

Stones and Stories #10

The Last One Hundred Years of First Temple Jerusalem

Timeline

734 BCE Tiglath Pileser III conquers Syria, Israel and the Philistine and Phoenician coast.

722 Kingdom of Israel (Samaria) is conquered by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II .

Most Jews are exiled, some flee to Kingdom of Judah

705 Sargon II is killed in battle, rebellions flare up all over the Assyrian Empire.

Hezekiah king of Judah rebels along with the kings of Ashkelon and Sidon (Isaiah 12, 14, 22). Hezekiah prepares for battle with the Assyrians by building the city wall and diverting the water supply.

701 Sennacherib marches on Judah, attacks and conquers Lachish and other cities in the plains. He besieges Jerusalem but does not conquer it (Isaiah 36 - 37).

627 Jeremiah begins his career

612 Defeat of the Assyrians by the Babylonians at Nineveh

609 Josiah goes to battle against Pharaoh Necho in Megiddo

608 – 605 Judah under the rule of Egypt

605 Egypt defeated by Babylonia at Carcemish, Judah independent

Nebuchadnezzar attacks Ashkelon, fasting in Jerusalem

604 – 601 Judah under the rule of Babylonia

601 Yehoyakim rebels against Babylonia

597 Yehoyachin, the royal house, craftsmen and the vessels of the Temple taken to Babylonia

588 Zedekiah, with Egypt's help, rebels against Babylonia

586 Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem, destroys the Temple

Gedaliah ben Achikam appointed governor of Judea

Gedaliah assassinated, remaining Jews leave for Egypt with Jeremiah

538 Cyrus of Persia issues an edict allowing the Jews to return to Judea and rebuild the Temple

Kings of Judah: Ahaz ben Yotam 742 -727

Hezekiah ben Ahaz 727 – 698

Menashe ben Hezekiah 698 – 642

Amon ben Menashe 641-640

Josiah ben Amon 639 -609

Yehoahaz ben Josiah 609

Yehoyakim ben Josiah 609 – 598

Yehoyachin ben Yehoyakim 597

Zedekiah ben Josiah 595 – 586

Prophets: Isaiah : reign of Ahaz, Hezekiah, maybe Menashe. His prophet contemporaries: Amos, Micha, Hosea

Jeremiah: reign of Josiah until the destruction of the Temple. His prophet contemporaries: Hulda, Ezekiel (Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah)

Did Tanakh Spin it or did Sennacherib?

And Hezekiah King of Judah, I shut him up like a bird in a cage. . .

Isaiah 31:5 : כְּצִפְרִים עֹפֹת כֵּן יִגֵן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם גְּנוּן וְהִצִּיל פֶּסַח וְהִמְלִיט :

Like the birds that fly, even so will the LORD of Hosts shield Jerusalem, shielding and saving, protecting and rescuing.

Josiah: The Last Great King of Judah: Religious Reform

Kings II 22: Then the high priest Hilkiyah said to the scribe Shaphan, “I have found a scroll of the Teaching in the House of the LORD.” And Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, who read it . . . and Shaphan read it to the king. When the king heard the words of the scroll of the Teaching, he rent his clothes. And the king gave orders to the priest Hilkiyah, and to Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Michaiah, the scribe Shaphan, and Asaiah the king’s minister: “Go, inquire of the LORD on my behalf, and on behalf of the people, and on behalf of all Judah, concerning the words of this scroll that has been found. For great indeed must be the wrath of the LORD that has been kindled against us, because our fathers did not obey the words of this scroll to do all that has been prescribed for us.” So the priest Hilkiyah, and Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the prophetess Huldah—the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah son of Harhas, the keeper of the wardrobe—who was living in Jerusalem in the Mishneh, and they spoke to her. She responded: “Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: Say to the man who sent you to me: Thus said the LORD: I am going to bring disaster upon this place

and its inhabitants, in accordance with all the words of the scroll which the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken Me and have made offerings to other gods and vexed Me with all their deeds, My wrath is kindled against this place and it shall not be quenched. But say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD: Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: As for the words which you have heard— because your heart was softened and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I decreed against this place and its inhabitants—that it will become a desolation and a curse—and because you rent your clothes and wept before Me, I for My part have listened— declares the LORD.

