



## SEFER YIRMIYAHU

2019-2020 Shiur  
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### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

#### ➤ Overview (Rav Hirsch)

Again we find the prophet in fervent prayer before God, for he continues to hope that he might be able to avert the worst from his people. Can we blame him for that? But when his repeated supplications to God to save his people meet with what seems to be a harsh, unrelenting response (“even if a man like Moses or Samuel were standing before Me” to plead for the people, My decision to inflict harsh sufferings on them would be irrevocable), the prophet must fall silent. He now realizes there is no longer any hope that his prayer might be heard. This was probably the moment when God opened the prophet’s eyes so that he would realize on his own that disaster was truly inevitable and necessary.

#### ➤ Verse 1: Moshe and Shmuel

- While the symbolism evoked by these two historical personages is obvious, the meforshim give us additional insights into this verse.
- Here is Rashi’s view:

**משה ושמואל:** שניהם נזקקו לבקש רחמים על ישראל ומתחלה החזירו למוטב ואח"כ התפללו עליהם ולא עלה בלבם להשיב אפי עד שהחזירו למוטב, משה שימו איש חרבו וגו' 'שמות ל"ב:ל' (ויזר על פני המים וגו' (שם) ואח"כ אעלה אל ה' אולי אכפרה, שמואל במצפה ויסירו בני ישראל את הבעלים) שמואל א ז'ה' (ואח"כ קבצו את כל ישראל המצפתה ואתפלל עליכם (שם) אתה אינך יכול להשיבם אלי לכך אל תתפלל עליהם.

**Moses and Samuel:** Both were needed to beg mercy for Israel, but first they induced them to repent, and afterwards they prayed on their behalf, but they had no idea of turning away My wrath until they had induced them to repent. Moses said (Exodus 32:27), “Let each man put his sword...” (v. 20) “and he scattered it on the surface of the water, etc.” And afterwards (v. 30), “I will ascend to the Lord, perhaps I will atone.” Samuel in Mizpah (I Samuel 7:4, 5) “And the children of Israel removed the Baalim,” and afterwards, “Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I shall pray to the Lord on your behalf (sic).” But you cannot bring them back to Me, therefore do not pray for them.

- Here is the Malbim’s understanding of this phrase:

**שיעמד משה ושמואל לפני:** שהם היו קוראים תמיד בעד ישראל והשיבו את הגזרה, זה היה בעוד שהיה נפשי ורצוני אליהם, שהגם שפני היו פנים של זעם נפשי היה לרצון, אבל עתה נקעה נפשי מהם, לכן **שלח מעל פני ויצאו** לגולה, כבן סורר שאביו דחפו מביתו.

#### ➤ Verse 4: Why punish them for the sins of Menashe?

- Why now, asks Rabbi Leibtag? Fifty years have passed since his time and his sinful actions? Indeed, in the current time, the people had begun to do some form of teshuva, albeit flawed and far from sincere. To answer this, we need to look at Divrei HaYamim II, Perek 33:

*He did what was displeasing to the LORD, following the abhorrent practices of the nations that the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites. He rebuilt the shrines that his father Hezekiah had demolished; he erected altars for the Baals and made sacred posts. He bowed down to all the host of heaven and worshiped them . . . Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray into evil greater than that done by the nations that the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites. (Verses 2 -3, 9)*

- What's the point here? We are Hashem's chosen people. We represent Him in this world with our actions and our offerings. Starting in the time of Menashe, we strayed far from that path. Our services do not represent Hashem. They shame and embarrass Him, even more so than those of the other nations of the world. Have the people improved since the time of Menashe? Somewhat, but their core behaviors still remain disgusting (to use Rabbi Leibtag's term) and still remain worse than the other nations.
- In a sense then, destruction and exile is a necessary cure, a form of rehabilitation as it were.
- Here is how Radak understands this:

בגלל מנשה: כי הוא הנהיג את יהודה במעשים רעים ודם נקי שפך עד שמלא ירושלים חללים כמו שכתוב וי"ת על דלא תבו כמנשה בר חזקיהו.

- Worth noting here the words of verse 6: "You cast Me off —declares the LORD— You go ever backward."

#### ➤ Verse 8: Quick and harsh

- It is hard not to see a comparison between the promises Hashem makes to Avraham about the number of his descendants and the number of widows Hashem warns the people will result from the impending destruction ("Their widows shall be more numerous than the sands of the seas").
- As for the swiftness of the destruction ("I will bring down suddenly upon them alarm and terror"), Rav Hirsch notes: "They will learn all this when the terrible fate ordained for them will overtake them at a time they least expect it." How can they NOT expect it? They have been listening to the comforting words of the false prophets and ignoring the warnings and exhortations of Yirmiyahu.

