



## SEFER YIRMIYAHU

2019-2020 Shiur  
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### CHAPTER TWELVE

#### ➤ Overview

- As Rav Hirsch notes, the prophet have overcome his despondency. He no longer rails at Hashem. Yet, Yirmiyahu is confused by the continued prosperity and success of those who sin against God: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are the workers of treachery at ease?” (verse 1)
- Here are Rav Hirsch’s observations: “He [Yirmiyahu] now understands that the harsh fate which God, in His loving justice, wishes to impose upon His people, is in fact a demonstration of His righteousness. But the more convinced he is that this fate is the only way to their salvation and thus unhappily inevitable, the more he is puzzled by a question which has occupied thinking men from time immemorial but which, at this particular moment, more than ever, must force itself upon the prophet: Why are the ways of the wicked crowned with success? Why do their lives seem happy and free of care, even though they use the prosperity granted them by God only to turn against Him in faithlessness?”

#### ➤ Verses 2 – 3: Frustrated yes, but with who?

- Against whom is Yirmiyahu venting his frustration?
- Rabbi Leibtag believes that Yirmiyahu is directing the harsh language in these verses (“Drive them out like sheep to the slaughter, Prepare them for the day of slaying!”) against the false prophets who have misled the people and who have consistently opposed him. This, says Rabbi Leibtag, is consistent with the end of the previous perek: “Assuredly, thus said the LORD of Hosts concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life and say, ‘You must not prophesy any more in the name of the LORD, or you will die by our hand . . . No remnant shall be left of them, for I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth, the year of their doom’.”
- Rashi seems to adopt this view:  
**מדוע דרך רשעים צלחה: שנתת גדולה לנבוכדנצר הרשע ותצליחהו להחריב ביתך, ד"א על אנשי ענתות היה צועק וקורא תגר.**
- Rav Hirsch views these verses are targeting the people; “Under God’s solicitous care they strike deeper and deeper roots and see their efforts crowned with success. Is it any wonder, then, that in their arrogance, rejecting God, they become so increasingly sure of themselves, building up those structures which they hope will ensure eternal life to their independence?”
- This approach is suggested at in the Malbim’s commentary:  
**אך משפטים אדבר אותך מדוע דרך רשעים צלחה: שעל שאלת רשע וטוב לו אין לך שום תשובה שהלא הרשע רשעתו גלויה, וא"ת כדעת המשיבים ע"ז, ששלות הרשע אינה שלוח פנימית כי לבו מלא פחד וקול פחדים באזניו, וכמו שכן היה שטת אליפז בזה.**

➤ **Verses 4: The land lies desolate**

- Echoing what we read in the last chapter . . . why and how long must the land suffer for the sins of its inhabitants?
- According to Rav Hirsch, Hashem cuts off the prophet's protest and assures Yirmiyahu that He has a plan: "There is a purpose in this plan of Mine. I will permit them to continue making plans for what they think will be a secure future. Let them build their proud political structures; smug in the success of all their undertakings, let them persist in their refusal to give God His rightful place in their calculations. For this will only serve to make their sudden downfall all the more impressive demonstration of the workings of God in the course of history which no man can deny or evade."

➤ **Verses 5 – 6: Yirmiyahu's enemies in Jerusalem**

- Regardless of who is correct in his understanding of verses 2 and 3, these verses are clearly describing the prophet's enemies and opponents in the political caste in Jerusalem!
- Rabbi Leibtag explains the metaphor of the "jungle of the Jordan" as follows. Just as the Jordan winds and flows through difficult territory, which is sometimes almost impossible to traverse, so, too, will be the case of your "journey" against your enemies!
- Rashi makes exactly this point!

ואיך תעשה בגאון: שרי יהודה, וגאון הירדן משל הוא לפי שהוא מקום אריות ונמרים וכן למדנו יונתן בהרבה מקומות וכאן תירגם ואכדין את מדמי לקבל חיות ברא די ברום ירדנא והנה כאריה יעלה מגאון הירדן

- All this is to say that if you thought you had issues with the people of Anathoth, just wait until you must deal with the people in Jerusalem!

➤ **Verse 8: What is this lion-like cry?**

- Not of the ruling class or the opponents of Yirmiyahu, but rather it is the cries of the poor who struggle under the heavy burden of their taxes. [Rashi: עלתה לפני צעקת המסיה]

➤ **Verse 9: Who are these many shepherds?**

- Clearly, they are the nations of the world (most notably, the Babylonians) who descend upon Israel to consume and destroy her (See Rashi and Malbim). However, as Rav Hirsch notes: "The ravenous nations, swooping down upon Israel, think that Israel's hour of annihilation has come. But God sees it otherwise: He regards them only as shepherds who – as the prophet has already so aptly declared elsewhere (Chapters 4 & 17) – have been appointed by God to strike Israel in order to bring that erring nation back to Him."

➤ **Verse 11: She pours out grief to Me**

- Here is how Rav Hirsch understands this verse: "For this reason on one will be more distressed than God Himself when the terrible decree will strike His beloved land, a land which will look up to Him in bleak desolation because its people were too foolish to take His warnings to heart while there was yet time."

➤ **Verse 14: Hashem addresses the nations of the world**

- Verses 9 – 12 were addressed to the Jewish people. Now Hashem delivers this same message to the other nations of the world, who are also in need of solemn warnings. (Rav Hirsch)
- Malbim makes this same point (but compare to Metzudat David):

כה אמר ה' על שכני הרעים: האומות שהיו שכנים לא".

➤ **Concluding thought**

- The perek does not directly answer the question with which it opens: “Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are the workers of treachery at ease?”
- Rabbi Leibtag argues that while the perek does not definitely answer this question, it suggests that the reign of the wicked will be for a limited duration and that Hashem will ultimately dole out righteous judgment, including the possibility of a reconciliation with the Jewish people.

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