Hubris: The Battle at Megiddo

Chronicles II 35: 20 After all this refurbishing of the Temple by Josiah, King Necho of Egypt came up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him.

[Necho] sent messengers to him, saying, “What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I do not march against you this day but against the kingdom that wars with me, and it is God’s will that I hurry. Refrain, then, from interfering with God who is with me, that He not destroy you.”

But Josiah would not let him alone; instead, he donned [his armor] to fight him, heedless of Necho’s words from the mouth of God; and he came to fight in the plain of Megiddo.

Archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, “Get me away from here, for I am badly wounded.”

His servants carried him out of his chariot and put him in the wagon of his second-in-command, and conveyed him to Jerusalem. There he died, and was buried in the grave of his fathers, and all Judah and Jerusalem went into mourning over Josiah.

Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah which all the singers, male and female, recited in their laments for Josiah, as is done to this day; they became customary in Israel and were incorporated into the laments.

Jeremiah in Anatot

Jeremiah 1: The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. The word of the LORD came to him in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign, and throughout the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, when Jerusalem went into exile in the fifth month.

Kings I 2: To the priest Abiathar, the king said, “Go to your estate at Anathoth! You deserve to die, but I shall not put you to death at this time, because you carried the Ark of my Lord GOD before my father David and because you shared all the hardships that my father endured.” So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from his office of priest of the LORD—thus fulfilling what the LORD had spoken at Shiloh regarding the house of Eli.

Jeremiah 7: Just go to My place at Shiloh, where I had established My name formerly, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel.

Near Living Waters

Jeremiah 2:13 For My people have done a twofold wrong: They have forsaken Me, the Fount of living waters, And hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, Which cannot even hold water.

Jeremiah 13: Thus the LORD said to me: “Go buy yourself a loincloth of linen, and put it around your loins, but do not dip it into water.” So I bought the loincloth in accordance with the LORD’s command, and put it about my loins. And the word of the LORD came to me a second time: “Take the loincloth which you bought, which is about your loins, and go at once to Perath and cover it up there in a cleft of the rock.”

The Desert as a Refuge

Jeremiah 2 Go proclaim to Jerusalem: Thus said the LORD: I accounted to your favor The devotion of your youth, Your love as a bride— How you followed Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown.

Jeremiah 9: Oh, to be in the desert, At an encampment for wayfarers! Oh, to leave my people, To go away from them— For they are all adulterers, A band of rogues.

Walking to Jerusalem

Jeremiah 7:13 **וְעַתָּה יְעַן עֲשׂוּתְכֶם אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים הָאֵלֶּה נָא־יְהוָה וְאִדְבַּר אֵלֵיכֶם הַשָּׁכֵם וְדַבֵּר וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם וְאָקְרָא אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא עֲנִיתֶם:**

And now, because you do all these things—declares the LORD—and though I spoke to you persistently, you would not listen; and though I called to you, you would not respond—

Jeremiah 17:19 Thus said the LORD to me: **Go and stand** in the People’s Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go forth, and in all the gates of Jerusalem,

Jeremiah 20:7 You enticed me, O LORD, and I was enticed; You overpowered me and You prevailed. I have become a constant laughingstock, Everyone jeers

at me. For every time I speak, I must cry out, Must shout, “Lawlessness and rapine!” For the word of the LORD causes me Constant disgrace and contempt. I thought, “I will not mention Him, No more will I speak in His name”— But [His word] was like a raging fire in my heart, Shut up in my bones; I could not hold it in, I was helpless.

Jeremiah 21:13 I will deal with you, O **inhabitants of the valley, O rock of the plain**—declares the LORD— You who say, “Who can come down against us? Who can get into our lairs?”

