

four special Torah passages added to the regular *Shabbat* portion in the weeks before *Pesah*. The theme of each reading is different, yet rabbinic tradition correlated each of the four readings with prophetic selections that reinforce the main theme of purification. (For details on the scheduling of the special Torah portions, see the introduction to the *haftarah* for *parashat Sh'kalim*.)

Clear links exist between this special Torah reading and the *haftarah*. Thematically speaking, the Torah passage presents an ancient rite of detoxification whereby individuals who have become impure through contact with the dead are purified and restored to the community; the cor-

responding prophetic passage announces Israel's revivification (a new heart and a new spirit) as well as its purification by God. Meanwhile, both the technical language of purity-impurity and the terms for sacred ritual bathing (among others) connect these two texts verbally.

Parashat Parah was recited at this season from early Rabbinic times (M Meg. 3:4) and was understood to signal to the entire community that the *pesah* sacrifice should be performed in ritual purity (see Rashi on BT Meg. 29a). The *haftarah* invigorates the present preparations for *Pesah* by envisioning a new era of purification and of transformed religious consciousness.

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¹⁶The word of the LORD came to me:
¹⁷O mortal, when the House of Israel dwelt on their own soil, they defiled it with their ways and their deeds; their ways were in My sight like the impurity of a menstruous woman. ¹⁸So I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they shed upon their land, and for the fetishes with which they defiled it. ¹⁹I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: I punished them in accordance with their ways and their deeds. ²⁰But when they came to those nations, they caused My holy name to be profaned, in that it was said of them, "These are the people of the

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¹⁶וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:
¹⁷בֶּן-אָדָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבִים עַל-
אֲדָמָתָם וַיִּטְמְאוּ אוֹתָהּ בְּדַרְכָּם
וּבַעֲלִילוֹתָם כְּטִמְאַת הַנִּזְהָ הֵיחָד דְּרָכָם
לִפְנֵי: ¹⁸וָאֲשַׁפֵּן חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם עַל-הַדָּם
אֲשֶׁר-שָׁפְכוּ עַל-הָאָרֶץ וּבַגְלוּלֵיהֶם
טִמְאוּהָ: ¹⁹וָאֶפֶץ אֹתָם בְּגוֹיִם וַיִּזְרוּ
בְּאַרְצוֹת בְּדַרְכָּם וּבַעֲלִילוֹתָם שִׁפְטֵתִים:
²⁰וַיָּבֹאוּ * אֶל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ שָׁם
וַיַּחֲלִלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם קְדֹשִׁי בְּאֹמֶר לָהֶם עַם-

v. 20. סבירן ומטעין לשון רבים

Ezekiel 36:17-19. The prophet's priestly orientation shows through his presentation of moral sins as the cause of the Land's ritual impurity. Similarly, the purification of the nation in verse 25 is portrayed in cultic terms. (Likewise, the vocabulary of defilement, purification, sprinkling, and pure water is employed in connection with the rite of the heifer—the special Torah portion read on this *Shabbat*; see Num. 19:11-13, 17.) The punishment of exile is presented here as recompense for ritual and moral crimes.

O mortal Hebrew: *ben adam*; literally, "O son of man." A common characterization in the vocabulary of this prophet. Ezekiel's mortal nature is emphasized, perhaps counterpointing his

humanity to the divinity of the beings he communes with; chapters 1, 8-11, 40-42).

like the impurity of a menstruous woman Refers to her ritual impurity (see Lev. 15:19ff.). Hebrew: *ha-niddah*; literally, "the menstruous woman." The definite article personifies the simile, rather than indicating a general state of impurity. The link between ritual impurity in this verse and bloodshed in verse 18 suggests that the figure here alludes to moral and ritual crimes elsewhere denounced by the prophet (18:6, 22:3-13). For Ezekiel, the theme has real cultic consequences. As a result of its "menstrual impurity," the nation is banished from the Land.

20. they caused My holy name to be profaned By referring to God in a demeaning way. The na-

LORD, yet they had to leave His land.”²¹ Therefore I am concerned for My holy name, which the House of Israel have caused to be profaned among the nations to which they have come.

²²Say to the House of Israel: Thus said the Lord God: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have caused to be profaned among the nations to which you have come. ²³I will sanctify My great name which has been profaned among the nations—among whom you have caused it to be profaned. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD—declares the Lord God—when I manifest My holiness before their eyes through you. ²⁴I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you shall be pure: I will purify you from all your impurities and from all your fetishes. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit into you: I will remove the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh; ²⁷and I will put My spirit into you. Thus I will cause you to follow My laws and faithfully to observe My rules. ²⁸Then you shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people and I will be your God.

²⁹And when I have delivered you from all your impurity, I will summon the grain and make it abundant, and I will not bring famine upon you.

