

THESE ARE SOME FASCINATING FACTS!

The years leading up to the destruction of the first Temple in 423 BCE were years of great confusion in Israel. In 463 BCE the Prophet Jeremiah began his prophecies of doom warning the people that they would suffer destruction and dispersal if they did not repent. Even though Judea was conquered by the Babylonians and their King Jechonia led off to Babylon in chains the Judean Kings held out hope that they could throw off the Babylonian shackles and Judea would rise again to its former preeminence. They rallied the people in support of their belligerent policy to Babylon.

Jeremiah for his part remained steadfast in his message only repentance can save Judea. Jeremiah was scorned and labeled a traitor. False prophets arose to contradict him, and they preached an upbeat and hopeful message to the people. One such prophet was Chananiah ben Azzur. In 459 BCE, Chananiah confronted Jeremiah as told in Jeremiah's words in Chapter 28 of the Book of Jeremiah. And it came to pass..., that Chananiah the son of Azzur the prophet, who was of Gibeon, spoke unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying: 'Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the G-d of Israel, saying: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring back into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, took away from this place and carried them to Babylon; and I will bring back to this place Jechoniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went to Babylon, saith the LORD; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'

Jeremiah told Chanania that he wished it would be as Chananiah had prophesized but prophets are not measured by what they prophesize but rather if they come true. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Chananiah the prophet: 'Hear now, Chananiah; the LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. 'Therefore, thus saith the LORD: Behold, I will send thee away from off the face of the earth; this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken perversion against the LORD.' As Jeremiah had prophesized, Chanania ben Azzur did not live out the year. He died on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.

It is essential to be positive and live a life filled with hope. It is also essential to fix whatever is in our control and not blithely assume all will be well. The false prophets actually sealed Judea's doom by offering hope at the expense of teshuva.