Yehoyakim and Social Justice

Jeremiah 22 Ha! he who builds his house with unfairness And his upper chambers with injustice, Who makes his fellow man work without pay And does not give him his wages, Who thinks: I will build me a vast palace With spacious upper chambers, Provided with windows, Paneled in cedar, Painted with vermilion! Do you think you are more a king Because you compete in cedar? Your father ate and drank And dispensed justice and equity— Then all went well with him. He upheld the rights of the poor and needy— Then all was well. That is truly heeding Me —declares the LORD. But your eyes and your mind are only On ill-gotten gains, On shedding the blood of the innocent, On committing fraud and violence. Assuredly, thus said the LORD concerning Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah: They shall not mourn for him, “Ah, brother! Ah, sister!” They shall not mourn for him, “Ah, lord! Ah, his majesty!” He shall have the burial of an ass, Dragged out and left lying Outside the gates of Jerusalem.

Yehoyakim and the Word of God

Jeremiah 36 In the ninth month of the fifth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people coming from Judah proclaimed a fast before the LORD in Jerusalem. It was then that Baruch—in the chamber of Gemariah son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court, near the new gateway of the House of the LORD—read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll to all the people in the House of the LORD. Micaiah son of Gemariah son of Shaphan heard all the words of the LORD [read] from the scroll, and he went down to the king’s palace, to the chamber of the scribe. . . .” And Baruch took the scroll and came to them. They said, “Sit down and read it to us.” And Baruch read it to them. When they heard all these words, they turned to each other in fear; and they said to Baruch, “We must report all this to the king.” . . . The officials said to Baruch, “Go into hiding, you and Jeremiah. Let no man know where you are!” And they went to the king in the court, after leaving the scroll in the chamber of the scribe Elishama. And they reported all these matters to the king. The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll and he fetched it from the chamber of the scribe Elishama. Jehudi read it to the king and to all the officials who were in attendance on the king. Since it was the ninth month, the king was sitting in the

winter house, with a fire burning in the brazier before him. And every time Jehudi read three or four columns, [the king] would cut it up with a scribe's knife and throw it into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed by the fire in the brazier. Yet the king and all his courtiers who heard all these words showed no fear and did not tear their garments;

First Exile: The Elite

Kings II 24: King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon advanced against the city while his troops were besieging it. Thereupon King Jehoiachin of Judah, along with his mother, and his courtiers, commanders, and officers, surrendered to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign. He carried off from Jerusalem all the treasures of the House of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace; he stripped off all the golden decorations in the Temple of the LORD—which King Solomon of Israel had made—as the LORD had warned. He exiled all of Jerusalem: all the commanders and all the warriors—ten thousand exiles—as well as all the craftsmen and smiths; only the poorest people in the land were left. He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon; and the king's wives and officers and the notables of the land were brought as exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Split Screen: Ezekiel in Babylonia and Jeremiah in Jerusalem

Jeremiah 21: Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: I am going to turn around the weapons in your hands with which you are battling outside the wall against those who are besieging you—the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans—and I will take them into the midst of this city; and I Myself will battle against you with an outstretched mighty arm, with anger and rage and great wrath. I will strike the inhabitants of this city, man and beast: they shall die by a terrible pestilence. And then—declares the LORD—I will deliver King Zedekiah of Judah and his courtiers and the people—those in this city who survive the pestilence, the sword, and the famine—into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, into the hands of their enemies, into the hands of those who seek their lives. He will put them to the sword without pity, without compassion, without mercy. “And to this people you shall say: Thus said the LORD: I set before you the way of life and the way of death. Whoever remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but whoever leaves and goes over to the Chaldeans who are besieging you shall live; he shall at least gain his life.

Ezekiel 11: “O mortal, [I will save] your brothers, your brothers, the men of your kindred, all of that very House of Israel to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem say, ‘Keep far from the LORD; the land has been given as a heritage to us.’ Say then: Thus said the Lord GOD: I have indeed removed them far among the nations and have scattered them among the countries, and I have become to them a diminished sanctity in the countries whither they have gone. Yet say:

Thus said the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the Land of Israel.