³⁰I will make the fruit of your trees and the crops of your fields abundant, so that you shall never again be humiliated before the nations because

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי וּמֵאֶרְצוֹ יֵצְאוּ: ²¹וְאֶחָמֶל עַל-שֵׁם קְדֹשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חִלְלוּהוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה: ס

²²לָכֵן אֶמַר לְבֵית-יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי אִם-לְשֵׁם-קְדֹשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חִלַּלְתֶּם בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאתֶם שָׁם: ²³וְקִדְשָׁתִי אֶת-שְׁמִי הַגָּדוֹל הַמְּחַלָּל בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר חִלַּלְתֶּם בְּתוֹכָם וַיִּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה נֹאֵם אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה בַּהֲקֹדְשִׁי בְכֶם לַעֲיִינֵיהֶם: ²⁴וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן-הַגּוֹיִם וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל-הָאֲרָצוֹת וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֲדֹמְתְכֶם: ²⁵וְזִרְקָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים וְטִהַרְתֶּם מִכָּל טְמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל-גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם אֲטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם: ²⁶וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חָדָשׁ אֶתֶּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת-לֵב הָאֵבֶן מִבְּשָׁרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר: ²⁷וְאֶת-רוּחִי אֶתֶּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְעָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-בִּחְקִי תִלְכוּ וּמִשְׁפָּטִי תִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם: ²⁸וּשְׁבַתֶּם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵייתֶם לִי לְעָם וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

²⁹וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל טְמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וְקִרְאתִי אֶל-הַדָּגָן וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אוֹתוֹ וְלֹא-אֶתֶּן עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב: ³⁰וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת-פְּרִי הָעֵץ וְתִנּוּבַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִקְחוּ עוֹד חֲרַפַּת רָעָב בְּגוֹיִם: ³¹וְזָכַרְתֶּם

unilateral divine action, this image seems to reflect some of the despair in the exilic period over the independent incapacity of the human spirit to return faithfully to God, or at least a strong feeling that without divine initiative true repentance could not take place.

28. you shall be My people and I will be your God A technical covenant formula (see Jer. 11:4). Also in 16:60 and 37:26, Ezekiel anticipates a new covenant after the exile.

tions interpreted Israel's exile as a sign of divine impotence, not as punishment (Rashi, Radak).

22. Not for your sake Or: "Not on account of your merits" (Abravanel). The motivation for divine action is regard for God's own name alone.

26. I will give you a new heart Along with Ezek. 11:19, other prophecies contemplate a radical transformation of Israel's religious spirit, after the exile, through sovereign and unilateral divine fiat (see Jer. 24:7, 31:32–33). In its focus on a

of famine. ³¹Then you shall recall your evil ways and your base conduct, and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abhorrent practices. ³²Not for your sake will I act—declares the Lord God—take good note! Be ashamed and humiliated because of your ways, O House of Israel!

³³Thus said the Lord God: When I have purified you of all your iniquities, I will people your settlements, and the ruined places shall be rebuilt; ³⁴and the desolate land, after lying waste in the sight of every passerby, shall again be tilled. ³⁵And men shall say, "That land, once desolate, has become like the garden of Eden; and the cities, once ruined, desolate, and ravaged, are now populated and fortified." ³⁶And the nations that are left around you shall know that I the LORD have rebuilt the ravaged places and replanted the desolate land. I the LORD have spoken and will act.

³⁷Thus said the Lord God: Moreover, in this I will respond to the House of Israel and act for their sake: I will multiply their people like sheep. ³⁸As Jerusalem is filled with sacrificial sheep during her festivals, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. And they shall know that I am the LORD.

אֶת־דִּרְכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וּמַעַלְלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא־טוֹבִים וְנִקְטַתֶּם בְּפִנְיֵכֶם עַל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם
וְעַל תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיכֶם: ³² לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי־
עֹשֶׂה נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה יוֹדַע לָכֶם בּוֹשׁוּ
וְהִפְלֹמוּ מִדִּרְכֵיכֶם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס
³³ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה בְּיוֹם טְהַר אֶתְכֶם
מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־הָעָרִים
וְנִבְנוּ הַחֲרָבוֹת: ³⁴ וְהָאֶרֶץ הַנִּשְׁמָה תַעֲבֹד
תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הִיתָה שְׂמָמָה לְעֵינַי כָּל־
עוֹבֵר: ³⁵ וְאָמְרוּ הָאֶרֶץ הַלְלוּ הַנִּשְׁמָה
הִיתָה כְּגֶן־עֵדֶן וְהָעָרִים הַחֲרָבוֹת
וְהַנִּשְׁמֹת וְהַנְּהַרְסוֹת בְּצוּרוֹת יִשְׁבּוּ:
³⁶ וְיִדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאָרוּ סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם
כִּי אֲנִי יְהוִה בְּנִיתִי הַנְּהַרְסוֹת נִטְעַתִּי
הַנִּשְׁמָה אֲנִי יְהוִה דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי: ס
³⁷ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה עוֹד זֹאת אֲדַרְשׁ
לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם אַרְבָּה אֹתָם
כְּצֹאן אָדָם: ³⁸ כְּצֹאן קֳדָשִׁים כְּצֹאן
יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּמוֹעֲדֶיהָ כֵּן תִּהְיֶינָה הָעָרִים
הַחֲרָבוֹת מְלֵאוֹת צֹאן אָדָם וְיִדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי
יְהוִה: ס