאו הגרנות בר והשיקו היקבים תירוש ויצהר

והשיקו היקבים תירוש ויצהר

1. The wine and oil would make a sound as they would flow down from the press to the holding cisterns. This is a welcome sound of plenty. (Metzudat David)
2. There was so much wine and oil that the presses overflowed. (Radak)

The student should note what support each commentator can get from the context of the verse.

**Verse 25:**

ושילמתי לכם את השנים אשר אכל הארבה הילק והחסיל והגזם  
חילי הגדול אשר שילחתי בכם

ושילמתי לכם את השנים

There will be an abundance – equal to all that was lost because of the locusts. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 26:**

ואכלתם אכול ושבוע והיללתם את שם ה' אלוקיכם אשר עשה  
עמכם להפליא ולא יבושו עמי לעולם

ואכלתם אכול ושבוע

1. The people will be able to satisfy their hunger completely, not just eat the bare minimum they need in order to survive. (Metzudat David)
2. This is a special blessing: they will not eat much, but that little bit will satisfy them. (Malbim)

היללתם את שם ה' אלוקיכם אשר עשה עמכם להפליא

The people will then praise Hashem who has bestowed this goodness on them. (Metzudat David)



Yoel

ולא יבושו עמי לעולם

The people will no longer need to suffer embarrassment for having to go to other nations for food. (Metzudat David)

Verse 27:

וידעתם כי בקרב ישראל אני ואני ה' אלוקיכם ואין עוד ולא  
יבושו עמי לעולם

וידעתם כי בקרב ישראל אני

The people will realize that Hashem is among them, watching over them.  
(Metzudat David)

ואני ה' אלוקיכם ואין עוד

There is no one who can stop Hashem from bestowing this goodness on the people.  
(Metzudat David)

ולא יבושו עמי לעולם

There is no one powerful enough to cause the people embarrassment, against Hashem's wish. (Metzudat David)

**וקרעו לבבכם ואל בגדיכם ושובו אל ה' אלוקיכם כי  
חנון ורחום הוא ארך אפיים ורב חסד וניחם על הרעה**

## Chapter 3

### Verse 1:

וְהָיָה אַחֲרַי כֵּן אֲשַׁפּוֹךְ אֶת רוּחִי עַל כָּל בָּשָׂר וְנִיבְאוּ בְנֵיכֶם  
וּבְנוֹתֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם חֲלוּמוֹת יַחְלוּמוֹן בַּחּוּרֵיכֶם חֲזִיוֹנוֹת יִרְאוּ

וְהָיָה אַחֲרַי כֵּן

1. This is referring to the time of the *Mashiach*. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* During the time of the *Mashiach* there will be a clear knowledge of Hashem. (Radak)

אֲשַׁפּוֹךְ אֶת רוּחִי עַל כָּל בָּשָׂר

1. This *ruach* (spirit) is a *ruach chochmah* – a spirit of wisdom and recognition of Hashem. Everyone will experience this, even the other nations. (Metzudat David)
2. This *ruach* will descend on those who prepare themselves for it by softening their hearts, and making them into hearts of *basar* – of flesh – and not of stone. (Rashi)

The students should note how each commentator understands the phrase על כל בשר.

- 3.\* The *ruach* of Hashem includes all the physical, mental and spiritual powers of man, as it says (in Yeshayahu 11:2): וְנָחָה עָלָיו רוּחַ חֵכְמָה וּבִינָה רוּחַ עֲזָה וּגְבוּרָה – “And there shall rest upon him a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of resourcefulness and courage, a spirit of knowledge and fear of Hashem.” At this time, Hashem will pour out an abundance of His spirit, which will include all three realms – physical power, mental powers of understanding, and spiritual powers, including prophecy. But there are different levels of this spiritual wealth: a) Full prophecy, b) A vision, seen in a state of wakefulness, c) A prophetic dream, which may be mixed with extraneous material. (Malbim)

Yoel

וניבאו בניכם ובנותיכם

1. Hashem's spirit will descend equally on everyone. Prophecy, on the other hand, will descend on people according to their level. (Radak)
- 2.\* The sons and daughters, who were born in the generation of the *Mashiach*, and who will be primed for prophecy, will become full prophets. (Malbim)

זקניכם חלומות יחלומון

- \* The older people, who will be less spiritual, will experience prophetic dreams, the lowest of the three levels. (Malbim)

בחוריכם חזיונות יראו

- \* The young men, who will be born before the coming of the *Mashiach*, but whose birth will be closer to his coming than that of the older people, will see prophetic visions. (Malbim)

### Verse 2:

וגם על העבדים ועל השפחות בימים ההמה אשפוך את רוחי

וגם על העבדים ועל השפחות

1. The “slaves and maidservants” are those who are removed from spiritual endeavor, and are enslaved to physical pleasures. (Da’at Sofrim)
- 2.\* The slaves and maidservants who will live then will not reach the level of prophetic dreams, but even they will experience a higher level of mental and spiritual powers – “resourcefulness and courage... and fear of Hashem”. (Malbim)

### Verse 3:

ונתתי מופתים בשמיים ובארץ דם ואש ותימרות עשן

ונתתי מופתים בשמיים ובארץ

This will happen in the future – *le'atid lavo*. The verse goes on to delineate the *moftim* – the signs that will appear in heaven and on earth. (Radak)

דם

There will be much blood on the land, due to the war of Gog and Magog. (Metzudat David)

ואש

Fire will descend on Gog and Magog from heaven. (Metzudat David)

ותימרות עשן

The smoke that will rise from the fires on earth will rise in the shape of a *tamar* – a date tree. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 4:**

השמש ייהפך לחושך והירח לדם לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא

השמש ייהפך לחושך והירח לדם

The disturbance will be so great that it will be as if darkness has descended upon earth. The moon will have the appearance of blood, and will not shine normally. This is a poetic description of how people feel at such times: when things are bad, the world seems dark to them. (Metzudat David)

לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא

Before the redemption one will see the great and awesome deeds of Hashem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 5:**

והיה כל אשר יקרא בשם ה' יימלט כי בהר ציון ובירושלים תהיה פליטה כאשר אמר ה' ובשרידים אשר ה' קורא

והיה כל אשר יקרא בשם ה' יימלט

The Jews who believe in Hashem will be saved from the troubles that will befall the other nations. (Metzudat David)

כי בהר ציון ובירושלים תהיה פליטה... ובשרידים אשר ה' קורא

The salvation will come only to those who 1) call out to Hashem, 2) put their faith in Him and 3) are on Har Tzion. (Metzudat David)

The Midrash quotes a Midrash, and explains the concept of 'יקרא בשם ה'' as meaning emulating Hashem, a concept which has practical ramifications for our lives. See מכתב מאליהו חלק א' p. 138.

Yoel

# THE BOOK OF AMOS

## *Introduction:*<sup>2</sup>

The times of Amos – corresponding with the times of Uziyah, the king of Yehudah, and Yerovam II, the king of Israel – were times of prosperity. The major world powers were weak: Aram had been defeated, and the Assyrians were fighting far away from the land of Israel. Together with prosperity, however, came corruption: The rich oppressed the poor, the judges did not judge fairly. It is only on the basis of this prior information, that one can appreciate Amos's message: His rebuke is mainly about matters of *bein adam lechaveiro* – matters between man and man, for those were the main sins of his times. Very little is said about the sin of idol worship.

Amos also speaks of the retribution which will befall the people, and calls upon them to do *teshuva*. In conclusion, though, Amos brings words of solace. As it says in Midrash Shocheh Tov: כל הנביאים פתחו בחובות וסיימו בנחמות – all the prophets began with words of rebuke, and ended their prophecies with words of solace.

## Chapter 1, Verse 1

דברי עמוס אשר היה בנוקדים מתקוע אשר חזה על ישראל בימי  
עוזיה מלך יהודה ובימי ירבעם בן יואש מלך ישראל שנתיים  
לפני הרעש

דברי עמוס אשר היה בנוקדים מתקוע

1. Amos was the greatest of the shepherds. Shepherds are called *nokdim* because sheep usually have spots (*nekudot*) on them (see also Amos 7:14-15). (Radak)
2. Who was Amos? In the Gemara (Shabbat 92) it says that אין השכינה שורה אלא על חכם, גיבור ועשיר – the Divine Presence rests only on one who is wise, courageous and wealthy.

<sup>2</sup>Based on the Da'at Mikra introduction to Amos.

אשר חזה על ישראל בימי עוזיה ובימי ירבעם בן יואש מלך ישראל

As mentioned in the introduction, the times of Uziyah and Yerovam II were times of peace and expansion for both kingdoms, similar to the times of David and Shlomo. Yerovam extended the borders of the kingdom up to Damascus (see Malachim II 14:25). Uziyah subjugated the Ammonites, Moabites and Arabs (see Divrei Hayamim II 26:1-8). (Da'at Mikra)

שנתיים לפני הרעש

1. The *ra'ash* was an earthquake that occurred at that time. (See Zechariah 14:5.) (Radak)
2. The *ra'ash* was the shaking of the walls of the Temple, which happened when Uziyah offered incense in it, something which only the priests were allowed to do. (See Yeshayahu, 6:1, 4.) (Rashi)

## Chapter 2, Verses 4-16

In the previous verses, Amos mentions different nations and city-states – Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Amon and Moav, which had three sins forgiven but not a fourth – the fourth being that which was committed against Israel, and for which they are to be punished with destruction.. Then, in the same format – of three versus four sins, followed by destruction – the prophet continues with reference to Yehudah and Israel.

### Verse 4:

כה אמר ה' על שלושה פשעי יהודה ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו על  
מאסם את תורת ה' וחוקיו לא שמרו ויתעום כזביהם אשר הלכו  
אבותם אחריהם

כה אמר ה' על שלושה פשעי יהודה ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו

1. The numbers three and four are not literal numbers, but come to indicate that Israel sinned so often that they deserve punishment. (Da'at Mikra)
- 2.\* Hashem did not destroy the Temple immediately, but preferred to extract retribution from them slowly. Chizkiyahu was a righteous person, and the next three generations (Menashe, Amon, Yehoachaz/Yehoyachin) were evil. It was

in the days of the fourth ruler, Tzidkiyahu, who continued to do evil in the eyes of Hashem, that the Temple was destroyed. (Radak)

3. Hashem was able to allow them to continue doing the three major sins: עבודה זרה, גילוי עריות, שפיכות דמים – idol worship, immorality and bloodshed – for a short time. (Malbim)

על מאסם את תורת ה'

- 1.\* This sin was characteristic of all the four generations, though they were punished only in the fourth generation. (Radak)
2. This was the fourth major sin, one which Hashem was unwilling to forgive: their leaving the Torah not because of evil inclination and base desires, but because of their lack of belief in it, leading to their detesting it as such. (Malbim)

All the other sins can be forgiven on the basis of *teshuva* and Torah. This sin, against the Torah, had no hope of being rectified, and therefore they were punished for it. (Da'at Sofrim)

ועל ארבעה ועל ארבעה This students should differentiate between the two approaches towards  
לא אשיבנו.

ויתעום כזביהם אשר הלכו אבותם אחריהם

The false prophets led the people away from the proper path. Although their forefathers were also fooled by these prophets, the younger generation did not learn from their experience. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 5:**

ושילחתי אש ביהודה ואכלה ארמנות ירושלים

ושילחתי אש ביהודה...

Nevuchadnetzar will come and burn Jerusalem. (Radak)



Verse 6:

כה אמר ה' על שלושה פשעי ישראל ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו על  
מכרם בכסף צדיק ואביון בעבור נעליים

כה אמר ה' על שלושה פשעי ישראל ועל ארבעה לא אשיבנו

1. The Ten Tribes also sinned with עבודה זרה, גילוי עריות, שפיכות דמים. The fourth sin they committed – robbery – intensified the other three sins. For example, they used stolen money in order to bribe the judge, so that he would judge against a righteous person and have him executed. (Malbim)
2. Although they committed the three major sins, their decree was sealed because of the fourth sin – robbery. (Radak)

The students might be able to recall the generation of the flood, about which it was said: שלא נחתם גזר דינם אלא על הגזל – their fate was sealed because of the sin of robbery (Bereishit 6:13: כי מלאה הארץ חמס).

על מכרם בכסף צדיק ואביון בעבור נעליים

1. The judges were willing to pervert justice because of bribes, however small (such as a pair of shoes). (Radak, Metzudat David)
2. The *midrash* notes that this verse hints at the selling of Yosef Hatzaddik, the money from the sale (20 shekels) being used for shoes for the brothers. (Me'am Lo'ez)

The students should note that the Radak and the Metzudat David understand the word *tzaddik* as one whom the court ought to declare innocent. The *midrash* sees it as referring to a certain person, who is known by the appellation of *tzaddik*. It is important to mention that this chapter is the *haftara* for *Parashat Vayeshev*, which tells the story of Yosef's sale by his brothers. This is the verse which connects the Torah reading with the *haftara*. The midrash about the sale and the shoes is found in the *piyut* אלה אוכרה, said on Yom Kippur. The students should read this *piyut*.

## Verse 7:

השואפים על עפר ארץ בראש דלים ודרך ענווים יטו ואיש ואביו  
ילכו אל הנערה למען חלל את שם קודשי

השואפים על עפר ארץ בראש דלים

1. As the rich people walk on the ground, their thoughts are on how to oppress the poor. (Rashi)
2. They would appoint judges who would demand money that the poor people “owed”. When the poor would not pay it, they would throw them to the ground and beat them. (Metzudat David)

The students should differentiate between the two commentators as to the understanding of the phrases עפר ארץ and ראש דלים, and the subject of השואפים according to each commentary.

3. A person would covet the land of poor man, and in order to get it he would hire false witnesses to testify against him, so that he would be sentenced to death (and “his head would roll”). (Malbim)

ודרך ענווים יטו

The weak people would detour around the regular paths to avoid encountering the rich people. (Rashi)

ואיש ואביו ילכו אל הנערה למען חלל את שם קודשי

The father and son having relations with the same woman together shows that they had no feelings of shame. (Metzudat David)

They would have relations specifically with a *na'arah me'orasah* – a betrothed woman – in order to spite Hashem. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 8:

ועל בגדים חבולים יטו אצל כל מזבח ויין ענושים ישתו בית  
אלוהיהם

ועל בגדים חבולים יטו אצל כל מזבח

As a result of the false debt claims against the poor people, who couldn't pay, the rich people would take the clothes off the poor people's backs instead of payment,

Amos

and would recline on these garments, while they feasted near their altars.  
(Metzudat David)

ויין ענושים ישתו בית אלוהיהם

The poor people would be fined for not paying up, and with that money the evil people would buy wine to drink in the houses of their gods. (Metzudat David)

According to the Malbim, these two verses detail the three major sins – bloodshed, immorality and idol worship – that the people engaged in. But not only did the people perform these sins; they intensified them. The students should find the references to these sins and their intensification in the verses.

#### Verse 9:

ואנוכי השמדתי את האמורי מפניהם אשר כגובה ארזים גובהו  
וחסון הוא כאלונים ואשמיד פריו ממעל ושרשיו מתחת

ואנוכי השמדתי את האמורי מפניהם אשר כגובה ארזים גובהו...

Hashem destroyed the Amorites because of their immoral ways, and now the Children of Israel are following in these ways.

The Amorites are mentioned specifically, because they were the strongest of the seven nations. (Radak)

ואשמיד פריו ממעל ושרשיו מתחת

Hashem destroyed them completely. They are being likened here to a tree: both their fruit and their roots were obliterated. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 10:

ואנוכי העליתי אתכם מארץ מצרים ואולך אתכם במדבר  
ארבעים שנה לרשת את ארץ האמורי

ואנוכי העליתי אתכם מארץ מצרים ואולך אתכם במדבר ארבעים שנה...

1. The Jews have a relationship with Hashem: He took them out of Egypt, provided them with all their needs for forty years in the desert, and enabled them to acquire the land of the Amorites. (Metzudat David)

- 2.\* Hashem took the people out of Egypt, taught them in the desert to follow His laws, so that they would not follow the ways of the Amorites when they would inherit the land from them. (Radak)
- 3.\* The forty years in the desert, during which they saw the wonders that Hashem did for them, were designed to erase the effects of the idol worship they saw in Egypt, and to purify them so that they wouldn't be affected by the abominations of the Egyptians and the Canaanites. (Malbim)
4. The training in the desert to follow the ways of Hashem and to do His *mitzvot* was so that they would merit inheriting the land. (Abarbanel)

The students should notice that according to the *ta'amei hamikra* the two last phrases of the verse (“And I walked you in the desert for forty years to inherit the land of the Amorites”) are connected. The commentators are trying to work out the connection between walking in the desert and inheriting the land. The students should fill in the connecting word between the two phrases according to each commentary.

#### Verse 11:

ואקים מבניכם לנביאים ומבחוריהם לנזירים האף אין זאת בני  
ישראל נאום ה'

ואקים מבניכם לנביאים ומבחוריהם לנזירים

1. This was a special act of kindness that Hashem performed for His people: He gave them prophecy, in order to allow them to come closer to Him. (Radak)
- 2.\* The prophets were to be an antidote to the soothsayers, since through prophecy the people could connect with Hashem. The Nazirites were to act as living lessons to the people, so that they would avoid the sin of sexual immorality. (Malbim)

האף אין זאת בני ישראל נאום ה'

Is it not enough that you did not keep the *mitzvot*? Did you have to go further and do away with the measures that I took so that you would keep the *mitzvot*? (Malbim; see next verse)

**Verse 12:**

ותשקו את הנזירים יין ועל הנביאים ציוותם לאמור לא תינבאו

ותשקו את הנזירים יין...

The people prevented the prophets and the Nazirites from reaching the level of holiness they were supposed to reach: They tempted the Nazirites to break their vows (by enticing them to drink wine, which is forbidden to a Nazirite), and they did not allow the prophets to prophecy. By doing this they prevented these potentially holy people from serving as role models. (Radak)

**Verse 13:**

הנה אנוכי מעיק תחתיכם כאשר תעיק העגלה המלאה לה עמיר

הנה אנוכי מעיק תחתיכם

If the nations mentioned above (in chapter 1) were punished so severely, even though they didn't have a relationship with Hashem, how much more so should the Jews get punished – they, who received so many blessings from Hashem, and yet rebelled against Him. (Metzudat David)

מעיק תחתיכם כאשר תעיק העגלה המלאה לה עמיר

The punishment will be that Hashem will oppress them wherever they are, and they will not be able to escape. The imagery used is that of a wagon with a load so heavy that it cannot be shaken off. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 14:**

ואבד מנוס מקל וחזק לא יאמץ כוחו וגיבור לא ימלט נפשו

ואבד מנוס מקל

Even a fast runner will not be able to escape from the enemy. (Metzudat David)

וחזק לא יאמץ כוחו וגיבור לא ימלט נפשו

The strong and the brave will lose their strength, and be unable to fight. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 15:**

ותופש הקשת לא יעמוד וקל ברגליו לא ימלט ורוכב הסוס לא  
ימלט נפשו

ותופש הקשת לא יעמוד... ורוכב הסוס לא ימלט נפשו

1. The warriors will be so frightened, that they will not be able to stand at their posts, and will run away. (Metzudat David)
2. Even the mounted riders will not be able to escape, if Hashem does not will it. (Radak)
- 3.\* These verses mention all three types of soldiers: archers, foot soldiers and horsemen. (Abarbanel)

**Verse 16:**

ואמיץ לבו בגיבורים ערום ינוס ביום ההוא נאום ה'

ואמיץ לבו בגיבורים ערום ינוס

Even the mightiest of the warriors will strip off his armor in his fright, in order to flee with greater ease. (Metzudat David)

**כה אמר ה' על שלושה פשעי ישראל ועל ארבעה לא  
אשיבנו על מכרם בכסף צדיק ואביון בעבור נעליים**

## Chapter 3

### Verse 1:

שמעו את הדבר הזה אשר דיבר ה' עליכם בני ישראל על כל  
המשפחה אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים לאמור

אשר העליתי מארץ מצרים

The mention of the salvation from Egypt emphasizes Hashem's special relationship with His nation – His *hashgacha pratit* – His personal interest in their welfare. (Malbim)

### Verse 2:

רק אתכם ידעתי מכל משפחות האדמה על כן אפקוד עליכם את  
כל עוונותיכם

רק אתכם ידעתי מכל משפחות האדמה על כן אפקוד עליכם...

1. Since the people of Israel are the only beloved ones of Hashem, and yet dared to rebel against Him, Hashem will punish them for all their sins. (Metzudat David)
2. The closer one is to the king, the harsher the punishment for disobeying him. (Radak)
- 3.\* Although Divine Providence is used in a positive way with our relationship with Hashem, here it is used to punish us. (Abarbanel)

The students should note the problem being dealt with by the commentators: What is the connection between the two parts of the verse – between the people of Israel being the only ones beloved by Hashem, and the need to punish them for all their sins?

**Verse 3:**

הילכו שניים יחדיו בלתי אם נועדו

הילכו שניים יחדיו בלתי אם נועדו

1. If two people walk together to the same destination, it is evident that their trip together was preplanned. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* A prophet cannot know a future event unless Hashem reveals it to him. If the prophecy comes true, it is not a coincidence, just as two travellers, travelling together, generally planned the trip jointly. Therefore, the people should not behave towards the prophets as if they are inventing their prophecies, and tell them to stop. Rather, they should listen to their Divine messages. (Rashi, Ibn Ezra)
3. The enemy attack that is to come upon the people is predetermined by Hashem. (Malbim)

**Verse 4:**

הישאג אריה ביער וטרף אין לו היתן כפיר קולו ממעונתו בלתי  
אם לכד

הישאג אריה ביער וטרף אין לו

1. A lion roars only when the prey is in its hands. (Rashi)
2. When the enemy attacks Israel, it will not come back empty-handed. Its victory is assured. (Radak)

היתן כפיר קולו ממעונתו בלתי אם לכד

1. Animals that possess some kind of intelligence flee when they hear the roar of the lion, for it means that it sees some prey; those that don't flee, face the consequences. Likewise, the wise people should heed the warnings of the prophets in order to be saved. (Da'at Mikra)
2. This part of the verse is not a new idea, but a repetition of the first part of the verse in different words. (Radak)

See box on Hoshea, chapter 1, verse 9.



**Verse 5:**

התיפול ציפור על פח הארץ ומוקש אין לה היעלה פח מן  
הארמה ולכוד לא ילכוד

התיפול ציפור על פח הארץ ומוקש אין לה

1. Can a bird fall into a trap and not get caught? Traps are set with the intention of snaring birds. (Metzudat David)
2. The people will surely be ensnared – the enemy won't return empty-handed. (Radak)
3. The people are like birds who are oblivious both of the trap that is set for them and of the impending doom. (Da'at Mikra)

היעלה פח מן הארמה ולכוד לא ילכוד

1. A *pach* – a trap – rises and ensnares a bird only when it is trying to escape from it – but by then it is too late. (Rashi)
2. The Jews cannot escape from the trap that the enemies have set for them, a trap planned by Hashem. (Radak)

**Verse 6:**

אם ייתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחרדו אם תהיה רעה בעיר וה' לא  
עשה

אם ייתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחרדו

1. People automatically react with fear when they hear a shofar being blown, warning them of an approaching enemy. (Metzudat David)
2. The same instinctive fear that is felt when a shofar is blown, should be felt when one hears the words of a prophet. (Radak)
3. The Jews, in their lack of fear, are like people who don't react to a shofar being blown. (Da'at Mikra)

אם תהיה רעה בעיר וה' לא עשה

1. All of the images evoked above have a direct cause and effect (a lion roars when it is presented with food, a set trap catches a bird). Likewise, Hashem does not bring evil on a city unless there is a cause to do so – a reason to punish the people. (Metzudat David)
2. How can the people believe that when evil befalls a city, it is not from Hashem, especially when this evil has been foretold by a prophet? The immediate reaction to such an evil happening should be to return to Hashem. (Radak)

Rashi understands this whole section as one continuous idea: A prophet prophesies only if he has been told about the dire punishment that is due. Hashem would speak harshly to His people only as a result of their sinning. It is not possible to transgress Hashem's laws and not be entrapped. One should therefore heed the words of the prophet, who is coming to help a person escape from the evil outcome. When that outcome occurs, the people should realize that it is Hashem who has caused it, in punishment for their not having listened to the prophet. The students should fill out the chart of the *marshal* and *nimshal* of the images brought in these verses, according to Rashi and Radak.

The students can draw a picture for each image, and write the appropriate phrase from the verse. This exercise is helpful in making the message of these verses more tangible.

#### Verse 7:

כי לא יעשה ה' אלוקים דבר כי אם גלה סודו אל עבריו הנביאים

כי לא יעשה ה' אלוקים דבר כי אם גלה סודו

1. Everything comes from Divine Providence. Hashem does not do anything unless he reveals it first to His prophets. (Metzudat David)
2. When one sees prophecies coming true, one should understand from that that one should do *teshuva*. (Radak)
- 3.\* The fact that Hashem always informs the prophets – and the people – of His intentions regarding them, is a sign of His love for the Children of Israel. (Da'at Mikra)

#### Verse 8:

אריה שאג מי לא יירא ה' אלוקים דיבר מי לא יינבא

אריה שאג מי לא יירא ה' אלוקים דיבר מי לא יינבא

1. Just as one reacts with fear upon hearing a lion's roar, so the prophets should respond upon hearing a prophecy. (Rashi)
2. The prophets do not conceal their prophecies, but rather inform the people. Nothing happens by chance – everything is Divine Providence according to the actions of the people. (Metzudat David)

Amos

3. The prophets cannot possibly refrain from prophesying, even if the people forbid them to speak out, since prophecy is an all-encompassing experience. (Radak)

The teacher should note that Metzudat David and the Radak emphasize the two basic themes of the rhetorical questions brought in verses 3-8:

The Radak sees them as expressing the idea that it is impossible to stop a prophet from prophesying, and that the purpose of the prophecies is to move the people to do *teshuva*.

The Metzudat David sees these questions as pointing to the understanding that everything that happens emanates from Divine Providence, and a result of our behavior.

The students should bring support for each view from some of the rhetorical questions.

#### Verse 9:

השמיעו על ארמנות באשדוד ועל ארמנות בארץ מצרים ואמרו  
האספו על הרי שומרון וראו מהומות רבות בתוכה ועשוקים  
בקרבה

השמיעו על ארמנות באשדוד ועל ארמנות בארץ מצרים

1. The Egyptians and the Plishtim should call on their people to gather around Shomron, in order to view the evil that is in the city. (Rashi)
2. The people of Egypt and Ashdod are joining Assyria in its fight against the Jews. (Metzudat David)

ואמרו האספו על הרי שומרון וראו מהומות רבות בתוכה ועשוקים בקרבה

The people of Shomron should realize that the evil is coming upon them because of the robbery that they are committing. (Radak)

#### Verse 10:

ולא ידעו עשות נכוחה נאום ה' האוצרים חמס ושוד  
בארמנותיהם

ולא ידעו עשות נכוחה

The people of Shomron do so much evil that they don't know how to do good anymore. (Radak)

האוצרים חמס ושוד בארמנותיהם

1. The people steal, not from need, but for the sake of stealing. (Metzudat David)
2. *Chamas* and *shod* are stolen monies (not the act of stealing). (Rashi)

**Verse 11:**

לכן כה אמר ה' אלוקים צר וסביב הארץ והוריד ממך עוזך ונבוחו  
ארמנותיך

לכן כה אמר ה' אלוקים צר וסביב הארץ

The troubles will surround the people, so that they will not be able to escape.  
(Metzudat David)

The students should bring examples of this kind of situation from chapter 2, verses 13-16.

הוריד ממך עוזך ונבחו ארמנותיך

1. The enemy will strip the people of their prestige and strength, and will despoil the palaces. (Metzudat David)
2. The people hid their treasures (their “strength”) in high places, but the enemy will find them anyway and take them down from there. (Radak)

**Verse 12:**

כה אמר ה' כאשר יציל הרועה מפי הארי שתי כרעיים או בדל  
אוזן כן יינצלו בני ישראל היושבים בשומרון בפאת מיטה  
ובדמשק ערש

כה אמר ה' כאשר יציל הרועה מפי הארי שתי כרעיים או בדל אוזן

When a sheep is taken by a lion, the shepherd brings back to the owner some remnant of it, to prove that it was eaten by a lion, and not stolen by the shepherd himself. These small remnants in themselves have no value to the owner, and only serve as evidence. (Metzudat David)

כן יינצלו בני ישראל היושבים בשומרון בפאת מיטה ובדמשק ערש

1. The only ones who will be saved will be the sick and the weak, who remained in their beds. (Metzudat David)

Amos

2. It is the nature of a sick person to crouch in one corner of the bed, and hide. (Radak)
3. When the enemy comes, the Jews will only be able to salvage bits and pieces, like the corners of their beds. (Metzudat David)

ובדמשק ערש

1. A kind of material used as a bed spread, made in Damascus. (Da'at Mikra)
2. Of the Jews that sit in Damascus, only bits and pieces will be saved. (Da'at Mikra)

### Verse 13:

שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב נאום ה' אלוקים אלוקי הצבקות

שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב

The prophets should hear this and warn the people. (Metzudat David)

נאום ה' אלוקים אלוקי הצבקות

\* This is the only place in the Bible where there are four names of Hashem mentioned consecutively. This is done to emphasize the message. (Da'at Mikra)

### Verse 14:

כי ביום פקדי פשעי ישראל עליו ופקדתי על מזבחות בית אל  
ונגדעו קרנות המזבח ונפלו לארץ

כי ביום פקדי פשעי ישראל עליו ופקדתי על מזבחות בית אל

When Hashem will punish the people of Shomron for their sins, the altars in Beit El will also be destroyed.

This is similar to the concept of ובאלוהיהם עשה ה' שפטים – Hashem destroyed their idols, while punishing the people. (Radak)

ונגדעו קרנות המזבח ונפלו לארץ

1. When one destroys the corners of a structure, the entire structure collapses. (Radak)

2. The corners of the altar were the primary place of worship – it was there that the blood was sprinkled (זריקת הדם). (Radak)

**Verse 15:**

והכיתי בית החורף על בית הקיץ ואבדו בתי השן וספו בתים  
רבים נאום ה'

והכיתי בית החורף על בית הקיץ

1. Both the summer and winter homes will be destroyed. (Mahari Kra)
- 2.\* The kings in particular built both summer and winter palaces (see Yirmiyahu 36:22). (Radak)

ואבדו בתי השן

The palaces were covered with ivory decorations – they too will be destroyed. (Mahari Kra)

וספו בתים רבים נאום ה'

*Batim Ra* can mean many houses, or great, big houses. (Radak)

The students should note the many references in this chapter to palaces and great houses (ארמונות, בית החורף, בית הקיץ, בתי שן). The students should see how this motif is used to emphasize the excessive wealth of the people, at the expense of the poor. The punishment is, then, measure for measure.

**הילכו שניים יחדיו בלתי אם נועדו  
אם ייתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחרדו אם  
תהיה רעה בעיר וה' לא עשה**

## Chapter 4

### Verse 1:

שמעו הדבר הזה פרות הבשן אשר בהר שומרון העושקות דלים  
הרוצצות אביונים האומרות לאדוניהם הביאה ונשתה

שמעו הדבר הזה פרות הבשן אשר בהר שומרון

The cows of the area of the Bashan are very fat. The wives of the officers of Shomron are compared to these cows: fat, and overindulged in worldly pleasures. (Metzudat David)

העושקות דלים הרוצצות אביונים האומרות לאדוניהם הביאה ונשתה

The women themselves did not oppress anybody; rather, in their demands to their husbands to supply them with various pleasures, they caused their husbands to go out and steal from the poor in order to satisfy these demands. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 2:

נשבע ה' אלוקים בקדשו כי הנה ימים באים עליכם ונישא אתכם  
בצינות ואחריתכן בסירות דוגה

נשבע ה' אלוקים בקדשו

This decree of Hashem was sealed by an oath. (Malbim)

ונישא אתכם בצינות

The women will be taken into captivity like maidservants, in small boats. (Metzudat David)

ואחריתכן בסירות דוגה

The children will be taken into captivity in fishing-boats, not fit for human beings. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 4:

וּפְרָצִים תִּצְאָנָה אִשָּׁה נִגְדָה וְהִשְׁלַכְתָּנָה הַהֶרְמוֹנָה נְאוּם ה'

וּפְרָצִים תִּצְאָנָה אִשָּׁה נִגְדָה

1. All the women who will try to escape will run to the nearest breach in the wall facing them, for the gates of the city will be watched by the enemy. (Metzudat David)
2. The women will be sent to harems in exile, and will be greeted there by women who have already become prostitutes (and therefore have “broken through” – *poretzet gader*). This will be a tremendous shame for these women. (Malbim)

The students should note which commentary fits in best with the order of the verses. They should also observe the different connotations of the word פּרָצִים according to each commentator. The word אִשָּׁה also refers to different women according to the different commentaries.

וְהִשְׁלַכְתָּנָה הַהֶרְמוֹנָה נְאוּם ה'

1. The women will flee to the palaces outside the city for safety. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The women will be thrown into the harem, to serve as prostitutes, with all the humiliation involved in that. (Malbim)

## Verse 4:

בּוֹאוּ בֵּית אֵל וּפְשְׁעוּ הַגִּלְגָּל הֲרַבּוּ לַפְשׁוּעַ וְהִבִּיאוּ לְבוֹקֵר זִבְחֵיכֶם  
לְשִׁלוּשַׁת יָמִים מֵעֲשָׂרוֹתֵיכֶם

בּוֹאוּ בֵּית אֵל וּפְשְׁעוּ הַגִּלְגָּל הֲרַבּוּ לַפְשׁוּעַ

This is said as a taunt: Go ahead, do bad things, but remember what fate will befall you if you do. (Metzudat David, Radak)

בּוֹאוּ בֵּית אֵל וּפְשְׁעוּ הַגִּלְגָּל

Beit El was the place of the golden calf which they worshipped; the Gilgal had become a place of worship for the Ba'al, since the city was thought to be a holy place, following the period when the *Mishkan* – the Tabernacle – had been there. (Radak)



Amos

והביאו לבוקר זבחיכם...

They brought their sacrifices and their tithes to these places, instead of to Jerusalem. (Radak)

לשלושת ימים מעשרותיכם

The tithes were brought once every three years (*yamim* meaning years, not days). (Radak)

**Verse 5:**

וקטר מחמץ תודה וקראו נדבות השמיעו כי כן אהבתם בני ישראל נאום ה' אלוקים

וקטר מחמץ תודה וקראו נדבות השמיעו

The people brought the loaves of the Thanksgiving offering, together with the offering itself, to the places of idol worship instead of to Hashem. (Radak)

כי כן אהבתם בני ישראל נאום ה' אלוקים

The people like to serve the idols, more than they like to serve Hashem. (Radak)

The following verses (6-11) are a series of warnings. Amos is warning the people of certain consequences if they do not do *teshuva*. After each warning, the students can note, there is a refrain: ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'.

**Verse 6:**

וגם אני נתתי לכם נקיון שיניים בכל עריכם וחוסר לחם בכל מקומותיכם ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'

וגם אני נתתי לכם נקיון שיניים בכל עריכם...

