



SEFER YIRMIYAHU

2019-2020 Shiur
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CHAPTER ELEVEN

➤ Verses 1 – 2: How many prophets?

- In verse 1, Hashem addresses Yirmiyahu directly, and yet, the verbs in verse 2 (hear . . . speak) are in the PLURAL.
- Could this mean that Yirmiyahu has companions who were also included in Hashem's message, so that, like the Kohanim and Levi'im at the side of Moshe, they, too would proclaim the word of Hashem to the people?
- No, this is not the case, as shown in verses 3 (speak) and 6 (said to ME), where the verbs return to the singular.

➤ Verses 1 – 5: Which covenant?

- Verse 3 talks of “the words of this brit.” From verse 4, it seems clear that we are talking about the covenant Hashem made with the people when He took them out of Egypt, but if so, why bring it up here?
- The short answer, says Rabbi Leibtag, is that we are not. Instead, this verse is referring to a different covenant, a newer one, meant to preserve and strengthen the original.
- To put this into context, we need to review a bit of history. Remember that Yirmiyahu begins to prophesize in the 13th year of the reign of King Yoshiyahu. In the 18th year of his reign, during the renovation of the Temple, the book of Devarim is found. Rabbi Leibtag argues that the book was known to them (for Divrei HaYomim talks of the people doing teshuva for 6 years, which makes little sense if Devarim was unknown to them). If so, they are not rediscovering the book so to speak, but rather their excitement stems from the fact that they found the ORIGINAL scroll of Devarim, the one initially placed in the Temple, that had been lost or hidden away for generations.
- The story is told over in Divrei HaYomim II, Chapter 34. Here is the verses (29-32) that are relevant to our discussion:

וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֵּאֱמֹר אֶת־כָּל־זִקְנֵי יְהוּדָה וַיְרוּשָׁלַיִם: בְּיַעַל הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּית־יְהוָה וְכָל־אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וַיֹּשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְכָל־הָעָם מִגְּדוּל וְעַד־קַטָּן וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם אֶת־כָּל־דְּבַר סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַנִּמְצָא בְּיַד יְהוָה: וַיַּעֲמֵד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־עַמּוּדוֹ וַיִּכְרַת אֶת־הַבְּרִית לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְלַכֵּת אַחֲרָי וְהָיָה וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקָּיו בְּכָל־לִבָּבוֹ וּבְכָל־נַפְשׁוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית הַכְּתוּבִים עַל־הַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה: וַיַּעֲמֵד אֶת כָּל־הַנִּמְצָא בִירוּשָׁלַם וּבְנִינָמוֹן וַיַּעֲשֵׂה יוֹשִׁיָּהוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם כַּבְּרִית אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם:

Then the king sent word and assembled all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. The king went up to the House of the LORD with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites—all the people, young and old—and he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll that was found in the House of the LORD. The king stood in his place and solemnized the covenant before the LORD: to follow the LORD and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all his heart and soul, to fulfill all the terms of the covenant written in this scroll. He obligated all the men of Jerusalem and Benjamin who were present; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem acted in accord with the Covenant of God, God of their fathers.

- Following the making of this covenant, the King works to reinforce it though ritual observance, and it seems to be working, as seen in Divrei HaYomim 35:18:

וְלֹא־נִעְשָׂה פֶסַח כְּמִהַר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מִימֵי שְׁמוּאֵל הַנָּבִיא וְכָל־מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל | לֹא־עָשׂוּ כְּפֶסַח אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה אֲשֵׁיהוּ וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם וְכָל־יִהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הַנִּמְצָא וְיוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם: (ס)

Since the time of the prophet Samuel, no Passover like that one had ever been kept in Israel; none of the kings of Israel had kept a Passover like the one kept by Josiah and the priests and the Levites and all Judah and Israel there present and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

- Yermiyahu’s dilemma, about which we have spoken many times, is very manifest here. There is devotion to ritual, but the ethical still is lacking. Thus, the decree of destruction still remains in place.

➤ **Verses 6 – : Hashem’s reaction**

- Hashem “calls out the people.” He sees through their false and insincere repentance.

➤ **Verses 9 – 14: Hashem’s reaction**

- Hashem “calls out the people.” He sees through their false and insincere repentance. He calls this service of Baal (verse 13) because, according to Rabbi Leibtag, the people pray for what is best for them, and not for what Hashem wants.
- Even with this approach, that the service of Baal is not literally idol worship, but is instead misguided and inappropriate prayers. What we see is the people foolishly believing that their service to Hashem is sincere. They will pray to Hashem (at least in their minds that is what they are doing), but Hashem will close His ears and not listen to them (verse 11). The lesson here is subtle but shocking. Prayer that is ritualistic (“ben adam l’Makom”) with no element of the ethical and humanistic (“ben adam l’chaveiro”) is rejected by Hashem.
- Worse still, Hashem tells Yirmiyahu not to pray on behalf of the people (verse 14). As Rav Hirsch notes: “In the face of the gross immorality that prevails in the streets, in the life of the nation, not even the prophet can continue to intercede with God for his people.”
- In the end, say Hashem, He will punish the people (verse 11). Rabbi Hirsch explains this as follows:

Where the excessive worship of material wealth has led a people to a blind adoration of the forces of nature, which they consider independent guarantors of their powers and possessions, and where the last trace of free-willed morality and personal consecration that should emanate from the Temple has been eliminated from a nation’s life, destruction is the only remedy.

➤ **Verses 19 – 20: Even Yirmiyahu begins to turn away**

- In verse 19, the prophet acknowledges the depth of the hatred directed towards him and the plots to kill him that abound.
- In verse 20, he says he looks forward to God's vengeance against his enemies.
- Clearly, then, this chapter underscores for us the change that is beginning to take place in the prophet's emotional life.

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