**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

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**Yechezkel: The Book of Ezekiel**

**By Dr. Tova Ganzel**

**Shiur #29b: The Vision of the Future Temple:**

**The Temple with God’s Glory in Its Midst (40:1 – 43:9) - continued**

The return of God’s Glory to the Temple (43:1-9)

The prophet describes the return of God’s glory to the Temple (we earlier touched on these verses when discussing of the journeys of God’s glory in *Sefer Yechezkel*):

“Then He brought me to the gate, the gate that looks towards the east, and behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the earth, and His voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory.

And the appearance of the vision which I saw was like the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city, and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Kevar, and I fell upon my face.” (vv. 1-3)

We will make a few points that will complement our earlier discussion. Here, too, as at the beginning of Chapter 40, the prophet makes repeated use of the root “*r-a-h*” (to see, appearance, vision). However, while previously what the prophet saw was the plan of the Temple, here the same root points to a vision of God’s glory.[[1]](#footnote-1) In addition, as in Chapter 1, here too the vision is full of sound and light. God’s glory is revealed not in silent modesty, but with great power. The “sound of many waters” to which God’s voice is compared, will turn out in Chapter 47 to represent, more than ever before, the bond between God and His people. Attention should be paid to the fact that this image serves as a sort of “compensation” for the lack of participation of the nation in the offering of the sacrifices – unlike the situation at the time of the Temple built by Shlomo. Now the prophet emphasizes once again the return of God’s glory to the Temple:

“And the glory of the Lord came into the House by the way of the gate whose entrance is towards the east. And a spirit carried me up and brought me into the inner court, and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the House.” (vv. 4-5)

These verses create an exalting sense of God’s complete presence. The transition to the next four verses is therefore sharp and unexpected:

“And I heard one speaking to me out of the House, and a man stood by me. And he said to me, Son of man, behold the place of My Throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of Bnei Yisrael forever; and the house of Israel shall no more profane My holy Name – neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places. In their setting of their threshold by My thresholds, and their doorpost by My posts, and only the wall between Me and them, they have defiled My holy Name by their disgusting deeds which they have committed; and so I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put away their harlotry, and the carcasses of their kings, far from Me, and I will dwell in the midst of them forever.” (vv. 6-9)

The sudden fall from such lofty exaltation to such depths seems to reflect the fact that one of the conditions for the return of God’s glory to the Temple is that “the house of Israel will no more profane My holy Name”. The aim of this prophecy is to point out the cause of the defilement of the Temple, in the years in which God’s glory left the Temple and the edifice was destroyed, since this prophecy belongs to the vision of the future Temple (Chapters 40-48) and not to the chapters of rebuke (2-24). Unlike the concept of “profaning [*chillul*] of God”, which, in *Sefer Yechezkel*, always refers to God’s status in the eyes of the other nations, the “defiling [*tum’a*] of God’s Name” arises from the actions of Bnei Yisrael – actions whose gravity causes a more profound desecration of God’s Name than any outward apparent damage to His standing. Therefore, in vv. 7-8 the prophet repeats twice the main reason for God’s glory having left the Temple: the house of Israel, through their evil actions, caused God’s holy Name to be defiled.

“… neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places. In their setting of their threshold by My thresholds, and their doorpost by My posts, and only the wall between Me and them….”

These verses describe the burial of the kings close to the Temple. According to the commentaries of Rashi, Radak, and R. Eliezer of Beaugency, the kings were actually buried in the Temple itself. This interpretation amplifies the severity of their actions.[[2]](#footnote-2) Such burial would bring severe impurity upon those in proximity to the burial place; beyond this, it would represent a defiant challenging of God’s supremacy over the mortal kings. Symbolically, burial of the kings in the Temple is an expression of the kings’ view of themselves as worthy of resting near the holiest place, together with God, while they themselves are performing actions that are considered “harlotry”. In *Sefer Yechezkel* this expression is used as a general reference to the worst type of idolatry. The cessation of such activity is a necessary condition for God dwelling in the nation’s midst forever. In the verses that follow, Yechezkel demands, as a condition for giving over the plan of the Temple to the people, that they “be ashamed of their iniquities” (v. 10) and “are ashamed of all that they have done” (v. 11). Although these are chapters devoted to the vision of the future Temple, following on after the chapters of revival, the prophet nevertheless emphasizes once again the severity of the sins that brought about the destruction of the First Temple. The conclusion of this prophecy represents the end of the rebuke to the nation in *Sefer Yechezkel*. Now, a study of the prophecies leaves us longing for a vision of the future without any painful reminder of the events of the past.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

1. In addition, the appearances of the root here are a contrast and complement to its use in Chapter 8 to characterize the idolaters, who do not see God. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. However, in the final chapters of *Melakhim* II, which discuss the sins of the kings during this period, no mention is made of burial of the kings in the Temple, although the idolatry introduced into the Temple is explicitly noted (21:4-7; 23:6-7). Where explicit mention is made of burial of kings, the location is the garden of Uzza (21:18, 26) or the city of David. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)