1. This is a punishment of measure for measure: they did not bring the meat sacrifices, nor did they bring the meal offerings. Therefore, they will lack meat (which tends to get stuck between the teeth), and bread. (Metzudat David)
2. They will lack meat and food because the enemy will come and take their produce and animals. (Metzudat David)

ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'

With all these problems, the people will not accept rebuke, and will not return to Hashem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

וגם אנוכי מנעתי מכם את הגשם בעוד שלושה חודשים לקציר  
והמטרתי על עיר אחת ועל עיר אחת לא אמטיר חלקה אחת  
תימטר וחלקה אשר לא תמטיר עליה תיבש

וגם אנכי מנעתי מכם את הגשם

Hashem also stopped the rain three months before the harvest, when it is most necessary. (Metzudat David)

והמטרתי על עיר אחת ועל עיר אחת לא אמטיר

This is clear indication of *hashgacha* – Divine Providence – one city will get rain, while an adjoining city will not. (Metzudat David)

חלקה אחת תמטיר וחלקה אשר לא תמטיר עליה תיבש

1. Even within a certain area, some fields will get rain, while others will dry up. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The rain that will fall on the fields of the people who did *teshuva* will suffice only for them; there will not be any extra water for them to share with the others. (Malbim)

**Verse 8:**

ונעו שתיים שלוש ערים אל עיר אחת לשתות מים ולא ישבעו  
ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'

ונעו שתיים שלוש ערים אל עיר אחת.. ולא ישבעו

The people from the deprived cities will go to the nearby places where there is water, but their thirst will not be quenched. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 9:**

**הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון הרבות גנותיכם וכרמיכם ותאניכם  
וזיתיכם יאכל הגזם ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'**

הכיתי אתכם בשדפון... הרבות גנותיכם... יאכל הגזם

1. The majority of the fruits will be eaten by the locusts, so that the people will not get any pleasure from them. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The fields that the Jews worked on increasing, were to be destroyed by the locusts. (Rashi)

The students should discuss the two different understandings of הרבות, and, accordingly, the nature of the punishment involved.

**Verse 10:**

**שילחתי בכם דבר בדרך מצרים הרגתי בחרב בחוריכם עם שבי  
סוסיכם ואעלה באש מחניכם ובאפכם ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'**

שילחתי בכם דבר בדרך מצרים הרגתי בחרב בחוריכם...

When young men were sent to Egypt to get food, a plague broke out among them and killed their horses. Bandits also came and killed them. (Metzudat David)

ואעלה באש מחניכם ובאפכם

All those who followed the group's route to Egypt, could smell the stench of their bodies which were strewn along the way. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 11:**

**הפכתי בכם כמהפכת אלוקים את סדום ואת עמורה ותהיו כאוד  
מוצל משריפה ולא שבתם עדי נאום ה'**

הפכתי בכם כמהפכת אלוקים את סדום ואת עמורה

Hashem decided that the people – in this case referring to the tribe of Naftali and the tribes that lived to the east of the Jordan river, who were exiled during the reign of Pekach and in the beginning of the reign of Hoshea ben Elah (see Melachim II 15:29) – merited total destruction like that of Sodom.

ותהיו כאוד מוצל משריפה

Shomron will be like an ember that is all that remains from a burning furnace.  
(Metzudat David)

The teacher should list on the blackboard the five warnings (התראות):  
a) Famine, b) drought, c) damages to the agriculture, d) plagues and bandit attacks,  
e) total destruction like that inflicted on Sodom and Amorah.

**Verse 12:**

לכן כה אעשה לך ישראל עקב כי זאת אעשה לך היכון לקראת  
אלוקיך ישראל

לכן כה אעשה לך ישראל

Since the people did not listen, they will be punished. (Metzudat David)

עקב כי זאת אעשה לך היכון לקראת אלוקיך ישראל

1. The people should prepare themselves to do *teshuva*, and then Hashem will change the prophecies from bad to good. This exemplifies the special Divine Providence accorded to Hashem's people. (Radak)
- 2.\* Hashem does not want to punish the Children of Israel; He wants to do only good things to them. By not behaving well, the Children of Israel force Him to punish them, and for that, too, they will be punished. (Malbim)
- 3.\* Chazal learn from this verse that one needs to prepare oneself for prayer, including physically. Therefore, one should reloneself prior to davening. (Me'am Lo'ez)

**Verse 13:**

כי הנה יוצר הרים ובורא רוח ומגיד לאדם מה שיחו עושה שחר  
עיפה ודורך על במותי ארץ ה' אלוקי צבקות שמו

כי הנה יוצר הרים ובורא רוח

Hashem controls everything. (Metzudat David)

ומגיד לאדם מה שיחו

Hashem knows our thoughts, and knows what a person will say (Metzudat David)

Rav Wolbe, in his book *עלי שור*, develops the concept of the powers of speech and silence that are imperative in this world. He also quotes the *נפש החיים* by Rav Chaim of Volozhin, who says that the power of speech can build or destroy worlds. See *עלי שור*, חלק ב', pp. 36-37.

עושה שחר עיפה ודורך על במותי ארץ

Hashem can change day into night, and can crush the exalted. (Metzudat David)

ה' אלוקי צבקות שמו

Hashem controls the upper and lower realms, and therefore, who can be saved from the impending punishment He wishes to bring? (Metzudat David)

**והמטרתו על עיר אהת ועל עיר אחת לא  
אמטיר**

**כי הנה יוצר הרים ובורא רוח ומגיד לאדם  
מה שיחו עושה שחר עיפה ודורך על  
במותי ארץ ה' אלוקי צבקות שמו**

## Chapter 9, Verses 7-15

### Verse 7:

הלוא כבני כושיים אתם לי בני ישראל נאום ה' הלוא את ישראל  
העליתי מארץ מצרים ופלשתיים מכפתור וארם מקיר

After prophesying about terrible calamities that are to come on the people, the prophet ends the book with words of solace. (Malbim)

הלוא כבני כושיים אתם לי בני ישראל נאום ה'

1. The Cushites remain slaves forever; likewise, we Jews became Hashem's slaves forever. (Metzudat David)
2. Just as the Cushite is easily recognizable because of the color of his skin, so too, the Children of Israel stand out in their dedication to Hashem, even in exile. (Malbim)

הלוא את ישראל העליתי מארץ מצרים

1. The Children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, the "House of Slaves", and thereby became lifelong slaves to Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. The proof that the Children of Israel are dedicated to Hashem under all circumstances, is that even when they were slaves in Egypt, they did not assimilate and were distinguished by name and lineage. That is why they ere eventually redeemed. That is why they ere eventually redeemed. (Malbim)

ופלשתיים מכפתור וארם מקיר

1. This is a rhetorical question: Did Hashem return the Plishtim, originally from Caftor, after they were exiled? Did Hashem return Aram to Kir, where they had been exiled? The Jews will be treated differently than these other nations, because of their unique relationship with Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. Both the Plishtim and Aram assimilated in the places they were exiled to, and lost their own identity. Only the Jews, who do not intermarry and remain loyal, retain their identity even in foreign cultures. (Malbim)

This commentary of the Malbim should be discussed with the students: it raises issues of Jewish identity, influences of the surrounding culture in exile, intermarriage, and the challenges of being Jewish in a foreign culture.

**Verse 8:**

הנה עיני ה' אלוקים בממלכה החטאה והשמדתי אותה מעל פני האדמה אפס כי לא השמיד אשמיד את בית יעקב נאום ה'

הנה עיני ה' אלוקים בממלכה החטאה והשמדתי אותה מעל פני האדמה

1. The eyes of Hashem are upon the kingdom of Efraim, whose people have sinned, and as a result of this special relationship with Hashem, the kingdom will be punished. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Although Hashem punishes kingdoms when they sin, and destroys them, in the case of Israel it is different (see below). (Malbim)

אפס כי לא השמיד אשמיד את בית יעקב נאום ה'

1. The nation of Yaakov will not be destroyed; only the kingdom will cease to exist. (Metzudat David)
2. Although Hashem will punish Beit Yaakov, they will never be destroyed, and they will always be known as Beit Yaakov – “the House of Yaakov” – distinguished by their family life and customs. (Malbim)

The students should note how the commentary on each verse connects with the commentary on the previous one. The students should discuss which commentary is closer to the simple meaning of the verses (פשוטו של מקרא), basing their opinions on the text.

**Verse 9:**

כי הנה אנוכי מצווה והניעותי בכל הגוים את בית ישראל כאשר יינוע בכברה ולא ייפול צרור ארץ

כי הנה אנוכי מצווה והניעותי בכל הגוים את בית ישראל

1. The Jews will be scattered amongst the nations in exile. (Metzudat David)
2. The scattering of the Jews amongst the nations is actually Divine Providence: First, the Jews will be everywhere, and second, that no one nation will be able to destroy them completely. (Malbim)

כאשר יינזע בכברה ולא ייפול צרור ארץ

When one sifts kernels of wheat, the dust and chaff fall through the holes in the sifter. Likewise, the evil people will be weeded out during the exile, and only the righteous will remain. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 10:**

בחרב ימותו כל חטאי עמי האומרים לא תגיש ותקדים בעדינו  
הרעה

בחרב ימותו כל חטאי עמי

The sinners will die by the sword of the enemies. (Metzudat David)

האומרים לא תגיש ותקדים בעדינו הרעה

1. The sinners are those who do not believe in Divine retribution. (Metzudat David)
2. The sinners do not believe that it is their actions that cause the bad things to happen to them, believing instead that everything happens by coincidence. (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

ביום ההוא אקים את סוכת דוד הנופלת וגדרתי את פרציהן  
והריסותיו אקים ובניתיה כימי עולם

ביום ההוא אקים את סוכת דוד הנופלת

After the wicked people will be destroyed, Hashem will rebuild the kingdom of David. (Metzudat David)

וגדרתי את פרציהן והריסותיו אקים ובניתיה כימי עולם

There will be no breach in this kingdom – no separate kingdom for Efrayim. Although the monarchy was destroyed during the exile, it will now be rebuilt, to the point that it will be as it was in the days of David Hamelech. (Metzudat David)



**Verse 12:**

**למען יירשו את שארית אדום וכל הגויים אשר נקרא שמי עליהם  
נאום ה' עושה זאת**

למען יירשו את שארית אדום וכל הגויים אשר נקרא שמי...

1. This verse should be inverted: Those nations who carry My name will inherit the nations that will remain after the war of Gog and Magog. (Metzudat David)
2. The Jews will rule over the few remnants of Edom after the war of Gog and Magog. In the times of the *Mashiach*, these remnants will recognize the oneness of Hashem. (Malbim)
- 3.\* The Jews will be able to conquer the other nations because they will carry My name. (Rashi)

The students should note the relationship of the second part of the verse to the rest of it, according to each commentator.

נאום ה' עושה זאת

Hashem is the one who does this goodness. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

**הנה ימים באים נאום ה' וניגש חורש בקוצר ודורך ענבים במושך  
הזרע והטיפו ההרים עסיס וכל הגבעות תתמוגגנה**

הנה ימים באים נאום ה' וניגש חורש בקוצר ודורך ענבים במושך הזרע

1. In these good times there will be so much wheat, that those who harvest the crop will work alongside those who will be planting the new crop, and the wine-pressers will likewise meet up with those who are bringing the grain to be planted. (Metzudat David)
2. This is the fulfillment of the blessings enumerated in *Parashat Bechukotei*. (See Vayikra 26:5)

והטיפו ההרים עסיס וכל הגבעות תתמוגגנה

1. This is a hyperbolic statement: There will be so much wine, that it will drip down from the vineyard-covered mountains. There will be abundant pasture, and milk will drip from the sheep in abundance. (Metzudat David)

2. This statement exemplifies the goodness that the people will receive without having to exert themselves. (Radak)

**Verse 14:**

ושבתי את שבות עמי ישראל ובנו ערים נשמות וישבו ונטעו  
כרמים ושתו את יינם ועשו גנות ואכלו את פריהם

ושבתי את שבות עמי ישראל

Hashem will settle all those Jews who were in captivity, granting them peace and quiet. (Metzudat David)

ובנו ערים נשמות וישבו ונטעו כרמים...

The desolate cities will be rebuilt. The Jews will never again be sent into exile, and will not have to worry about the enemy taking away their crops. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 15:**

ונטעתים על אדמתם ולא יינתשו עוד מעל אדמתם אשר נתתי  
להם אמר ה' אלוקיך

ונטעתים על אדמתם ולא יינתשו עוד מעל אדמתם

1. The Jews will be firmly planted in place, like a tree, never to be exiled. (Metzudat David)
2. The reason that they will be so well settled in their land will be that they will follow the precepts of the Torah. (Radak)

This section is the *haftara* for the *parshiot* of *Acharei-Mot/Kdoshim* according to one of the customs. Rav Soloveitchik offered one reason why this chapter was chosen. He noted that these *parshiot* contain the first mention of exile: ולא תקיא (Vayikra 18:28). In order to alleviate the frightening prediction, the *haftara* emphasizes the promise that a day will come when we will never be exiled again. (Rav. Y.D. Soloveitchik, דברי השקפה, . 91-93.

**הנה ימים באים נאום ה' וניגש חורש  
בקוצרודורך ענבים במושך הזרע והטיפו  
ההרים עסיס וכל הגבעות תתמוגגנה**

# THE BOOK OF OVADYAH

## Verse 1:

חזון עובדיה כה אמר ה' אלוקים לאדום שמועה שמענו מאת ה'  
וציר בגויים שולח קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה

## חזון עובדיה

Ovadyah's only prophecy was about Edom. Since Ovadyah was an Edomite convert, Hashem felt it fitting that he should prophecy their doom.

Ovadyah was a minister in the house of Achav and Izevel (See Melachim I 18:1-5, which describes how Ovadyah saved 100 prophets from death). He lived together with two wicked people, but was not influenced by their ways; therefore, he is the right person to speak about the punishment due to Esav (Edom), who lived with two righteous people (Yitzchak and Rivkah) but did not absorb their positive influence. (Rashi)

The מתנת חיים, by Rav Matityahu Chaim Solomon, discusses the greatness of Ovadyah, working under the pressures of negative surroundings. See מתנת חיים - מאמרים, p. 292.

The מכתב מאליהו discusses at length the general issue of the influence of one's surroundings, and how careful we must be not to be influenced negatively. See מכתב מאליהו, חלק א', p. 153.

This prophecy speaks about the evil that Edom will do the Jews in the time of the Second Temple. It also foretells that the return of the Jewish people to their land will spell the downfall of Edom. (Radak)

\* The Radak states that it is impossible to identify nations like Edom today. All the nations were moved around and mixed in with other nations. One thing we do know (according to tradition), is that the Roman Empire consisted of Edomites, and so its actions can be related to these prophecies about Edom.

Ovadyah

כה אמר ה' אלוקים לאדום שמועה שמענו מאת ה'

“We heard from Hashem” – not only Ovadyah, but many other prophets as well heard prophecies about Edom. (Metzudat David)

רציר בגויים שולח קומו ונקומה עליה למלחמה

All the nations are coming together to fight Edom, and they are sending messengers to other nations to come and join them. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 2:

הנה קטון נתתיך בגויים בזוי אתה מאוד

הנה קטון נתתיך בגויים...

In the beginning, Edom was a small nation, despised by others. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 3:

זרון לבך השיאך שוכני בחגווי סלע מרום שבתו אומר בלבו מי  
יורידני ארץ

זרון לבך השיאך שוכני בחגווי סלע מרום שבתו

When Rome developed into a huge empire, the Romans' power seduced them into thinking that they were the world's greatest nation. They envisioned themselves as sitting on the top of a cliff, where nobody could touch them. (Metzudat David)

אומר בלבו מי יורידני ארץ

The Romans thought they were invincible – that nobody would be able to bring them down from their lofty perch. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 4:

אם תגביה כנשר ואם בין כוכבים שים קינך משם אורידך נאום ה'

אם תגביה כנשר...

1. Even if their dwelling place will be up in the heavens, like that of an eagle, or even amongst the stars, Hashem will bring them down. (Metzudat David)
2. It is as if Hashem is commanding them to have this haughty attitude. Hashem wants them to feel as high and mighty as possible, so that the fall and its impact will be that much greater. (Malbim)

In Bereishit 28:12 the Torah tells us of the dream that Yaakov Avinu had, of angels ascending and descending a ladder that reached up to the heavens. Chazal understood this as an allegory of the different nations that would subjugate the Jewish people. Yaakov saw Babylon ascend 70 rungs of the ladder, Madai ascend 52 rungs, and Greece – 180. Then Edom ascended but did not descend. Yaakov Avinu became very frightened, and Hashem reassured him that even if Edom would ascend all the way to Hashem's holy throne, he would be brought down. Chazal base this idea on this verse in Ovadyah. (Vayikra Raba 29, quoted in מכתב מאליהו Part III, p. 202.

### Verse 5:

אם גנבים באו לך אם שודדי לילה איך נדמיתה הלוא יגנבו דיים  
אם בוצרים באו לך הלוא ישאירו עוללות

אם גנבים באו לך אם שודדי לילה איך נדמיתה הלוא יגנבו דיים

1. The prophet compares the downfall of Edom to their being victimized by robbers who come at night and take everything, even more than they need. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Enemies will come and plunder the land of Edom. The prophet is astounded at Edom's lack of response to the attack: It is as if Edom is in a stupor, preventing it from driving the attackers away. (Malbim)

אם בוצרים באו לך הלוא ישאירו עוללות

Grape pickers always leave the smaller, unformed grapes on the vines. The prophet expresses amazement at how nothing will be left of Edom – not even insignificant remnants. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 6:

איך נחפשו עשו נבעו מצפוניו

איך נחפשו עשו...

Again, the prophet is amazed how the enemies will make off with everything that belonged to Edom – even the most hidden things. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

עד הגבול שלחוך כל אנשי בריתך השיאוך יכלו לך אנשי שלומך  
לחמך ישימו מזור תחתיך אין תבונה בו

עד הגבול שלחוך כל אנשי בריתך

Edom's allies tricked them: They escorted the Edomites to the border, but did not help them fight the enemy. (Metzudat David)

השיאוך יכלו לך אנשי שלומך

It was the allies who convinced Edom to go to war. (Metzudat David)

לחמך ישימו מזור תחתיך אין תבונה בו

Those who ate Edom's bread duped the Edomites, bringing them to their downfall. And the Edomites were somehow oblivious of the plot against them. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

הלוא ביום ההוא נאום ה' והאבדתי חכמים מאדום ותבונה מהר  
עשו

והאבדתי חכמים מאדום ותבונה מהר עשו

When the time of troubles comes, all the wisdom that Edom has will disappear – Edom's wise men will not be able to think of a way to be saved from it. (Radak)

**Verse 9:**

וחתו גיבוריך תימן למען ייכרת איש מהר עשו מקטל

וחתו גיבוריך

Esav was blessed by Yitzchak that he would live on his sword (Bereishit 27:40); in other words, that his descendants would be brave warriors. But when the troubles come, all the brave warriors will quake and not be able to fight. (Radak)

תימן...

Teiman is one of the sons of Elifaz, the son of Esav. (Radak)

למען ייכרת איש מהר עשו מקטל

The fear that will engulf the people of Edom will prevent them from thinking of ways to save themselves, from acting in self-defense, and so they will be killed by their enemies. (Malbim)

**Verse 10:**

מחמס אחיך יעקב תכסך בושה ונכרת לעולם

מחמס אחיך יעקב

The reason for this fall of Edom will be the troubles that Edom caused the Jewish people – either after the destruction of the First Temple (as Ibn Ezra explains it), or the actual destruction of the Second Temple, which the Romans perpetrated. (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

ביום עמדך מנגד ביום שבות זרים חילו ונוכרים באו שערינו ועל  
ירושלים ידו גורל גם אתה כאחד מהם

ביום עמדך מנגד ביום שבות זרים חילו

1. After the destruction of the First Temple by Nevuchadnetzar, the Edomites did not help the Jews. (Metzudat David)
2. There were still Edomites in Edom at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, and they stood by when the Romans (also from Edom) took over Yehudah. This was especially despicable, considering the fact that when the Children of Israel were going through the desert, they deliberately avoided bothering Edom, because of the family relation between the two nations. (Radak)

The students can note that in this verse, one cannot equate the Edomites with the Romans, since it speaks of standing aside – not of participating in the destruction.

ועל ירושלים ידו גורל

The Edomites drew lots between them, as to who would get the land of Israel. (Metzudat David)



גם אתה כאחד מהם

In not coming to the assistance of the Jews, the Edomites were as bad as the people who did the actual fighting and looting. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 12:**

ואל תרא ביום אחיך ביום נוכרו ואל תשמח לבני יהודה ביום  
אבדם ואל תגדל פיך ביום צרה

ואל תרא ביום אחיך ביום נוכרו

The least the Edomites could have done would have been not to watch and gloat over the Jews' travails, shaming them. (Metzudat David)

ואל תשמח לבני יהודה ביום אבדם

Even more so, they shouldn't have been glad to see the downfall of the Jews. (Metzudat David)

ואל תגדל פיך ביום צרה

Certainly, they shouldn't have opened their mouths and mocked the Jews. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

אל תבוא בשער עמי ביום אידם אל תרא גם אתה ברעתו ביום  
אידו ואל תשלחנה בחילו ביום אידו

אל תבוא בשער עמי ביום אידם

The list of Edom's inappropriate actions goes on: they shouldn't have shown up at the gates of Jerusalem, as they did in the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, helping in the destruction. (Metzudat David)

אל תרא גם אתה ברעתו

Again, they shouldn't have witnessed the destruction, thus shaming the Jews. In Sefer Yosippon it says that the people who were living in Edom came especially in order to watch the Romans plunder Jerusalem. (Metzudat David)

ואל תשלחנה בחילו ביום אידו

They shouldn't have participated in the looting. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 14:**

**ואל תעמוד על הפרק להכרית את פליטיו ואל תסגר שרידיו ביום צרה**

ואל תעמוד על הפרק להכרית את פליטיו

1. Edom shouldn't have stood at the crossroads, in order to catch fleeing Jews and turn them in to the Romans. (Radak)
2. The Romans should not have insisted on the eradication of the refugees, even after the destruction, as they did throughout the centuries that followed. (Metzudat David)

ואל תסגר שרידיו ביום צרה

The Romans should not have jailed the remains of the Jewish people in the centuries that followed. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 15:**

**כי קרוב יום ה' על כל הגויים כאשר ייעשה לך גמולך  
ישוב בראשך**

כי קרוב יום ה' על כל הגויים

1. The nations need to realize that the day of retribution will come soon. They will be punished for all that they did to the Jewish People. (Metzudat David)
2. Although this day of retribution is still far off chronologically, the nations should relate to it as if it is imminent. (Radak)

כאשר ייעשה לך גמולך ישוב בראשך

The nations will be punished not only for what their actual actions, but also for the feelings of hatred that they exhibited while doing them. (Malbim)

**Verse 16:**

**כי כאשר שתיתם על הר קדשי ישתו כל הגויים תמיד ושתו ולעו  
והיו כלוא היו**

כי כאשר שתיתם על הר קדשי ישתו כל הגויים תמיד

1. Just as Yehudah drank from the cup of misfortune and destruction on the Mountain of Hashem, likewise all the enemies will drink from the same cup, until they are completely destroyed. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The non-Jews who originally rejoiced and partied when the Temple was destroyed, will now drink from the cup of destruction with the other nations. (Radak)

The students should note the difference between the subject of the verb שתיחם according to each commentator. They should also note how the word על is understood by the two commentators.

ושתו ולעו והיו כלוא היו

They will drink and swallow, and then they will be destroyed as if they had never existed. (Radak)

**Verse 17:**

**ובהר ציון תהיה פליטה והיה קודש וירשו בית יעקב את  
מורשיהם**

ובהר ציון תהיה פליטה והיה קודש

Although many Jews will die in exile, there will still be a large remnant left on Har Tzion – the place they were exiled from. This remnant will be holy – consisting of righteous people. (Radak)

וירשו בית יעקב את מורשיהם

The Jewish people will once again inherit their original land, as well as the neighboring lands – Plishtim, Edom and Moav. (Radak)

**Verse 18:**

והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה ובית עשו לקש ודלקו בהם  
ואכלום ולא יהיה שריד לבית עשו כי ה' דיבר

והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה ובית עשו לקש ודלקו בהם ואכלום

1. Just as straw burns quickly and completely, so the Jews will destroy Edom totally. (Metzudat David)
2. According to Chazal, Esav's fall will be through an encounter with Yosef Hatzaddik, or with one of his descendants. (Radak)
3. Esav will be defeated by *Mashiach ben Yosef* (Me'am Lo'ez)

A beautiful explanation of the relationship of fire and straw and its relevancy to our lives is found in Rabbi Tatz's book, *The Thinking Jewish Teenager's Guide to Life*, in the chapter "Straw and Fire", p. 209.

ולא יהיה שריד לבית עשו כי ה' דיבר

Since Hashem decided on this total destruction, it will, of course, come about. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 19:**

וירשו הנגב את הר עשו והשפלה את פלישתים וירשו את שדה  
אפרים ואת שדה שומרון ובנימין את הגלעד

וירשו הנגב את הר עשו

The house of Yaakov will inherit the Negev – the south – which is the place of Se'ir (Edom). (Metzudat David)

וירשו את שדה אפרים ואת שדה שומרון

When Yehoshua conquered the land, the people inherited only the mountains, and not the valleys. In the future, they will gain control over everything, including the lower-lying fields. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 20:**

וגלות החל הזה לבני ישראל אשר כנענים עד צרפת וגלות  
ירושלים אשר בספרד יירשו את ערי הנגב

וגלות החל לבני ישראל אשר כנענים עד צרפת

The exiles from the tribe of Asher, who had been exiled as far as France. (Rashi)

וגלות ירושלים אשר בספרד

The exiles from the kingdom of Yehudah, who reached Spain. (Rashi)

יירשו את ערי הנגב

All these people – the tribes of Asher and Yehudah – will come back and inherit the southern parts of the land of Israel. (Rashi)

**Verse 21:**

ועלו מושיעים בהר ציון לשפוט את הר עשו והיתה לה' המלוכה

ועלו מושיעים בהר ציון לשפוט את הר עשו

The “saviors of Har Tzion” are the *Mashiach* and his officers. They will go to Har Se'ir and judge the people there for the evil that they committed. (Metzudat David)

והיתה לה' המלוכה

1. After this judgment, all the nations will recognize Hashem as their king and accept Him. Hashem will, then, be recognized as the King of the entire world. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Only when Amalek is punished, will the kingdom of Hashem be complete. See Shemot 17:16 and Rashi there. (Rashi)

This one-chapter book is the *haftara* for *Parashat Vayishlach*. The students should write an essay detailing the connection between the *parasha* and the *haftara*.

**והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה ובית  
עשו לקש ודלקו בהם ואכלום ולא יהיה  
שריד לבית עשו כי ה' דיבר**

**ועלו מושיעים בהר ציון לשפוט את הר  
עשו והיתה לה' המלוכה**

# Ovadyah

# THE BOOK OF YONAH

## *Introduction:*

The book of Yonah does not mention the Jewish People at all, and in that way it is unique among the books of the Prophets.

And yet, there are many reasons for its being recorded anyway:

1. It contains a lesson to the Jewish people on how quickly one can repent.
2. The miracles that the prophet experienced are worthy of mention, especially the miracle of his being swallowed by a fish.
3. The message inherent in it is that Hashem has mercy on those who repent, no matter who they are, and what their background is. (Radak)

Another point worth mentioning, is that in this book there is no mention of kings, history, or politics. It is meant to be universal, containing a message for all times and places. (Dr. Gavriel Haim Cohen)

## **Who was Yonah?**

The prophet Yonah is mentioned as the prophet who prophesied to Yerovam II (see Melachim II 14:23-29). Both in that prophecy, and in the story in the book of Yonah, the result of the prophecy is a change to the good. (Radak)

According to Chazal, Yonah was the son of the woman of Tzarfat, whom Eliyahu Hanavi revived. See Melachim I, chapter 17. (Me'am Lo'ez)

A hint of this connection can be seen in the words of the woman to Eliyahu Hanavi in verse 24:

"עתה זה ידעתי כי אלוקים אתה ודבר ה' בפוך אמת"

Yonah, the son of אמייתי, then, was the spiritual son of Eliyahu Hanavi.

Yonah's actions and statements will raise many questions in the course of the study. Chazal (in Mechilta 1:4 (Shemot, Chapter 12)) explain Yonah's attitude – in running away from the prophecy, and in being upset by the repentance of the



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people of Ninveh - by saying that he was *tove'a kevod haben* and not *tove'a kevod ha'av*. He cared more about the honor of the son, namely the Jewish People, than about the honor of the Father, namely Hashem. He knew that the nations repent easily, and their repentance could lead to eventual trouble for the Jewish People. This explains why he tried to run away from prophesying. (Radak)

The teacher should read through the passage in the Mechilta with the students. Eliyahu is brought as an example of a prophet who cared more about the honor of the Father than that of the son, and Yirmiyahu is brought as an example of one who cared about both. The word *tove'a* here does not mean to demand, but to care about and love deeply, to the point of being willing to sacrifice one's life for the loved one.

## Chapter 1

Verses 1-2:

ויהי דבר ה' אל יונה בן אמיתי לאמור  
קום לך אל נינווה העיר הגדולה וקרא עליה כי עלתה רעתם לפני

קום לך אל נינווה העיר הגדולה וקרא עליה

Yonah is to rebuke the people of Ninveh and point out to them of their evil ways; there is no mention here of the exact words he is supposed to say to them. (Metzudat David)

Had Yonah been given the actual decree that he is to convey to them, he would have been considered *kovesh nevu'ato* – withholding his prophecy – when he ran away, an offense punishable by death. (Malbim)

וקרא עליה כי עלתה רעתם לפני

1. We see from here that Hashem is concerned about the moral level of the nations, when it sinks so low that corruption is pervasive. Similarly, he singled out the generation of the Flood, and Sodom. In all these cases, the sin that tipped the scales was that of *chamas* – robbery, for that sin is destructive to the very fabric of society. (Radak)

2. Hashem wanted the people of Ninveh to repent, so that they will be worthy of being the instrument that will punish the Ten Tribes of Israel. (Metzudat David)

The students should note the difference between the Radak and the Metzudat David as to why Ninveh was chosen – the Radak says that it is due to Ninveh itself (its spiritual state), and the Metzudat David relates the choice to its consequences for the Jewish people.

3. The Midrash states that Ashur, the founder of Ninveh, was a righteous person, and was not part of *Dor Hapalagah* – the generation that built the Tower of Babel. Therefore the city he built merited being saved from destruction. (Me'am Lo'ez)

It is important for the students to realize that our actions and prayers may have an impact hundreds of years later. No good deed is ever overlooked.

### Verse 3:

ויקם יונה לברוח תרשישה מלפני ה' וירד יפו וימצא אוניה באה  
תרשיש ויתן שכרה וירד בה לבוא עמהם תרשישה מלפני ה'

ויקם יונה לברוח תרשישה מלפני ה'

Yonah did not try to run away from Hashem; rather, he was trying to flee from the Land of Israel, the place where the voice of prophecy can be heard. Yonah did not want to receive a more explicit prophecy concerning Ninveh, for then he would be forced to go there and deliver it. He did not want the people of Ninveh to have the chance to repent and become the tool that will harm the Jewish People. (Metzudat David)

Hashem's response to these notions of Yonah was that He has many agents who can return Yonah to the Land of Israel, so that he will be able to receive the full prophecy. (Rashi)

The students should be aware of the special qualities of the Land of Israel: Prophecies are given only in the land of Israel, or, if they are given outside of it, they are about it. See Kuzari 2:4.

The story of Yonah is symbolic of man, who when he tries to run away from a mission, is really trying to run away from himself. Hashem decides the ultimate destiny and mission for each person. Although the person may try to avoid fulfilling his mission, Hashem has many ways to make him confront it anyway. (Dr. Gavriel Haim Cohen; Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*, p. 142)

וירד יפו וימצא אוניה באה תרשיש

1. Yafo (Jaffa) is a port city. (Meizudat David)
- 2.\* Yonah decided to flee by sea because of the unsettling nature of sea travel, which prevents meditation both physically (because of the swaying of the ship) and mentally (because of the many idolators among the travellers). (Malbim)

באה תרשיש

The ship had just arrived from Tarshish, and usually such a ship would have to stay in port a few days until it found return passengers. But Yonah hired the entire ship, so that it would leave immediately, and so that there wouldn't be too many people endangered by his voyage. (Malbim)

ויתן שכרה

Yonah paid the fare for all potential passengers, and he paid it upon boarding, and not upon reaching his destination. (Rashi)

We see from here that a prerequisite of being a prophet is wealth. (Radak)

Verse 4:

וה' הטיל רוח גדולה אל הים ויהי סער גדול בים והאוניה חישבה להישבר

וה' הטיל רוח גדולה אל הים

This was clearly an act of Divine Providence. It was not the season for this type of storm, and all the other boats around were sailing peacefully. (Malbim)

והאוניה חישבה להישבר

It seemed that the ship was about to break apart from the burden of the cargo, and the strength of the wind. (Metzudat David)

The students should note the development in the verse: first, the focus is on the wind around the ship, then the sea around the ship, and, finally, the situation in the ship (continued in the next verse).

**Verse 5:**

וייראו המלחים ויזעקו איש אל אלוהיו ויטילו את הכלים אשר  
שבאוניה אל הים להקל מעליהם ויונה ירד אל ירכתי הספינה  
וישב וירדם

וייראו המלחים

The sailors were afraid. (Rashi)

ויזעקו איש אל אלוהיו

1. The sailors prayed with the complete conviction that their gods would save them in this time of trouble (Mahari Kra)
- 2.\* The sailors believed that the storm was an expression of their gods' anger toward them, and so prayed to them. (Malbim)
3. All seventy nations had representatives on the ship. (Rashi)

ויונה ירד אל ירכתי הספינה וישכב וירדם

1. Yonah realized that Hashem was angry with him, and therefore did not try to pray, as he realized that his prayers would not be accepted. He went to sleep unconcerned with what would happen to the ship. (Mahari Kra)
- 2.\* Yonah went down to the bowels of the ship, for that was the place that would be flooded first, if the ship were to sink. Yonah thought that if he would drown first, the storm would stop, and the sailors would be saved. (Malbim)

Yonah's sleep in such a dire situation reflects his total indifference to the world. Today, too, modern man often reaches a level of apathy, when he would prefer to die. (Dr. Gavriel Haim Cohen)

**Verse 6:**

ויקרב אליו רב החובל ויאמר לו מה לך נרדם קום קרא אל  
אלוהיך אולי יתעשת האלוקים לנו ולא נאבד

ויקרב אליו רב החובל

The captain of the ship is known as the “chief of the ropes”, for he was the one who was most skilled in manipulating the ropes that steer the ship. (Radak)

מה לך נרדם

1. How is it possible for you, Yonah, to be sleeping, and not to be aware of the danger the ship is in? (Metzudat David)
2. It is not natural for one in such a situation to be sleeping. (Alsheikh Hakadosh)

קום קרא אל אלוהיך אולי יתעשת האלוקים לנו ולא נאבד

1. Perhaps Hashem will change his thoughts (*eshtonot* – thoughts), and decide to save the ship. (Metzudat David)
2. The captain was clearly a messenger from Hashem; his words (קום קרא) should have reminded Yonah of the original command: קום לך... וקרא עליה: (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

**Verse 7:**

ויאמרו אי שאל רעהו לכו ונפילה גורלות ונדעה בשלמי הרעה  
הזאת לנו ויפילו גורלות ויפול הגורל על יונה

ויאמר איש אל רעהו לכו ונפילה גורלות ונדעה בשלמי הרעה הזאת לנו

Since all the other ships were sailing peacefully, the sailors realized that there was someone on their ship who was guilty of some transgression, and therefore deserving of this punishment. (Rashi)

ויפילו גורלות ויפול הגורל על יונה

1. The sailors cast many lots, and in each case Yonah was the one who was singled out. Casting only one lot is not sufficient, since, obviously, every lottery singles out one person.

