

## SOURCES

Making and Breaking of a Kingdom:  
Yirmiyahu and the Final Kings of Yehuda

Based on shiur given by Noemi Novetsky  
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## I. Snapshots of Yirmiyahu

### 1. Elie Wiesel, Five Biblical Portraits, based on Eichah Rabbah

And it came to pass that when Jerusalem was destroyed, Gd entered the burning sanctuary. He saw it in flames and began to weep. And he said to Jeremiah who stood nearby, "Why are you not weeping? I am like the father whose only son died on the day of his wedding during the ceremony. And you, Jeremiah, feel no pain – neither for the father nor the son? Go, go, Jeremiah, go wake up Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And Moses, wake him, too. Tell them I wish to see them. I need them because they know how to weep.

### 2. Mechilta Divrei Yishmael

There are three children: one demanded the honor of the father and the honor of the son, one demanded the honor of the father but not the honor of the son, and one demanded the honor of the son but not the honor of the father. Jeremiah demanded the honor of the father and the son, as it says, "We sinned and rebelled; You didn't forgive ..." Elijah demanded the honor of the father but not that of the son, as it says, "I have been zealous for Gd ..." And what does it say there? "And Gd said to him, 'Go, return on your way ... and Elisha ben Shafat you shall appoint as a prophet beneath you ...'" Jonah demanded the honor of the son but not of the father, as it says, "And Jonah stood to run away ..." And what does it say? "And Gd's word came to Jonah a second time" – a second time, not a third.

## II. Yirmiyahu cries about the Bnei Yisroel

### 3. Jeremiah 8:21-22

Because of the breaking of my nation, I am broken. Who would give my head water and my eyes a source of tears that I may cry night and day on the corpses of my daughter nation.

### 4. Jeremiah 9:1

Who will find me a resting place in the desert and I will leave my nation and I will go away from them for they are all adulterers, a band of traitors....

### III. Yirmiyahu doesn't want to prophesy, but ...

#### 5. Jeremiah 12:1

Right wouldest Thou be, O Lord, Were I to contend with Thee, Yet will I reason with Thee: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they secure that deal very treacherously?

#### 6. Jeremiah 20:7-9

O Lord, Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed, Thou hast overcome me, and hast prevailed; I am become a laughing-stock all the day, Every one mocketh me. (8) For as often as I speak, I cry out, I cry: 'Violence and spoil'; Because the word of the Lord is made A reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. (9) And if I say: 'I will not make mention of Him, Nor speak any more in His name', Then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire Shut up in my bones, And I weary myself to hold it in, But cannot.

#### 7. P'sichta Rabati

When Yirmiyahu was born, he began to accuse his mother of being an adulteress. "You did not bear me in the way of women ... perhaps your ways were the ways of one who has strayed from the path?" ... When his mother heard these words, she thought, "What made him say such things at his age? Yirmiyahu opened his mouth and said, "Not about you, Mother, am I speaking but about Zion and Yerushalayim."

#### 8. P'sichta Rabati

Said Jeremiah, "I am like a priest whose duty it is to punish the adulteress, and as he begins to do so and raises the cup to give her to drink, realizes that she is his mother. He begins to scream, "Woe is me for I wanted to honor you, but here I am degrading you...."

#### 9. Elie Wiesel, Five Biblical Portraits

Jeremiah was forever torn between Gd and Israel, between Israel and other nations... between lost childhood and unbearable old age. He is perplexing and intriguing: he arouses every passion from extreme hatred to infinite fidelity. He is an outsider .... Though surrounded by people, Jeremiah is alone, alone with Gd and at times, alone against Gd. Like all prophets before him, he is constantly in the opposition, forever fighting the establishment, ridiculing power, emphasizing the fragility of the present....

[Jeremiah] is, in short, a survivor, a witness. Of all the prophets, he alone predicted the catastrophe, experienced it, and lived to tell the tale. He alone sounded the alarm before the fire, and after being singed by its flames, went on to retell it to whoever would listen.

10. Jeremiah, 24:1-10

(1) The Lord showed me, and behold two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord; after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. (2) One basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first-ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. (3) Then said the Lord unto me: 'What seest thou, Jeremiah?' And I said: 'Figs; the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, that cannot be eaten, they are so bad.' (4) And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: (5) 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so will I regard the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for good. (6) And I will set Mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. (7) And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart. (8) And as the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad; surely thus saith the Lord: So will I make Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt; (9) I will even make them a horror among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil; a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. (10) And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.'

11. Jeremiah, Chapter 29

(1) Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, (2) after that Jeconiah the king, and the queen-mother, and the officers, and the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the craftsmen, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem; (3) by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying: (4) Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon: (5) Build ye houses, and dwell in them, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; (6) take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. (7) And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. (8) For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, beguile you, neither hearken ye to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. (9) For they prophesy falsely unto you in My name; I have not sent them, saith the Lord. (10) For thus saith the Lord: After seventy years are accomplished

for Babylon, I will remember you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. (12) And ye shall call upon Me, and go, and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. (13) And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. (14) And I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn your captivity, and gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you back unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive. (15) For ye have said: 'The Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon.' (16) For thus saith the Lord concerning the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and concerning all the people that dwell in this city, your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; (17) thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like **vile figs**, that cannot be eaten, they are so bad. (18) And I will pursue after them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will make them a horror unto all the kingdoms of the earth, a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them; (19) because they have not hearkened to My words, saith the Lord, wherewith I sent unto them My servants the prophets, sending them betimes and often; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord. (20) Hear ye therefore the word of the Lord, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon: (21) Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie unto you in My name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes; (22) and of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah that are in Babylon, saying: 'The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire'; (23) because they have wrought vile deeds in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken words in My name falsely, which I commanded them not; but I am He that knoweth, and am witness, saith the Lord. (24) And concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite thou shalt speak, saying: (25) Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: Because thou hast sent letters in thine own name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying: (26) 'The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that there should be officers in the house of the Lord for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in the stocks and in the collar. (27) Now therefore, why hast thou not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, who maketh himself a prophet to you, (28) forasmuch as he hath sent unto us in Babylon, saying: The captivity is long; build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them?' (29) And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. (30) Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying: (31) Send to all them of the captivity, saying: Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he hath caused you to trust in a lie; (32) therefore thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither shall he behold

the good that I will do unto My people, saith the Lord; because he hath spoken perversion against the Lord.

