



## SEFER YIRMIYAHU

2019-2020 Shiur  
Rabbi Reuven Travis

### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

#### ➤ Overview (Rav Hirsch)

Chapter 11 marked the beginning of the prophet's words which, viewed in their context, were intended to help us understand the gradual change in his emotional state.

The prophet had to be persuaded beyond any doubt that the approaching catastrophe had become inevitable. Only thus could he be freed from the agonizing uncertainty which until then had sustained within him the hope that his words might yet find their way into the hearts of his people, so that their deliverance would come about through his life's work. But now he was convinced that the disaster was unavoidable (Chapters 11 and 12).

This realization did rob him of the last ray of hope that could still have brightened his life, bleak as it already was. Even if he now felt certain that his people would not perish in the misery decreed for them, his clear vision of Israel's future misfortunes and sufferings filled his heart with unending pain and forced to his lips a question that would seem altogether legitimate: Why should God have chosen him of all men, for such a difficult mission?

This question would appear all the more justified since the prophet came to realize that his honest efforts had earned him only ingratitude and that his own lot seemed to be a life filled with adversities and sufferings.

While it seems natural to us that the prophet should complain in words of bitterness or even wild despair about his joyless, frustrated existence, it must surprise us that his lamentations now suddenly cease, not to resume again even when the prophet's life becomes increasingly embittered by his own sufferings.

But at that point we hear not one word of complain from his lips. His whole being radiates a calm serenity that can emanate only from a spirit fully reconciled to the mission assigned to him by God. How did this last great transformation within the prophet's soul come about? The answer to this question will be given us in Chapters 14 – 20.

#### ➤ Verses 2 – 3: First time we see/hear shame on the part of the people

- “They are shamed and humiliated; they cover their heads. . . . The plowmen are shamed; they cover their heads.”
- “When the messengers return with empty pitchers, handing them to their masters without a word, their arrogance is dealt a fatal blow. They cover their heads in mute despair.” (Rav Hirsch – verse 3)

Malbim suggests they realize the end is near.

➤ **Verses 5 – 6: Again we have the sufferings of innocent animals**

- “Snuffing the air like jackals; their eyes pine, because there is no herbage.” (verse 6)

➤ **Verses 7 – 8: Yirmiyahu turns to Hashem in prayer**

- The people are devoid of merits, so the prophet must appeal to Hashem directly, that He save them “for the sake of Your name.”
- As Rashi explains:

**עשה למען שמך:** עשה מה שתעשה עמנו למען שם גדול שיצא לך שאתה מושל בכל ואנחנו עמך וצאן מרעיתך ולא נאה שתתן שם נצחונך לאלילים ומדרש אגדה יש למען שמך וכו'.

***Do for Your name's sake:** Do what You will do with us for the sake of the great name that has spread about You that You rule over all and that we are Your people and the flock of Your pasture, and it is not fitting that You give Your victorious name to the idols. And the Midrash Aggadah explains: for the sake of Your name that is inherent in our name.*

- Note the word play at the beginning of verse 8: מַקְוָה literally means water, and the perek begins with a mention of drought. Yet, as Rashi explains, and as many translations have it, the word can also mean “hope.”
- Note also how Malbim understands the phrase in verse 8: “like a stranger in the land.”  
*למה תהיה כגור בארץ:* שהגר לא יקפיד על הנעשה בארץ מצד שאינו מתושבי הארץ.
- Rabbi Leibtag underscores the prophet's frustrations in the prayer. Yirmiyahu thinks the people have begun doing teshuva. It may be incomplete. It may be misguided. Yet, they have made the first steps of returning to God. How then can Hashem ignore their prayers and punish them so sharply?

➤ **Verses 9 – 12: Hashem refuses to listen to the prayer of the prophet**

- “Truly, they love to stray, they have not restrained their feet.” Rabbi Leibtag notes that the commentators interpret this wandering as turning to other countries, such as Ashur and Egypt, as well as to their gods, for help and assistance. Now that they finally turn to Hashem, He rejects them.
- See Rashi's explanation on this verse.

**כן אהבו לנוע:** כן כמה שגזרתי עליהם גולה במצרים ובבל אהבו שם להיות גולים לעבוד אלילים הרחוקים.

***So have they loved to wander:** So, just as I have decreed upon them exile to Egypt and Babylon, they loved it there to go into exile to worship distant idols.*

- Verses 11 and 12 – Oy!
- Note that verse 12 equates sacrifice and prayer. Both are meaningless if offered without proper behavior and without changed deeds (i.e., teshuva).

➤ **Verses 13 – 16: Rebuke and dismissal of the false prophets**

- Yirmiyahu is quoting the false prophets in verse 13!
- Malbim expounds on this in his commentary on verse 15:

נבאים בשמי ואני לא שלחתיים: שאף אם היה נבואתם לקיים דברי התורה המתנבא בשקר חייב מיתה מצד שהם אומרים חרב ורעב לא יהיה בארץ הזאת ומתעים את העם בל ישמעו לדברי נביאי האמת שאומרים בהפך ובל ישוּבו בתשובה ולכן בחרב וברעב יתמו.

- Rabbi Leibtag believes that the real sin of the people lies in their belief that mere prayer to Hashem is sufficient. They believe that prayer without changed deeds, without teshuva, will be enough to save them!

➤ **Verse 17: Note the griping metaphor**

- Note the differing translations:
  - Sefaria: For my hapless people has suffered a grievous injury, a very painful wound.
  - Chabad: For the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, a very grievous blow.
- The Chabad translation is closer to the Hebrew (בְּתוּלַת בֵּת־עַמִּי), and the term “virgin” is appropriate, for this is the first time Judah is to be subjected to foreign rule.

➤ **Verses 18 – 19: Note the Eicha-like tone**

➤ **Verses 19 – 22: The prophet offers another prayer**

- Again he asks that Hashem save the people “For Your name’s sake,” only this time he adds an additional rationale: “Do not dishonor Your glorious throne.”
- And what is this “glorious throne?” According to Rashi -

כסא כבודך: בה"מ, ומדרש אגדה ישראל החקוקים בכסא כבודך.

*the throne of Your glory: The Temple. And according to Midrash Aggadah, Israel who is engraved on the throne of Your glory.*

➤ **A final thought**

- Rabbi Leibtag is amazed that such a sincere, powerful, heart moving prayer such as those offered in this perek by Yirmiyahu can be ignored by Hashem. The depth of Hashem’s anger with the people becomes even more apparent with the opening of Chapter 15:

*The LORD said to me, “Even if Moses and Samuel were to intercede with Me, I would not be won over to that people. Dismiss them from My presence, and let them go forth!”*

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