2. In the Bible, casting lots is always a way of finding out what Hashem has decreed - it is not a game of chance. See Bemidbar 34:13. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

**Verse 8:**

ויאמרו אליו הגידה נא לנו באשר למי הרעה הזאת לנו מה  
מלאכתך ומאין תבוא מה ארצך ואי מזה עם אתה

ויאמר אליו הגידה נא לנו באשר למי הרעה הזאת לנו

The sailors wanted to know what his sin was, and against whom he had sinned, bringing upon their ship this storm. They thought that perhaps he could compensate the person he had wronged. (Metzudat David)

מה מלאכתך

Perhaps, they thought, Yonah had been involved in a business in which he had cheated people, making it impossible to pay back everything that he owed. (Metzudat David)

ומאין תבוא

Perhaps, they thought, Yonah had cheated a person from a distant place, and that is why it was impossible for him to pay that person back. (Metzudat David)

מה ארצך

Perhaps Yonah had gone against the law of the land, and it is impossible to ask forgiveness from everyone in that land. (Metzudat David)

ואי מזה עם אתה

Perhaps Yonah had sinned against his G-d, and it is impossible to appease G-d with money. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 9:**

ויאמר אליהם עברי אנוכי ואת ה' אלוקי השמיים אני ירא אשר  
עשה את הים ואת היבשה

ויאמר להם עברי אנוכי

1. Yonah answered only their last question, since the other questions were irrelevant. (Metzudat David)

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2. Yonah called himself *ivri* – as in אברהם העברי: כל העולם מעבר אחד ואברהם מעבר אחר . The children of Avraham Avinu are like him – separated from the rest of the world. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

ואת אלוקי השמיים אני ירא

1. By describing himself as G-d-fearing, Yonah is telling the sailors that it is to this G-d that he has sinned. (Metzudat David)
2. In this answer, Yonah was responding to the questions relating to his land, his nation, and his business: he was not involved in any kind of corrupt business. (Radak)
3. In making this statement, Yonah is admitting that one can never run away from Hashem, or from one's mission in life. (Dr. Gavriel Haim Cohen)

Yonah's response עברי אנוכי is the prototypical answer that every Jew should give when asked such questions. One's identity consists not of one's profession or place of residence, but of the fact that one is a G-d-fearing Jew. These components should be the focus of every Jew's life. (Rabbi Frand, *Listen to Your Messages*, chapter "Jews on the Career Track", p. 197.

אשר עשה את הים ואת היבשה

Hashem controls the sea as well as the land; therefore, this storm is part of His providence – its purpose is to make Yonah go on his mission. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 10:

וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה ויאמרו אליו מה זאת עשית כי ידעו  
האנשים כי מלפני ה' הוא בורח כי הגיד להם

וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה

They realized that Yonah had sinned against Hashem, and that it was impossible to pacify Him with money – and that caused them great fear. (Metzudat David)

ויאמרו אליו מה זאת עשית

They were amazed that Yonah had had the audacity to rebel against Hashem, and to flee from his mission of prophesying. (Metzudat David)

כי הגיד להם

1. The sailors inferred the whole story from what he had told them. (Metzudat David)
2. Though it doesn't say so explicitly, Yonah explained the entire situation to the sailors, as part of his answer to their questions. (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

ויאמרו אליו מה נעשה לך וישתוק הים מעלינו כי הים הולך  
וסוער

כי הים הולך וסוער

There was no time to waste; they wanted to know what could be done to quiet the menacing sea as quickly as possible. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 12:**

ויאמר אליהם שאוני והטילוני אל הים וישתוק הים מעליכם כי  
יודע אני כי בשלי הסער הגדול הזה עליכם

ויאמר אליהם שאוני והטילוני אל הים

Yonah asked the sailors to throw him overboard, for he knew that he was the cause of the storm. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

ויחחרו האנשים להשיב אל היבשה ולא יכולו כי הים הולך  
וסוער עליהם

ויחחרו האנשים להשיב אל היבשה

The sailors tried to thrust the oars deep into the water, in an effort to bring the ship back to shore. (Metzudat David, Metzudat Zion)

**Verse 14:**

ויקראו אל ה' ויאמרו אנה ה' אל נא נאבדה בנפש האיש הזה  
ואל תיתן עלינו דם נקיא כי אתה ה' כאשר חפצת עשית

ויאמר אנה ה' אל נא נאבדה בנפש האיש הזה

They were afraid that they would die for having killed Yonah. (Metzudat David)



כי אתה ה' כאשר חפצת עשית

1. The sailors realized that whatever happens is G-d's will; it must have been His will that they should be the ones to throw Yonah into the sea, because otherwise, Hashem would have done it Himself. (Metzudat David)
2. The sailors realized that Hashem's will is always fulfilled (See Yeshayahu 14:26, 27). This is the lesson that Yonah is also being taught. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*).

**Verse 15:**

וישאו את יונה ויטילוהו אל הים ויעמוד הים מזעפו

וישאו את יונה ויטילוהו אל הים...

The Midrash (*Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*) notes that they didn't throw him in all at once: first, they put his legs in, and then withdrew him. Each time he was in the water, the water stopped raging, but when they removed him, it started again. When they saw this, they finally threw him in completely. (Mahari Kra)

**Verse 16:**

וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה את ה' ויזבחו זבח לה' וידרו נדרים

וייראו האנשים יראה גדולה את ה'

When the sailors saw Hashem's providence and ability, they became G-d-fearing. (Metzudat David)

ויזבחו זבח לה' וידרו נדרים

1. They converted to Judaism. (Rashi)
2. They vowed that they would bring sacrifices to the Temple, and distribute money to the poor. (Metzudat David)

The words and phrases used in this chapter are very significant. For example:

- At first, when the storm seems natural, the sailors are called *malachim* - sailors. But when they begin to change their perception of it, they are called "people" – *anashim*. Ironically, Yonah is thus bringing them closer to Hashem, without even making an effort. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

- The word ירד – “went down” is a recurring word in the beginning of the chapter. Yonah wants to go down, in order to detach himself from his mission.
- The word ים is used 11 times – to emphasize its being Hashem’s agent.
- At the beginning of the chapter, the word *Elokim* is used, implying Hashem in nature. As Hashem’s Presence becomes more apparent, the name used for him is Hashem, and it appears many times, underscoring the people’s awareness of this Presence. (Dr. Gavriel Haim Cohen)

The students should list the agents of Hashem that were involved in trying to steer Yonah back towards his mission. The list should include the captain, the lottery, the storm, the sea and the wind. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

## Chapter 2

### Verse 1:

וימן ה' דג גדול לבלוע את יונה ויהי יונה במעי הדג שלושה ימים ושלושה לילות

וימן ה' דג גדול לבלוע את יונה

1. According to Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, this fish had been ready since the creation of the world, to perform this miracle of swallowing Yonah. (Me'am Lo'ez, Radak)
2. Hashem arranged that the fish would swallow Yonah immediately, so that he would not drown in the sea. (Metzudat David)
- 3.\* Yonah was swallowed whole, without any of his bones breaking. His living inside the fish is a miracle similar to that of the survival of Chananiah, Misha'el and Azariah in the blazing furnace (see Daniel, chapter 3). (Malbim)
- 4.\* Yonah was swallowed by a fish, to show him the power of Hashem – there is no place where Hashem cannot put a person; there is no place that Hashem cannot redeem a person from. (Alsheikh Hakadosh)

ויהי יונה במעי הדג שלושה ימים ושלושה לילות

Since it was a male fish, Yonah had plenty of room in his belly, and did not feel any need to pray. Hashem then had the fish spit him out – into a female fish, whose insides were crowded, thus prompting his prayer. (Rashi)

The students should note the basis for this idea, found in the change of language from the male form *dag* to the female form in the next verse – *dagah*.

### Verse 2:

ויתפלל יונה אל ה' אלוקיו ממעי הדגה

ויתפלל יונה....

It was a great miracle that he was able to survive inside the fish – and a further miracle that he had the presence and state of mind to pray. (Radak)

## Verse 3:

ויאמר קראתי מצרה לי אל ה' ויענני מבטן שאול שיוועתי שמעת  
קולי

ויאמר קראתי מצרה לי אל ה' ויענני

Yonah was calling out to Hashem because of his troubles. He was confident that he would be answered, since he had already been kept alive inside the fish for so long. (Metzudat David)

מבטן שאול שיוועתי

The belly of the fish is comparable to the depths of *she'ol*. (Metzudat David)

שמעת קולי

1. Yonah is confident that Hashem will accede to his request. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Yonah is referring to the time when Eliyahu Hanavi came and brought him back from death (see the introduction to the book, above). (Abarbanel)

The students should note the difficulty in the text's being written in past tense. Abarbanel understands this to be literal.

## Verse 4:

ותשליכני מצולה בלבב ימים ונהר יסובבני כל משברייך וגלייך  
עלי עברו

ותשליכני מצולה בלבב ימים ונהר יסובבני

Yonah was cast into the depths of the sea. (Metzudat David)

כל משברייך וגלייך עלי עברו

Yonah, inside the fish, experienced all the waves and the currents of the sea passing over it. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 5:**

ואני אמרתי נגרשתי מנגד עיניך אך אוסיף להביט אל היכל  
קדשך

ואני אמרתי נגרשתי מנגד עיניך

1. When Yonah was cast into the sea, he believed that Hashem was no longer watching over him. (Metzudat David)
2. Yonah thought that he would die and be banished from Hashem's Presence. (Rashi)

אך אוסיף להביט אל היכל קדשך

The fact that he was still alive proved to him that he would survive the experience. He was confident that he would once again be able to offer a sacrifice in the Temple. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 6:**

אפפוני מים עד נפש תהום יסובבני סוף חבוש לראשי

אפפוני מים עד נפש תהום יסובבני

The water surrounded him, until he was close to death. (Metzudat David)

סוף חבוש לראשי

When the fish's head got entangled in the reeds of the water, it was as if Yonah's own head was entang. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

לקצבי הרים ירדתי הארץ בריחיה בעדי לעולם ותעל משחת חיי  
ה' אלוקי

לקצבי הרים ירדתי

While inside the fish, Yonah went down to the bases of the mountains, at the bottom of the sea. (Metzudat David)

הארץ בריחיה בעדי לעולם

Yonah felt as if the dry land had shut its gates to him, preventing him from returning to it. (Metzudat David)

ותעל משחת חיי ה' אלוקי

Since he had already been saved from death, he hoped that he would be taken out of this "grave" of the fish's belly. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

בהתעטף עלי נפש את ה' זכרתי ותבוא אליך תפילתי אל היכל  
קדשך

בהתעטף עלי נפשי את ה' זכרתי

When Yonah was surrounded by all these troubles, and he thought he would die, he still remember Hashem and prayed to Him. (Radak)

ותבוא אליך תפילתי אל היכל קדשך

Yonah was confident that his prayers would reach the heavens. (Metzudat David)

Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer explains the above verses as describing the tour that Yonah received through the eyes of the fish, which became like two windows. Through the fish's eyes he saw *Yam Suf*, that the Children of Israel crossed (verse 6); he saw *Gehinnom* (verse 7); he saw the Temple (verse 7), and the *even hashtiyah*, the cornerstone of the world (verse 7).

**Verse 9:**

משמרים הבלי שווא חסדם יעזובו

משמרים הבלי שווא...

1. Yonah knows that the sailors will not keep the promises that they made when they were in trouble. (Metzudat David)
2. When the sailors saw all that happened to Yonah, they threw away their idols (*chasdam*), went to Jerusalem, and converted. (Radak, based on Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer).

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**Verse 10:**

ואני בקול תודה אזבחה לך אשר נדרתי אשלמה ישועתה לה'

ואני בקול תודה אזבחה לך אשר נדרתי אשלמה

Unlike the sailors, who won't keep their promises, Yonah will indeed go up to Jerusalem and offer sacrifices of thanks to Hashem for all the miracles that He performed. (Metzudat David)

There are four groups of people who are obliged to offer thanksgiving offerings in the Temple: A person who has recovered from an illness, a person who has been released from jail, a person who has finished a sea-voyage, and a person who has crossed a desert. The acronym for all of them is חיים:  
חולה שנתרפא, יוצא מבית האסורים, יורדי הים, עוברי מדבריות.  
Today, when we don't have a Temple, instead of offering this sacrifice, these people say *Birkat Hagomel*.

ישועתה לה'

Salvation comes only from Hashem – it was He who saved him in such a miraculous way. (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

ויאמר ה' לדג ויקא את יונה אל היבשה

ויאמר ה' לדג ויקא את יונה...

Hashem caused the fish to spit Yonah out. (Metzudat David)

Hashem returned Yonah to the male fish, so he would have more room, and then he was released from the fish. (Metzudat David)

## Chapter 3

### Verse 1:

ויהי דבר ה' אל יונה שנית לאמור

ויהי דבר ה'... שנית..

1. This was the second prophecy concerning the city of Ninveh. (Metzudat David)
2. This was the last prophecy that Yonah received. Since he tried to run away from the prophetic message, he was punished measure for measure, with the removal of his prophetic powers. (Me'am Lo'ez)

### Verse 2:

קום לך אל נינווה העיר הגדולה וקרא אליה את הקריאה אשר  
אנוכי דובר אליך

קום לך אל נינווה העיר הגדולה

Ninveh is called “a great city,” in order to explain why Hashem had compassion on it, and did not want to destroy it. (Me'am Lo'ez)

וקרא אליה את הקריאה אשר אנוכי דובר אליך

The call that Yonah is to convey to the people is what appears in verse 4: עור  
in forty days Ninveh will be destroyed. (Metzudat David)

The students should note the difference between the command in Chapter 1, verse 2, and the command here: The first time Yonah receives the command, he is told why they are being destroyed (see Amos 3:7: כי לא יעשה ה' דבר כי אם גלה סודו אל (עבדיו הנביאים); the second time, Yonah is no longer as close to Hashem as he was before, and therefore the reason is omitted. The students should note that the appellation “Son of Amitai” is also missing. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)



**Verse 3:**

ויקם יונה וילך אל נינווה כדבר ה' ונינווה הייתה עיר גדולה  
לאלוקים מהלך שלושת ימים

ונינווה הייתה עיר גדולה לאלוקים מהלך שלושת ימים

The city of Ninveh was so big, that it took three days to walk from one end of it to the other. (Radak)

**Verse 4:**

ויחל יונה לבוא בעיר מהלך יום אחד ויקרא ויאמר עוד ארבעים  
יום ונינווה נהפכת

ויחל יונה לבוא אל העיר מהלך יום אחד

After the prophet walked one day's journey in the city, he began to proclaim his prophecy. (Metzudat David)

ויאמר עוד ארבעים יום ונינווה נהפכת

“In forty more days the city will be completely destroyed,” like the cities of Sodom and Amarah (about which the verb הפך is also used). After the destruction, there will be nothing left – מיש לאין – (as opposed to the creation of the world, which was יש מאין). (Metzudat David)

It is important to note that nowhere does Yonah the prophet exhort the people of Ninveh to do *teshuva*; he just informs them of what is going to happen. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

**Verse 5:**

ויאמינו אנשי נינווה באלוקים ויקראו צום וילבשו שקים מגדולם  
ועד קטנם

ויאמינו אנשי נינווה באלוקים

1. The people of Ninveh believed that Yonah was speaking the words of Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. The sailors had come to Ninveh, and had told them what had happened to Yonah. The people of Ninveh, therefore, believed his prophecy when he came to the city. (Radak, Ibn Ezra)

- 3.\* We see from here the power of Hashem's word to convince people to do *teshuva*. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

ויקרא צום וילבשו שקים מגדולם ועד קטנם

Even before the king decreed so (see next verse), they began to do acts of repentance. (Radak)

**Verse 6:**

ויגע הדבר אל מלך נינווה ויקם מכסאו ויעבר אדרתו מעליו ויכס  
שק וישב על האפר

ויגע הדבר אל מלך נינווה ויקם מכסאו ויעבר אדרתו מעליו

1. The king removed his royal cloak. (Mahari Kra)
- 2.\* We learn from here the proper way for a leader to lead his people effectively. He must practice publicly what he is going to preach to others. (Me'am Lo'ez)

**Verse 7:**

ויזעק ויאמר בנינווה מטעם המלך וגדוליו לאמור והבהמה  
הבקר והצאן אל יטעמו מאומה אל ירעו ומים אל ישתו

ויזעק ויאמר בנינווה מטעם המלך וגדוליו לאמור

The king commanded that his proclamation be cried out to all the people of the city. (Metzudat David)

האדם והבהמה הבקר והצאן אל יטעמו מאומה אל ירעו ומים אל ישתו

1. The animals were to refrain from eating as well, so that the hearts of the people would be humbled. (Metzudat David)

The students should compare this to Yoel 2:13.

2. The animals should also call out to Hashem, since Hashem feeds all living beings. (Abarbanel, Me'am Lo'ez)
3. The king added to what the people were doing already by way of repentance, by saying that the animals should also be afflicted, and that stolen property should be returned (see next verse). (Radak)

**Verse 8:**

ויתכסו שקים האדם והבהמה ויקראו אל אלוקים בחזקה וישובו  
איש מדרכו הרעה ומן החמס אשר בכפיהם

ויתכסו שקים האדם והבהמה

This was part of the king's decree, in order to humble the people's hearts.  
(Metzudat David)

ויקראו אל אלוקים בחזקה

The king also decreed that the people should pray. (Malbim)

וישובו איש מדרכו הרעה ומן החמס אשר בכפיהם

1. The people should repent their evil ways, and their acts of violence. (Metzudat David)
2. The people of Ninveh returned only what they had in their hands – public items. Things that had been stolen in private, and were hidden, they did not return. (Yerushalmi Ta'anit 2:31; Rav Yehoshua Bachrach, *Yonah ben Amitai Hanavi Ve-Eliyahu*)

**Verse 9:**

מי יודע ישוב וניחם האלוקים ושב מחרון אפו ולא נאבד

מי יודע ישוב וניחם האלוקים...

1. Those who know of sins they have committed should repent. (Rashi)
2. Who knows? Perhaps Hashem will reconsider His decree as a result of our *teshuva*. (Radak)

The students should compare this verse with Yoel 2:14, which uses the same phrase, and where Radak uses the same approach in explaining it.

- 3.\* One should repent even of the sins which are not known to others. (Mahari Kra)

**Verse 10:**

**וירא האלוקים את מעשיהם כי שבו מדרכם הרעה ויינחם  
האלוקים על הרעה אשר דיבר לעשות להם ולא עשה**

וירא האלוקים את מעשיהם כי שבו מדרכם הרעה

The people of Ninveh did complete *teshuva*. Chazal note that if a person stole a beam, and used it to build a tower, he tore down the tower in order to return the stolen beam. (Radak)

In Mishnah Ta'anit 2, 2, where the procedure of prayer in times of trouble is spelled out, it says that the elders who would arouse people to do *teshuva* in time of trouble, would use this verse, in order to emphasize that it was the actions of the people of Ninveh, not their fasting, and that caused the decree to be reversed.

## Chapter 4

### Verse 1:

וירע אל יונה רעה גדולה ויחר לו

וירע אל יונה רעה גדולה

Hashem told Yonah that He was not going to destroy Ninveh; this upset hiim.  
(Metzudat David)

ויחר לו

Yonah was upset for the sake of the Jews, who, unlike the people of Ninveh, had not repented of their sins. (Radak)

### Verse 2:

ויתפלל אל ה' ויאמר אנה ה' הלוא זה דברי עד היותי על אדמתי  
על כן קידמתי לברוח תרשישה כי ידעתי כי אתה קל חנון ורחום  
ארך אפיים ורב חסד וניחם על הרעה

ויתפלל אל ה'

Yonah prayed that he should die. (Metzudat David)

ויאמר אנה ה' הלוא זה דברי עד היותי על אדמתי על כן קידמתי לברוח תרשישה

Yonah was concerned, even before he set out on his journey, that the people of Ninveh would repent, and that that repentance would have negative ramifications for the Jewish people. Therefore he tried to escape to Tarshish, before Hashem would command him again. (Radak)

כי ידעתי כי אתה קל חנון ורחום ארך אפיים ורב חסד וניחם על הרעה

1. Yonah knew that Hashem is merciful, and accepts repentance. Therefore, this prophecy was difficult for Yonah, knowing that Assyria would now be worthy of being Hashem's tool for harming the Jews (as indeed they proved to be – conquering the kingdom of Israel and threatening the kingdom of Yehudah). (Metzudat David)

2. Besides Assyria harming Israel physically, there was the danger that Israel would be punished by Hashem after seeing the power of repentance, as experienced by the Assyrians, and not learning from it that they, too, should repent. (Metzudat David)
3. In comparing these descriptions of Hashem to the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, one notes that the attribute of truth, *emet*, is missing. According to Yonah, truthfully, the repentance of the people of Ninveh should not be accepted. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

#### Verse 3:

ועתה ה' קח נא את נפשי ממני כי טוב מותי מחיי

ועתה ה' קח נא את נפשי ממני...

Yonah preferred to die, rather than see the destruction of his people as a result of his prophecy to Ninveh. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 4:

ויאמר ה' ההיטב חרה לך

ויאמר ה' ההיטב חרה לך

Hashem's response is in the form of a question. Hashem will show Yonah, through the *kikayon*, that he should not feel this way. (Metzudat David)

#### Verse 5:

ויצא יונה מן העיר וישב מקדם לעיר ויעש לו שם סוכה וישב  
תחתיה בצל עד אשר יראה מה יהיה בעיר

ויצא יונה מן העיר וישב מקדם לעיר

Yonah sat outside the city, waiting to see whether perhaps the people of Ninveh would revert to their old ways, and the decree of destruction would be carried out. (Radak)

**Verse 6:**

וימן ה' אלוקים קיקיון ויעל מעל ליונה להיות צל על ראשו  
להציל לו מרעתו וישמח יונה על הקיקיון שמחה גדולה

וימן ה' אלוקים קיקיון ויעל מעל ליונה להיות צל על ראשו

1. Hashem made a plant sprout, adding to the protection of the hut that he had built. The hut would have dried out, while this living plant would remain moist. (Metzudat David)
2. This act of kindness to Yonah was to teach him that Hashem has compassion on all of His creations. (Radak)

להציל לו מרעתו

As a result of Yonah's experience in the fish, his skin had become soft, and could not handle the intensity of the heat. (Ibn Ezra)

**Verse 7:**

וימן האלוקים תולעת בעלות השחר למחרת ותך את הקיקיון  
וייבש

וימן האלוקים תולעת בעלות השחר...

On the following day, a worm cut the plant at its roots, and it therefore dried up. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

ויהי כזרוח השמש וימן אלוקים רוח קדים חרישית ותך השמש  
על ראש יונה ויתעלף וישאל את נפשו למות ויאמר טוב מותי  
מחיי

ויהי כזרוח השמש וימן אלוקים רוח קדים חרישית

A *ruach kadim* (east wind) is the fiercest and hottest of winds. Since Yonah was sitting to the east of the city, he had no protection from it. (Metzudat David)

ותך השמש על ראש יונה ויתעלף

Yonah became tired and confused, until he was unable to think clearly. (Radak)

וישאל את נפשו למות

Yonah asked that his soul separate from his body, so that he should die. (Metzudat David)

ויאמר טוב מותי מחיי

Yonah said to himself, as he lay sick and suffering from the heat and the sun, that he preferred to die. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 9:**

ויאמר אלוקים אל יונה ההיטב חרה לך על הקיקיון ויאמר היטב  
חרה לי עד מוות

ויאמר היטב חרה לי עד מוות

Yonah indeed preferred death to his current situation. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 10:**

ויאמר ה' אתה חסת על הקיקיון אשר לא עמלת בו ולא גידלתו  
שבן לילה היה ובן לילה אבד

ויאמר ה' אתה חסת על הקיקיון אשר לא עמלת בו ולא גידלתו

1. Generally, a person is upset when he loses something that he spent many hours working on. In this case, Yonah did not plant the *kikayon*, or tend it in any way, and yet he was still upset at its demise. (Metzudat David)

Hashem did not actually labor in the creation of Ninveh, but He used a human form of speech so that Yonah could relate to the idea He was conveying. (Radak)

2. In truth, Hashem is not rebuking Yonah for having pity on the *kikayon*, but rather, on his having mercy on himself. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

שבן לילה היה ובן לילה אבד

One generally does not mourn over something that is so short-lived. (Metzudat David)



Michah

**Verse 11:**

ואני לא אחוס על נינווה העיר הגדולה אשר יש בה הרבה  
משתים עשרה ריבו אדם אשר לא ידע בין ימינו לשמאלו ובהמה  
רבה

ואני לא אחוס על נינווה העיר הגדולה

Ninveh is the work of Hashem's hand, so He should have mercy on it. (Metzudat David)

אשר יש בה הרבה משתים עשרה ריבו אדם אשר לא ידע בין ימינו לשמאלו  
"Those who do not know right from left" are the children. (Rashi)

ובהמה רבה

"And much cattle" are the adults – they are like animals, who do not know who created them. (Rashi)

In the course of this chapter, Yonah expresses many strong emotions: intense anger over the favorable fate of Ninveh, to the point of not wanting to live himself; joy over a plant, and then the depths of despair, to the point of again requesting death when the plant dies. These reactions reflect the fickleness of man, and the idea that man has no right to demand that the world be run according to his limited understanding. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

נינווה and יונה have the same letters, with נינווה having an extra *nun*. Yonah's essence was his message to the city of Ninveh. In addition to that, *nun* means "fish" in Aramaic, and a fish plays a big part in the story. Fish are also symbolic of silence, muteness – part of Yonah's personality.

The book of Yonah, read on Yom Kippur, conveys many concepts, and can be understood on many levels, beyond those mentioned above:

- Throughout the book, we are faced with the concept that a person's destiny is directed by Hashem.
- In Shir Hashirim, the *yonah* is understood to refer to the Children of Israel. As such, the story of Yonah the prophet can be that of the role of the Jewish People – to proclaim the will of Hashem to the world. (Rav Yedid, *Mikra Kodesh*)

- The Vilna Gaon, based on the Zohar, understands Yonah to be symbolic of the soul of a human being. The book is a description of the short sojourn of the soul in the body, and the reincarnation of that soul, in order to reach the proper level of fulfillment.

**וּאֲנִי לֹא אֲחוּס עַל נִינוּוָה הָעִיר הַגְּדוּלָה אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ  
בָּהּ הַרְבֵּה מִשְׁתִּים עֲשׂוּהָ רִיבּוֹ אָדָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַע  
בֵּין יָמֵינוּ לְשִׁמְאֵלוֹ וּבִהְמָה רַבָּה?**

# Michah

# THE BOOK OF MICHAH

## ***Introduction:***

Michah was one of four prophets who prophesied at the same time: the other three were Hoshea, Amos and Yeshayahu. (Rashi on Hoshe'a 1:2)

Michah deals with the same social problem that Amos talks about in his prophecies: the problem of leaders (of Shomron and Yehudah) who oppress the poor. (Da'at Mikra)

There are three major sections in the book of Michah: Chapters 1-3 are chapters of rebuke and warnings of troubles; chapters 4-6 are chapters of consolation; and chapters 6-7 are chapters of *mussar*, introspection and prayer.

This curriculum will bring excerpt from all three sections.

## **Chapter 1, Verse 1:**

דבר ה' אשר היה אל מיכה המורשתי בימי יותם אחז יחזקיה  
מלכי יהודה אשר חזה על שומרון וירושלים

דבר ה' אשר היה אל מיכה המורשתי

Michah was from the city of Maresha, in the kingdom of Yehudah. (Rashi, Radak)

## Chapter 3

### Verse 1:

ואומר שמעו נא ראשי יעקב וקציני בית ישראל הלוא לכם לדעת  
את המשפט

ואומר שמעו נא ראשי יעקב וקציני בית ישראל

1. Michah turns to the leaders, and says that as leaders it is in their hands to save the oppressed from their oppressors. (Radak)
2. Michah is speaking to the leaders of Shomron (Efrayim). (Abarbanel)

הלוא לכם לדעת את המשפט

These leaders are responsible to know whether justice is being carried out in the land, and to warn about injustices. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 2:

שונאי טוב ואוהבי רע גוזלי עורם מעליהם ושארם מעל עצמותם

שונאי טוב ואוהבי רע

The leaders themselves hate good and love evil. (Metzudat David)

גחלי עורם מעליהם ושארם מעל עצמותם

1. They steal the skin and meat off the bones of the poor people. This is an exaggerated imagery, to reflect the extent of their stealing. (Metzudat David)
2. The imagery is referring to their theft of the poor people's property and their exploitation of the poor people's hard work. (Ibn Ezra)

**Verse 3:**

ואשר אכלו שאר עמי ועורם מעליהם הפשיטו ואת עצמותיהם  
פיצחו ופרשו כאשר בסיר וכבשר בתוך קלחת

ואשר אכלו שאר עמי ועורם מעליהם הפשיטו ואת עצמותיהם פיצחו

1. The “meat of My nation” is the righteous people. (Metzudat David)
2. They crack the bones to get at the marrow – this is also an exaggerated expression of the extent of their stealing. (Metzudat David)

ופרשו כאשר בסיר וכבשר בתוך הקלחת

1. They break the bones in order to put them into the pot and cook them. (Metzudat David)
2. They boil the bones for a long time, to get the marrow out, meaning that they oppress the poor, both financially and physically, until they reach a breaking point. (Malbim)
- 3.\* This imagery conveys the oppressors’ feeling that the poor are not human beings. (Da’at Sofrim)

**Verse 4:**

אז יזעקו אל ה' ולא יענה אותם ויסתר פניו מהם בעת ההיא  
כאשר הרעו מעלליהם

אז יזעקו אל ה' ולא יענה אותם

This is a punishment of measure for measure: Since they did not listen to the cries of the poor, Hashem will not listen to their own cries when the enemy comes upon them. (Radak)

ויסתר פניו מהם

Hashem will take his Divine Providence (*hashgacha*) away from them, and leave them in the hands of blind fate. (Malbim)

The students should discuss why this punishment is so severe, and why these leaders deserved it.

Michah

בעת ההיא כאשר הרעו מעלליהם

1. Just like these leaders harmed the poor, so the enemy will harm them. (Radak)
2. Evil happenings are an automatic result of evil ways; they brought this fate upon themselves. (Malbim)

**Verse 5:**

כה אמר ה' על הנביאים המתעים את עמי הנושכים בשיניהם  
וקראו שלום ואשר לא יתן על פיהם וקידשו עליו מלחמה

כה אמר ה' על הנביאים המתעים את עמי

1. The prophets referred to are the false prophets who misled the Jews. (Metzudat David)
2. These prophets turned others away from doing good, and they did this for their own benefit. (Malbim)

הנושכים בשיניהם וקראו שלום ואשר לא יתן על פיהם וקידשו עליו מלחמה

Those people who would give the prophets food would receive a good prophecy from them; those who did give them food received bad predictions. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 6:**

לכן לילה לכם מחזון וחשכה לכם מקסום ובאה השמש על  
הנביאים וקדר עליהם היום

לכן לילה לכם מחזון וחשכה לכם מקסום

When the enemy will come, darkness will descend upon them; everyone will know that they are liars. (Radak)

ובאה השמש על הנביאים וקדר עליהם היום

The sun will set upon them – there will be great darkness because of the troubles. (Radak)

**Verse 7:**

ובושו החוזים וחפרו הקוסמים ועטו על שפם כולם כי אין מענה  
אלוקים

ובושו החוזים וחפרו הקוסמים ועטו על שפם כולם

When the false prophets will see that their prophecies did not come true, they will be embarrassed. They will cover their moustaches (their faces) like mourners. (Radak)

כי אין מענה אלוקים

Their words did not come from a Divine source. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

ואולם אנוכי מלאתי כוח את רוח ה' ומשפט וגבורה להגיד  
ליעקב פשעו ולישראל חטאתו

ואולם אנוכי מלאתי כוח את רוח ה' ומשפט וגבורה

Michah, in contrast to the false prophets, is full of strength from Hashem. His words come from Hashem, and he will not be intimidated. (Metzudat David)

להגיד ליעקב פשעו ולישראל חטאתו

1. Michah is able to rebuke the Jews, and he is not out to flatter them. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The false prophets flatter the people by praising their evil ways. Michah, however, is concerned with truth and righteousness. (Radak)

**Verse 9:**

שמעו נא זאת ראשי בית יעקב וקציני בית ישראל המתעבים  
משפט ואת כל הישרה יעקשו

שמעו נא זאת ראשי בית יעקב וקציני בית ישראל

1. Michah continues to rebuke the leaders. (Radak)
2. These words are directed at the leaders of Yehudah. Michah is using the same language that he used in his rebuke for the leaders of Shomron, to teach us that the leaders of Yehudah learned their evil ways from them. (Abarbanel)



The students should note that these three groups – judges, priests and prophets – are the three groups in charge of leading the Jewish nation. Their corruption is a reflection of the corruption of the entire society. There was no proper leadership to guide the people to better ways.

ועל ה' יישענו לאמור הלוא ה' בקרבנו ולא תבוא עלינו רעה

Although the leaders were corrupt, they believed that Hashem would save them. Hashem, they thought, would not destroy the Temple, in which His Divine Presence resided. (Metzudat David)

Radak brings another, similar example of such mistaken notions, from Yirmiyahu 7:4:

”היכל ה' היכל ה' היכל ה' המה”

**Verse 12:**

לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש וירושלים עיין תהיה והר הבית  
לבמות יער

לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש

Because of the people's sins, Tzion will be destroyed – the enemy will come and plow it down like a field. (Metzudat David)

ירושלים עיין תהיה והר הבית לבמות יער

1. Jerusalem will be filled with heaps of stones from the destroyed buildings, and the Temple Mount will be filled with many piles of rubble, resembling stumps of trees. (Metzudat David)

The Maharal states that there are three calamities mentioned in this verse, corresponding to the three cardinal sins that were the cause of the destruction of the Temple – עבודה זרה, גילוי ערות, שפיכות דמים. (Maharal, *Netzach Yisrael*, Chapter 3)

2. This prophecy was said to Chizkiyahu and had a tremendous impact on him – so much so that Jerusalem was saved for the time being. This prophecy then shows the positive impact a prophet can have, and that his words are heeded. See Yirmiyahu 26:18. (Da'at Mikra)

## Michah

As a summary of this chapter, the students should divide it into three sections, according to the three groups of leaders mentioned. For each group, they should write what their sins were, the punishment they would receive, and the aspect of measure for measure in these punishments.

## Chapter 4, Verses 1-4

### Verse 1:

והיה באחרית הימים יהיה הר בית ה' נכון בראש ההרים ונישא  
הוא מגבעות ונהרו עליו עמים

This prophecy is almost identical to a prophecy of Yeshayahu 2:2-4. The two prophets had the same vision, which they expressed almost identically, with minor word changes. (Radak)

והיה באחרית הימים

1. *Acharit Hayamim* (End of the Days) is the days of the *Mashiach*. (Metzudat David)
2. After the dreadful prophecy that Michah pronounced for Jerusalem, he immediately gives words of comfort. (Radak)

יהיה הר בית ה' נכון בראש ההרים ונישא הוא מגבעות

1. The mountain on which the Temple is built will become the greatest and the most important mountain of all. (Metzudat David)
2. The place that had come to resemble a clearing filled with tree stumps will become instead a valued and respected place. This mountain will be viewed by the nations as greater than all the other mountains upon which they had worshipped their idols. (Radak)
- 3.\* This mountain is always prepared for greatness and holiness. (Abarbanel)

ונהרו עליו עמים

1. The nations will be drawn to it, like a river. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The nations will run there; this is why a river is called a *nahar*, for the waters rush along. (Radak)

**Verse 2:**

והלכו גויים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל הר ה' ואל בית אלוקי  
יעקב ויורנו מדרכיו ונלכה באורחותיו כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר  
ה' מירושלים

והלכו גויים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל הר ה' ואל בית אלוקי יעקב

1. The nations will say to each other “Let’s go”. (Metzudat David)
2. The nations will go to the mountain not because of its status as a mountain, but in order to honor Hashem’s presence in that place. (Abarbanel)
- 3.\* This is a recognition of Yaakov’s being the only spiritual heir of Avraham Avinu. Yaakov was the first person to call this mountain a *Beit Elokim*. See Bereishit 28:17. (Da’at Sofrim)

ויורנו מדרכיו ונלכה באורחותיו

The nations state that Hashem will teach them Torah through the leaders in Jerusalem, who are the disseminators of Torah. (Metzudat David)

כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים

1. The nations will realize that the Torah comes from Tzion, and there is nothing like it in the world. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* All the nations will learn to speak the name of Hashem. Jerusalem will be the capital city – the central metropolis – of the entire world. (Abarbanel)

**Verse 3:**

ושפט בין עמים רבים והוכיח לגויים עצומים עד רחוק וכיתתו  
חרבותיהם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות לא ישאו גוי אל גוי  
חרב ולא ילמדון עוד מלחמה

ושפט בין עמים רבים והוכיח לגויים עצומים עד רחוק

1. The *Mashiach* will be the chief arbitrator among the nations. All disputes will be brought before him. He will reprove the nations. (Radak)
2. The *Mashiach* will rule forever. (Targum Yonatan)

The students should note the two ways of understanding עד רחוק – distance of space, or distance of time.