#### ➤ Verse 9: Who are these?

- Who are the seven? Rashi says that they are Samaria and the nation of the Ten Tribes, from whom rose seven dynasties of wicked kings, and these have already been cut off and exiled (Jeroboam son of Nebat and his dynasty, Baasha and his dynasty, Omri and his dynasty, Jehu and his dynasty, Menahem and his dynasty, Pekah and his dynasty, Hoshea and his dynasty).
- Who is the remnant? Rashi says these are Judah and part of Benjamin, who remained in Israel. These, too, I shall deliver to the sword.

➤ **Verse 10: Yirmiyahu complains about his own situation**

- Rav Hirsch writes of the prophet's complaints: "Why, of all men, should he have been chosen for such an unspeakably harsh fate? Was he in any way deserving of the curse that a whole world has hurled at him? What outstanding claim could they possibly have against him, or what claim has he ever made against anyone that would even begin to explain the hatred a whole world shows him? True, he knows only too well that the curse hurled at him is, in fact intended for the Word of God, to which he has dedicated himself as an obedient instrument. But why, of all men, had he been chosen to bear such a heavy burden?"
- See also Arbarbanel.

➤ **Verses 11 – 12: Hashem responds**

- Rav Hirsch writes on verse 11: "The prophet's cry of despair had rudely interrupted the word of God. Now God addresses Himself to the prophet again to prepare the ground for that change in the prophet's mood which should enable him in the future to accept even the harshest blows of fate calmly and with equanimity. Jeremiah is to know that his life will not be altogether empty of triumph. He will receive tribute and recognition from a source where he would have least expected it. The enemy, who one day will confront Jeremiah's people, with all the disdain typical of an arrogant victor, will come to the prophet as a suppliant (See Chapters 39 – 40)."
- Verse 12 speaks of the strength of Jeremiah. As Rashi notes:

הירוע ברזל ברזל מצפון: אומר אני ברזל הבא מצפון קשה משאר ברזל וכן פתרונו הם נמשלו לברזל הולכי רכיל נחשת וברזל (לעיל ו) וברמיה נאמר נתתיך לעמוד ברזל ולהומת נחשת (לעיל א) ושלו חזק משלהם כי נבוכדנצר מצפון יבא כדבריו עליהם.

*Will iron break iron from the north: I say that iron that comes from the north is harder than other iron, and this is its interpretation: They were compared to iron (above 6:28), "Going tale bearing like copper and iron." And concerning Jeremiah it is stated (above 1:18): "I have made you... into an iron pillar and into copper walls," and his is stronger than theirs, for Nebuchadnezzar will come upon them according to his words.*

הירוע: הירוצץ ברזל שלהם את שלך, ד"א הירוצץ פרעה הבא בעזרתכם שהוא קשה כברזל את נבוכדנצר שהוא ברזל הבא מצפון ונחשת ותרגום יונתן נוטה לצד זה.

*Will...break: Will their iron break yours? Another explanation: Will Pharaoh who comes in your aid, who is as hard as iron, break Nebuchadnezzar, who is iron that comes from the north and copper? Targum Jonathan is inclined toward this direction.*

➤ **Verses 15 – 18: The prophet again calls out to Hashem**

- According to Rabbi Leibtag, it is as if the prophet calls out to Hashem: If you are not going to save the people, can you not at least save me? Look what I have done for You. "Consider how I have borne insult On Your account. . . I have not sat in the company of revelers and made merry! I have sat lonely because of Your hand upon me, for You have filled me with gloom."
- Verse 18 goes so far as to reflect the apparent anger of the prophet: "You have been to me like a spring that fails, like waters that cannot be relied on."

➤ **Verses 19 – 21: Hashem responds**

- Rabbi Leibtag understands God as saying to the prophet, if you turn away from your anger, I will take you back, and you shall continue to spread My word to the people. However, they must come to you. You must not chase after them.
- Rav Hirsch reads it differently: “This is God’s promise to him. The prophet will not end his days in misery; even if an adverse fate casts him out into exile along with the rest of his people, God promises him a happy homecoming. Someday the prophet will stand once again before God’s countenance to resume his calling.”
- Specifically on the phrase “They shall come back to you,” Rav Hirsch writes: The prophet and the people will find their way back to one another. They will be drawn to him, whom they have misunderstood and slandered for so long. Henceforth, he and his message will be the goal of their aspirations. He will be the prophet of old whom the people will seek again, but he will see before him a new nation, far more splendid than he had ever dared dream.”

➤ **A final thought**

- “For the present, with all its vicissitudes and brutalities that would have crushed even a stronger man, the prophet needed only an allusion to the assurance which had already been given to him when he was first called.

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