The Final Battles: In the Lowlands

Jeremiah 36: when the army of the king of Babylon was waging war against Jerusalem and against the remaining towns of Judah—against Lachish and Azekah, for they were the only fortified towns of Judah that were left.

King Zedekiah's Escape?

Jeremiah 39: In the ninth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the tenth month, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon moved against Jerusalem with his whole army, and they laid siege to it. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, on the ninth day of the fourth month, the [walls of] the city were breached.

All the officers of the king of Babylon entered, and took up quarters at the middle gate—Nergal-sarezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim the Rab-saris, Nergal-sarezer the Rab-mag, and all the rest of the officers of the king of Babylon. When King Zedekiah of Judah saw them, he and all the soldiers fled. They left the city at night, by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the double walls; and he set out toward the Arabah. But the Chaldean troops pursued them, and they overtook Zedekiah in the steppes of Jericho. They captured him and brought him before King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon at Riblah in the region of Hamath; and he put him on trial. The king of Babylon had Zedekiah's children slaughtered at Riblah before his eyes; the king of Babylon had all the nobles of Judah slaughtered. Then the eyes of Zedekiah were put out and he was chained in bronze fetters, that he might be brought to Babylon.

רש"י דרך גן המלך. מערה היתה לו מביתו עד ערבות ירחו ויצא לילך דרך המערה מה עשה הקב"ה לקיים ופרשתי את רשתי עליו (יחזקאל י"ב:י"ג) זימן צבי לפני הכשדים מהלך על גג המערה חוץ לעיר ורצו אחריו לתפשו והוא רץ עד פתח המערה וראו את צדקיהו יוצא מן המערה:

Gedaliah and the Remnant Who Stayed Behind

Jeremiah 40: So Jeremiah came to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah, and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land. The officers of the troops in the open country, and their men with them, heard that the king of Babylon had put Gedaliah son of Ahikam in charge of the region, and that he had put in his charge the men, women, and children—of the poorest in the land—those who had not been exiled to Babylon. So they with their men came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah; Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah; Seraiah son of Tanhumeth; the sons of Ephai the Netophathite; and Jezaniah son of the Maacathite. Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan reassured them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans.

Stay in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you. I am going to stay in Mizpah to attend upon the Chaldeans who will come to us. But you may gather wine and figs and oil and put them in your own vessels, and settle in the towns you have occupied.” Likewise, all the Judeans who were in Moab, Ammon, and Edom, or who were in other lands, heard that the king of Babylon had let a remnant stay in Judah, and that he had put Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan in charge of them. All these Judeans returned from all the places to which they had scattered. They came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and they gathered large quantities of wine and figs.

Treachery and More Exile

Jeremiah 41: In the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, who was of royal descent and one of the king’s commanders, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah; and they ate together there at Mizpah. Then Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him arose and struck down Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan with the sword and killed him, because the king of Babylon had put him in charge of the land. Ishmael also killed all the Judeans who were with him—with Gedaliah in Mizpah—and the Chaldean soldiers who were stationed there. The second day after Gedaliah was killed, when no one yet knew about it, eighty men came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, their beards shaved, their garments torn, and their bodies gashed, carrying meal offerings and frankincense to present at the House of the LORD. Ishmael son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he walked. As he met them, he said to them, “Come to Gedaliah son of Ahikam.” When they came inside the town, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men who were with him slaughtered them [and threw their bodies] into a cistern. . . .

Ishmael carried off all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah, including the daughters of the king—all the people left in Mizpah, over whom Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam. Ishmael son of Nethaniah carried them off, and set out to cross over to the Ammonites. Johanan son of Kareah, and all the army officers with him, heard of all the crimes committed by Ishmael son of Nethaniah. They took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael son of Nethaniah; and they encountered him by the great pool in Gibeon.

The Return

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion.

There on the poplars we hung up our lyres,

for our captors asked us there for songs, our tormentors, for amusement, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

How can we sing a song of the LORD on alien soil?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither;

let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep
Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour. (Psalms 137)