וכיתתו חרבותם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות לא ישאו גוי אל גוי חרב ולא ילמדון עוד מלחמה

1. The *Mashiach* will make peace among the nations, and there will be no more wars. (Radak)
2. The *Mashiach* will judge the nations' disputes, and therefore there will be no more need for war. They will turn their weapons into farming equipment. (Metzudat David)
3. The nations won't even need to learn the strategies of war anymore. (Malbim)

**Verse 4:**

וישבו איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו ואין מחריד כי פי ה' צבקות דיבר

וישבו איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו ואין מחריד

Both the nations and the Jews will live in peace, and there will be no more war. (Metzudat David)

כי ה' צבקות דיבר

1. "Because Hashem... spoke" – see the promise in Vayikra 26:6: ונתתי שלום בארץ. (Rashi)
2. The state of peace mentioned above can only come about through Divine Providence. (Abarbanel)

## Chapter 5, Verses 6-14

### Verse 6:

והיה שארית יעקב בקרב עמים רבים כטל מאת ה' כרביבים עלי  
עשב אשר לא יקווה לאיש ולא ייחל לבני אדם

והיה שארית יעקב בקרב עמים רבים

1. This “remnant of Yaakov” will be those who survive the refinement process of exile. (Radak)
2. The “many nations” refers to Gog and the kings who will come with him to attack the Jewish people. (Radak, Metzudat David)

כטל מאת ה' כרביבים עלי עשב אשר לא יקווה לאיש ולא ייחל לבני אדם

The Jews will put their faith in Hashem and trust only Him – just as dew and rain are totally dependent on Hashem’s will. The Jews will realize that no human being can save them. (Metzudat David)

The students should note the two parallel sections in this phrase.

### Verse 7:

והיה שארית יעקב בגויים בקרב עמים רבים כאריה בבהמות יער  
ככפיר בעדרו צאן אשר אם עבר ורמס וטרף ואין מציל

והיה שארית יעקב בגויים בקרב עמים רבים כאריה בבהמות יער ככפיר בעדרו צאן...

1. The Jewish people will become a strong nation. They will be like a lion in a forest, whom no one can hope to be safe from. If they come upon the other nations, no one will be able to withstand them. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* a *kfir* is a smaller creature, powerful only among sheep; a lion can vanquish even the biggest beasts of the forest, such as tigers, bears and wolves. (Radak)

**Verse 8:**

**תרום ירך על צריך וכל אויביך ייכרתו**

תרום ירך על צריך...

1. The Jewish people will be able to overcome their enemies and destroy them. (Metzudat David)
2. A *tzar* is a person who bears an active and visible hatred towards another. One hand will be enough to destroy these active haters. An *oyev* is a person who does not express his hatred outwardly in any way. Such haters will be destroyed automatically (ייכרתו – a passive tense), without the Jews even having to act against them. (Malbim)

**Verse 9:**

**והיה ביום ההוא נאום ה' והכרתי סוסיך מקרבך והאברתי מרכבותיך**

והיה ביום ההוא נאום ה' והכרתי סוסיך מקרבך...

1. After the war of Gog and Magog, there will be peace, and there will be no need for war-horses. (Radak)
- 2.\* After the war, there will be no need to rely on any powers besides Hashem. (Mahari Kra)

**Verse 10:**

**והכרתי ערי ארצך והרסתי כל מבצוריך**

והכרתי ערי ארצך...

1. There will be no more need for fortified cities in which one can hide, since there will be no more wars. (Metzudat David)
2. An additional benefit of peace will be that people will not have to live within walled cities; unwalled cities are healthier to live in, because of the better air circulation in them. (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

והכרתי כשפים מידיך ומעוננים לא יהיו לך

והכרתי כשפים מידיך...

1. In that time, when everyone will see Hashem's Providence, there will be no need to use witchcraft in order to predict the future. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Hashem will cut out our "heart of stone", thus negating the need for witchcraft. (Radak)

**Verse 12:**

והכרתי פסיליך ומצבותיך מקרבך ולא תשתחוה עוד למעשה ידיך

והכרתי פסיליך ומצבותיך...

Since the Jews will recognize no god except Hashem, there will be no more idol worship. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

ונתשתי אשיריך מקרבך והשמדתי עריך

והשמדתי עריך

The cities that worshipped idols will be destroyed (like the *ir hanidachat* – the wayward city – described in Devarim 13:13-19). (Malbim)

The students should note that this verse is repetitive of verse 12, if one understands it according to *pshutu shel mikra* – the simple meaning of the words.

**Verse 14:**

ועשיתי באף ובחמה נקם את הגויים אשר לא שמעו

ועשיתי באף ובחמה נקם את הגויים...

The retribution and vengeance that Hashem will wreak on the nations will be unprecedented in history. (Metzudat David)



## Chapter 6, Verses 1-8

### Verse 1:

שמעו נא את אשר ה' אומר קום ריב את ההרים ותשמענה  
הגבעות קולך

שמעו נא את אשר ה' אומר קום ריב את ההרים...

1. The prophet is told to argue so loudly with the people that the mountains will be able to hear his words. This is an exaggerated expression. (Metzudat David)
2. The mountains referred to here are the foundations of the world, namely the forefathers and mothers. The prophet should tell them how the Jewish people are not living up to their expectations. (Rashi, Targum Yonatan)

### Verse 2:

שמעו הרים את ריב ה' והאיתנים מוסדי ארץ כי ריב לה' עם עמו  
ועם ישראל יתווכח

שמעו הרים את ריב ה' והאיתנים מוסדי ארץ

The prophet says: "Listen, mountains, to the words of Hashem". (Metzudat David)

כי ריב לה' עם עמו ועם ישראל יתווכח

1. Hashem's argument with the people is about how they strayed from Him. (Malbim)
2. The word *yitvakach* comes from *tochecha* – rebuke (not from *vikuach* – argument). (Mahari Kra)

### Verse 3:

עמי מה עשיתי לך ומה הלאתיך ענה בי

עמי מה עשיתי לך

1. The Jews should pay attention to all the good that Hashem has done for them. (Rashi)

Michah

2. Hashem is asking the Jewish people what bad things has He done to them. (Radak)

The students should put in the proper punctuation mark after לך according to each commentator.

ומה הלאיתך

1. How has your worshipping of Hashem tired you? (Rashi)
2. Which *mitzvah* has tired out the people? (Radak)
- 3.\* What bad things has Hashem done to the Jewish People? In reality, He has only done good things, and actually we should be obligated to do hard labor for Him in recognition of what we owe Him. However, Hashem does not demand very difficult work from us. (Malbim)

ענה בי

Hashem wants the Jews to testify if indeed they have been tired out by His demands. (Metzudat David)

Verse 4:

כי העליתך מארץ מצרים ומבית עבדים פדיתך ואשלח לפניך  
את משה אהרן ומרים

כי העליתך מארץ מצרים ומבית עבדים פדיתך

1. The Exodus from Egypt is an example of the kindness that Hashem has shown the Jewish people. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Egypt is called *beit avadim* – a house of slaves – for two reasons: 1) It is the place where the Jews were enslaved, 2) It is the place where the Jews were enslaved to slaves. (The Egyptians were children of Cham, about whom it was said עבד עבדים יהיה לאחיו – He will be a slave to his brothers). (Radak)

The students should note to whom the word *avadim* is referring according to each view in the Radak.

ואשלח לפניך את משה אהרן ומרים

1. Hashem acted with kindness, giving the Children of Israel worthy leaders. (Metzudat David)
2. Even before the redemption from Egypt, Moshe, Aharon and Miriam were sent to tell the news of its coming. (Radak)
3. All three leaders were prophets, who communicated with Hashem, and passed on the messages to the people, so that the messages would be clear. (Ibn Ezra)
4. Moshe Rabbeinu taught the men Torah; Aharon Hacohein achieved atonement for the people; and Miriam Hanevi'ah taught the women Torah. (Rashi, Targum Yonatan)
5. Each one of these three people brought about a miracle: Moshe Rabbeinu brought about the manna, Aharon brought about the *anenai Hakavod* – the protective cloud, and Miriam was responsible for the well; these three miracles sum up all the miracles that were done to the people in the desert. (Abarbanel)

#### Verse 5:

עמי זכור נא מה יעץ בלק מלך מואב ומה ענה אותו בלעם בן  
בעור מן השיטים עד הגלגל למען דעת צדקות ה'

עמי זכור נא מה יעץ בלק מלך מואב ומה ענה אותו בלעם בן בעור

1. Balak's idea was that Bilam should curse the Jews at the moment that Hashem is angry with them. (Metzudat David)
2. The story of Balak and Bilam is indicative of the quiet acts of lovingkindness that Hashem did for them, unbeknownst to them – at the time the people had no idea that someone was trying to curse them. (Abarbanel)

מן השיטים עד הגלגל למען דעת צדקות ה'

1. Although the Jews had sinned, Hashem still was kind to them and brought them to the Land of Israel. He did this in order to show that He acts לפנים – leniently. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The people really deserved to die in Shittim (see Bemidbar 25:1-9), but only a small number were killed. One should look at the kindnesses of Hashem, and do *teshuva*.

**Verse 6:**

במה אקדם ה' איכף לאלוקי מרום האקדמנו בעולות בעגלים בני  
שנה

במה אקדם ה' איכף לאלוקי מרום

This is the response of the people to the above: they recognize the kindness of Hashem and want to know how they can serve Him. (Metzudat David)

האקדמנו בעולות בעגלים בני שנה

Shall they bring offerings from the best animals? (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

הירצה ה' באלפי אילים ברבבות נחלי שמן האתן בכורי פשעי  
פרי בטני חטאת נפשי

הירצה ה' באלפי אילים ברבבות נחלי שמן

1. Does Hashem want thousands of rams? And rivers of oil poured on them as libations? (Metzudat David)
2. The imagery of thousands of rams and rivers of oil is a hyperbolic expression, not to be taken literally. (Radak)

האתן בכורי פשעי פרי בטני חטאת נפשי

Should they offer their sons as expiation for their sins? What does Hashem want? (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם עשות משפט  
ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם אלוקיך

הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך

1. The prophet answers the above question. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem tells man what is the good that He expects from him. (Radak)
- 3.\* “What is good” is referring to the *mitzvot* which are לחבירו – between man and man; “What Hashem wants from you” is referring to the *mitzvot* which are בין אדם למקום – between man and G-d. (Malbim)

## עשות משפט

1. "To do justice" – the *mitzvot* which are between man and man, especially those referring to financial damages. (Radak)
2. A just society is necessary in order prevent oppression and theivery. (Malbim)

## ואהבת חסד

1. *Chesed* – lovingkindness – is doing acts that are לפנים משורת הדין – beyond the dictates of the law. (Radak)
2. One should love doing acts of lovingkindness, and not view them as a burden. (Da'at Sofrim)

Rav Wolbe in *עלי שור* develops the idea of *chesed* as that of supplying a person with whatever he or she lacks (אשר יחסר לו), and shows how we can implement this idea in our lives. See *עלי שור*, חלק א', chapter 14, or *עלי שור*, חלק ב', p. 194, א', ב', ג'.

## והצנע לכת עם אלוקיך

One should believe in Hashem with one's whole heart and soul – the two most intimate parts of a human's being. (Radak)

Gila Manolson, in her book *Outside Inside, A fresh look of tzniut*, particularly in chapter 5 and in the conclusion, deals with the concept of *tzniut* as a way of life.

The Gemara in Makkot 24a understands this verse as encapsulating the basic principles of the Torah.

The example the Gemara brings for a *mitzvah* of הצנע לכת is הרצאת המת והכנסת כלה – burying the dead and providing for a bride. The Gemara notes that although these acts are done in public, still they should be done discreetly (בצנועא), without drawing attention to oneself. How much more so does that apply to *mitzvot* which by nature are done in private (such as giving charity).

Me'am Lo'ez notes that these two *mitzvot* relate to situations that are opposites of each other – sadness versus joy. This teaches us that we need to be close to Hashem both in times of intense joy and in times of intense sadness.

This chapter is the *haftara* for *Parashat Balak*. The students should be able to see the obvious connection immediately. They should be challenged to find other ideas that connect the two.

\* A longer discussion can be initiated in the classroom regarding the significance of this three point “summary” of what Hashem wants from us. The Gemara in Makkot 24a can be read in its entirety, and one can ask the students to explain why these three things were singled out as so basic for being a proper Jew.

**הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם עשות  
משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**

## Chapter 7, Verses 18-20

### Verse 18:

מי קל כמוך נושא עוון ועובר על פשע לשארית נחלתו לא החזיק  
לעד אפו כי חפץ חסד הוא

מי קל כמוך נושא עוון ועובר על פשע לשארית נחלתו

The prophet is praising Hashem for the good things he is promising the Jewish people. Michah states that there is no one like Hashem. Who forgives people's sins, although they, the remnants of the travails of the coming of the *Mashiach*, are undeserving of forgiveness. (Metzudat David)

לא החזיק לעד אפו כי חפץ חסד הוא

1. Hashem never remains angry for long. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem's *chesed* – His lovingkindness – will override the people's sins in the time of the redemption. (Radak)

Rabbi Friedlander, in his book 'חלק א', שפתי חיים, p. 215, speaks of the concept of *teshuva* and forgiveness, as a most important concept in *teshuva* and forgiveness.

### Verse 19:

ישוב ירחמנו יכבוש עוונותינו ותשליך במצולות ים כל חטאתם

ישוב ירחמנו יכבוש עוונותינו

Hashem will grasp our sins, so that we will not be held accountable for them. (Metzudat David)

ותשליך במצולות ים כל חטאתם

It will be as if Hashem will throw the sins into the depths of the ocean, where they will be forgotten, and therefore we will not be punished for them. (Metzudat David)

Michah

Verse 20:

תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם אשר נשבעת לאבותינו מימי  
קדם

תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם

1. Hashem will fulfill His promise to Yaakov Avinu, and reward Avraham Avinu's acts of *chesed*. (Metzudat David)
2. This fulfillment of the promise (the *emet*) to Yaakov will be Avraham Avinu's reward for having taught his children the way of G-d. (Rashi)

אשר נשבעת לאבותינו מימי קדם

1. The vow referred to here is the promise made at the time of *Akedat Yitzchak*: ויירש זרעך את שער אויביו. (Metzudat David)
2. "Whatever you promised our forefathers" includes all the forefathers, since all of them received promises from Hashem. (Radak)
- 3.\* Yitzchak Avinu reflects *midat hadin* – the aspect of justice, and that is why he is not mentioned here. (Alsheikh Hakadosh)

The students should notice that Yitzchak Avinu is not mentioned, and see how the commentators deal with this problem.

These three verses are read at *Tashlich* on Rosh Hashanah, and the students should recognize them as the source of the name for this prayer, while noting why these verses are read at that occasion.

The Artscroll Machzor connects each phrase in these verses to one of the 13 attributes of mercy of G-d. A suggested exercise is to read the introduction in the Machzor and review the basic ideas with the students. The students should pair off and read through the commentary on all the attributes. Each pair can choose one to act out before the class, with the class then guessing which attribute is being acted out.

As a homework assignment, they can read the section on *Avot* in *The Art of Jewish Prayer*, by Rabbi Kurzner. This section discusses the different attributes of each of the forefathers, and how we can emulate them. The students should summarize the section, and write three new things they learned.



**מי קל כמוך... לא החזיק לעד אפו כי חפץ חסד הוא  
ישוב ירחמנו יכבוש עוונותינו ותשליך במצולות  
ים כל חטאתם**

Michah

# THE BOOK OF NACHUM

## *Introduction:*

This is a prophecy of the destruction of Ninveh. Although the people of Ninveh did *teshuva* in the time of Yonah, by now they had reverted back to their evil ways. (Targum Yonatan)

Nachum came from Elkosh; nothing more is known about him. According to Seder Olam, Nachum prophesied in the time of Menashe; Menashe is not mentioned here by name because of his evil deeds. (Radak)

## Chapter 1, Verses 1-10

### Verse 1:

משא נינווה ספר חזון נחום האלקושי

משא נינווה

Ninveh was Assyria's capitol. Hashem is avenging Assyria for exiling the Ten Tribes from their land, by destroying it in the first year of Nevuchadnetzar's reign. (Radak)

ספר חזון נחום

Nachum's prophecy is referred to as a *sefer*, since it was written and sent to Ninveh, and not delivered orally. (Me'am Lo'ez)

**Verse 2:**

קל קנוא ונוקם ה' נוקם ה' ובעל חמה נוקם ה' לצריו ונוטר הוא  
לאויביו

קל קנוא ונוקם ה' נוקם ה' ובעל חמה

1. Hashem is jealous and vengeful. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem is jealous for his people, as he sees them suffering in exile. Although Assyria was appointed by Him to be the Jews' agent of destruction, the Assyrians overdid it. (Radak)
3. The word *nokem* appears three times in this verse, paralleling the three stages in which the Jews were exiled: First to be exiled were the two-and-a-half tribes who lived to the east of the Jordan River. Next were the tribes of Zevulun and Naftali; and third were the people of Shomron – the rest of the kingdom of Israel. (Me'am Lo'ez)

נוקם ה' לצריו ונוטר הוא לאויביו

The enemies of the Jews are also the enemies of Hashem. (Radak)

One approach to understanding the meaning of the “vengeance of Hashem”, can be found in מכתב מאליהו חלק ג', p. 247.

**Verse 3:**

ה' ארך אפיים וגדול כוח ונקה לא ינקה ה' בסופה ובשערה דרכו  
וענן אבק רגליו

ה' ארך אפיים וגדול כוח ונקה לא ינקה

Hashem can punish any time. He is patient and slow to anger, and does not rush to punish people. However, Hashem does not forgive completely. (Metzudat David)

ה' בסופה ובשערה דרכו

Hashem comes with a tempest wind to punish the nations – such a wind both shakes them and destroys them. (Metzudat David)

וענן אבק רגליו

The decrees that emanate from Hashem against the nations are like a dark brooding cloud. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 4:

גוער בים ויבשהו וכל הנהרות החריב אומלל בשן וכרמל ופרח  
לבנון אומלל

גוער בים ויבשהו וכל הנהרות החריב

1. This is an allegorical description of the destruction of the princes of Assyria. (Metzudat David)
2. This verse tells of Hashem's mastery over nature. In the same way, Hashem can easily have one nation come to rule over another. (Radak)

אומלל בשן וכרמל ופרח לבנון אומלל

1. The Bashan, Carmel and Levanon are fertile areas, serving as an allegory of the rich people, who will be destroyed. (Metzudat David)
2. The successes of the people will come to an end. (Metzudat David)
- 3.\* The Bashan, Carmel and Levanon are golden, sweet fruits that were planted in the Temple by Shlomo Hamelech. They dried up when the Temple was destroyed. (Rashi)

These fruits reflect the wonderful spiritual state that existed until the enemy came. The students should recognize the word Levanon as being synonymous with the Temple (Hoshea 14).

## Verse 5:

הרים רעשו ממנו והגבעות התמוגגו ותישא הארץ מפניו ותבל  
וכל יושבי בה

הרים רעשו ממנו והגבעות התמוגגו

1. This is a metaphoric description of the leaders and princes, who will be terrified. (Metzudat David)
2. The verse describes the powers of Hashem: the very foundations of the world will tremble. (Radak)

Nachum

ותישא הארץ מפניו ותבל וכל יושבי בה

The land will burn up as a result of Hashem's anger. This is a metaphor, describing the great fear and destruction that will overtake the people. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 6:**

לפני זעמו מי יעמוד ומי יקום בחרון אפו חמתו ניתכה כאש  
והצורים ניתצו ממנו

לפני זעמו מי יעמוד ומי יקום בחרון אפו חמתו ניתכה כאש

There are different levels of anger: *chemah* is anger hidden in one's heart; *af* is anger that is revealed; *za'am* is the punishment itself.

The verse, then, reads: Who can withstand the punishment itself (*za'am*), or who can withstand the anger, even without punishment (*af*)? Even the unrevealed anger itself (*chemah*) can burn one to the ground. (Malbim)

והצורים ניתצו ממנו

Hashem's anger is all-consuming: rocks are split by it. In other words, strong and powerful people can be destroyed by it. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

טוב ה' למעוז ביום צרה ויודע חוסי בו

טוב ה' למעוז ביום צרה...

1. Unlike an earthly king, Hashem, even on the Day of Judgment, is concerned in saving those who believe in Him. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem will save the Jews who will be living in exile in Assyria, and they will not be harmed by the general destruction of the kingdom. (Radak)

The students should note the two different approaches to this verse, and be able to base each approach on the context of the chapter.

**Verse 8:**

ובשטף עובר כלה יעשה מקומה ואויביו ירדף חושך

ובשטף עובר כלה יעשה מקומה

1. Nevuchadnetzar will overrun the city like running water. (Metzudat David)
2. Ninveh will be destroyed in one blow – and afterwards it will be hard to tell that the city had ever existed. (Radak)

ואויביו ירדף חושך

\* Darkness, meaning great troubles, will pursue the enemies. (Radak)

**Verse 9:**

מה תחשבון אל ה' כלה הוא עושה לא תקום פעמיים צרה

מה תחשבון אל ה' כלה הוא עושה...

The people of Ninveh should not think that they will be able to escape Hashem's wrath; they will be destroyed in one blow. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 10:**

כי עד סירים סבוכים וכסבאם סבואים אוכלו בקש יבש מלא

כי עד סירים סבוכים וכסבאם סבואים

The punishment will come upon them suddenly, while they are still drinking and partying. They will still be strongly rooted when they are destroyed. (Rashi)

As a homework assignment, the students can write the minutes of the town meeting when Nachum's letter is received in Ninveh. The minutes should reflect the different options that were open to the city: fighting, doing *teshuva*, ignoring the message, or using preventive measures.

# Chavakuk



# THE BOOK OF CHAVAKUK

## *Introduction:*

There is no information given here on Chavakuk's ancestry, nor on the times he lived in. According to Seder Olam, Chavakuk lived in the times of the king Menasheh. The prophecy is about the rise of Nevuchadnetzar and the destruction of the Jewish kingdom. It also foretells the rise of Persia and Mede, who would later conquer Babylon. (Radak)

According to the Zohar, Chavakuk was the son of the Shunamite woman who was promised by Elisha that she will be *choveket ben* – she will hug a child. Chavakuk was further embraced when Elisha lay upon him in order to revive him.

Chavakuk raises the profound question of *לֹא צַדִּיק וְרַע לֹא רָשָׁע וְטוֹב לוֹ* – why is it that righteous people suffer, and evil people seem to have good lives? Why does it seem as if there is no justice in this world? There are many approaches to answering this question. One way of dealing with this problem, is seeing the suffering as a message that is being sent to the person, and trying to understand it. See Rabbi J.D. Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek", in English translation in the book *Theological and Halachic Reflections on the Holocaust*, (Ktav Publishers), p. 62.

The essence of Chavakuk's prophecy is a complaint: it is not fair that the evil Nevuchadnetzar should vanquish the good nation of Israel. (Radak)

The Abarbanel explains that the question behind the book is not why good people suffer – for the Jews were not all good, and deserved punishment – but why evil people prosper. Why did Nevuchadnetzar have so much success in his conquests?

## Chapter 1

### Verses 1-2:

המשא אשר חזה חבקוק הנביא  
עד אנה ה' שיוועתי ולא תשמע אזעק אליך חמס ולא תושיע

עד אנה ה' שיוועתי ולא תשמע

Chavakuk was complaining about the exile to Babylon. He wanted to know how long he will have to call out to Hashem, until he gets a response. (Metzudat David)

אזעק אליך חמס ולא תושיע

Chavakuk is calling out to Hashem because of the *chamas* (pillage) being practiced against the Jews, with no response forthcoming from Him. (Radak)

### Verse 3:

למה תראני אוון ועמל תביט ושוד וחמס לנגדי ויהי ריב ומדון  
יישא

למה תראני אוון ועמל תביט ושוד וחמס לנגדי

In his prophecy, Chavakuk saw the hidden sins of the Jews, and the punishment that was befalling them. He complains to Hashem: Why does he have to be exposed to such painful sights? (Metzudat David)

ויהי ריב ומדון יישא

He sees the wicked people, who engage in fightmongering, prospering. (Rashi)

### Verse 4:

על כן תפוג תורה ולא יצא לנצח משפט כי רשע מכתיר את  
הצדיק על כן יצא משפט מעוקל

על כן תפוג תורה ולא יצא לנצח משפט

1. The success of Nevuchadnetzar weakens the force of Torah. People will say that there is no Divine Providence, and that everything happens by chance. (Metzudat David)

2. Since Nevuchadnetzar is not being prosecuted, the people will think that there is no reward or punishment in the world, and that will weaken the observance of the Torah commandments. (Radak)

כי רשע מכתיר את הצדיק על כן יצא משפט מעוקל

Nevuchadnetzar, the evil one, surrounds the righteous Israel in order to harm them. (Although the Jews have sinned, in comparison with Nevuchadnetzar they are righteous). It seems as if there is no justice. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 5:

ראו בגויים והביטו והיתמהו תמהו כי פועל פועל בימיכם לא  
תאמינו כי יסופר

ראו בגויים והביטו והיתמהו תמהו

1. One can't compare the reign and successes of Nevuchadnetzar to those of other kings – he is so much greater. (Metzudat David)
2. It is amazing that one who was not of royal blood was able to achieve such dominance without being stopped. (Abarbanel)

כי פועל פועל בימיכם לא תאמינו כי יסופר

1. What Nevuchadnetzar will accomplish will happen in their lifetime, and it will be hard to believe the unnatural things that he will do. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Even when the people are told of all the evil things Nevuchadnetzar will do, it will be hard to believe. (Radak)

### Verse 6:

כי הנני מקים את הכשדים הגוי המר והנמהר ההולך למרחבי  
ארץ לרשת משכנות לא לו

הגוי המר והנמהר

1. The Casdim (Babylonians) act with haste, without thinking. (Radak)
- 2.\* The prophet is describing the nation that Hashem is raising up, as a cruel and bitter one. (Metzudat David)

Chavakuk

ההולך למרחבי ארץ לרשת משכנות לא לו

The Casdim will go through the world, conquering land that does not belong to them. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

**איום ונורא הוא ממנו משפטו ושאתו יצא**

איום ונורא הוא ממנו משפטו... יצא

1. This nation frightens other nations. It acts independently, without relying on allies. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* As a people, the Casdim are terrible, and their actions are dreadful. Nevuchadnetzar is unconventional in his conquests: He does not abide by the commonly-accepted rules of warfare – for instance, that one does not start a war against another nation, unless provoked. (Malbim)

The students should note how the Malbim understands the word *mishpat* in this context, and how this reflects on the nature of Babylon, as depicted in this chapter.

**Verse 8:**

**וקלו מנמרים סוסיו וחדו מזאבי ערב ופשו פרשיו ופרשיו מרחוק  
יבואו יעופו כנשר חש לאכול**

וקלו מנמרים סוסיו וחדו מזאבי ערב

The Babylonians were very quick to devour their prey. The Casdim were worse than a hungry wolf, who hunts at night. (Metzudat David)

ופשו פרשיו

The number of Babylonian soldiers grows, and none die in war. (Metzudat David)

ופרשיו מרחוק יבואו יעופו כנשר חש לאכול

Although their army has to travel a great distance to fight, they never tire. It is as if they fly in to devour their prey. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 9:

כולה לחמס יבוא מגמת פניהם קדימה ויאסוף כחול שבי

כולה לחמס יבוא מגמת פניהם קדימה

1. Their whole purpose in attacking is to get the loot of the war; they do not fight for the honor of winning. They therefore leave nothing behind, and devour everything. They also burn and destroy the newly-conquered land, since their whole purpose is to return to their own land in the east, not to resettle the lands they conquer. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* *Kadimah* denotes *azut panim* – brazenness (See Shemot 14:21: ורוח קדים עזה). (Radak)

The students should write down the difference between the two commentaries in two words (literal vs. figurative). They should also think about what is learned about the Casdim from each image.

ויאסוף כחול שבי

They gather captives in great numbers – like the sand of the sea, and leave nothing behind. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 10:

והוא במלכים יתקלס ורוזנים משחק לו הוא לכל מבצר ישחק  
ויצבור עפר וילכדה

והוא במלכים יתקלס ורוזנים משחק לו

Nevuchadnetzar ridicules and mocks the other kings and leaders. (Metzudat David)

הוא לכל מבצר ישחק ויצבור עפר וילכדה

1. Nevuchadnetzar laughs at a fortified city – so easy it is for him to conquer it. He takes sand, builds a ramp and conquers it. (Metzudat David)
2. Nevuchadnetzar mobilizes masses of people – like sand – and conquers the city. (Radak)

Here too, the difference between the commentators (literal vs. figurative) should be noted. The students should comment on which one is closer to the simple meaning of the words and why.

**Verse 11:**

אז חלף רוח ויעבור ואשם זו כוחו לאלוהו

אז חלף רוח ויעבור...

When Nevuchadnetzar sees his success, he becomes quite boastful and believes it comes from his god. (Radak)

**Verse 12:**

הלוא אתה מקדם ה' אלוקי קדושי לא נמות ה' למשפט שמתו  
וצור להוכיח יסדתו

לא נמות

Chavakuk is praying that although Hashem has given Nevuchadnetzar the power to exile the Jewish people, he should not be allowed to annihilate them completely. (Radak)

ה' למשפט שמתו וצור להוכיח יסדתו

Hashem created Nevuchadnetzar so that he will punish anyone who rebels Him; Hashem, who is the stronghold of the world, set up Nevuchadnetzar as a berater. (Radak)

**Verse 13:**

טהור עיניים מראות רע והביט אל עמל לא תוכל למה תביט  
בוגדים תחריש בבלע רשע צדיק ממנו

טהור עיניים מראות רע והביט אל עמל לא תוכל

Chavakuk is complaining to Hashem: Hashem has such pure eyes, that He does not like to look upon bad people. How can He look upon Nevuchadnetzar favorably, as he harms Israel? (Metzudat David)

למה תביט בוגדים תחריש בבלע רשע צדיק ממנו

Hashem rejects evil. How can He bear evildoers and allow them to commit evil? And more so, how can He let these evildoers harm the Jewish people, who with all their sins, are still more righteous than Nevuchadnetzar? (Radak)

The teacher should point out that the phrase טהור עיניים is used in the *piyutim* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, to describe Hashem.

**Verse 14:**

ותעשה אדם כדגי הים כרמש לא מושל בו

ותעשה אדם כדגי הים...

Chavakuk is complaining: Why does Hashem allow people to become like fish and crawly things, whom anyone can come and take? The people have become like abandoned objects, free for the taking. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 15:**

כולה בחכה העלה יגורוהו בחרמו ויאספהו במכמרתו על כן  
ישמח ויגיל

כולה בחכה העלה יגורוהו בחרמו ויאספהו במכמרתו

Nevuchadnetzar is compared to a fisherman, who is able to catch anything in his net. (Metzudat David)

על כן ישמח ויגיל

1. Since things are going well for Nevuchadnetzar, he is happy, and not worried about the future repercussions of his actions. (Metzudat David)
2. Since he is successful in his conquests, he is happy. (Radak)

**Verse 16:**

על כן יזבח לחרמו ויקטר למכמרתו כי בהמה שמן חלקו ומאכלו  
בריאה

על כן יזבח לחרמו ויקטר למכמרתו

Nevuchadnetzar attributes his success to his tools and strategy, or to his gods. (Metzudat David)

כי בהמה שמן חלקו ומאכלו בריאה

He believes that he has received his fat portion because of his net, or because of his gods. (Metzudat David)

Chavakuk

**Verse 17:**

העל כן יריק חרמו ותמיד להרוג גויים לא יחמול

העל כן יריק חרמו... גויים לא יחמול

Even when he empties his net, he still isn't satiated, and he continues his slaughter.  
(Metzudat David)

The students should write a homework assignment: a newspaper article of an imaginary battle fought by Babylon. The article should include descriptions from this chapter of how they fight, what their aims are in fighting, and how they view themselves as warriors. The article should include an interview with Nevuchadnetzar himself.

The theme of this chapter is Chavakuk's accusation against Hashem for allowing evil to exist in this world. This is like Avraham Avinu pleading for Sodom and stating חלילה לך, השופט כל הארץ לא יעשה משפט? Chavakuk's plea reflects his love for his people, and a desire to understand the ways of Hashem. (Da'at Mikra)



## Chapter 2, Verses 1-15

### Verse 1:

על משמרתי אעמודה ואתיצבה על מצור ואצפה לראות מה  
ידבר בי ומה אשיב על תוכחתי

על משמרתי אעמודה ואתיצבה על מצור

1. Just as guard does not leave his post, nor an army a siege, Chavakuk refuses to stop arguing with Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. Chavakuk is like in a state of siege – he is surrounded by his questions about the success of the evil, and cannot escape them. (Radak)

Chavakuk drew a circle around where he was standing, and refused to leave until he received an answer to his questions. (Midrash Shocher Tov)

ואצפה לראות מה ידבר בי ומה אשיב על תוכחתי

Chavakuk wanted to know what Hashem will answer, in order to answer all those who press him about the same questions. (Metzudat David)

The commentary of Metzudat David on the second half of the verse relates to both its parts.

### Verse 2:

ויענני ה' ויאמר כתוב חזון ובאר על הלוחות למען ירוץ קורא בו

כתוב חזון ובאר על הלוחות למען ירוץ קורא בו..

Chavakuk is commanded to write down Hashem's response clearly and simply, so that it will be able to be read with ease. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 3:**

**כי עוד חזון למועד ויפח לקץ ולא יכזב אם יתמהמה חכה לו כי  
בוא יבוא לא יאחר**

כי עוד חזון למועד ויפח לקץ...

Aside from the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, there is another vision of ultimate redemption. This may not come to pass for a long time, but one must believe that it will come in its proper time. It was imperative for Chavakuk to speak about the destruction of Babylon, so that people will recognize the hand of Hashem in history, and so come to believe in the greater future redemption. (Metzudat David)

**כי עוד חזון למועד is the first answer of Hashem to Chavakuk's question. Hashem has a time framework beyond our earthly frame of reference. Everyone is rewarded and punished in the right time, taking into account factors that are unknown to us. (Rabbi Wein, tape on Chavakuk)**

**Verse 4:**

**הנה עופלה לא ישרה נפשו בו וצדיק באמונתו יחיה**

הנה עופלה לא ישרה נפשו בו

One who does not have faith in Hashem, is haughty (from *ofel* – fortress) and not afraid of evil. (Radak)

וצדיק באמונתו יחיה

1. One who is humble (has a *nefesh shefalah*) is also G-d fearing, and therefore he will be saved when the bad things befall the wicked. (Radak)
2. A righteous person lives on, realizing that everything comes from Hashem, and not from his own efforts. (Metzudat David)

**The Gemara in Makkot 24 sees this statement as encompassing the entire Torah. (See above, Michah 6:9). The Gemara also quotes a verse from Amos (5:4): כה אמר ה' לבית ישראל דרשוני וחיו, as another verse which encapsulates the entire Torah. Whereas the verse from Amos reflects an intellectual view, the verse in Chavakuk brings a more emotional point of view of the Torah.**

\* Rav Eliyahu Dessler in his book *מכתב מאליהו* devotes an entire essay to belief. He develops a five-level hierarchy of ways to reach belief in G-d:

- 1) Through education and habit – in such matters as davening and forms of speech (G-d willing, Thank G-d, etc.)
  - 2) Through observation of nature.
  - 3) Through ascending steps of holiness: first, to be truthful, and to seek truth; second, to be ascetic – to overcome one's baser inclinations; and third, to be holy in an active way – to embrace the Torah enthusiastically, for instance, to look for novelty in one's learning.
  - 4) Through developing confidence (*bitachon*) in Hashem. When one sees the Divine Providence, one's belief in Hashem is strengthened.
  - 5) Through total and constant contemplation of Hashem. This is the highest level.
- This essay can be given as a homework reading assignment to an advanced class, with a discussion held afterwards in class.

