



SEFER YIRMIYAHU

2019-2020 Shiur
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CHAPTER FOUR

➤ **Note that the first two verses thematically and linguistically are part of previous chapter**

(א) אִם-תָּשׁוּב יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָאִם-יְהוָה אֵלַי תָּשׁוּב וְאִם-תִּסָּר שְׁקוּצֵיךָ מִפְּנֵי וְלֹא תִגֹּד: (ב) וְנִשְׁבַּעְתָּ חַי-יְהוָה בְּאֵמֶת בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצִדְקָה וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְּךָ גּוֹיִם וּכְךָ תִהְלְלוּ: (ג) כִּי-כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה וְלִירוּשָׁלַם נִירוּ לְכֶם גֵּיר וְאַל-תִּירְעוּ אֶל-קוֹצִים:

(1) If you return, O Israel —declares the LORD— If you return to Me, If you remove your abominations from My presence and do not waver, (2) And swear, “As the LORD lives,” in sincerity, justice, and righteousness— Nations shall bless themselves by you and praise themselves by you. (3) **For thus said the LORD** to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: Break up the untilled ground, and do not sow among thorns.

➤ **Overall theme of Chapter 4**

- The prophet is saying that destruction is not inevitable, but rather, that with proper repentance, it can be averted.
- According to Rabbi Leibtag, the setting for this chapter seems to be the beginning of Jeremiah’s prophetic mission. The righteous king Yoshiyahu was in the 13th year of his reign. (Remember that Yoshiyahu instituted major reforms and is credited by most historians with having established or compiled important Jewish scriptures during what is referred to as “the Deuteronomic Reform” that occurred during his rule.) Because of these reforms, the people thought they were on the right track, that their teshuva was sincere and sufficient. Jeremiah now comes to tell them that their repentance is not good enough.
- The prophet is stressing the importance of real repentance. If the focus of the people is only on ritual, as embodied by the restoration of the Temple, and not on core values and behaviors, it will not be sufficient. Inevitably, the people will backslide, and destruction will occur. Hence, the analogy of a farmer plowing a field to grow weeds. (Verses 3 and 4)
- In brief, then, an overarching theme of the chapter is the prophet’s hope that the people will repent, but he is insistent that if they do not, the destruction will occur much more rapidly than they believe. This is the point, says Rabbi Leibtag, of the boiling pot vision in the first chapter.
- This is further reinforced by verse 5: תִּקְעוּ שׁוֹפָר בְּאַרְצֵי קְרָאָו מְלֵאוּ וְאָמְרוּ: Rav Hirsch points out that מְלֵאוּ, which literally means “to fill” in this context means “to cry out with a loud voice.” There is not one moment to lose . . . Like an alarm bell rung by a watchman in a watchtower, causing the masses to flee amidst screams of panic, so the piercing blast of the shofar sounds forth, proclaiming the allegiance to the ideals of life as set down in Zion, to be the only haven from the impending disaster.”

➤ **What are the “wicked acts” mentioned in Verse 3**

- The phrase “wicked acts” has to be looked at in conjunction with Chapter 7 (verses 4 – 7), where Jeremiah defines the term.

(4) Don't put your trust in illusions and say, “The Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD are these [buildings].” (5) No, if you really mend your ways and your actions; if you execute justice between one man and another; (6) if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow; if you do not shed the blood of the innocent in this place; if you do not follow other gods, to your own hurt— (7) then only will I let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for all time.

- The Hebrew *רַע מַעֲלָלֵיכֶם* refers not only to actual behavior, but also to planned behavior. The point is this. It is not how they are acting now, but also how they plan on acting in the future. The emphasis, as we see from chapter 7, is on social justice.

➤ **Verses 19 – 21: a new “parsha”**

- The prophet proclaims in verse 19, “Oh, my suffering, my suffering!” [literally, “My entrails! My entrails!]
- Rav Hirsch expounds on this: “If even God feels the sufferings that have struck His corrupt nation, how infinite must have been the pain that racked the tormented soul of the prophet, who could see approaching disaster and was filled with the burning desire to save his people from it. He is literally writhing with pain, for he still hopes that his people may be saved.”
- We will see Jeremiah's pain, both physical and emotional, again and again throughout the sefer.

➤ **Verses 22 – 31: another new “parsha”**

- Another good example of the comingling of the doom of the approaching destruction and the hope for a future restoration. Verse 27 makes this point explicitly.

For thus said the LORD: The whole land shall be desolate, but I will not make an end of it. [Note: Rav Hirsch translates this last phrase as “I will not decree annihilation.”]

- As Rav Hirsch comments on this verse: “These ruins will not be the grave of His people, but the transition to its eventual rebirth.”

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