12. Jeremiah, 52:31-34

31) And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison. (32) And he spoke kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon. (33) And he changed his prison garments, and did eat bread before him continually all the days of his life. (34) And for his allowance, there was a continual allowance given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

13. Yechezkel, 11:14-16

(14) And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying: (15) 'Son of man, as for thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel, all of them, concerning whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said: Get you far from the Lord! unto us is this land given for a possession; (16) therefore say: Thus saith the Lord God: Although I have removed them far off among the nations, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet have I been to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they are come;

IV. Yirmiyahu and Tzidkihyahu

14. Jeremiah, 37:1-21

And Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king, instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. (2) But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah. (3) And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying: 'Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.' (4) Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison. (5) And Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt; and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they broke up from Jerusalem. (6) Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying: (7) 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto Me to inquire of Me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. (8) And the Chaldeans shall return, and fight against this city; and they shall take it, and burn it with fire. (9) Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying: The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us; for they shall not depart. (10) For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight

against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet would they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.' (11) And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, (12) then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. (13) And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 'Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.' (14) Then said Jeremiah: 'It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans'; but he hearkened not to him; so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. (15) And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. (16) When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon-house, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; (17) then Zedekiah the king sent, and fetched him; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said: 'Is there any word from the Lord?' And Jeremiah said: 'There is.' He said also: 'Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.' (18) Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah: 'Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? (19) Where now are your prophets that prophesied unto you, saying: The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? (20) And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be presented before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.' (21) Then Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard, and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

15. Jeremiah, 38:1-26

(1) And Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah spoke unto all the people, saying: (2) 'Thus saith the Lord: He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey, and he shall live. (3) Thus saith the Lord: This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it.' (4) Then the princes said unto the king: 'Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.' (5) Then Zedekiah the king said: 'Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.' (6) Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the pit of Malchiah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard; and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the pit there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire. (7) **Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian (*ha'kushi*)**, an officer, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the pit; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin; (8) Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house,

and spoke to the king, saying: (9) 'My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the pit; and he is like to die in the place where he is because of the famine; for there is no more bread in the city.'

(10) Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying: 'Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the pit, before he die.' (11) So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence worn clouts and worn rags, and let them down by cords into the pit to Jeremiah. (12) And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah: 'Put now these worn clouts and rags under thine armholes under the cords.' And Jeremiah did so. (13) So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the pit; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard. (14) Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that was in the house of the Lord; and the king said unto Jeremiah: 'I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.' (15) Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah: 'If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me.' (16) So Zedekiah the king swore secretly unto Jeremiah, saying: 'As the Lord liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.' (17) Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah: 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: If thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, thou, and thy house; (18) but if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.'

(19) And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah: 'I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.' (20) But Jeremiah said: 'They shall not deliver thee. Hearken, I beseech thee, to the voice of the Lord, in that which I speak unto thee; so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live. (21) But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the Lord hath shown me: (22) Behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say: Thy familiar friends have set thee on, And have prevailed over thee; Thy feet are sunk in the mire, And they are turned away back. (23) And they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans; and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon; and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.' (24) Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah: 'Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. (25) But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee: Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee; (26) then thou shalt say unto them: I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.'

16. Lakish Ostraca

*Letter #6*

To my lord, Yaush, may Jehovah cause my lord to see peace at this time! Who is your servant, a dog, that my lord sent him the king's [lette]r [and] the letters of the officer[s, sayin]g, "Please read!" And behold, the words of the [officers] are not good; to weaken your hands [and to in]hibit the hands of the m[en]. [I(?)] know [them(?)]. My lord, will you not write to [them] sa[ying, "Wh]y are you behaving this way? [...] well-being [...]. Does the king [...] And [...] As Jehovah lives, since your servant read the letters, your servant has not had [peace(?)].

*Letter Number 4*

May Jehovah cause my [lord] to hear, this very day, tidings of good. And now, according to everything which my lord has sent, this has your servant done. I wrote on the sheet according to everything which [you] sent [t]o me. And inasmuch as my lord sent to me concerning the matter of Bet Harapid, there is no one there. And as for Semakyahu, Semayahu took him and brought him up to the city. And your servant is not sending him there any[more ---], but when morning comes round [---]. And may (my lord) be apprised that we are watching for the fire signals of Lachish according to all the signs which my lord has given, because we cannot see Azeqah.

17. Sanhedrin 103a

Gd wanted to destroy the world due to Yehoyakim: He saw his generation and changed His mind. Gd wanted to destroy the world due to the generations of Tzidkeyahu. He saw Tzidkeyahu and changed His mind. But by Tzidkeyahu it also says, "And he did evil in the eyes of Gd" – that he should have prevented and he did not ...

18. Moed Katan 9:7

And the kushite servant heard – was he a Kushite, or was his name not Tzidkeyahu? Just as a kushite is different in his skin color, so, too, Tzidkeyahu was different in his actions....