#### Verse 5:

ואף כי היין בוגד גבר יהיר ולא ינווה אשר הרחיב כשאל נפשו  
והוא כמוות ולא ישבע ויאסוף אליו כל הגוים ויקבוץ אליו כל  
העמים

ואף כי היין בוגד גבר יהיר ולא ינווה

1. Nevuchadnetzar is a drunkard who makes rash decisions, and betrays his allies. He will not remain in power for long; Hashem will punish him in due time. (Radak)
- 2.\* The haughty king mentioned here is Belshatzar. He had the audacity to drink from the Temple vessels, bringing on the downfall of Babylon (see Daniel, chapter 5). (Malbim)

It is recommended that the students read the chapter in Daniel for homework, to receive the historical background of Belshatzar's death. It is also important to connect it to the story of Purim. See *History of the Jewish People* (Artscroll), pp. 22-23.

אשר הרחיב כשאל נפשו והוא כמוות לא ישבע

He desired to conquer the whole world, and was never satisfied. This is similar to death that constantly swallows people and is never satisfied. (Metzudat David)

Chavakuk

ויאסוף אליו כל הגויים ויקבוץ אליו כל העמים

Nevuchadnetzar wanted the whole world to be subjugated to him. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 6:**

הלוא אלה כולם עליו משל יישאו ומליצה חידות לו ויאמר הוי  
המרבה לא לו עד מתי ומכביד עליו עבטיט

הלוא אלה כולם עליו משל יישאו ומליצה חידות לו

He will ultimately be the subject of songs and riddles in all the nations that he conquered. (Metzudat David)

ויאמר הוי המרבה לא לו עד מתי ומכביד עליו עבטיט

1. They will say: “Woe to one who increases his kingdom, when that kingdom in the end will not belong to him or to his descendants. All that he is doing is increasing his sins like a load of mud.” (Metzudat David)
2. When Nevuchadnetzar gathered money, did he think it would be his forever? The accumulated money was like a burden – like a weight of mud on him. (Radak)
3. Ultimately, everyone dies, and is buried under the ground. (Radak’s father)

אל תירא כי יעשר איש כי ירבה כבוד ביתו כי לא  
במותו יקח הכל, לא ירד אחריו כבודו

The students should discuss the different pictures drawn by each commentator.

**This is the second answer to Chavakuk’s question: The wicked person ultimately gets punished:**

כי עוד חזון למועד ויפח לקץ ולא יכזב אם יתמהמה חכה לו כי בוא יבוא לא יאחר

**Verse 7:**

הלוא פתע יקומו נושכיך ויקצו מזעזעיך והיית למשיסות למו

הלוא פתע יקומו נושכיך ויקצו מזעזעיך

Persia and Media will attack Nevuchadnetzar suddenly. (Metzudat David)

והיית למשיסות למו

They will trample Nevuchadnetzar with their feet. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

כי אתה שלות גויים רבים ישלוך כל יתר עמים מדמי אדם וחמס  
ארץ קריה וכל יושבי בה

כי אתה שלות גויים רבים ישלוך כל יתר עמים

Since Babylon despoiled nations, they too will be despoiled. (Metzudat David)

כל יתר עמים

The nations that were not under the rule of Babylon, namely Persia and Mede.  
(Radak)

מדמי אדם וחמס ארץ קריה וכל יושבי בה

The Babylonians will receive retribution of the blood of the Jewish people that they spilled in the Land of Israel and in Jerusalem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 9:**

הוי בוצע בצע רע לביתו לשום במרום קינו להינצל מכף רע

הוי בוצע בצע רע לביתו

This is speaking of Nevuchadnetzar, who stole from other nations in order to build his empire. (Radak)

לשום במרום קינו להינצל מכל רע

Nevuchadnetzar gathered wood and stone from other nations and used them to build himself a big fortress where he could be protected from his enemies. (Radak)

**Verse 10:**

יעצת בושח לביתך קצות עמים רבים וחוטא נפשך

יעצת בושח לביתך

When the enemies come and destroy the fortified tower, it will be an embarrassment to Nevuchadnetzar and his family. (Radak)

קצות עמים רבים וחוטא נפשך

The destruction of many nations for the purpose of building his house, was a sin of Nevuchadnetzar's soul. (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

כי אבן מקיר תזעק וכפיס מעץ יעונה

כי אבן מקיר תזעק...

Every stone and beam in the house cries out that it is stolen. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 12:**

הוי בונה עיר בדמים וכונן קריה בעוולה

הוי בונה עיר בדמים...

The stones cry out that the city of Babylon was built through bloodshed, and the ceiling calls out that even after the pillaged city was conquered, robbery and injustice prevailed. (Malbim)

**Verse 13:**

הלוא הנה מאת ה' צבקות וייגעו עמים בדי אש ולאומים בדי ריק  
ייעפו

הלוא הנה מאת ה' צבקות וייגעו עמים...

1. When Babylon will be destroyed, the people will realize that all their conquests were for naught; that all they built was destroyed by fire. (Radak)
2. All the actions of nations are ultimately for naught, since one cannot outsmart or defeat Hashem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 14:**

כי תימלא הארץ לדעת את כבוד ה' כמים יכסו על ים

כי תימלא הארץ לדעת את כבוד ה'

1. Belshatzar and Nevuchadnetzar came to realize Hashem's power before they died. Coresh clearly saw the power of Hashem as well (see [Ezra 1:2](#)) (Radak)
- 2.\* The verse is referring to the End of the Days, to the war of Gog and Magog, about which it is also said that the world will be filled with the knowledge of

Hashem (see Yeshayahu 11:9: כמים לים מכסים). Compared to the events of the wars of Gog and Magog, the destruction of Babylon will be a small matter. (Radak)

3. Since the Jewish people will be filled with knowledge of Hashem, they will be able to take revenge upon those who tried to harm them. (Metzudat David)

כמים יכסו על הים

Just as water covers the bed of the sea, likewise the knowledge of Hashem will fill the whole earth. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 15:**

הוי משקה רעהו מספח חמתך ואף שכר למען הביט על מעוריהם

הוי משקה רעהו מספח חמתך ואף שכר

1. Woe to the nations who at the beginning befriended the Jews, and then turned on them to destroy them. It was as if they gave them a cup of destruction to drink. (Metzudat David)
2. Nevuchadnetzar used to drink with the other kings, whom he had imprisoned. (Radak)

The students should note how each commentator understands the word רעיו.

למען הביט על מעוריהם

1. The nations tricked the Jews not in order to conquer their lands, but rather because they hated the Jewish people so much that they wanted to make fun of them. (Metzudat David)
2. Nevuchadnetzar drank with the imprisoned kings in order to ridicule them. (Radak)

## Chapter 3, Verses 1-4, 18-19

### Verse 1:

תפילה לחבקוק הנביא על שגיונות

תפילה לחבקוק הנביא...

1. After Chavakuk argued with Hashem and challenged Him, he now turned to sing Hashem's praises. (Metzudat David)
2. The "sin" that Chavakuk committed was his refusal to leave the place he was standing until Hashem answered him (see above, chapter 2, verse 1). (Mahari Kra)
- 3.\* In this prayer Chavakuk pleaded that if the Jewish people repent, all their sins should be considered accidental (*shigyonot* – mistakes). (Targum Yonatan)
- 4.\* This prayer is patterned after the Psalms, like the psalm that begins שגיון לדוד. The content of this prayer is that Hashem should protect the Jewish people from the troubles they will confront in exile. (Radak)

The students should note the two approaches in understanding the word שגיון: mistake, or song. In the first approach, there are three ways of understanding the nature of the mistake. It is important to see how each approach and way connect with the entire book.

### Verse 2:

ה' שמעתי שמעך יראתי ה' פעלך בקרב שנים חייהו בקרב שנים  
תודיע ברוגז רחם תזכור

ה' שמעתי שמעך יראתי ה' פעלך בקרב שנים חייהו

Chavakuk heard about the long exile that was to come, and became frightened. He is asking Hashem to allow the Jews to live, and to always watch over the people. (Metzudat David)



בקרב שנים תודיע ברוגז רחם תזכור

1. Even in times of anger, Hashem should remember the people with kind feelings. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem should remember the love of the forefathers. רחם is numerically equivalent to אברהם – Hashem should remember the covenant made with Avraham. (Radak)

**Verse 3:**

אלוק מתימן יבוא וקדוש מהר פארן סלה כיסה שמים הודו  
ותהילתו מלאה הארץ

אלוק מתימן יבוא וקדוש מהר פארן סלה

Hashem went to the other nations to offer them the Torah, and they refused to accept it. Teiman is Esav, and Paran is Yishma'el. See Devarim 33:2. (Rashi)

Esav and Yishma'el represent the sons of Avraham and Yitzchak. If they rejected the Torah, one can only imagine how strongly the other nations rejected it as well. (Maharal, דרוש על התורה)

כיסה שמיים הודו ותהילתו מלאה הארץ

This is referring to the time that the Jewish people accepted the Torah on Mount Sinai. (Mahari Kra, Rashi)

**Verse 4:**

ונוגה כאור תהיה קרניים מידו לו ושם חביון עוזה

ונוגה כאור תהיה קרניים מידו לו

The day of the giving of the Torah was filled with the light of Creation. (Rashi)

ושם חביון עוזה

1. At the giving of the Torah, Hashem's strength, which until then had been hidden, was revealed. (Rashi)
2. The Torah, which had been hidden for two thousand years, was revealed. (Mahari Kra)

The chapter goes on to describe different events mentioned in the Bible (particularly in the desert, and upon entering the Land of Israel), that reflect Hashem's Providence and strength. The end of the chapter deals with a vision of the future.

This review of Jewish history is one way the prophet can deal with his original dilemma: History has shown that ultimately Israel – and justice – prevail, and that one must have faith in Hashem.

**Verse 18:**

ואני בה' אעלוזה אגילה באלוקי ישעי

ואני בה' אעלוזה...

This joy is what the Jewish people will feel when Gog will be vanquished. (Radak)

**Verse 19:**

אלוקים ה' חיילי וישם רגלי כאיילות ועל במותי ידריכני למנצח  
בנגינותי

אלוקים ה' חיילי וישם רגלי כאיילות ועל במותי ידריכני

Hashem makes one's feet swifter than a deer, so that one can chase the enemies. He helps one trample the enemies in one's own land (*bamot* – high places – referring to Jerusalem, which sits on a mountain). The prophet is singing about this miracle. (Radak)

למנצח בנגינותי

This prayer was given over to the Levites to sing, together with the melody for it. (Metzudat David)

This reference to music is the ultimate statement of reconciliation between Chavakuk and Hashem: Hashem is similar to a conductor who directs hundreds of musical instruments in perfect harmony. And so, everything in this world has its proper time and place (Rabbi Wein, tape on Chavakuk)

Chapter 3 is read as the *haftara* for the second day of Shavuot. As seen above, the imagery of Mount Sinai is found in the beginning of the chapter.

# THE BOOK OF TZEFANYAH

## ***Introduction:***

Tzefanyah lived around 50 years before the destruction of the First Temple. (Da'at Mikra)

According to the Radak, Tzefanyah was the prophet who educated the elite in the houses of study (*batei midrashot*), while Yirmiyahu taught the masses of men, and Chulda the prophetess taught the women.

The name Tzefanyah reflects his time and mission: *Tzafon* is a hint at the enemy, who is going to come from the north (see Yirmiyahu 1:14: מצפון תיפתח הרעה) to destroy the Temple. *Tzafun* is a hint that this prophet was revealing hidden things to mankind. (Rabbi Wein, tape on Tzefanyah)

## Chapter 1, Verses 1; 12-14

### Verse 1:

דבר ה' אשר היה אל צפניה בן כושי בן גדליה בן אמריה בן  
חזקיה בימי יאשיהו בן אמון מלך יהודה

According to the Ibn Ezra, the Chizkiyah mentioned here as a forebear of Tzefanyah was the king Chizkiyah.

Chapter 1 describes the terrible destruction that will occur. The teacher should read verses 1-11 out loud, in order to get a feeling of the chapter. Verses 12-14 are to be studied in detail, in order to understand the theme of the chapter in greater depth.

**Verse 12:**

**והיה בעת ההיא אחפש את ירושלים בנרות ופקדתי על האנשים  
הקופאים על שמריהם האומרים בלבבם לא ייטיב ה' ולא ירע**

והיה בעת ההיא אחפש את ירושלים בנרות

1. Nobody will be able to hide from Hashem; everyone will be punished. (Metzudat David)
2. Checking by candlelight indicates that one is searching carefully. (Radak)

Chazal understand this verse to be the basis for checking for *chametz* by candlelight. (Pesachim 7b)

ופקדתי על האנשים הקופאים על שמריהם האומרים בלבבם לא ייטיב ה' ולא ירע

The people who are being punished are those who are complacent. They lack nothing, and believe that there is no Divine Providence in this world. They are like wine that sits, motionless, on its dregs (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

**והיה חילם למשיסה ובתיהם לשממה ובנו בתים ולא ישבו ונטעו  
כרמים ולא ישתו את יינם**

והיה חילם למשיסה ובתיהם לשממה

1. The people's wealth will be trampled by the enemy, and they will be exiled from their homes. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* One sees Hashem's Providence in all areas: Money, houses and crops will all be taken by the enemy. (Malbim)

ובנו בתים ולא ישבו ונטעו כרמים ולא ישתו את יינם

They will build houses and plant vineyards for naught, since they will never live in the houses, nor drink from the wine. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 14:**

קרוב יום ה' הגדול קרוב ומהר מאוד קול יום ה' מר צורח שם  
גיבור

קרוב יום ה' הגדול קרוב ומהר מאוד...

The day of retribution is announced by the prophet, as fast-approaching. It will be such a loud day, that even warriors will be frightened and will cry out in fear. (Metzudat David)

The teacher should read the rest of the chapter out loud.

## Chapter 2, Verses 1-4

### Verse 1:

התקוששו וקושו הגוי לא נכסף

התקוששו וקושו

1. Everyone should seek out their misdeeds and repent. They should then help their friends find their misdeeds as well, and help them to repent. (Metzudat David)
2. First correct your own misdeeds, and then go on to try to correct the misdeeds of others, as it says in Sanhedrin 18a: קשוט עצמך ואחר כך קשוט אחרים. (Rashi)

הגוי לא נכסף

1. The Jews are described as a nation that does not desire Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. The Jews are a people who do not desire to look inward and expose their sins, nor do they want to improve the behavior of others. (Radak)

The teacher should discuss the concept of the desire to serve Hashem – not only to do the minimum in a routine fashion, but to want to improve one's service of Hashem to grow spiritually.

### Verse 2:

בטרם לדת חוק כמוץ עבר יום בטרם לא יבוא עליכם חרון אף ה'  
בטרם לא יבוא עליכם יום אף ה'

בטרם לדת חוק

One should improve one's ways before the decree is carried out. (Radak)

כמוץ עבר יום

The days of exile are like chaff blowing in the wind. (Metzudat David)

בטרם לא יבוא עליכם חרון אף ה' בטרם לא יבוא עליכם יום אף ה'

1. The warning is repeated for emphasis. The anger of Hashem is manifested at the time of the punishment. (Metzudat David)
2. Tzefanyah is warning the people to repent before the decree is carried out. That way, the day of retribution will come, but without Hashem's wrath; and perhaps the day will not come at all. (Malbim)

### Verse 3:

בקשו את ה' כל ענווי הארץ אשר משפטו פעלו בקשו צדק בקשו  
ענווה אולי תיסתרו ביום אף ה'

בקשו את ה' כל ענווי הארץ אשר משפטו פעלו

Although many Jews sinned, there were those who remained loyal to Hashem. (Radak)

בקשו צדק בקשו ענווה

1. The righteous people should help others return to Hashem. (Radak)
2. The rest of the people should seek justice and humility. (Metzudat David)

אולי תיסתרו ביום אף ה'

1. If the people return to Hashem, although they will have to go through the process of exile, they will be saved from the sword. (Radak)
2. The people who do *teshuva* will be able to survive the exile experience and will return to the Land of Israel. (Metzudat David)

The fundamental concepts of 'משפטי ה' are developed by R. Chaim Shmuelevitz in his essay "משפטי ה'", included in his book מאמר א' שיחות מוסר, (1973).

### Verse 4:

כי עזה עזובה תהיה ואשקלון לשממה אשרוד בצהריים יגרשוה  
ועקרון תיעקר

כי עזה עזובה תהיה ואשקלון לשממה

When the Jewish people return to the Land, they will find it bereft of its inhabitants. (Metzudat David)

## Chapter 3, Verses 16-20

### Verse 16:

ביום ההוא ייאמר לירושלים אל תיראי ציון אל ירפו ידייך

ביום ההוא ייאמר לירושלים...

1. The prophets will tell Jerusalem there is no longer any need to fear. (Radak)
2. Each person will tell his fellow man that there is no longer any need to fear. (Radak)
3. The other nations will tell the Jews that there is no longer any need to fear. (Radak)

### Verse 17:

ה' אלוקיך בקרבך גיבור יושיע ושיש עלייך בשמחה יחריש  
באהבתו יגיל עלייך ברינה

ה' אלוקיך בקרבך גיבור יושיע

Hashem is the hero who will save the Jewish people. (Metzudat David)

ישיש עלייך בשמחה יחריש באהבתו יגיל עלייך ברחמים

As a reflection of Hashem's love to His people, He will ignore their sins and not mention them, so as not to embarrass them. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 18:

נוגי ממועד אספתי ממך היו משאת עליה חרפה

נוגי ממועד אספתי ממך

Those who experienced the exile, and were sad because of the long wait for redemption, will once again join the people. This is an allusion to the resurrection of the dead at the End of the Days. (Radak)



היו משאת עליה חרפה

They deserve to join the people, for they have already experienced much shame about Jerusalem, for many days. (Radak)

**Verse 19:**

הנני עושה את כל מענייך בעת ההיא והושעתי את הצולעה  
והנידחה אקבץ ושמתים לתהילה ולשם בכל הארץ בשתם

הנני עושה את כל מענייך בעת ההיא

At the time of redemption, Hashem will destroy all the nations that afflicted the Jewish people. (Metzudat David)

והושעתי את הצולעה והנידחה אקבץ ושמתים לתהילה ולשם בכל הארץ בשתם

The Jewish people, who are like the lame in their inability to return to their land, will return. The Jews, who were humiliated, will now bask in glory. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 20:**

בעת ההיא אביא אתכם ובעת קבצי אתכם כי אתן אתכם לשם  
ולתהילה בכל עמי הארץ בשובי את שבותיכם לעיניכם אמר ה'

בעת ההיא אביא אתכם ובעת קבצי אתכם

At the time of the redemption, everyone will return to the Land of Israel, even those who did not return during the period of the Second Temple. (Metzudat David)

כי אתן אתכם לשם ולתהילה בכל עמי הארץ בשובי את שבותיכם לעיניכם אמר ה'

1. All of the Jews will be gathered from the lands of exile to the Land of Israel. They will become the glorified nation of the world. (Metzudat David)
2. The word לעיניכם hints that the generation of Tzefanyah will also behold the fulfillment of these words. So this, too, is an allusion to the resurrection of the dead. (Metzudat David)

As a review exercise for this chapter, the teacher can assign the students the writing of a catchy headline for each of the four verses studied in depth. For example: "Fear not" (for verse 16), "Love conquers all" (for verse 17), and "You won't believe it till you see it!" (for verse 20).

# Chagai

# THE BOOK OF CHAGAI

## *Introduction:*

The last three prophets whose prophecies are brought in Trei Asar prophesied in the time of the Second Temple, and their prophecies relate, accordingly to the situation at that time – the people of Israel trying to rebuild the Temple and resettle the land.

Chagai (a shortened form of Chagayah, a common name at the time) prophesied at the same time as Zecharyah. Chagai's father's name is not known, nor where he came from. Chagai is mentioned in the book of Ezra as well (See Ezra 5:1, 6:14), as a prophet who encouraged the people.

In reading these prophecies it is necessary to try and envision the situation of the people who returned to the Land of Israel: Coresh had indeed decreed that the Jews were to be allowed to return to the Land of Israel and to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. But once the few returnees arrived, they encountered difficulty after difficulty. There was no king, the building of the Temple stopped after a short while, and it was a far cry from the prosperity, joy and rapture envisioned by the prophets. The leaders who sought to change this had to overcome the great feelings of disappointment, and encourage the people to persevere and continue struggling. Chagai was one of the people who took part in awakening the people and urging them to build the Temple, the one part of the redemption that they could contribute to. (Da'at Mikra)

As background for Chagai, the students can read the book of Ezra, chapters 1, 3-6, and summarize the events described there.

A contemporary parallel to the times of Chagai, can be found in the Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik's קול דודי דופק, in the section on "Six knocks", in English translation in the book *Theological and Halachic Reflections on the Holocaust* (Ktav Publishers), p. 68.

## Chapter 1

### Verse 1:

בשנת שתיים לדרייווש המלך בחודש השישי ביום אחד לחודש  
היה דבר ה' ביד חגי הנביא אל זרובבל בן שאלתיאל פחת יהודה  
ואל יהושע בן יהוצדק הכהן הגדול לאמור

בשנת שתיים לדרייווש המלך

Darius was the son of Esther and Achashverosh. Eighteen years had elapsed since the rescinding of original decree of Coresh to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Chagai was told to urge the people to continue building the Temple, and that the king would not stop them from doing so. (Rashi)

בחודש השישי

The sixth month is the month of Elul. (Mahari Kra)

פחת יהודה

The rulers of the returnees during the Second Temple period were not kings but *pachot* – governors, since there was no independent Jewish state. Besides, many of the rulers were not from the tribe of Yehudah. (Radak)

יהושע בן יהוצדק הכהן הגדול

Yehotzadak was the father of both Yehoshua and Ezra. While Yehoshua came with Zerubavel, to try and rebuild the Temple, Ezra came only after the full 70 years had elapsed since the actual destruction of the Temple (See Ezra, chapter 7). (Radak)

### Verse 2:

כה אמר ה' צבקות לאמור העם הזה אמרו לא עת בוא עת בית  
ה' להיבנות

העם הזה אמרו לא עת בוא עת בית ה' להיבנות

The people felt that the time had not yet come for the rebuilding of the Temple. Hashem is telling them that the time has indeed come. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 3:**

ויהי דבר ה' ביד חגי הנביא לאמור

ויהי דבר ה'...

The prophecy in verse 2 was meant for the leaders. The following prophecy was for the people. (Radak)

**Verse 4:**

העת לכם אתם לשבת בבתיכם ספונים והבית הזה חרב

העת לכם אתם לשבת בבתיכם...

1. This is a rhetorical question: Is this the time for the people to be sitting comfortably in their own homes, while the Temple remains desolate? (Metzudat David)
2. The people should be ashamed at the situation. (Radak)

**Verse 5:**

ועתה כה אמר ה' צבקות שימו לבבכם על דרכיכם

שימו לבבכם על דרכיכם

The people should examine their ways and see that this is not a time for sitting comfortably at home. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 6:**

זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט אכול ואין לשבעה שתו ואין לשכרה  
לבוש ואין לחום לו והמשתכר משתכר אל צרור נקוב

זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט

1. The people harvest much less food than the seeds they originally planted. (Metzudat David)
2. The failure of the crops is a punishment for not bringing the first fruits to the Temple. (Rashi)

אכול ואין לשבעה

1. It is as if their stomachs are cursed, and they are not satisfied with the food they eat. (Metzudat David)

2. The lack of sawith the food is a punishment for not bringing the meal-offerings to the Tempie. (Rashi)

שתו ואין לשכרה

1. There is no point in getting drunk on wine, for it has lost its taste. (Metzudat David)
2. The lack of pleasure from the wine is a punishment measure for measure for not doing the wine libations in the Temple. (Rashi)

לבוש ואין לחום לו

The fact that the clothes do not provide warmth is a punishment measure for measure for not having made the clothes of the Kohen Gadol. (Rashi)

דהמשתכר משתכר אל צרור נקוב

Businesses do not make profits. Putting money into a business is like putting money into a pocket full of holes. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 7:**

כה אמר ה' צבקות שימו לבבכם על דרכיכם

שימו לבבכם על דרכיכם

The people should examine their ways, in order to change them. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

עלו ההר והבאתם עץ ובנו הבית וארצה בו ואכבד (כתיב)

/ואכבדה (קרי) אמר ה'

עלו ההר והבאתם עץ ובנו הבית

The people should climb the mountains and get wood with which to build the Temple. (Metzudat David)

וארצה בו ואכבדה אמר ה'

1. Although this Temple will be small, Hashem will be satisfied with it, and will be honored by it. (Metzudat David)

2. The word אכבד is missing a *Heh*. This signifies the five things that existed in the First Temple, but were missing from the Second Temple: The Holy Ark, the *Urim V'Tumim*, the Divine fire, the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence), and *Ru'ach Hakodesh* (prophecy; it stopped in the fourth year of Darius – see Yoma 21b, and Rashi there). (Rashi)

The students should draw the five things. This exercise should help them to remember this information.

### Verse 9:

פנה אל הרבה והנה למעט והבאתם הבית ונפחתי בו יען מה  
נאום ה' צבקות יען ביתי אשר הוא חרב ואתם רצים איש לביתו

פנה אל הרבה והנה למעט

At present the people anticipate much, and receive very little. If they build the Temple, the curse will be lifted from them. (Radak)

והבאתם הבית ונפחתי בו

When they will bring the produce to the house, a slight breath of wind from Hashem will be enough to make it all disappear. This imagery shows the futility of their efforts. (Metzudat David)

יען מה

And if you may ask, What is the cause of all of this? (Metzudat David)

יען ביתי אשר הוא חרב ואתם רצים איש לביתו

The reason is that the people run to their homes, ignoring the desolation of Hashem's "home". (Metzudat David)

### Verse 10:

על כן עליכם כלאו שמים מטל והארץ כלאה יכולה

על כן עליכם כלאו שמים מטל...

It was only in Israel there was no dew, and the earth did not produce fruits; in other lands, there was dew. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 11:**

ואקרא חורב על הארץ ועל ההרים ועל הדגן ועל התירוש ועל  
היצהר ועל אשר תוציא האדמה ועל האדם ועל הבהמה ועל כל  
יגיע כפיים

ואקרא חורב על הארץ ועל ההרים

The dryness was decreed on all the fields, and on the hills, where fruits and grasses grow. (Radak)

ועל הדגן ועל התירוש ועל היצהר ועל אשר תוציא האדמה

The verse spells out the three staples – grain, wine and oil – and then adds that everything will be affected. (Radak)

ועל האדם ועל הבהמה

The dry air will cause disease among the people and the animals. (Radak)

ועל כל יגיע כפיים

1. Those who try and draw water from the wells will not be successful (Ibn Ezra, Radak)
2. All types of endeavors will be unsuccessful. (Metzudat David)

The students should note the ambiguity in this last phrase – it is not clear what it adds to what was said before. The students should note that the Ibn Ezra sees it as continuing the discussion of food and drink being affected. The students should pay attention to the parallel that the Metzudat David sees between this verse and verse 6.

**Verse 12:**

וישמע זרובבל בן שלתיאל ויהושע בן יהוצדק הכהן הגדול וכל  
שארית העם בקול ה' אלוקיהם ועל דברי חגי הנביא כאשר  
שלחו ה' אלוקיהם וייראו העם מפני ה'

בקול ה' אלוקיהם...

Even if Chagai had not come with this prophecy, the people should have come to this conclusion themselves, for when troubles come up, one is obligated to look into one's actions and see what needs improvement. (Radak)



**Verse 13:**

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲגַי מַלְאֲכֵי ה' בַּמְּלָאכּוֹת ה' לַעֲם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֲתֻכֶם נְאוּם ה'

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲגַי מַלְאֲכֵי ה' בַּמְּלָאכּוֹת ה'

Chagai was the messenger of Hashem, sent on a mission to the people. (Metzudat David)

אֲנִי אֲתֻכֶם נְאוּם ה'

Since the people were still afraid to build without the explicit permission of the king, Hashem had to reassure them that He would be with them. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 14:**

וַיִּעַר ה' אֶת רוּחַ זְרוּבָבֶל בֶּן שְׁלֵתִיאל פַּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֵת רוּחַ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן יְהוֹצָדֵק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֵת רוּחַ כָּל שְׂאֵרֵיט הָעָם וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ מִלֵּאכָה בַּבַּיִת ה' צְבָקוֹת אֱלֹקֵיהֶם

וַיִּעַר ה' רוּחַ זְרוּבָבֶל

1. Hashem aroused within Zerubavel a spirit, to begin rebuilding the Temple. (Metzudat David)
2. Since there were so many factors preventing both the leaders and the people from building, they all needed a special strengthening of spirit. (Radak)

**Verse 15:**

בַּיּוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבַּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּשִׁישִׁי בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם לְדַרְיָיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ

בַּיּוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבַּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּשִׁישִׁי

They began collecting the materials on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the sixth month. The actual building did not begin until the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month, as mentioned in chapter 2, verse 18. (Metzudat David)

## Chapter 2

### Verses 1-2

בשביעי בעשרים ואחד לחודש היה דבר ה' ביד חגי הנביא  
לאמור  
אמור נא אל זרובבל בן שלתיאל פחת יהודה ואל יהושע בן  
יהוצרק הכהן הגדול ואל שארית העם לאמור

אמור נא אל זרובבל... ואל יהושע... ואל שארית העם

The order of speech should be first to the king, who deserves the most honor, and then to the priest or prophet. (Ibn Ezra)

### Verse 3:

מי בכם הנשאר אשר ראה את הבית הזה בכבודו הראשון ומה  
אתם רואים אותו עתה הלוא כמוהו כאין בעיניכם

מי בכם הנשאר אשר ראה את הבית הזה בכבודו הראשון

Those among you who are old enough to have been among the people exiled after the destruction of the First Temple (and who therefore had seen the First Temple in all its glory). (Metzudat David)

ומה אתם רואים אותו עתה הלוא כמוהו כאין בעיניכם

Compared with the First Temple, which was built with the wealth of Shlomo Hamelech, this Second Temple is like nothing in your eyes. (Metzudat David)

The students can be referred to the section in Ezra 3:12-13, which describes how the people who had seen the First Temple cried when they saw the roughness and simplicity of the Second Temple.

**Verse 4:**

ועתה חזק זרובבל נאום ה' וחזק יהושע בן יהוצרק הכהן הגדול  
 וחזק כל עם הארץ נאום ה' ועשו כי אני אתכם נאום ה' צבקות

ועתה חזק... כי אני אתכם נאום ה' צבקות

Although the Second Temple cannot compare to the First, the people should not be dissuaded from working to build it. Hashem promises that He will bestow His blessing on them, through the Temple that they will build. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 5:**

את הדבר אשר כרתי אתכם בצאתכם ממצרים ורוחי עומדת  
 בתוכם אל תיראו

את הדבר אשר כרתי אתכם בצאתכם ממצרים

This connects to the word ועשו in the previous verse – “Do the things about which I made a covenant with you”. The Jews should adhere to the Torah and *mitzvot*, as they were commanded when they left Egypt. (Metzudat David)

ורוחי עומדת בתוכם אל תיראו

1. *Ru'ach Hakodesh* (prophecy) is still present in the people, so they should not be concerned. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The presence of *Ru'ach Hakodesh* is dependent on the people keeping Torah and *mitzvot*. Since the people were lax in that area, *Ru'ach Hakodesh* was removed from them after the times of Zecharyah and Malachi. (Radak)

**Verse 6:**

כי כה אמר ה' צבקות עוד אחת מעט היא ואני מרעיש את  
 השמיים ואת הארץ ואת הים ואת החרבה

כי כה אמר ה' צבקות עוד אחת מעט היא

At the completion of Persia's rule, another nation (Yavan – Greece) will rule the Land of Israel, but only for a short time. (Rashi)

ואני מרעיש את השמיים ואת הארץ

1. Miracles will happen to the Hasmoneans. (Rashi)

2. The nations will recognize the presence of Hashem in the Temple, and will bring gifts of gold and silver to it. (Rashi)

**Verse 7:**

והרעשתי את כל הגויים ובאו חמדת כל הגויים ומילאתי את  
הבית הזה כבוד אמר ה' צבקות

והרעשתי את כל הגויים ובאו חמדת כל הגויים

1. The nations of the world will be so moved, they will come to see the glory of the Temple, and will bring their precious possessions with them. (Radak)
2. This prophecy refers to the campaign of Alexander the Great against Jerusalem. He gathered all his troops to conquer the most precious land on earth. Before the battle he had a dream in which Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol, to him and dissuaded him from carrying out his plan. The next day, as he approached Jerusalem, he met the Kohen Gadol, who had gone out to greet him, and recognized him from the dream. Alexander then got down from his chariot and bowed down to Yehoshua. Alexander then agreed to let the Temple stand, if a statue of himself were erected there. Yehoshua then replied, "Take the gold and silver that you would have put into that statue, and give it to the poor." And that year all the boys born were named Alexander in his honor. (Mahari Kra, based on Sefer Yosippon)

The students should differentiate between the two different understandings of the phrase חמדת כל הגויים – the precious possessions of the nations, or the Land of Israel.

- 3.\* This verse, and the following verses are referring to the future redemption, and not to the Second Temple period. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

לי הכסף ולי הזהב נאום ה' צבקות

לי הכסף ולי הזהב...

All material wealth ultimately belongs to Hashem; He can therefore take it from one person and give it to another. He will inspire the nations of the world to bring their material wealth to the Temple. (Radak)

**Verse 9:**

גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון מן הראשון אמר ה' צבקות  
ובמקום הזה אתן שלום נאום ה' צבקות

גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון מן הראשון

1. There are two ways to understand this statement, that the Second Temple will be greater than the First: a) that physically the Temple was more beautiful. According to Josephus the Temple built by Herod was the most beautiful building ever; b) that the Second Temple stood for longer than the First – 420 years, as opposed to 410. (Radak)
2. The Third Temple will be greater than the First. (Metzudat David)

The students should note how each commentator understands the word אחרון.

ובמקום הזה אתן שלום נאום ה' צבקות

Although there were wars during the Second Temple period, it was a relatively quiet time. (Radak)

**Verse 10:**

בעשרים וארבעה לתשיעי בשנת שתים לדרייוש היה דבר ה'  
ביר חגי הנביא לאמור

בעשרים וארבעה לתשיעי

The ninth month is the month of Tevet. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 11:**

כה אמר ה' צבקות שאל נא את הכהנים תורה לאמור

שאל נא את הכהנים תורה לאמור

Hashem instructed Chagai to ask the priests questions concerning the Temple service, to see whether they still remembered the laws connected with the Temple, after all those years of exile. (Metzudat David)

Verse 12:

הן יישא איש בשר קודש בכנף בגדו ונגע בכנפו אל הלחם ואל  
הנזיד ואל היין ואל שמן ואל כל מאכל היקדש ויענו הכהנים  
ויאמרו לא

הן ישא איש בשר קודש בכנף בגדו...

The questions concerned the laws of purity and impurity. (Radak)

הן ישא איש בשר קודש בכנף בגדו ונגע בכנפו אל הלחם... היקדש

Chagai was asking the priests whether there is a *revi'i letum'a* – whether a food distanced from impurity by four intermediaries becomes impure. The example given involves a dead animal – which is the *av hatum'a* – the source of the impurity – touching the coat of the person. The coat then becomes *rishon letum'a*. The coat touches bread – the *sheni letum'a*; the bread touches a pot – *the shlishi letum'a*. The pot then touches wine, oil or other food, which would become *revi'i letum'a*. (Metzudat David)

To assist the students, the teacher can draw the sequence on the board, or demonstrate the situation with real objects.

ויענו הכהנים ויאמרו לא

The priests answered that the wine, oil or other food do not become impure, but their answer was incorrect; for with materials used in the Temple there is a concept of *revi'i letum'a*. (Metzudat David)

Verse 13:

ויאמר חגי אם יגע טמא נפש בכל אלה היטמא ויענו הכהנים  
ויאמרו יטמא

אם יגע טמא נפש בכל אלה היטמא

Chagai then went on to see whether they knew the laws of *shlishi letum'a*. He presented them with a different situation: that of a dead body of a person (which is *avi avot hatum'a* – a higher level of impurity than that of an animal) touching the coat (which becomes *av hatum'a*). The coat then touches bread, making it *rishon letum'a*, the bread touches the pot of food, making it *sheni letum'a*, and then wine touches the pot of food and becomes *shlishi letum'a*. (Metzudat David)

ויאמרו יטמא

They answered correctly, that the wine or other food would become impure.

**Verse 14:**

ויען חגי ויאמר כן העם הזה וכן הגוי הזה לפני נאום ה' וכן כל מעשה ידיהם ואשר יקריבו שם טמא הוא

ויען חגי ויאמר כן העם הזה וכן הגוי הזה... וכן כל מעשה ידיהם

Chagai then berated the priests that they do not know the laws, and just as they made a mistake in this area, they make many more mistakes in other areas of Torah law. (Metzudat David)

ואשר יקריבו שם טמא הוא

Therefore, all the sacrifices they offer are to be considered impure, since they do not know the laws well. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 15:**

ועתה שימו נא לבבכם מן היום הזה ומעלה מטרם שום אבן אל אבן בהיכל ה'

ועתה שימו נא לבבכם... מטרם שום אבן אל אבן בהיכל ה'

Now, before they continue to build on the foundations laid in the times of Coresh, they should learn the laws that apply to the priests. (Rashi)

**Verse 16:**

מהיותם בא אל ערמת עשרים והיתה עשרה בא אל היקב לחשוף חמישים פורה והיתה עשרים

מהיותם בא אל ערמת עשרים והיתה עשרה

Until now it was clearly recognizable that Hashem had cursed their produce. When they anticipated finding twenty parts of some grain, they would only find ten. (Radak)

בא אל היקב לחשוף חמישים פורה והיתה עשרים

When they anticipated having fifty measures from a vat of wine, they would only find twenty. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 17:**

**הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון ובברד את כל מעשה ידיכם ואין אתכם אלי נאום ה'**

הכיתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון ובברד...

1. Although their produce was struck by many different plagues, the people still did not return to Hashem.
2. The reason Hashem sent all the plagues was because they performed the *mitzvot* without the proper intention and spirit. (Malbim)

The teacher should write on the board the phrases of the Malbim: מעשה בלא כוונה, גוף בלא נשמה, מקדש אבנים בלא לבבות. The students should discuss the meaning and nuances of each phrase, and relate them to their own performance of *mitzvot*.

**Verse 18:**

**שימו נא לבבכם מן היום הזה ומעלה מיום עשרים וארבעה לתשיעי למן היום אשר יוסד היכל ה' שימו לבבכם**

למן היום אשר יוסד היכל ה' שימו לבבכם

The people should note carefully the changes that will occur once the building of the Temple is resumed. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 19:**

**העוד הזרע במגורה ועד הגפן והתאנה והרימון ועץ הזית לא נשא מן היום הזה אברך**

העוד הזרע במגורה ועד הגפן והתאנה... מן היום הזה אברך

There are no more seeds in the storehouses, but once they begin building the Temple, their produce will be blessed. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 20:**

**ויהי דבר ה' שנית אל חגי בעשרים וארבעה לחודש לאמור**

ויהי דבר ה' שנית אל חגי

On the same day he received a second prophecy (see verse 10). (Metzudat David)



**Verse 21:**

אמור אל זרובבל פחת יהודה לאמור אני מרעיש את השמים  
ואת הארץ

אני מרעיש את השמים ואת הארץ

1. This is a reference to the wars that will plague Persia. These wars will not harm Zerubavel – he will emerge from them greater than before (see verse 23). (Radak)
2. This might be referring to the turnover from Persian to Greek rule. Chazal note the different rulers during the Second Temple period: Persia ruled for 34 years, Greece – 180 years, the Hasmoneans – 103 years, and Herod's dynasty – also 103 years. (Radak)

**Verse 22:**

והפכתי כיסא ממלכות והשמדתי חוזק ממלכות הגויים והפכתי  
מרכבה ורוכביה וירדו סוסים ורוכביהם איש בחרב אחיו

והפכתי כיסא ממלכות והשמדתי חוזק ממלכות הגויים

Persia, the ruler at that time, would be destroyed. (Rashi)

**Verse 23:**

ביום ההוא נאום ה' צבקות אקחך זרובבל בן שאלתיאל עבדי  
נאום ה' ושמתיך כחותם כי כך בחרתי נאום ה' צבקות

אקחך זרובבל בן שאלתיאל עבדי... ושמתיך כחותם

Zerubavel, the governer of Yehudah, will be raised to an even higher position. He will be surrounded by constant Divine Providence, like a ring that one wears constantly. (Radak)

Zerubavel was the descendant of Yechonyah, the king of Yehudah. Yechonyah was originally supposed to die childless because of his evil ways (see Yirmiyahu 22:30). But he did *teshuva* when he was in prison in Babylonia, and merited having a descendant who would rule over Israel. From this we learn that גדולה תשובה שמקרעת גזר דין – *teshuva* has the power to change a decree that has been made against a person. See Rambam, *Hilchot Teshuva*, 7:6. (Radak)

# Zecharyah

# THE BOOK OF ZECHARYAH

## ***Introduction:***

Zecharyah lived at the same time as Chagai (they are mentioned together in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14). The times were the beginning of the Second Temple period, when the walls of Jerusalem had not yet been completed, and the new settlers were hampered by those who hated them and did everything possible to stop them from continuing the construction work. Zecharyah is mentioned as הנער הלוי (2:8) – “that boy”, so it seems that he started to prophesy when he was still young.

In Nechemyah 12:16 there is a Zecharyah mentioned as being one of the priests, and it is possible that this is the same person. It seems that Zecharyah immigrated together with Zerubavel.

According to tradition, he is buried in “Zecharyah’s tomb” at the bottom of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. (Da’at Mikra)

The prophecies of Zecharyah are very obscure, for they contain many visions that resemble dreams, requiring interpretation. Only the *Moreh Tzedek* (the *Mashiach*) will be able to supply the true interpretations of these visions. (Rashi)

The visions of Zecharyah (in chapters 1-6) are unique in the books of the Prophets. Although they contain interpretations, these are not full explanations of all the components, and the reader remains perplexed. This lends them a mysterious air, and has encouraged a wide variety of interpretations (Da’at Mikra)

According to the Abarbanel, Zecharyah covers in his prophecies “everything that is going to happen to the nation, the good and the bad, until the End of the Days”. Chapter 14 goes even further than that, describing the effect of the End of the Days on the other nations as well: יהיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד – the final redemption of the entire world.

In this curriculum, only selections of the book will be dealt with, mainly the better-known parts of it.

## Chapter 1, Verse 1

בחודש השמיני בשנת שתיים לדרייוש היה דבר ה' אל זכריה בן  
ברכיה בן עידו הנביא לאמור

בחודש השמיני

1. The eighth month from Nissan, which is Cheshvan. (Mahari Kra)
2. The first day of the eighth month (in all other places in Zecharyah an exact date is given, and it is common to say the month when referring to the first of the month). (Da'at Mikra)

בשנת שתיים לדרייוש

This is the Persian king Darius I. His second year of reign corresponds to the 17<sup>th</sup> year since Coresh's proclamation, allowing the return of the Jews to Israel. (Da'at Mikra)

לאמור

1. To say to the people. (Ibn Ezra)
2. To say to the prophet. (Ibn Ezra)

## Chapter 2, Verse 14 - Chapter 4, Verse 14

**Verse 14:**

רני ושמחי בת ציון כי הנני בא ושכנתי בתוכך נאום ה'

רני ושמחי בת ציון... ושכנתי בתוכך

1. In verses 12-13 Hashem promised that he will punish anyone who harms the Jewish people. He then goes on in this verse to tell the Jewish people to be

happy about the salvation that they will experience, when the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) will come to dwell amongst them. (Malbim)

2. Verses 14-17 are a prophecy for the era of the *Mashiach*, since we know that the things prophesied here did not come true during the Second Temple era; starting from chapter 3, though, the prophecies relate to the immediate future. (Radak)

**Verse 15:**

ונלוו גויים רבים אל ה' ביום ההוא והיו לי לעם ושכנתי בתוֹכָךְ  
וידעת כי ה' צבקות שלחני אלייך

ונלוו גויים רבים אל ה' ביום ההוא והיו לי לעם

1. Many non-Jews will believe in Hashem and connect themselves with him. (Metzudat David)
2. Many non-Jews will convert to Judaism. (Malbim)

ושכנתי בתוֹכָךְ

The *Shechinah* will dwell only with the Jewish people, even though non-Jews will also believe in Hashem. (Metzudat David)

וידעת כי ה' צבקות שלחני אלייך

The people will know that the good being sent from Heaven is mainly for them; they will receive more of it than the non-Jews. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 16:**

ונחל ה' את יהודה חלקו על אדמת הקודש ובחר עוד בירושלים

ונחל ה' את יהודה חלקו על אדמת הקודש

1. The land of Yehudah will be Hashem's part, and the Jewish people will not be exiled from it anymore. (Metzudat David)
2. If we say that this prophecy is for the immediate future, this verse came true, in that only the tribe of Yehudah returned from the exile. (Radak)

ובחר עוד בירושלים

The *Shechinah* will again dwell in Jerusalem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 17:**

הס כל בשר מפני ה' כי נעור ממעון קדשו

הס כל בשר מפני ה'

All the nations will be frightened into silence. (Metzudat David)

כי נעור ממעון קדשו

The nations will be quiet, because they will see Hashem rising to punish them, as if he has just woken up. (Metzudat David)

**Chapter 3, Verse 1:**

ויראני את יהושע הכהן הגדול עומד לפני מלאך ה' והשטן עומד  
על ימינו לשטנו

ויראני

1. This was a prophetic vision. (Metzudat David)
2. This was a vision seen at night. (Ibn Ezra)

והשטן עומד על ימינו לשטנו

1. Yehoshua, the High Priest was standing trial for his deeds, and Satan was prosecuting him for not rebuking his sons when they married non-Jewish women (see Ezra 10:18). (Metzudat David)
2. "Satan" in Hebrew can mean "someone who impedes" – this "Satan" is hinting at Sanvalat and his cohorts, who were interfering with the process of the building of the Temple (see Nechemyah 4:1-3). (Radak)

**Verse 2:**

ויאמר ה' אל השטן יגער ה' בך השטן ויגער ה' בך הבוחר  
בירושלים הלוא זה אוד מוצל מאש

ויאמר ה' אל השטן

It was the angel (mentioned in the previous verse) who spoke. (Metzudat David)

יגער ה' בך השטן ויגער ה' בך הבוחר בירושלים

1. Hashem, who has chosen Jerusalem, should scold you, Satan, and scold you again. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem, who has decided that Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, is scolding those who interfere with that process. (Radak)

הלוא זה אוד מוצל מאש

1. "A brand plucked out of the fire" – Yehoshua is one of the few remaining Jews in the world, and yet you want to bring about his destruction by prosecuting him? (Mahari Kra)
- 2.\* According to Chazal, Yehoshua was thrown into a burning furnace together with two false prophets – Achav the son of Kolayah and Tzidkiyahu the son of Ma'aseyah (see Yirmiyahu 29:21-22, where it says that they will be known for having been singed by fire). Yehoshua had survived, though his clothes were singed. He is a righteous person, then, so how can Satan prosecute him? (Metzudat David; based on Sanhedrin 93a)

### Verse 3:

ויהושע היה לבוש בגדים צואים ועומר לפני המלאך

ויהושע היה לבוש בגדים צואים

1. Yehoshua was not dressed in the proper clothes of a High Priest. This was because they had not yet built the Temple – all they had was an altar, on which they brought sacrifices, with none of the other accoutrements of the Temple such as the actual building, and the special clothes for the priests. (Ibn Ezra)
2. Yehoshua was wearing soiled clothes. These symbolize his sin of not having rebuked his sons; at this point they were still married to their non-Jewish wives. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 4:

ויען ויאמר אל העומדים לפניו לאמור הסירו הבגדים הצואים  
מעליו ויאמר אליו ראה העברתי מעליך עוונך והלבש אותך  
מחלצות

ויען ויאמר אל העומדים לפניו לאמור

The angel told the other angels who were standing in front of him. (Metzudat David)

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הסירו הבגדים הצואים מעליו

The angel told those angels to remove the soiled garments from Yehoshua, i.e. to make his sons divorce their non-Jewish wives, thus removing Yehoshua's sin from him. (Metzudat David)

According to this symbolism, our actions are like garments – if we do pure acts, it is as if our garments are clean; if we sin – it is as if our garments are soiled.

והלבש אותך מחלצות

Now that Yehoshua's sin had been removed, his merits could be seen, and it was as if he was dressed in beautiful clothes. (Metzudat Zion, Metzudat David)

**Verse 5:**

ואומר ישימו צניף טהור על ראשו וישימו הצניף הטהור על  
ראשו וילבישוהו בגדים ומלאך ה' עומד

ואומר ישימו צניף טהור על ראשו

Zecharyah requested that the holy mitre be placed on Yehoshua's head, meaning that his offspring would retain the high priesthood, now that they had left their non-Jewish wives. (Metzudat David)

וישימו הצניף הטהור על ראשו

Zecharyah's request was granted, and the holy mitre was placed on Yehoshua's head. (Metzudat David)

וילבישוהו בגדים

1. He had already been dressed in fine clothes (as mentioned in the previous verse). (Radak)

Radak and Ibn Ezra bring other eof the order of acts appearing in reversed order: וירום תלעים ויבאש (Shemot 16:20) – “And it became wormy and spoiled”, when the proper order is first spoiling and then becoming wormy.

2. His merits could be seen. (Metzudat David)

ומלאך ה' עומד

All this while, the angel was standing there. (Metzudat David)



## Verse 6:

ויער מלאך ה' ביהושע לאמור

ויער מלאך ה'

The angel warned Yehoshua (Metzudat David)

## Verse 7:

כה אמר ה' צבקות אם בדרכי תלך ואם את משמרת תשמור וגם  
אתה תדין את ביתי וגם תשמור את חצרי ונתתי לך מהלכים בין  
העומדים האלה

אם בדרכי תלך...

If Yehoshua's offspring go in Hashem's ways. (Metzudat David)

וגם אתה תדין את ביתי

1. This and the following phrase are still part of the condition. (Ibn Ezra)
2. This is the reward for being faithful to Hashem: Yehoshua will be in charge of the Temple. (Mahari Kra)
3. Yehoshua, being the High Priest, is to make decisions for the other priests. (Radak)
4. From here on are the rewards for the children of Yehoshua – they will be in charge of the Temple. (Metzudat David)

וגם תשמור את חצרי

1. If Yehoshua and the other priests will guard the Temple, they will receive a reward. (Mahari Kra)
2. This phrase is a rewording of the previous phrase. (Metzudat David)

ונתתי לך מהלכים בין העומדים האלה

1. You will walk amongst these eternal angels (that “stand” forever) – your soul will join them. (Radak)
2. This will be the reward for all of the above. (Ibn Ezra)

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- Besides the earthly rewards they will receive a reward in the World-to-Come – they will join the angels. (Metzudat David)

The students can note the parts of the verse which are the condition or the reward, according to the various commentators: four parts condition and one part reward (Ibn Ezra), alternate conditions and rewards (Mahari Kra), two parts condition and three parts rewards (Metzudat David).

This can be done by making a table in which every phrase in the verse can be marked as condition or reward according to the four commentators:

| ונתתי לך מהלכים בין<br>העומדים והאלה | וגם תשמור את הצור | וגם אתה תדין את<br>בידו | אם בדרכי תלך<br>ואם את משמורת<br>תשמור |           |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|-----------|
| reward                               | condition         | condition               | condition                              | אבן עזרא  |
|                                      |                   |                         |  | מהר"י קרא |
|                                      |                   |                         |  | רד"ק      |
|                                      |                   |                         |  | מצודת דוד |

Also, a distinction can be made between Metzudat David and the other commentaries – Metzudat David is the only one that says that all of this relates to Yehoshua's children, and not to himself.

Regarding “standing” angels, the students can refer back to the previous verses and note the number of times that the angels are described as “standing”. They can offer ideas as to why angels are described as “standing”.

### Verse 8:

שמע נא יהושע הכהן הגדול אתה ורעיך היושבים לפניך כי  
אנשי מופת המה כי הנני מביא את עבדי צמח

ורעיך היושבים לפניך כי אנשי מופת המה

- The priests sitting in front of Yehoshua deserve to have miracles happen to them. (Radak)
- The people sitting in front of Yehoshua had returned from the exile, so they had experienced a miraculous salvation. (Mahari Kra)
- Chazal say that the people sitting in front of Yehoshua were Chananyah, Misha'el and Azaryah, who, like him, had experienced the miracle of having been saved from a burning furnace. (Metzudat David)

כי הנני מביא את עבדי צמח

1. Hashem is sending his servant Zerubavel, a scion of the House of David, to help build the Temple. (Mahari Kra)
2. Zerubavel had already come, but Zecharyah is saying here that he will become greater, like a growing plant, and more powerful. (Radak)
2. Hashem will send the *Mashiach*, as it says in Yirmiyahu 23:5: **הקיימתי לחדד צמח צדיק**. (Metzudat David)

Verse 9:

כי הנה האבן אשר נתתי לפני יהושע על אבן אחת שבעה עינים  
הנני מפתח פיתוחה נאום ה' צבקות ומשתי את עוון הארץ ההיא  
ביום אחד

כי הנה האבן אשר נתתי לפני יהושע

1. There is a stone that has already been set aside to be the cornerstone for the final Temple that will be built. (Metzudat David)
2. There is a stone that Zerubavel will place before Yehoshua to be used as a **cornerstone for the new Temple** (see 4:7). (Radak)

על אבן אחת שבעה עינים

1. Every stone in the building will have Hashem watching over it personally, as **if with seven eyes**, so that it will not be harmed by all those who wish to stop the building process. The number seven is used here to denote many, as in other places (see Vayikra 24:21, Mishlei 24:16). (Radak)
2. The seven eyes watching over the building stones are those of Yehoshua, Ezra, Zerubavel, Nechemyah, Chagai, Zecharyah and Malachi. (Radak, in the name of his father)
- 3.\* On the cornerstone received from Zerubavel, Yehoshua carved seven eyes, to express the idea that Hashem's seven eyes, meaning the laws of nature, will rule over the world from now on through the Temple. (Malbim)

הנני מפתח פיתוחה

1. Hashem Himself will beautify the stones; in other words, He will give the people strength and will help them in their labors. (Metzudat David)

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2. Hashem will release the stones, which were “tied” all this time that the building process had been arrested. (Radak)
- 3.\* This natural *hashgacha* will not last forever. In the next section it will be elaborated how, when the *Mashiach* comes, Hashem will rule over the world directly. (Malbim)

ומשתי את עון הארץ ההיא ביום אחד

1. All the sins of the land will be erased in one day, for people will sin no more. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 10:

ביום ההוא נאום ה' צבקות תקראו איש לרעהו אל תחת גפן ואל  
תחת תאנה

תקראו איש לרעהו אל תחת גפן...

There will be peace and much good in the land, and the people will call to each other to join them under the fruit trees, and to enjoy the fruits. (Metzudat David)

### Chapter 4, Verse 1:

ישב המלאך הדובר בי ועירני כאיש אשר יעור משנתו

ישב המלאך הדובר בי

1. “The angel that was speaking to me” appears several times, in previous visions (see 1:9; 2:2 and other places).
2. The angel that had spoken to Zecharyah before had left during the last vision, and now returned. (Da’at Mikra)
3. In the previous vision, the angel did not speak to Zecharyah, and now he returned to speak to him. (Metzudat David)

ועירני כאיש אשר יעור משנתו

1. The angel “woke up” Zecharyah “like a man who is awakened from sleep” – Zecharyah was in a state resembling sleep. (Metzudat David)
2. Zecharyah felt as if he had woken up, but in reality he was passing from one vision to another. (Da’at Mikra)

- 3.\* Zecharyah had not understood the previous vision, referring to the seven eyes on the stone, and therefore he fell into a deep sleep – meaning that G-d's message was hidden from him. Then, the angel came to him again, awakened him, and proceeded to show him another vision that would explain the first one to him. (Malbim)

**Verse 2:**

**ויאמר אלי מה אתה רואה ויאמר (כתיב) / ואומר (קרי) ראיתי  
והנה מגורת זהב כולה וגולה על ראשה ושבעה נרותיה עליה  
שבעה ושבעה מצקות לנרות אשר על ראשה**

**מה אתה רואה**

In this vision, unlike in the previous ones, Zecharyah was asked to describe what he was seeing. This is similar to the visions of Amos (7:5), and Yirmiyahu (1:11). (Da'at Mikra)

**והנה מגורת זהב כולה וגולה על ראשה**

1. Zecharyah saw a golden menorah, above which was a cup containing oil. (Metzudat David)
2. Zecharyah saw the central stem of the menorah, made of gold, on top of which was a bowl containing oil. (Da'at Mikra)

**ושבעה נרותיה עליה שבעה ושבעה מצקות לנרות אשר על ראשה**

The menorah had seven branches, each ending with a candle – a small cup in which the oil and the wick were placed. Each of these small cups had seven tubes connecting it to the big cup on top of the menorah, so that the oil would drip down (לצקת – to pour) automatically to the cups. (Metzudat David)

A picture of the menorah of the Temple can be shown to the students, and also pictures (or examples) of ancient oil-burning candles, to clarify this description.

The menorah described here is different from the menorah that was in the Temple, which had no central cup. In the following verses it is explained why this is so.

**Verse 3:**

ושניים זיתים עליה אחד מימין הגולה ואחד על שמאלה

ושניים זיתים עליה...

Two olive trees stood on either side of the menorah, and the olives would fall into bowls, and be crushed. The oil produced thus would flow through two tubes into the big cup on top of the menorah. (Metzudat David)

In Hebrew, the name of the fruit is also the name of the tree itself: A *shaked*, for instance, is an almond tree, and not just an almond.

**Verse 4:**

ואען ואומר אל המלאך הדובר בי לאמור מה אלה אדוני

ואען ואומר... מה אלה אדוני

1. Zechariah asked the angel what was the meaning of the vision. (Metzudat David)
2. Zechariah did not understand the matter of the olives being crushed without human intervention, producing oil automatically. (Rashi)

**Verse 5:**

וען המלאך הדובר בי ויאמר אלי הלוא ידעת מה המה אלה  
ואומר לא אדוני

הלוא ידעת מה המה אלה ואומר לא אדוני

1. Zechariah did not understand the vision, even though the angel thought he was capable of understanding it. (Metzudat David)
2. Zechariah claimed that he did not understand the details of the vision. Even though he knew the deep symbolism of the menorah, he did not understand the connection between that symbolism and the vision he was seeing now. (Malbim)

## Verse 6:

ויען ויאמר אלי לאמור זה דבר ה' אל זרובבל לאמור לא בחיל  
ולא בכוח כי אם ברוחי אמר ה' צבקות

זה דבר ה' אל זרובבל

1. The vision is meant for Zerubavel, who is building the Temple. (Rashi)
2. The vision is meant for the *Mashiach*, who will come from the seed of Zerubavel. (Metzudat David)

לא בחיל ולא בכוח כי אם ברוחי אמר ה' צבקות

1. Just as the oil is produced by itself, without human effort, so the Temple will not be built through your physical efforts, but through the spirit of Hashem, which will rest on Daryavesh (Darius), and he will supply you with all you need to finish the building. (Rashi)
2. Just as the oil is produced by itself, so the *Mashiach's* rule over the world will come about without his needing to resort to physical battles and bloodshed – the nations will subject themselves to him of their own accord. (Metzudat David)
- 3.\* When Hashem's servant Tzemach, from the seed of Zerubavel, will come, Hashem's ruling over the world will be direct, not through natural means, and not through the angels. (Malbim)

## Verse 7:

מי אתה הר הגדול לפי זרובבל למישור והוציא את האבן  
הראשה תשואות חן חן לה

מי אתה הר הגדול לפני זרובבל למישור

1. The prophet is speaking to all those people who were trying to prevent the building of the Temple, and saying to them that they will no longer be like a mountain towering over Zerubavel, but simply a plain, easily passable. (Rashi)
2. The prophet is speaking to the king of Gog (see Yechezkel chapters 38-39): Do you think you will be able to stand like a mountain in front of the *Mashiach*, and prevent him from making his way? You will be like a flat plain, and nothing will prevent him from crossing you. (Metzudat David)

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- 3.\* The prophet is speaking to the mountain of Moriah (*Har Habayit*), in which the cornerstone mentioned above will be hidden. He is commanding it to become a plain. (Malbim)

והוציא את האבן הראשה תשוואות חן חן לה

1. The architect will take the measuring stone, and head the builders in the process of building the Temple, which will be beautiful and arouse murmurs of admiration from the people. (Rashi)
2. The *Mashiach* will take out the good, important stone, and lay it as a cornerstone of the Temple; all who see the stone will acknowledge its importance. (Metzudat David)
- 3.\* The stone will be revealed as the mountain flattens, and then everyone will be pleased with it, unlike the reaction when the Second Temple was built, which was a reaction of dismay on the part of the older people who compared it to the magnificent First Temple (see Ezra 3:12-13 and Chagai 2:3). (Malbim)

### Verses 8-9:

יהי דבר ה' אלי לאמור

ידי זרובבל יסדו הבית הזה וידיו תבצענה וידעת כי ה' צבקות  
שלחני אליכם

ידי זרובבל יסדו הבית הזה וידיו תבצענה

1. Zerubavel started the building of the Temple, and he will finish it. (Rashi)
2. Zerubavel started building the Second Temple, and his children will eventually complete the building of the Third Temple, and that will be like a completion of the Second Temple, which was lacking many things. (Metzudat David, Malbim)

### Verse 10:

כי מי בז ליום קטנות ושמחו וראו את האבן הבדיל ביד זרובבל  
שבעה אלה עיני ה' המה משוטטים בכל הארץ

כי מי בז ליום קטנות...

1. Those who were upset at the inauguration of the Second Temple will now be happy, when they see the measuring stone in Zerubavel's hands, as he prepares to measure the proper place for the corner of the building. On each of the stones set already, there will be seven more. (Rashi)



- 2.\* Those to whom this Temple seems small, and who belittle it, will be happy when they see the seven eyes on the stone. These seven eyes do not represent the ways of the natural world, as they thought, but rather the eyes of Hashem – His direct, miraculous *hashgacha* on the world. This explains the vision of the **menorah: The seven branches are Hashem's seven eyes that will light up the world and watch over it, from the Temple.** (Malbim)

The last three verses of this vision are a further clarification of the details: the two olives (or olive trees) and their symbolism. The students, having mastered the rest of the vision according to the commentators, can, in a homework assignment, fill in these last three verses, which mention the High Priesthood and the kingship as major factors in the Jewish nation.

**לֹא בַחִיל וְלֹא בַכּוֹחַ כִּי אִם בְּרוּחֵי אֱמֶת ה' צַבָּאוֹת**

## Chapter 5, Verses 9-11

Zecharyah's visions can be understood on many levels. The vision described in the following three verses can be understood on the simple level brought by the Metzudat David commentary: The people who did not want to return to the Land of Israel, and who preferred to settle in Babylon, will be punished by having to **remain there**. It can also be understood on a much deeper level. The Vilna Gaon explained it as part of his interpretation of a section in Bechorot 8b, which contains a discussion between Rabbi Yehoshua and the Elders of Athens. The full explanation is brought in chapter 13 ("The House in the Air"), of Rabbi Aharon Feldman's book, *The Juggler and the King* (Feldheim, 1990).

The Elders of Athens asked Rabbi Yehoshua to build a house in the air. He pronounced a name of G-d, and suspended himself between heaven and earth. From his perch up there he called down to them "Send me up bricks and mortar" – to build the house they requested. They asked him "But who could lift them all the way up there?", and his response was "Then who could build a house between heaven and earth?"

The Vilna Gaon explains that there are three forces in man: the *nefesh*, the *ruach* and the *neschama*. The *nefesh* is the lowest level – it is the part of man that deals with the world about him – his senses and drives. Man's survival instincts stem from the *nefesh*. The *ruach* (spirit) is a slightly higher level – it is man's sense of self – the spirit of man. It is the source of his desire for intellectual activity, for honor and for other emotional satisfactions. The *neschama* is the soul – it is man's connection with the spiritual world, with Hashem.

The *nefesh* and the *ruach* vie for supremacy. Man is constantly pulled between satisfying his desire for bodily pleasures, and his desire for more intellectual satisfactions. In the history of the world many have tried to create societies in which honor or other semi-spiritual matters are supreme, at the expense of the bodily pleasures. These societies have not been able to last for long. The desire for pleasure triumphs in the end, creating a society of chaotic self-gratification.

The people who tried to build the Tower of Babel in the land of Shin'ar wanted to enhance their own glory. In order to do this, they were willing to create a society of liberty, democracy and justice, but all for the sake of the *ruach* – their own glory. In this way, the entire populace could be enticed into cooperating. (What comes to mind is the Nazi society, which promised glory and wealth in return for total subservience to their ideals. Nazi society, like the generation of the Tower of

Babel, was basically atheistic, denying the existence of a *neshama*.) Had the plan succeeded, mankind would never have been able to reach the true goal of serving G-d. G-d, therefore, sabotaged their plan.

**Verse 9:**

ואשא עיני ואיִא והנה שתיים נשים יוצאות ורוח בכנפיהם  
ולהנה כנפיים ככנפי החסידה ותישנה את האיפה בין הארץ ובין  
השמיים

והנה שתיים נשים יוצאות ורוח בכנפיהם

The two women are *fland vainglory* – two desires which form the *ruach* of man. It is this *ruach* which gives them their ability to fly. The two temptations are represented as women, in accordance with Shlomo Hamelech's depiction of the evil inclination as a scheming woman.

ולהנה כנפיים ככנפי החסידה

The word Chasidah (stork) is the same word as “pious”. The aims of the *ruach* generally masquerade as pious intentions.

ותישנה את האיפה בין הארץ ובין השמיים

They were attempting to carry a basket (= to build a house) between the earth (*nefesh*) and the heaven (*neshama*).

**Verses 10-11:**

ואומר אל המלאך הדובר בי אנה המה מוליכות את האיפה  
ויאמר אלי לבנות לה בית בארץ שנער והוכן והוניחה שם על  
מכונתה

לבנות לה בית בארץ שנער

The two women were trying to do what the generation of the Tower of Babel tried to do – to use the *nefesh* to buttress the *ruach* in its selfish orientation – and, as it says in Kiddushin 49b, the women were going to build – but they were not to succeed.

The *nefesh* and *ruach* are both forces that exist *inside* man. In order for a viable structure to be built with them, they both have to devote themselves to serving something beyond the self. Only when man makes both of them subservient to the desire to serve Hashem, can the *nefesh* serve the *ruach* – can a “house” be built in the “air”.

## Zecharyah

In order to help the students to understand this idea, one can bring the example someone who tries to resist eating a piece of cheesecake because of a diet – one often succumbs to the temptation anyway, taking “just a little bit”. The *nefesh* conquers the need of the *ru'ach* (to be thin). On the other hand, when one has just eaten a meat meal, and is confronted with that same piece of cheesecake, one successfully resists the desire to eat it. Here, the desire to serve Hashem supercedes the demands of the *nefesh*.

Rabbi Yehoshua was teaching the Elders of Athens that only by using the Name of G-d can one suspend oneself between heaven and earth. They, in turn, could not envision such a thing, and therefore answered him that they cannot send bricks and mortar – the body – up to the heavens.

## Chapter 7, Verses 1-7, Chapter 8, Verses 3-19

### Verses 1-2:

יהי בשנת ארבע לדרייוש המלך היה דבר ה' אל זכריה  
בארבעה לחודש התשיעי בכסלו  
וישלח בית אל שראצר ורגם מלך ואנשיו לחלות את פני ה'

ישלח בית אל שראצר ורגם מלך... לחלות את פני ה'

Saretzer and Regem Melech, two righteous people who lived in Babylon, sent a message to their relatives in Bet El, that they should ask the priests in the Temple a question. (Rashi)

### Verse 3:

לאמור אל הכהנים לבית ה' צבקות ואל הנביאים לאמור האבכה  
בחודש החמישי הינזר כאשר עשיתי זה כמה שנים

האבכה בחודש החמישי

1. The Temple had been built already; was it necessary therefore to keep observing the fast of the ninth of Av (the fifth month)? (Rashi)
2. The people did not ask about the Fast of Gedalyah, because the situation brought about by the assassination of Gedalyah – total exile – had been corrected already by the return of some people to the land. They were asking about the other three fasts, but chose to mention Tisha b'Av because if he would say that they do not have to fast on that day, then obviously the other fast days are not to be observed either. (Malbim)

The Malbim explains the reason for the question. The people in Babylon saw that the Temple had not attained the full glory of the First Temple. He lists seven things that seemed to indicate that the exile wasn't over:

- 1) The *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) had not returned openly.
- 2) They were still under the rule of Persia and were afraid that they would be exiled again.
- 3) There hadn't been a full ingathering of the exiles.

## Zecharyah

- 4) The land was still cursed (it was not producing fruit abundantly);
- 5) They saw that the Jewish people were still despised by the nations;
- 6) The Kutim were still in possession of a great part of the land, the number of returnees from Babylon still small;
- 7) There was no king from the house of David.

### הינור

Refrain from pleasure. (Rashi)

### Verses 4-5:

ויהי דבר ה' צבקות אל לאמור  
אמור אל כל עם הארץ ואל הכוהנים לאמור כי צמתם וספוד  
בחמישי ובשביעי וזה שבעים שנה הצום צמתוני אני

אמור אל כל עם הארץ

1. The prophet was told to answer the people who were living in the land of Israel – in Jerusalem. The people living out of the country, who had sent the messengers did not deserve a direct answer, for they had chosen not to return to the land. (Metzudat David)
2. The prophet was told to give his answer both to the people in Babylon and to the people in Jerusalem – including the priests who themselves did not know the answer to the question. (Ibn Ezra)

כי צמתם וספוד בחמישי ובשביעי

The prophet mentions the fast of the seventh month too. – the fast of Gedalyah, commemorating the assassination of Gedalyah ben Achikam after the destruction of the Temple (see Melachim II 25:22-27). He is adding this on in order to stress the fact that actually the fast of Gedalyah is as important as Tisha b'Av, because the death of a righteous person is as terrible as the destruction of the Temple. (Metzudat David)

וזה שבעים שנה

More than seventy years had passed since the Temple had been destroyed. (Ibn Ezra)

הצום צמתוני אני

1. Did you make Me hungry by fasting (see next verse)? (Metzudat David)

2. A person should try to emulate Hashem in good deeds and ways of behavior, and that way he can bring upon himself the same kind of behavior from Hashem. But in eating or fasting that is impossible: Hashem doesn't eat or drink anyway. (Malbim)

**Verse 6:**

וכי תאכלו וכי תשתו הלוא אתם האוכלים ואתם השותים

הלוא אתם האוכלים...

1. Hashem doesn't get enjoyment from a person's eating and drinking. Hashem is trying to say here that their fasting makes no difference to Him. (He did not command them to fast on these days). (Metzudat David)
2. As mentioned in the previous verse – it is the people who are eating and drinking, and since there is no eating or drinking in Heaven, Hashem cannot respond in kind to their fasting. (Malbim)

**Verse 7:**

הלוא את הדברים אשר קרא ה' ביד הנביאים הראשונים בהיות ירושלים יושבת ושלווה ועריה סביבותיה והנגב והשפלה יושב

הלוא את הדברים אשר קרא ה' ביד הנביאים הראשונים...

The prophet is shifting the discussion to a different track: the issue is not whether or not to continue fasting on these days, but whether the people have corrected the things which caused the exile in the first place.

The people must first do what the prophets demanded of them before the exile. Their laxness in these matters, enumerated in the following verses, caused the destruction; it will take much more to actually bring about the building. It is like the small amount of heat needed to maintain a pot that is already hot versus the large amount of heat needed to heat up a cold pot of water. (Malbim)

בהיות ירושלים יושבת... והנגב והשפלה יושב

“Sitting” – meaning in a state of peace and quiet. (Metzudat David)

**Verses 8-10:**

ויהי דבר ה' אל זכריה לאמור  
כה אמר ה' צבקות לאמור משפט אמת שפוטו וחסד ורחמים עשו  
איש את אחיו  
ואלמנה ויתום גר ועני אל תעשוקו ורעת איש אחיו אל תחשבו  
בלבבם

ויהי דבר ה' אל זכריה לאמור

Hashem spoke to Zecharyah to tell him the things the earlier prophets had told the people, before the exile. (Malbim)

משפט אמת שפוטו וחסד ורחמים...

In all these things enumerated, if the people do them, Hashem will do likewise to them: If they do justice, for instance judging a widow fairly, Hashem will judge their enemies and punish them. If they show mercy, and not even think of doing anything bad to their fellow man, Hashem will show mercy on them. (Malbim)

The prophet goes on, in verses 7:4-8:2, to say that the people did not do these things, and that's why they were punished and exiled. He then spells out the wonders that will occur if the people do act according to the truth and behave in merciful ways.

**Chapter 8, Verse 3:**

כה אמר ה' שבתי אל ציון ושכנתי בתוך ירושלים ונקראה  
ירושלים עיר האמת והר ה' צבקות הר הקודש

שבתי אל ציון ושכנתי בתוך ירושלים

1. Hashem has already returned the exiles to Zion, and He Himself will also return. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem intends to return to Zion, and settle the Divine Presence there. He will also return to dwell amongst the people, meaning that prophecy and holiness will both be restored to them. (Malbim)

ונקראה ירושלים עיר האמת והר ה' צבקות הר הקודש

1. When Hashem returns, Jerusalem will be known as the city of Truth, and the Temple Mount will be known for the Divine Presence residing there. (Metzudat David)



2. Hashem's return to Jerusalem is dependent on the people of Jerusalem judging truthfully and speaking the truth to each other, and on the priests being holy. (Malbim)

The Malbim enumerates the answers to the queries that the people had, as mentioned above in chapter 7, verse 3:

- 1) The Divine Presence can return, if the people behave truthfully;
- 2) Daryavesh will not exile them again, and people will live in such peace that the elderly and the young will play unafraid in the streets (see below);
- 3) There will be a full ingathering of the exiles (see verse 7);
- 4) The prophet Chagai promised them that if they build the Temple the blessings of the earth will be renewed (see verses 9, 12)
- 5) They will be considered blessed by the nations (see verse 13);
- 6) They are not to be afraid of Sanvalat and his cohorts. (verse 15)
- 7) The kingdom of David will return (9:9).

#### Verse 4:

כה אמר ה' צבקות עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים  
ואיש משענתו בידו מרוב ימים

עוד ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים...

1. In the days of the redemption, elderly people, even those who require canes, will be strong enough to sit outside of their homes, as young people do. (Metzudat David)
2. In the days of the peace that redemption will bring, even weak people will not fear to sit in the streets of Jerusalem. (Malbim)

This verse plays a part in the famous Midrash brought in the Gemara in Makkot 24b, about the four sages seeing a fox come out of the *Kodesh Hakodashim*. Three of the Sages started to weep, but Rabbi Akiva was happy. When they asked him why he was happy, he replied that what they had just seen confirmed the truth of the prophecies of destruction; so too, the Zecharyah's prophecy of elderly people sitting peacefully in the streets of Jerusalem would come true. The students can read this Midrash in full.

## Zecharyah

### Verse 5:

**ורחובות העיר יימלאו ילדים וילדות משחקים ברחובותיה**

**ורחובות העיר יימלאו ילדים וילדות**

1. There will be many children, so many that they will fill the streets. (Metzudat David)
2. In the days of the peace that redemption will bring, even children will not fear to play in the streets of Jerusalem. (Malbim)

**משחקים ברחובותיה**

There will be such prosperity that the children will be able to play happily. (Metzudat David)

It might be worth noting that, in the past, children did not usually have much time to play – they were put to work as soon as possible.

### Verse 6:

**כה אמר ה' צבקות כי ייפלא בעיני שארית העם הזה בימים ההם  
גם בעיני ייפלא נאום ה' צבקות**

**גם בעיני ייפלא**

1. Even Hashem is so-to-speak amazed at the marvels that will happen at that time. (Radak)
2. The phrase should be read as a question: is it wondrous in My eyes too? (Radak)

In verses 7-15 further words of solace are spoken (see box above), until the prophet returns to the issue of the fast days.

## Verses 16-17:

אלה הדברים אשר תעשו רבו אמת איש את רעהו ומשפט  
 שלום שפטו בשעריכם  
 ואיש את רעת רעהו אל תחשבו בלבבכם ושבועת שקר אל  
 תאהבו כי את כל אלה אשר שנאתי נאום ה'

The prophet repeats the admonitions already mentioned in chapter 7, verses 8-10, about the sins that brought about the destruction.

The students should note the prominence given to אמת in these chapters – the importance of truth as a basic principle of society.

דברו אמת איש את רעהו

Do not be two-faced. (Radak)

אמת ומשפט שלום שפטו בשעריכם

1. If justice is done, peace results between the two contestants, for even the person whom the court rules against realizes the truth. (Radak)
2. Chazal note the three components mentioned: truth, justice and peace. How can all three exist at once? When a compromise is reached. At the same time, care should be taken that justice is not perverted. (Metzudat David; based on Sanhedrin 6b)

על שלושה דברים העולם קיים, על הדין ועל האמת ועל השלום: See Pirkei Avot 1:18. Justice, truth and peace are the pillars of a viable world.

ושבועת שקר אל תאהבו כי את כל אלה אשר שנאתי

A person should not love what Hashem hates; Hashem hates perjury, and therefore we should not love it either. (Radak)

**Verses 18-19:**

**וְהָיָה דְבַר ה' צְבָקוֹת אֱלֹהִים לְאִמּוֹר  
כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְבָקוֹת צוֹם הַרְבִּיעִי וְצוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וְצוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְצוֹם  
הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵית יִהוּדָה לְשִׁשּׁוֹן וּלְשִׂמְחָה וּלְמוֹעֲדִים טוֹבִים  
וְהָאִמַּת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אָהָבוּ**

**צוֹם הַרְבִּיעִי וְצוֹם הַחֲמִישִׁי וְצוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְצוֹם הָעֲשִׂירִי**

The four fast days commemorating the exile are in the fourth month (the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz), the fifth month (the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av), the seventh month (Tishrei, The Fast of Gedalyah on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month), and the tenth month (the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tevet).

**יִהְיֶה לְבֵית יִהוּדָה**

In the period of the Second Temple these fasts were abolished by the tribe of Yehudah – the only one to return from the exile; the Ten Tribes did not return, so this decree does not apply to them. (Radak)

**וְהָאִמַּת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אָהָבוּ**

These fasts will be abolished if the people love truth and peace, for only then will the full redemption come about. (Malbim)

The students can note the frequent use of the word “love” in these texts in relation to *mitzvot*.

A discussion can be initiated in class about the importance of not merely performing the *mitzvot* and behaving properly, but doing it out of love and an emotional devotion and attachment to the word of G-d.

**אִמַּת וּמִשְׁפַּט שְׁלוֹם שִׁמְטוּ בְּשַׁעֲרֵיכֶם...  
וְהָאִמַּת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אָהָבוּ**

\* On Chapter 9:9:

גִּילֵי מְאֹד בַּת צִיּוֹן הֲרִיעִי בַּת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הִנֵּה מֶלֶכְךָ יִבֹּא לְךָ צְדִיק וְנוֹשַׁע הוּא עֲנִי וְרוֹכֵב עַל חֲמוֹר  
וְעַל עֵיר בֶּן אֲתוֹנוֹת

there is a chapter (chapter 29) in *Gevurot Hashem* of the Maharal, which describes the donkey (חמור) as signifying the material world (חומריות). The Mashiach's attribute is that he will be riding on the donkey – he will be above the material world. The chapter also deals with other great Tzaddikim such as Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu, riding on “a donkey”.

## Chapter 14

This chapter deals mainly with another description of מלחמת גוג ומגוג – the final war over Jerusalem, described also in Yechezkel 38.

### Verse 1:

הנה יום בא לה' וחולק שללך בקרבך

הנה יום בא לה'

1. A special day for Hashem will come. (Metzudat David)
2. A beloved day for Hashem will come. (Rashi)

חולק שללך בקרבך

1. All the loot that had been taken from Yisrael over the years will be returned to them, and be divided among the people. (Metzudat David)
2. Gog and Magog will capture Jerusalem and begin to divide up the spoils. (Malbim)

### Verse 2:

ואספתי את כל הגויים אל ירושלים למלחמה ונלכדה העיר  
ונשסו הבתים והנשים תישגלנה (כתיב) / תישכבנה (קרי) ויצא  
חצי העיר בגולה ויתר העם לא ייכרת מן העיר

ואספתי את כל הגויים אל ירושלים

1. This is how the loot will be returned: first, the nations will decide to make war on Jerusalem. (Metzudat David)
2. The forces of Edom will gather together to take Jerusalem from the sons of Yishmael, and as a result the city will be captured. (Malbim)

ונלכדה העיר ונשסו הבתים... ויצא חצי העיר בגולה

1. The city will be conquered, the houses will become rubble, trampled by the conquerers; who will also rape the women. (Metzudat David)

## Zecharyah

2. The city will be conquered, and half the people will be exiled already, but the conquerers will not have time to complete the job. (Malbim)

ויתר העם לא ייכרת מן העיר

Hashem will allow the conquerers to exile half the people of the city, and to destroy it, so that they won't be able to say that they didn't mean to make war on the city, but only came to worship Him. (Rashi)

### Verse 3:

ויצא ה' ונלחם בגויים ההם כיום הלחמו ביום קרב

ויצא ה' ונלחם בגויים ההם

Hashem will make the conquerers fight amongst themselves. (Malbim)

כיום הלחמו ביום קרב

1. He will fight them the way he fought the Egyptians on the Red Sea, where it says ה' ילחם לכם – Hashem will fight for you (Shemot 14:14). And the end result will be the same as well – the enemy will be destroyed and the Jews will take the loot left behind. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem will do direct battle (קרב) with them: He will not merely make war on them from afar, meaning via natural means, but will perform direct miracles in order to vanquish them. (Malbim)

### Verse 4:

ועמדו רגליו ביום ההוא על הר הזיתים אשר על פני ירושלים  
מקדם ונבקע הר הזיתים מחציו מזרחה וימה גיא גדולה מאוד  
ומש חצי ההר צפונה וחציו נגבה

ועמדו רגליו ביום ההוא על הר הזיתים אשר על פני ירושלים מקדם

Har Hazeitim (Mount of Olives) is a mountain to the east of Jerusalem. It has a northern summit and a southern summit, with a slight dip in the middle. The northern part is also called Har Hatzofim (Mount Scopus). It would be useful to show a picture of this mountain in its entirety to the students, or at least a map of Jerusalem showing the mountain, so they can envisage the following prophecy.

1. The mountain is going to be split, as if Hashem will plant both His “feet” on it and force the two sections apart. (Metzudat David)

- 2.\* The word *regel* – “foot” – also means cause, or reason (see Bereishit 30:30). It will be clear that Hashem caused the mountain to split miraculously. (Radak)

תבקע הר הזיתים מחציו מזרחה וימה גיא גדולה מאוד ומש חצי ההר צפונה וחציו  
נגבה

1. An earthquake will break the Mount of Olives apart, the break starting from the east and going towards the west, separating the north and the south parts; in between there will be a deep valley. This will be so that the exiles will be able to escape through it. (Metzudat David)
2. The events described here are not to be taken literally, but rather are referring to the battle between Edom and Yishmael, which will take place on the Mount of Olives, which will therefore be split between them. The reason this prophecy cannot be taken literally, is because Hashem does not do miracles for no reason (and there doesn't seem to be any obvious reason why this miracle should be necessary). (Abarbanel)

The Abarbanel brings another possibility, that the description is literal, in the sense that the mountain will be levby the warring parties.

#### Verse 5:

ונסתם גיא הרי כי יגיע גי הרים אל אצל ונסתם כאשר נסתם  
מפני הרעש בימי עזויה מלך יהודה ובא ה' אלוקי כל קדושים  
עמך

ונסתם גיא הרי

1. The people will escape from their would-be captors through the valley between the two parts of the split mountain, now two mountains. (Metzudat David)
2. Targum Yonatan reads the first word as ונסתם – it will close up. The split between the two mountains will close up, and that is a greater miracle than merely an earthquake that creates a permanent break. (Radak)
3. The people who will have been taken captive by the Christians, will escape from the battling parties through a valley to the mountains around Jerusalem (“My” mountains). (Abarbanel)

## Zecharyah

כי יגיע גי הרים אל אצל

1. The valley between the mountains will reach a place called Atzal. (Metzudat David)
2. The split will close up completely, to the top of the mountain (*atzal* meaning something high up, as in the word *atzil* – aristocrat). (Radak)
3. The people will escape to the mountains because they will be close to the valley. (Abarbanel)

ונסתם כאשר נסתם מפני הרעש בימי עזיה מלך יהודה

The people will run away in a panic, just as they ran from the earthquake in the times of Uziyah (see Amos 1:1, Yeshayahu 6:1, 4, and Divrei Hayamim II 26:16-21. Chazal connect all of these events: when Uziyahu attempted to serve as a Kohen in the Temple, even though he was not a Kohen, there was an earthquake, and the king became afflicted with *tzara'at*. A *metzora* is like a dead person, so it is as if he died at that point). (Metzudat David)

ובא ה' אלוקי כל קדושים עמך

1. Then Hashem and all the angels will come and help the Jews fight against Gog. (Metzudat David)
2. As opposed to the earthquake in the time of Uziyah, which was a sign of displeasure, this will be a sign of Hashem's returning to dwell amongst the Jewish people. (Malbim)

### Verse 6:

והיה ביום ההוא לא יהיה אור יקרות יקפאון (כתיב) / וקפאון  
(קרי)

לא יהיה אור יקרות וקפאון

1. On that day there will be no normal light or darkness, meaning that the situation will be unclear, and people will not know whether the progression of events is for the good or for the bad. (Metzudat David)
2. On that day the sun (which is its own source of light) and the moon (which reflects the sun's light) will stop shining (as it says in Yeshayahu 60:19); there will no longer be any natural light; it will be replaced by the Divine light. (Malbim)



**Verse 7:**

והיה יום אחד הוא ייודע לה' לא יום ולא לילה והיה לעת ערב  
יהיה אור

והיה יום אחד הוא ייודע לה' לא יום ולא לילה

1. This uncertain situation will last for one day; during that day only Hashem will know the truth. (Metzudat David)
2. There will be only day; at the beginning the sun will still shine, and will be recognized as daytime, but no night will follow. (Malbim)

והיה לעת ערב יהיה אור

1. When evening comes everyone will realize that salvation is at hand. (Metzudat David)
2. When the sun sets, the main light will begin to shine – the Divine light. This is all a way of saying that the heavenly light will shine from then on, and there will be no more “darkness” – troubles or lack of abundance. Only light, good, peace and success will reign. (Malbim)

**Verse 8:**

והיה ביום ההוא יצאו מים חיים מירושלים חציים אל הים  
הקדמוני וחציים אל הים האחרון בקיץ ובחורף יהיה

יצאו מים חיים מירושלים...

1. On that same day a spring will burst forth from Jerusalem. This is the same spring prophesied by Yoel (4:18) and by Yechezkel (47:1-13), as coming out of the Temple. (Radak)
2. The spring will symbolize the spiritual output of Jerusalem at the time, as Yeshayahu prophesied (2:4) כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים (Abarbanel)

חציים אל הים הקדמוני וחציים אל הים האחרון

The water will flow in two directions – one stream will go east, to the Dead Sea, and the other will go west, to the Mediterranean. (Radak)

In Yechezkel there is a detailed description of the therapeutic properties of the stream going east. It will bring about the healing of the Dead Sea.

**It is worth noting that the watershed line in Israel passes through Jerusalem, though not through the Temple Mount.**

בקץ ובחורף יהיה

The river will run both during the summer, when streams often dry up, and during the winter, when streams sometimes freeze over. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 9:**

**והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד**

והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ

**All the nations will accept Hashem as their G-d. (Metzudat David)**

ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד

1. Only Hashem will be worshipped, and only His name will be mentioned; No one will worship both idols and Hashem, as was the custom at the time. (Metzudat David)
2. At the present, Hashem is known by various ways of action: justice, mercy etc. In the future, there will be only one simple *hanhaga* – way of running the world – so only one name will apply to Him. (Malbim)

**Verse 10:**

**ייסוב כל הארץ כערבה מגבע לרימון נגב ירושלים וראמה  
וישבה תחתיה למשער בנימין עד מקום שער ראשון עד שער  
הפינים ומגדל חננאל עד יקבי המלך**

ייסוב כל הארץ כערבה מגבע לרימון נגב ירושלים

1. The land around Jerusalem will change into a low prairie, starting from the mountain of Rimon, to the south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, on a mountain, will stand out because of this, and look more impressive. (Metzudat David)
2. The mountains of Geva and Rimon will become like the area south of Jerusalem, which is flat. (Rashi)
3. The river flowing from Jerusalem will twist through the Arava, from Geva, which is north of Jerusalem, to south of the city. (Da'at Mikra)

The students can note the different subjects of the verse according to each commentator (the land, or the river), and which one seems to fit the grammar of the verse better.

וראמה וישבה תחתיה

Jerusalem will remain high up, and in its original place, as opposed to the place where it was built after Titus destroyed it. (Metzudat David)

The Abarbanel points out that there is evidence that the current Old City of Jerusalem is not in the place of the original city: No corpses were buried inside the holy city, and yet, the tomb of Jesus is in the center of the Old City. The city is, therefore, built on the place that was once a cemetery.

למשער בנימין עד מקום שער הראשון...

Jerusalem will be fully settled, and will stretch from Sha'ar Binyamin, at its northeastern point, where formerly there had been a gate, to the northwestern corner. And from Migdal Chananel in the north, to the king's wineries, in the south. (Da'at Mikra)

Verse 11:

וישבו בה וחרם לא יהיה עוד וישבה ירושלים לבטח

וישבו בה וחרם לא יהיה עוד

The people will settle in Jerusalem forever, and no scenes of destruction will ever take place in it again. (Metzudat David)

Verse 12:

וזאת תהיה המגפה אשר ייגוף ה' את כל העמים אשר צבאו על  
ירושלים המק בשרו והוא עומד על רגליו ועיניו תימקנה  
בחוריהן ולשונו תימק בפיהם

וזאת תהיה המגפה אשר ייגוף ה'... המק בשרו והוא עומד על רגליו

1. Hashem will do battle with the nations by afflicting them with an illness. Their flesh will rot, not from a prolonged illness, but suddenly, as they stand on their feet. (Metzudat David)
2. The illness described is that of limbs falling away; something like leprosy. (Da'at Mikra)

Zecharyah

ועיניו תימקנה בחזרה ו לשנתו תימק בפהם

Likewise, their eyes and tongues will rot away. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

והיה ביום ההוא תהיה מהומת ה' רבה בהם והחזיקו איש יד  
רעהו ועלתה ידו על יד רעהו

תהיה מהומת ה' רבה בהם

Hashem will cause confusion amongst them. (Metzudat David)

החזיקו איש... ועלתה ידו על יד רעהו

1. They will grab one another for help, but in the confusion will not be able to differentiate between friend and foe, and will end up fighting one another. (Metzudat David)
2. They will grab each other, but their limbs will fall away as they do so. (Radak)

**Verse 14:**

וגם יהודה תילחם בירושלים ואוסף חיל כל הגויים סביב זהב  
וכסף ובגדים לרוב מאוד

וגם יהודה תילחם בירושלים

Adding to the confusion will be the people of Yehudah who will have been forced to join the forces of the conquerors. Once in Jerusalem, they will turn against the conquerors, who will then suspect any soldier of belonging to them, and of being an enemy. (Metzudat David)

ואוסף חיל כל הגויים סביב

1. Besides the conquering nations, others will come with the intention of despoiling Jerusalem. (MetDavid)
2. All the belongings of the nations will be collected after the battle. (Da'at Mikra)

The students should notice the difference in the meaning of חיל according to each commentary.

**Verse 15:**

וכן תהיה מגפת הסוס הפרד והחמור וכל הבהמה אשר  
יהיה במחנות ההמה כמגפה הזאת

וכן תהיה מגפת הסוס הפרד הגמל...

The animals in the enemy's camp will likewise suffer from the illness described above. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 16:**

והיה כל הנותר מכל הגוים הבאים על ירושלים ועלו מדי שנה  
בשנה להשתחוות למלך ה' צבקות ולחוג את חג הסוכות

והיה כל הנותר מכל הגוים

1. There will be people who will witness the battle in Jerusalem and will immediately do *teshuva* and be saved. (Radak)
2. Those of the nations who remained in their lands and did not come to Jerusalem for this battle will know of it. (Da'at Mikra)

ועלו מדי שנה בשנה... ולחוג את חג הסוכות

1. The battle will happen on Sukkot, and therefore the nations will come every year at that time to commemorate the events. (Metzudat David)
2. Sukkot is a festival during which it is decreed how much water the world will receive that year. Besides that, seventy oxen are sacrificed during Sukkot for the seventy nations of the world. That is why the nations will come on this festival to Jerusalem. (Da'at Mikra)

**Verse 17:**

והיה אשר לא יעלה מאת משפחות הארץ אל ירושלים  
להשתחוות למלך ה' צבקות ולא עליהם יהיה הגשם

מאת משפחות הארץ

The nations are called "families" (enlarged families). (Metzudat David)

## Zecharyah

ולא עליהם יהיה הגשם

Those who will not come to Jerusalem on Sukkot, and will not pray for rain, thus showing that they do not accept Hashem's kingship, will not be blessed with rain. (Da'at Mikra)

### Verse 18:

ואם משפחת מצרים לא תעלה ולא באה ולא עליהם תהיה  
המגפה אשר ייגוף ה' את הגוים אשר לא יעלו לחוג את חג  
הסוכות

ואם משפחת מצרים לא תעלה ולא באה

Egypt does not need rain, for it uses the waters of the Nile. What will happen to the Egyptians if they do not come to Jerusalem like the other nations? (Metzudat David)

ולא עליהם תהיה המגפה אשר ייגוף ה' את הגוים...

1. They do not get rain anyway, and therefore their punishment will be that same illness that struck the nations who tried to conquer Jerusalem. (Metzudat David)
2. The Nile will not rise, and that's how they will be afflicted, in punishment for not coming to Jerusalem. (Da'at Mikra)

### Verse 19:

זאת תהיה חטאת מצרים וחטאת כל הגוים אשר לא יעלו לחוג  
את חג הסוכות

זאת תהיה חטאת מצרים וחטאת כל הגוים..

These two punishments will be the punishments for the various nations that will not come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival of Sukkot – Egypt will be afflicted with an illness, and the rest of the nations will suffer a drought. (Metzudat David)

חטאת here means punishment, not sin.

## Verse 20:

ביום ההוא יהיה על מצילות הסוס קודש לה' והיה הסירות בבית  
ה' כמזרקים לפני המזבח

על מצילות הסוס קודש לה'

1. The jingling bells taken from the horses who died in the plague will be consecrated to Hashem, and it will be as if they have קודש לה' engraved upon them. (Metzudat David)
2. The jingling bells of the horses going up to Jerusalem will have קודש לה' engraved upon them. (Da'at Mikra)

והיה הסירות בבית ה' כמזרקים לפני המזבח

1. These golden jingling bells will be melted down for use as cooking-ware in the Temple, and therefore they will be like the utensils used at the altar. (Metzudat David)
2. The pots of the temple will be used for service at the altar, for the utensils normally used for the sacrifices will not suffice for all the sacrifices brought. (Da'at Mikra)

## Verse 21:

והיה כל סיר בירושלים וביהודה קודש לה' צבקות ובאו כל  
הזובחים ולקחו מהם ובישלו בהם ולא יהיה כנעני עוד בבית ה'  
צבקות ביום ההוא

והיה כל סיר בירושלים וביהודה קודש לה' צבקות ובאו כל הזובחים ולקחו מהם...

All the cooking utensils in Jerusalem will be used for sacrifices, and therefore anyone who wants to bring a sacrifice will be able to use any pot he finds without asking whether it is fit to be used for that purpose. (Metzudat David)

ולא יהיה כנעני עוד בבית ה' צבקות ביום ההוא

1. The people of Givon (who were Canaanites) were declared to be choppers of wood and water-carriers at the Temple (see Yehoshua 9:27). But in the future, they will not be necessary, for the greatest of the nations will volunteer their services as choppers of wood and water-carriers. (Metzudat David)

## Zecharyah

2. There will be no need for salesmen (כנעני also means traveling salesmen; see Zecharyah 11:7, 11) of cooking-ware and beasts for the sacrifices, because the voluntary offerings brought by the pilgrims will suffice. (Da'at Mikra)

והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ  
ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד



# THE BOOK OF MALACHI

## *Introduction:*

In the Gemara (Megillah 15a) there is a discussion as to the identity of this prophet. Some say he was Mordechai, some say he was Ezra. It must be noted that his father's name is not given, nor is any date given for his prophecies, unlike the other books of prophets, where the names of the kings of their times are mentioned.

The Abarbanel voices his opinion, that there was a prophet named Malachi, who prophesied after Chagai and Zecharyah. To prove that, he points out that whereas Chagai and Zecharyah speak of the building of the Temple, Malachi does not mention it, indicating that it had been built already.

His name also indicates his being a messenger (*mal'ach*) from Hashem, as all the prophets were. (Abarbanel)

In the Mechilta, it is said that all the prophets were present at the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, and they carried the prophecies with them until the time came to give them over to the people. The Abarbanel sees this as being figurative, meaning that it was the power of prophecy that was granted at Mount Sinai that fueled the prophets from then on. Malachi was the last of these prophets, and that is why he ends his prophecy with the final exhortion: זכור תורת משה עבדי – “Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant”. (Abarbanel)

## Chapter 1

### Verse 1:

משא דבר ה' אל ישראל ביד מלאכי

משא דבר ה'

1. The prophecy of Malachi was given to him, that he should bear it to the Children of Israel. (Rashi)
2. The prophecy was a heavy burden, because the Children of Israel would not listen to it. (Abarhanel)

### Verse 2:

אהבתי אתכם אמר ה' ואמרתם במה אהבתנו הלא אח עשו  
ליעקב נאום ה' ואוהב את יעקב

אהבתי אתכם אמר ה' ואמרתם במה אהבתנו

One of the main characteristics of the book of Malachi is the dialogue that he conducts with the people: You may say X, and I say back to you Y. The students can look through the first chapter and find several instances of this.

Hashem states his love for the people of Israel, and they respond by asking why He loves them – for themselves, or because of His love for the Patriarchs and Matriarchs? (Metzudat David)

הלא אח עשו ליעקב נאום ה' ואוהב את יעקב

Hashem answers that if it were only because of the Patriarchs, His love would have been given equally to Esav and to Yaakov, both sons of Yitzchak and grandsons of Avraham; but He loves Yaakov alone. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 3:

ואת עשו שנאתי ואשים את הריו שממה ואת נחלתו לתנות  
מדבר

ואת עשו שנאתי

1. Since Hashem hates Esav and loves Yaakov alone, one can see that Hashem loves Yaakov and his offspring for themselves. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem hates Esav because of his deeds, and because of the deeds of his offspring: They continued to harm Israel, and were glad when the people of Israel were exiled from their land. (Radak)

The students can be referred to the book of Ovadiah, which details the acts of Esav at the time of the destruction of the Temple and the exile.

ואשים את הריו שממה

Both the land of Israel and the land of Edom were devastated by Nevuchadnetzar; but whereas the land of Israel was redeemed, and the Children of Israel came back to it, the land of Esav remains barren. (Metzudat David)

ואת נחלתו לתנות מדבר

Esav's land remained a desert, where jackals roam. (Radak)

See *Leket Sichot Mussar*, by Rabbi Yitzchak Sher, page 15. He describes the nature of Esav, as opposed to the nature of Yaakov. Esav (עשו) comes from the same root as עשיר – complete; this means that he does not grow and develop. Yaakov, on the other hand, is always learning, and therefore is always growing, and becoming more perfect.

## Verse 4:

כי תאמר אדום רוששנו ונשוב ונבנה חרבות כה אמר ה' צבקות  
המה יבנו ואני אהרוס וקרא להם גבול רשעה והעם אשר זעם ה'  
עד עולם

כי תאמר אדום רוששנו ונשוב ונבנה חרבות

If Edom says that indeed they have been devastated, but this happened by chance, and that therefore all they have to do is make an effort and rebuild their land –

## Malachi

כה אמר ה' צבקות המה יבנו ואני אהרוס

Hashem declares that they may rebuild their land, He will make sure that it will again be destroyed. (Metzudat David)

וקרא להם גבול רשעה

The Edomites will be known as the “limit (or border) of evil”. (Metzudat David)

הארץ אשר זעם ה' עד עולם

The Edomites' land will be known as one on which Hashem's anger was poured – not like they thought, that it was by chance. The destruction – and the lesson that it will serve – will be forever. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 5:

ועיניכם תראינה ואתם תאמרו יגדל ה' מעל לגבול ישראל

ואתם תאמרו יגדל ה' מעל לגבול ישראל

The Jewish people will see the fate of Edom, as a “border of evil”, from their rebuilt land, within safe borders, and will praise Hashem for it. (Radak)

### Verse 6:

בן יכבד אב ועבד אדוניו ואם אב אני איה כבודי ואם אדונים אני  
איה מוראי אמר ה' צבקות לכם הכהנים בזו שמי ואמרתם במה  
בזינו את שמך

בן יכבד אב ועבד אדוני

Hashem loves the Children of Israel as a father does a son, but do the Children of Israel reciprocate this love?

A son naturally loves – and therefore honors – his loving father, and a slave naturally fears – and therefore honors – his master. But in this case, the people of Israel are showing Hashem neither love nor even fear of His punishments. The following verses spell out how the priests are showing lack of respect and honor. They ask: How have we shown contempt to You? (Malbim)

## Verse 7:

מגישים על מזבחי לחם מגואל ואמרתם במה גאלנוך באמרכתם  
שולחן ה' נבזה הוא

מגישים על מזבחי לחם מגואל

The answer to their question is that they are bringing disgusting sacrifices.  
(Metzudat David)

ואמרתם במה גאלנוך באמרכתם שולחן ה' נבזה הוא

1. The priests are mystified: In what way have we made the sacrifices disgusting? And the answer is: by saying that Hashem's "table" (namely the altar) is contemptible, for the offerings brought on it are the blood and the fat of the sacrifices – both things that are not considered edible. (Metzudat David)
2. The priests made the altar contemptible, by not wanting to bother dividing up each and every offering between many priests as they should, because then each one would get only a small portion. By scorning the sacrifices, they were belittling them. (Rashi)

The students should note that according to Metzudat David, the sin is not in any action being done, but in speaking derisively about the Temple service. Words are not "just" words – a disrespectful attitude towards someone or something can be a sin in itself, and, as in this case, harmful to one's entire attitude toward the service of Hashem.

The students can bring other examples from life about how one derisive word can destroy one's respect for something.

## Verse 8:

וכי תגישון עיוור לזבוח אין רע וכי תגישו פיסח וחולה אין רע  
הקריבהו נא לפחתך הירצך או היישא פניך אמר ה' צבקות

וכי תגישון עיוור...

As a result of your contemptuous attitude towards the sacrifices, you don't see why you shouldn't bring unfit animals, since the process of sacrificing seems disgusting to you anyway. (Metzudat David)

## Malachi

הקריבהו נא לפחתך הירצך או היישא פניך

If you brought such an animal as a gift to the governor of the province, as penance for some wrongdoing, would he forgive you? Would he be happy with it as a gift? (Metzudat David)

### Verse 9:

ועתה חלו נא פני קל ויחננו מידכם היתה זאת היישא מכם פנים  
אמר ה' צבקות

ועתה חלו נא פני קל ויחננו מידכם היתה זאת

The priests are entrusted by the people with the job of praying to Hashem; but in this case they are the sinners themselves. (Metzudat David)

היישא מכם פנים

Since the priests are the sinners, how can Hashem accept their prayers for the people of Israel? (Metzudat David)

### Verse 10:

מי גם בכם ויסגור דלתיים ולא תאירו מזבחי חינם אין לי חפץ  
בכם אמר ה' צבקות ומנחה לא ארצה מידכם

מי גם בכם ויסגור דלתיים...

With Priests like these, it would be better if one of them simply closed the doors of the Temple, so that no sacrifices would be brought. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 11:

כי ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו גדול שמי בגויים ובכל מקום מוקטר  
מוגש לשמי ומנחה טהורה כי גדול שמי בגויים אמר ה' צבקות

כי ממזרח שמש ועד מבואו גדול שמי בגויים

Even though the nations worship idols, still the Name of Hashem is considered great. Everybody knows that Hashem is the Supreme Ruler, but they think that elements such as the sun and moon are servants of Hashem, and therefore also deserve respect. (Malbim)

ובכל מקום מוקטר מוגש לשמי

The nations bring offerings to those that they think are close (*mugash* – close) to Hashem. (Malbim)

ומנחה טהורה כי גדול שמי בגויים

1. When they bring offerings, they bring whole, unblemished sacrifices, for they respect Hashem's servants (as they see them). (Malbim)
2. The nations bring their offerings with pure – though mistaken – intentions. (Metzudat David)

The students should read the verse and bring up the question themselves: How can the prophet say that the whole world worships Hashem?

**Verse 12:**

ואתם מחללים אותו באמרכתם שולחן ה' מגואל הוא וניבו נבזה  
אכלו

וניבו נבזה אכלו

1. Your way of referring to the altar is that the food placed on it is despicable in your eyes. (Metzudat David)
2. The word *niv* has a double meaning here: that of bread (as in *tenuva* – produce), and that of speech (which is the produce of the lips). (Ibn Ezra)

**Verse 13:**

ואמרתם הנה מתלאה והיפחתם אותו אמר ה' צבקות והבאתם  
גזול ואת הפיסח ואת החולה והבאתם את המנחה הארצה אותה  
מידכם אמר ה'

ואמרתם הנה מתלאה

The prophet now goes on to berate the people themselves: When they bring thin and gaunt animals as sacrifices, they put on an act, as if the animals are heavy and hard to carry. (Radak)

והיפחתם אותו

In reality, the animals are so thin and weak, that one can blow them over with one's breath. (Radak)

Malachi

והבאתם גזול ואת הפיסח ואת החולה

The sacrifices which you bring are either stolen (in which case they are a מצודה – a *mitzvah* which is done by transgressing another *mitzvah*), or animals which are blemished and unfit for the altar. (Malbim)

והבאתם את המנחה הארצה אותה מידכם

And then, you bring the side-offerings with these unfit sacrifices – how can I possibly want such side-offerings? (Malbim)

Verse 14:

וארור נוכל ויש בעדרו זכר ונודר חובח משחת לה' כי מלך גדול  
אני אמר ה' צבקות ושמי נורא בגויים

וארור נוכל ויש בעדרו זכר ונודר חובח משחת לה'

Cursed is the man who has a good and fit male animal, and yet brings a damaged one in order to fulfill his vow. (Metzudat David)

כי מלך גדול אני... ושמי נורא בגויים

For I am a great king, and how can you belittle Me this way? And, furthermore, I am feared among all the nations, so how can you, whom I love more than any of the nations (see above, verse 2), not fear Me? (Radak)



## Chapter 2

### Verse 1:

**ועתה אליכם המצווה הזאת הכהנים**

ועתה אליכם המצווה הזאת...

Hashem turns to the priests, who accept the blemished, poor sacrifices that the people bring, and exhorts them not to accept such sacrifices. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 2:

**אם לא תשמעו ואם לא תשימו על לב לתת כבוד לשמי אמר ה'  
צבקות ושילחתי בכם את המארה וארותי את ברכותיכם וגם  
ארותיה כי אינכם שמים על לב**

אם לא תשמעו ואם לא תשימו על לב

If you, the priests, do not listen to My warning, and also do not think for yourselves that such behavior is wrong. (Malbim)

ושילחתי בכם את המארה

As is said in chapter 1, verse 14, a person who brings a poor sacrifice dishonestly, is cursed. This curse will lay upon the priests. (Malbim)

וארותי את ברכותיכם

1. The blessings that you give the people after they bring their sacrifices (the priestly blessing) will be turned into curses instead. (Malbim)
2. The blessings which Chagai promised upon the building of the Temple will be repealed. (Metzudat David)

וגם ארותיה כי אינכם שמים על לב

1. You are already feeling a curse, for you do not honor Me. (Metzudat David)
2. You are already feeling the effects of a curse, and if you continue to defy Me, you will be cursed even more. (Radak)

**Verse 3:**

הנני גוער לכם את הזרע חריתי פרש על פניכם פרש חגיכם  
ונישא אתכם אליו

הנני גוער לכם את הזרע

Hashem says that he will “scold” the seed, so that it won’t grow. (Metzudat David)

חריתי פרש על פניכם פרש חגיכם

1. Hashem will spread the excrement from the animals that were sacrificed on the holidays on the people’s faces. This will be done measure for measure: the people are behaving disgracefully toward Hashem, so He will disgrace them with the most disgusting part of the sacrific. (Metzudat David)
2. The spreading of the excrement is figurative: the people will experience disgrace in the form of the famine that will come upon the land. (Radak)

ונישא אתכם אליו

This sin which you have sinned will carry you towards the disgrace that you will experience. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 4:**

וידעתם כי שילחתי אליכם את המצווה הזאת להיות בריתי את  
לוי אמר ה' צבקות

וידעתם כי שילחתי אליכם את המצווה הזאת

The people should know that this *mitzvah* of honoring Hashem was given to them so that they will receive the reward for it. (Metzudat David)

להיות בריתי את לוי

Hashem wanted the people to honor Him so that He will be able to uphold the covenant made with the tribe of Levi, and specifically with Aharon and his sons, that they should be His priests. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 5:**

**בריתי היתה איתו החיים והשלום ואתנם לו מורא ויראני ומפני שמי נחת הוא**

בריתי היתה איתו החיים והשלום

1. The covenant made with the tribe of Levi gave the tribe life and peace. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* The covenant was made first with Aharon, and then with Pinchas, promising Pinchas peace. (See Bemidbar 25:10-13). Pinchas received life as well – he lived more than 300 years. (Radak)

ואתנם לו מורא ויראני...

1. The peace and life were given to Pinchas because of his fear of Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem promised Levi peace and life in return for his fearing Him and being in awe of Him. (Malbim)

ומפני שמי נחת הוא

He fears My name. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 6:**

**תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועוולה לא נמצא בשפתיו בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי ורבים השיב מעוון**

תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועוולה לא נמצא בשפתיו

The priests taught the people Torah truthfully. (Metzudat David)

בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי

The priests went in Hashem's ways – in peace – and in the proper ways regarding people as well. (Radak)

ורבים השיב מעוון

By teaching Torah to the people the priests prevented many people from sinning. (Radak)

Yalkut Shimoni 588 brings a Midrash that sees this verse as referring specifically to Aharon Hacoheh. The Midrash describes Aharon's actions both in bringing peace between two people who were quarreling, and in preventing people from sinning. The Vilna Gaon on Pirkei Avot 1:12 (הלל אומר: הרי מתלמידיו של אהרן אהב) also sees this verse as the source for Hillel's words.

**Verse 7:**

**כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה יבקשו מפיהו כי מלאך ה'  
צבקות הוא**

כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה יבקשו מפיהו

Part of the job of the priests is to teach Torah (see Vayikra 10:11, and Devarim 33:9), and therefore the people will turn to them to learn. (Radak)

כי מלאך ה' צבקות הוא

The priest is an agent of Hashem for the purpose of teaching His words to the people. (Metzudat David)

The students should be made aware that the term מלאך, generally understood as meaning "angel", really means "messenger", or "agent". They can be referred to various verses in which it is clear that it is referring to a human messenger and not to an angel. See, for instance, Bereishit 32:3, Bemidbar 24:12, and Yehoshua 6:25.

\* As a possible homework assignment, the students can look up the word מלאך in a concordance, and bring several examples of both meanings.

**Verse 8:**

**ואתם סרתם מן הדרך הכשלתם רבים בתורה שיחתם ברית הלוי  
אמר ה' צבקות**

ואתם סרתם מן הדרך הכשלתם רבים בתורה

Hashem turns to the priests and berates them for doing the exact opposite of what they were supposed to do: instead of teaching the people Torah and preventing them from sinning, they have caused them to sin. (Metzudat David)

## שיחתם ברית ה'לוי

The priests have broken the covenant: instead of serving Hashem and respecting Him, they have disgraced the worship of Him. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 9:

וגם אני נתתי אתכם נבזים ושפלים לכל העם כפי אשר אינכם שומרים את דרכי ונושאים פנים בתורה

וגם אני נתתי אתכם נבזים ושפלים לכל העם

1. Since you have not kept your part of the covenant, I will not keep mine. Instead of giving you life and peace, I will make you despicable in the eyes of the people, and for a respected person lack of respect is like death, and he can find no peace in life that way. (Metzudat David)
2. The priests will be punished measure for measure: since they showed lack of respect for Hashem, He will make them suffer from disrespect. (Radak)

כפי אשר אינכם שומרים את דרכי

The extent of the disrespect they will suffer will be in accordance with their own disrespectful behavior. (Metzudat David)

ונושאים פנים בתורה

1. The priests have been favoring the rich people by not admonishing them for bringing blemished sacrifices. (Radak)
2. The priests have been favoring the rich people by deciding court cases in their favor. (Metzudat David)

The students can define the different jobs of the priests that each commentator is referring to.

## Verse 10:

הלוא אב אחד לכולנו הלוא קל אחד בראנו מדוע נבגד איש באחיו לחלל ברית אבותינו

הלוא אב אחד לכולנו הלוא קל אחד בראנו...

The prophet now goes on to mention another wrongdoing of the people: that of taking non-Jewish wives (as mentioned in Ezra, chapters 9, 10). He says: Why should we be unfaithful to our Jewish wives, who are close to us both physically

(since we were all born from the same father), and spiritually (since we have the same G-d)? (Radak)

**Verse 11:**

בגדה יהודה ותועבה נעשתה בישראל ובירושלים כי חילל יהודה  
קודש ה' אשר אהב ובעל בת אל נכר

בגדה יהודה ותועבה נעשתה בישראל ובירושלים

1. Yehudah has betrayed himself, and done a despicable thing; if a Jew is living among non-Jews and intermarries with them, it is not as bad as when he is surrounded by Jews, and is living in the heart of the Jewish world – Jerusalem – and still marries a non-Jewish woman. (Metzudat David)
2. Yehudah has betrayed the family by marrying out of it, and, in addition, has behaved despicably in marrying idol-worshippers. (Malbim)

כי חילל יהודה קודש ה' אשר אהב ובעל בת אל נכר

1. Yehudah had been holy, and now he has profaned himself by loving and marrying the daughter of a foreign god. (Metzudat David)
- 2.\* Yehudah has profaned the holy, loved, daughters of Israel, by taking other, non-Jewish wives. (Radak)

The Jewish people are intrinsically holy, and are also exhorted to be holy, meaning not to cohabit indiscriminately, as the non-Jews do. See Vayikra 19:2, and other places, where at the end of the section dealing with the prohibitions regarding incest and other prohibitions, where the matter is summed up as “Be holy”. (Radak)

**Verse 12:**

יכרת ה' לאיש אשר יעשנה ער ועונה מאהלי יעקב ומגיש מנחה  
לה' צבקות

יכרת ה' לאיש אשר יעשנה ער ועונה

1. Whoever marries a non-Jewish woman will not have any sons in the “tents of Yaakov” (the study-houses) who are students raising questions, nor sages who can answer them. (Metzudat David)
2. Whoever marries a non-Jewish woman will end up having no children left – when one calls out in his house, no one will be awake to answer. (Radak)

ומגיש מנחה ליה צבקות

If the person who does this is a priest, then he will have no offspring who will serve in the Temple. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 13:**

וזאת שנית תעשו כסות דמעה את מזבח ה' בכי ואנקה מאין עוד  
פנות אל המנחה ולקחת רצון מידכם

וזאת שנית תעשו כסות דמעה את מזבח ה' בכי ואנקה

1. In addition to showing disrespect to the altar (as mentioned above, chapter 1), the altar is also a site of sorrow: the deserted Jewish wives come to it to cry over their situation. (Radak)
2. Some unmarried men married non-Jewish women; but some did worse: they were already married to Jewish women, but these women had become unattractive as a result of the exile and the suffering. So the husbands took non-Jewish wives in addition to their Jewish wives, pushing them aside as mistresses of the house. This, of course, caused great anguish to the Jewish wives. (Rashi)
- 3.\* The Jewish women, who have been divorced, come to the altar and cry upon it, saying: If our husbands suspected us of infidelity, we are willing to be checked as *isha sota*. (Mahari Kra)

מאין עוד פנות אל המנחה ולקחת רצון מידכם

You have no merit left, that I should accept your offerings willingly. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 14:**

ואמרתם על מה על כי ה' העיד בינך ובין אשת נעורייך אשר  
אתה בגדתה בה והיא חברתך ואשת בריתך

ואמרתם על מה

The people claim that they divorced their wives because they suspected them of infidelity, so why is Hashem angry with them? (Metzudat David)

על כי ה' העיד בינך ובין אשת נעורייך אשר אתה בגדתה בה...

The prophet answers: Hashem can testify that it is you, the husband, who has been unfaithful, while she has remained faithful throughout. (Metzudat David)

The Talmud (Gittin 90a) says: כל המגרש אשתו ראשונה אפילו מזבח מוריד עליו דמעות – Even the altar [in the Temple] weeps when someone divorces his first wife. From this we can see how seriously the Torah views divorce.

**Verse 15:**

**ולא אחד עשה ושאר רוח לו ומה האחד מבקש זרע אלוקים  
ונשמרתם ברוחכם ובאשת נעוריך אל יבגוד**

**ולא אחד עשה ושאר רוח לו**

1. The people say: Didn't the one (see Yechezkel 33:24) – Avinu – do the same, in taking Hagar as a second wife? And he, of course, was on a very high spiritual level! (Metzudat David)
2. The prophet says: Didn't Hashem create man and woman as one being in the beginning (and only afterwards separated them into two beings), so that their souls are really united? (Malbim)

**ומה האחד מבקש זרע אלוקים**

1. Hashem answers the people's claim: What did this one person, Avraham, want? He wanted a holy seed to come from Sarah, as a result of his union with Hagar (see Bereishit 16:2). He did not take Hagar as a result of any desire on his part. (Metzudat David)
2. What is the point of the unity of the soul that exists between a man and his wife? That their seed will be holy, an unmixed seed, in the image of G-d. For that they must have a unity of body – from the same nation – and a unity of soul – worshipping the same G-d (as mentioned above, verse 10). (Malbim)

**ונשמרתם ברוחכם ובאשת נעוריך אל יבגוד**

1. Therefore, you should be careful to control your desires, and to love your **true** wife. (Metzudat David)
2. The original intention of the Creator was that man and wife should have unity of love and will. (Malbim)

The students should define the differences between the two commentaries to this verse (a continuation of the debate between the prophet and the people, vs. a statement of the prophet only, the meaning of “one” in the verse; bringing a claim from the origins of the nations, vs. bringing a claim of a universal nature, etc.)



## Verse 16:

כי שנא שלח אמר ה' אלוקי ישראל וכיסה חמס על לבושו אמר  
ה' צבקות ונשמרתם ברוחכם ולא תבגודו

כי שנא שלח

If a person really hates his wife, he should divorce her, freeing her so that she can marry someone else. (Metzudat David)

וכיסה חמס על לבושו... ונשמרתם ברוחכם ולא תבגודו

He shouldn't hide his hatred under wraps, and have his wife stay with him while he hates her; he should expose the hatred and divorce her, or else he should control his feelings and remove the hatred from his heart. In any case, he shouldn't be unfaithful to her, by taking another wife while she is still married to him. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 17:

הוגעתם ה' בדבריכם ואמרתם במה הוגענו באמרכם כל עושה  
רע טוב בעיני ה' ובהם הוא חפץ או איה אלוקי המשפט

הוגעתם ה' בדבריכם

“You have tired Hashem with your words” – this is being said as a figure of speech, as Hashem cannot get tired. (Radak)

ואמרתם במה הוגענו באמרכם כל עושה רע טוב בעיני ה' ובהם הוא חפץ

The people ask: How have we tired Hashem? And the answer is: by their saying that Hashem seems to like evildoers. (Metzudat David)

או איה אלוקי המשפט

If Hashem does indeed dislike the evildoers, then why doesn't he punish them? Can't He see their actions? (Metzudat David)

The next chapter is the answer to this question. There is justice in the world. (Malbim)

By looking in a Tanach Koren, one can see that the commonly-accepted division of chapters, which was done by Christians, is not in accordance with the Jewish division – and also does not make sense textually. According to the Jewish division, this last verse is the beginning of a paragraph, not the end of one, and indeed it is opening a new subject.

## Chapter 3

### Verse 1:

הנני שולח מלאכי ופינה דרך לפני ופתאום יבוא אל היכלו  
האדון אשר אתם מבקשים ומלאך הברית אשר אתם חפצים הנה  
בא אמר ה' צבקות

הנני שולח מלאכי ופינה דרך לפני

1. In answer to the question about justice in the world, Hashem says that when the time comes he will send an agent to clear the way for Him, so to speak. This agent will do away with the evil people and purify the land before the *Shechinah* returns to dwell on earth. (Metzudat David)
2. An agent will be sent from Heaven, as it says in Shemot 23:20. He will physically clear the way before the people returning to the Land. (Radak)

ופתאום יבוא אל היכלו

The End of the Days will come suddenly. As it says in the book of Daniel, these matters will remain hidden from us until the moment they happen. (Radak)

האדון אשר אתם מבקשים ומלאך הברית אשר אתם חפצים

1. The *Mashiach*, whom everybody wants, will come. (Metzudat David)
2. The Adon is either the *Mashiach*, or Eliyahu Hanavi (as mentioned in the end of the book, 3:23). In the Aggadah, Eliyahu is known as the Angel of the Covenant, because he claimed that the people of Israel were not keeping the covenant (Melachim II 19:10), meaning that they were not circumcising their sons. Hashem responded by saying that from then on Eliyahu has to be present at every circumcision done. From this stems the custom to have a *kiseh shel Eliyahu* – a chair for Eliyahu – at every *brit*. (Radak)

\* The Malbim on this verse gives a deep explanation about the difference between the present world and the way it is run, and the future world, when Hashem will reveal Himself, and every sin will be punished immediately. The world will have to be prepared for this transition, and that is what this agent will do. This Malbim can be assigned to honors students to read and to discuss.

## Verse 2:

ומי מכלכל את יום בואו ומי העומד בהראותו כי הוא כאש  
מצרף וכבורית מכבסים

ומי מכלכל את יום בואו ומי העומד בהראותו

Who can stand the day when this angel will arrive? (Metzudat David)

כי הוא כאש מצרף וכבורית מכבסים

1. This preparatory agent will be like a fire purifying metal, burning up the extraneous parts of the ore, and like a cleansing soap which washes away the stains in an item of clothing. He will destroy all the unfaithful people and the sinners. (Metzudat David)
2. The evil people will be burned up completely, like dross, and the righteous, who are basically “clean”, will have all the “spots” removed from them with soap. (Malbim)

## Verse 3:

ישוב מצרף ומטהר כסף וטיהר את בני לוי וזיקק אותם כזהב  
זככסף והיו לה' מגישי מנחה בצדקה

ישוב מצרף ומטהר כסף וטיהר את בני לוי

The Agent will sit like a judge, and will remove from the Levites – meaning here the priests, who come from the tribe of Levi – all those who belittle Hashem's Name, so the tribe will be purified. (Metzudat David)

והיו לה' מגישי מנחה בצדקה

After they will be purified, they will go back to bringing the offerings properly, as opposed to the situation now, where they bring offerings that are disgusting to Hashem. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 4:

וערבה לה' מנחת יהודה וירושלים כימי עולם וכשנים קדמוניות

וערבה לה' מנחת יהודה וירושלים...

1. Once the priests will do their job properly, the gifts that Yehudah will bring to the Temple will gladden Hashem, as in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu (ימי עולם)

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and the days of Shlomo Hamelech (שנים קדמוניות). In those days, Heavenly fire came down to light the fire on the altar. (Metzudat David)

2. Yehudah and Jerusalem are mentioned especially because that is where the Temple is. (Radak)

The students should, of course, recognize this verse from their daily prayers.

### Verse 5:

וקרבתי אליכם למשפט והייתי עד ממהר במכשפים ובמנאפים  
ובגשבעים לשקר ובעושקי שכר שכיר אלמנה ויתום ומטי גר ולא  
יראוני אמר ה' צבקות

וקרבתי אליכם למשפט

1. After the priests are purified, and the service in the Temple is renewed, Hashem will come to judge the rest of the people. (Metzudat David)
2. On the same day of the purification of the priests, Hashem will judge the rest of the people as well, including previous generations. (Radak)

והייתי עד ממהר במכשפים...

The trial will not be lengthened by the need to wait for the witnesses – Hashem Himself will be the witness against all the wrongdoers. (Metzudat David)

ומטי גר

Judges who rule against a convert unfairly. (Metzudat David)

ולא יראוני

All of the sins enumerated in this verse are sins that are either done in secret, or, even though they are done publicly, are done without fear of punishment. Who will stand up for the convert, who has no friends? Who will stand up for the widows and orphans? The claim of the people (above, 2:17), was that Hashem does not seem to punish evildoers. Hashem is saying here that on the Day of Judgment, all these evildoers will be punished. (Metzudat David)

## Verse 6:

כי אני ה' לא שניתי ואתם בני יעקב לא כליתם

כי אני ה' לא שניתי

1. Hashem says that He has not changed his mind – He still hates evil, as before. (Metzudat David)
2. Hashem says that He has not changed his mind – all the prophecies will come true. (Radak)

ואתם בני יעקב לא כליתם

1. The Jewish nation lives forever, and therefore, even if wicked people die, seemingly without being punished, when everyone is resurrected they will stand trial. (Metzudat David)
2. The Jewish nation lives forever: no matter how badly the people behave, in the End of the Days they will return to their high position in the world. (Radak)
- 3.\* Chazal say that Hashem says about the Jewish nation: לא הכיתי אומה ושניתי בה – אבל ... חצי כלים ואתם אינכם כלים, but with you, my arrows (the troubles I put you through) are used up, but you remain. (Rashi)

The students can note the difference between the two first commentaries in terms of the purpose of the second half of the verse: to warn the people, vs. to console them.

## Verse 7:

למימי אבותיכם סרתם מחוקי ולא שמרתם שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם אמר ה' ואמרתם במה נשוב

שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם... ואמרתם במה נשוב

Hashem is berating the Jewish People. He is calling them to return to Him, to observe the *mitzvot*, and then He will return to them, and their life will be good. But despite all of the sins enumerated above, the people might ask him: What do we have to repent of? (Metzudat David)

**Verse 8:**

היקבע אדם אלוקים כי אתם קובעים אותי ואמרתם במה קבענוך  
המעשר והתרומה

היקבע אדם אלוקים

1. Is it right that a person steal from G-d, as you steal from Me? (Metzudat David)
2. Can a person accept upon himself a G-d, without giving Him His due? (Malbim)

ואמרתם במה קבענוך המעשר והתרומה

The people may ask: How have we stolen from You? And the answer is that they have not given the *terumah* (the priestly portion) and the *ma'aser* (the tithes) to the priests and the Levites, who serve Hashem. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 9:**

במארה אתם נארים ואותי אתם קובעים הגוי כולו

במארה אתם נארים... הגוי כולו

1. Even though you are being cursed with poor crops, you still continue to steal from Hashem – no one is bringing the *terumah* and the *ma'aser*. (Metzudat David)
2. Even though you gain no benefit from not giving Hashem His due, for it causes you a curse, you continue to do so – not just individuals, but many of you. (Malbim)
3. The people are already cursed because of the other sins enumerated above (see 2:2), and they add to their sins by saying that they owe nothing to Hashem – He is stealing from them by cursing them, and therefore why should they give Him anything? (Radak)

**Verse 10:**

הביאו את כל המעשר אל בית האוצר ויהיה טרף בביתי ובחנוני  
נא בזאת אמר ה' צבקות אם לא אפתח לכם את ארובות השמיים  
והריקותי לכם ברכה עד בלי די

הביאו את כל המעשר אל בית האוצר ויהיה טרף בביתי

Bring the *ma'aser* to the *Beit Ha'otzar*, mentioned in Nechemiah 10:39, as the place where the *ma'aser* was brought to. This produce will be the food for the people who serve in the House of Hashem – the Levites. (Metzudat David)

ובחנוני נא בזאת אמר ה' צבקות אם לא אפתח לכם את ארובות השמיים...

The people are invited to test Hashem. Generally, it is forbidden to test Hashem, but in this special, one-time case, Hashem is promising them that if they bring the *ma'aser*, Hashem will bless their crops. (Abarbanel)

\* In Ta'anit 9a, there is a discussion about whether one is allowed to test Hashem. Rabbi Hoshayah says that the issue of *ma'asrot* is an exception to the general rule forbidding it, and he brings this verse as proof.

A discussion can be held in regard to the general issue of expecting immediate reward for doing a mitzvah – on one hand it appears to be a show of pure faith, but on the other hand it has many pitfalls, as, as a general rule, we are not to expect an immediate reward for doing our duty to Hashem, and not receiving an immediate reward should not deter us from doing more *mitzvot*.

עד בלי די

1. There will be so much produce, that the storehouses will not be able to contain it all. (Metzudat David)
2. There will be so much produce, much more than needed, so that your lips will tire of saying "enough". (Ta'anit 9a)

**Verse 11:**

וגערתי לכם באוכל ולא ישחית לכם את פרי האדמה ולא תשכל  
לכם הגפן בשדה אמר ה' צבקות

וגערתי לכם באוכל...

Hashem will stop the various pests from attacking the produce. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 12:**

**ואישרו אתכם כל הגוים כי תהיו אתם ארץ חפץ אמר ה' צבקות**

ואישרו אתכם כל הגוים...

The other nations will praise you for your great success. (Metzudat David)

**כי תהיו אתם ארץ חפץ**

1. Instead of the Land of Israel being a cursed land, it will be a land that fulfills the wishes of its inhabitants. (Metzudat David)
2. As opposed to the statement above (1:10), where Hashem says that He does not want the Jewish People, He says here that they will be His desired portion. (Mahari Kra)

**Verse 13:**

**חזקו עלי דבריכם אמר ה' ואמרתם מה נדברנו עליך**

חזקו עלי דבריכם...

After the prophet answers the people's question about the wicked not receiving punishment for their sins, still the people claim against the Heavenly system of reward and punishment. (Radak)

**Verse 14:**

**אמרתם שווא עבוד אלוקים ומה בצע כי שמרנו משמרתו וכי הלכנו קדורנית מפני ה' צבקות**

אמרתם שווא עבוד אלוקים...

1. The people say that there is no reward for the observing the *mitzvot*, and why should they bother? What good have they received for being subservient to Hashem? (Metzudat David)
2. The people say that although the answer given above might explain the phenomenon of the wicked prospering, it doesn't explain the suffering of the righteous. They also raise the question of what good does this serving of G-d do? It does no good to Hashem, for what does He need man's service for? (Malbim)



ומה בצע כי שמרתו משמרתו וכי הלכנו קדחתו

Serving Hashem seems to do no good for the people either, for they are supposed to get reward for it, and this reward does not seem to be forthcoming. (Malbim)

**Verse 15:**

ועתה אנחנו מאשרים זדים גם נבנו עושי רשעה גם בחנו אלוקים  
וימלטו

ועתה אנחנו מאשרים זדים...

1. The people say: Now that we have seen that it does us no good to serve Hashem, we praise the wicked, for not only have they prospered and stand firm like a building, but they have also tested Hashem, to see if He will punish them, and He has not. (Metzudat David)
2. We think highly of the wicked, for they do not labor to serve Hashem, and yet have not lost anything, even though they tested Hashem. (Malbim)

**Verse 16:**

או נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה' וישמע ויכתב ספר  
זכרון לפניו ליראי ה' ולחושבי שמו

או נדברו יראי ה' איש אל רעהו

Hashem is responding to these thoughts of the people: when those who truly fear G-d heard these things, they discussed them among themselves, and came to the conclusion that the ways of Hashem are just after all. (Metzudat David)

ויקשב ה' וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו ליראי ה'

1. Hashem heard their conclusions, and wrote down their names for future reference – that their reward should not be forgotten. This writing down is referred to in the book of Daniel (12:1): ובעת ההיא ימלט עמך כל הנמצא כחוב – בספר – “at that time (a time of troubles) anyone from your nation who is written down will escape”. (Metzudat David)
2. Even though Hashem will not reward them for their good deeds in this world, he did write down their deeds in a special book, for by remaining faithful, they prove that they fear G-d at the highest level – for G-d’s own sake (יראה), not for any reward. (Malbim)

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Rav Bloch (of the Telz Yeshiva), in his book *שיעורי דעת*, p. 128, has an insightful essay on the importance attached to all *mitzvas* that we do.

**Verse 17:**

**והיו לי אמר ה' צבקות ליום אשר אני עושה סגולה וחמלתי עליהם כאשר יחמול איש על בנו העובר אותו**

**והיו לי אמר ה' צבקות ליום אשר אני עושה סגולה**

1. Hashem is saving the words of the faithful, until the special day (סגולה) for which all the deeds of human beings are being saved, in order to pay each and every one accordingly. (Metzudat David)
2. The verse should be read: והיו לי סגולה ליום אשר אני עושה – the words of the righteous will be precious (סגולה) to Hashem, treasured by Him until the special day. (Malbim)

**וחמלתי עליהם**

On that day, I will have mercy on those who fear G-d, and they will not be harmed by the justice I will mete out to the wicked people. (Radak)

**כאשר יחמול איש על בנו העובר אותו**

1. A father has mercy on all his sons, but especially on the son who serves him. (Radak)
- 2.\* Employees, who work for pay, are paid immediately by their employer. But a son who serves his father is not paid immediately – the father saves up his pay for the future. Here too, Hashem is saving up the reward so that it will be given in the eternal world, and it itself will be eternal. (Malbim)

**Verse 18:**

**ושבתם וראיתם בין צדיק לרשע בין עובר אלוקים לאשר לא עבדו**

**ושבתם וראיתם בין צדיק לרשע...**

Then you will see that there is a difference between the wicked and the righteous, and not as you say now (verse 14), that there is no point in serving Hashem. (Radak)

**Verse 19:**

כי הנה היום בא בוער כתנור והיו כל זדים וכל עושה רשעה קש  
וליהט אותם היום הבא אמר ה' צבקות אשר לא יעזוב להם  
שורש וענף

כי הנה היום בא בוער כתנור...

The Day of Judgment will be like a hot furnace, in which all the wicked will be like straw – they will burn up immediately, and nothing at all will remain of them. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 20:**

וזרחה לכם יראי שמי שמש צדקה ומרפא בכנפיה ויצאתם  
ופשתם כעגלי מרבק

זרחה לכם יראי שמי שמש צדקה ומרפא

1. As opposed to the burning furnace that the wicked will experience on the Day of Judgment, the righteous will experience a pleasant and healing sun. This sun will be the light resulting from the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. (Metzudat David)
2. The righteous will be saved that day, and they will be happy and joyful. (Radak)

בכנפיה

The rays of the sun are like spread-out wings. (Radak)

ויצאתם ופשתם כעגלי מרבק

The righteous will go out and flourish like growing and fattening calves. (Metzudat David)

**Verse 21:**

ועסותם רשעים כי יהיו אפר תחת רגליכם ביום אשר אני  
עושה אמר ה' צבקות

ועסותם רשעים כי יהיו אפר תחת רגליכם...

1. The wicked will be trampled by the righteous on that day. (Metzudat David)
2. Right now the wicked are trampling the righteous, but from the Day of Judgment on, the righteous will trample the wicked. ועסותם comes from the

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same root as עסיס – juice, which is the result of trampling on fruit. One might ask, if the wicked are burned up on the Day of Judgment, when will they be trampled on? And the answer is, that they will not be burned up all at once, and as long as they exist, they will be like ashes, at the mercy of the righteous. (Radak)

### Verse 22:

זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר ציוויתי אותו בחורב על כל ישראל  
חוקים ומשפטים

זכרו תורת משה עבדי

1. Since you know you will receive your reward, make sure to remember the Torah, given to you through Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem's servant, for by keeping it you will earn this reward. (Metzudat David)
2. After rebuking the people, and especially the priests, for a variety of sins, the prophet ends his word by reminding them that all of Moshe's Torah is to be remembered and observed. (Da'at Mikra)

אשר ציוויתי אותו

Hashem gave the Torah to Moshe – Moshe did not make it up. (Metzudat David)

על כל ישראל חוקים ומשפטים

The Torah was given to all of Israel, and they are to observe all the commandments – both those that one does not understand the reason for them, and those whose reason is obvious. (Metzudat David)

### Verse 23:

הנה אנוכי שולח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול  
והנורא

הנה אנוכי שולח לכם את אליה הנביא

1. Because of the Torah, I will send you Eliyahu Hanavi, before the Day of Judgment. (Metzudat David)
2. Eliyahu Hanavi dedicated his life to bringing the people of Israel back to Hashem. It is he who will be sent to awaken the people to return to Hashem. (Da'at Mikra)

## הגדול והנורא

The Day of Judgment will be great for the righteous, and terrible for the wicked.  
(Da'at Mikra)

## Verse 24:

והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם פן אבוא והכיתי  
את הארץ חרם

והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם

1. Eliyahu Hanavi will resurrect the dead, and then all sons and fathers will stand together and tell each other the truth of the reward; then they will all, in wonder, repent and return to Hashem. (Metzudat David)
2. Eliyahu Hanavi will make everyone – fathers and sons – return to Hashem. (Metzudat David)
3. The entire world will do *teshuva*, so that the sons who have left the Torah of their fathers will return to it, and that way the hearts of the fathers and sons will be united. (Malbim)

An historical note can be added, that the Malbim is describing the reality of his day: that of the younger generation leaving the way of Torah.

פן אבוא והכיתי את הארץ חרם

This *teshuva* before the Day of Judgment will be necessary, for if that day comes without the people having repented, everyone will be struck fatally. (Metzudat David)

Verses 4-24 of this chapter are read as the *haftara* of *Shabbat Hagadol*, the Shabbat before Pesach. After reading the last verse, the next-to-last verse is repeated, so as not to end the reading on a negative note.

Malachi, the last prophet, ends his prophecy with a call to *teshuvah*, to teach us the power of *teshuva*, as being able to change *cherem* to *rachamim* – total annihilation into mercy. (Da'at Mikra)

**הנה אנוכי שולח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא  
יום ה' הגדול והנורא  
והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם**

## שאלות חזרה - נביאים

1. מי היה המנהיג שהכניס את עם ישראל לארץ ישראל? \_\_\_\_\_
2. כמה זמן היה המשכן בשילה? \_\_\_\_\_
3. מי היה המלך הראשון על כל ישראל? \_\_\_\_\_
4. מי היה המלך השני על כל ישראל? \_\_\_\_\_
5. מי היה המלך השלישי על כל ישראל? \_\_\_\_\_
6. מה קרה אחרי מלכות שלמה? \_\_\_\_\_
7. בימי איזה מלך נפרדה הממלכה? \_\_\_\_\_
8. מה היו שמות שתי הממלכות הנפרדות? \_\_\_\_\_
9. כמה שנים עמד בית המקדש הראשון? \_\_\_\_\_
10. מי הגלה את עשרת השבטים? \_\_\_\_\_
11. כמה שנים התקיימה ממלכת יהודה לאחר גלות עשרת השבטים? \_\_\_\_\_
12. איזה נביא חי בזמן חורבן בית המקדש הראשון? \_\_\_\_\_
13. מי היה המלך האחרון על ישראל בזמן בית המקדש הראשון? \_\_\_\_\_
14. מי החריב את בית המקדש הראשון? \_\_\_\_\_
15. כמה שנים אחרי חורבן בית המקדש הראשון נבנה בית המקדש השני? \_\_\_\_\_
16. מי החריב את בית המקדש השני? \_\_\_\_\_
17. כמה שנים חיו בני ישראל בארץ ישראל, מהכניסה לארץ ועד לחורבן בית המקדש הראשון? \_\_\_\_\_

## שאלות חזרה על ספרי התנ"ך

1. כמה ספרים יש בתנ"ך? \_\_\_\_\_
2. מה ההבדל בין תורה, נביאים וכתובים? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. רשם/י את שמות חמשה חומשי תורה: \_\_\_\_\_
4. רשם/י את שמות ספרי הנביאים הראשונים: \_\_\_\_\_
5. רשם/י את שמות ספרי הנביאים האחרונים: \_\_\_\_\_
6. רשם/י את שמות ספרי כתובים: \_\_\_\_\_
7. מה ההבדל בין נביאים ראשונים לנביאים אחרונים? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. רשום/רשמי את שמות הנביאים האחרונים (15)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. באר/י: "נבואה שהוצרכה לדורות נכתבה": \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. מתי חיו ישעיהו, ירמיהו ויחזקאל? ומה אפשר ללמוד מזה? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. מהי המטרה של ספרי נביאים אחרונים? \_\_\_\_\_

## שאלות חזרה לתרי עשר

1. מי כתב את תרי עשר? \_\_\_\_\_
2. באילו תקופות היסטוריות נכתבו ספרי תרי עשר? \_\_\_\_\_
3. מדוע כלולים כל ספרי תרי עשר בספר אחד? \_\_\_\_\_
4. איזה עוד נביאים נבאו בזמנו של הושע? \_\_\_\_\_
5. מי היה הנביא האחרון? \_\_\_\_\_

## בוחן - מבוא לתרי עשר



1. מה ההבדל בין תורה, נביאים וכתובים?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. כמה שנים היו בני ישראל בארץ ישראל, מהכניסה לארץ עד חורבן בית ראשון?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. מי היה המלך הראשון על ישראל, ומי היה המלך האחרון?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. כמה שנים התקיימה ממלכת יהודה לאחר גלות שומרון?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. מי הגלה את עשרת השבטים?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. מי החריב את בית המקדש הראשון?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. מהו סדר נביאים ראשונים?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. מהו סדר נביאים אחרונים?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. איזה עוד נביאים נבאו בזמנו של הושע?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. באר"י "נבואה שהוצרכה לדורות נכתבה":  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_