

**THE BOOK OF YIRMIYAHU**  
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**Shiur #25: The Last Days of Jerusalem (Chapter 37)**

**Introduction**

Chapter 37 in the book of *Yirmiyahu* opens a unit of historical stories that depict the events in Yirmiyahu's life during the period of the destruction, as well as the fulfillment of his prophecies, from the days of Tzidkiyahu until his last prophecy to the remnant of survivors in Egypt (in chapter 44).<sup>1</sup> The background to the events related in the chapter is the reign of Tzidkiyahu in the closing days of the kingdom of Yehuda, and over the course of the chapter we are exposed to Yirmiyahu's final attempts to save the city. The chapter opens with the first siege imposed by the Babylonians upon Jerusalem, which was removed following the arrival of the Egyptian army. Yirmiyahu leaves Jerusalem, is accused of treason and thrown into prison, and then is released due to the intervention of Tzidkiyahu. The chapter portrays Tzidkiyahu, the last king of Yehuda, with his complexity, indecision and political weakness, and describes the complex relationship between Tzidkiyahu and his princes and Yirmiyahu. (We will get the full picture when in the next *shiur* we complete our examination of chapter 38, which relates to this same period from a different perspective.)

The chapter is divided into three parts:

1-10: Tzidkiyahu's first appeal to Yirmiyahu and Yirmiyahu's response.

11-16: Yirmiyahu is arrested by Yir'iya on suspicion of desertion and thrown into prison.

17-21: Tzidkiyahu's second appeal to Yirmiyahu; Yirmiyahu is transferred to the court of the guard.

As we shall see below, the events described in the chapter have several parallels elsewhere in the book and outside of it, and the chapter must be examined in relation to these parallels.

**Tzidkiyahu's Appeal to Yirmiyahu**

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<sup>1</sup> See also Rashi at the beginning of the chapter: "And King Tzidkiyahu reigned – Since from now on he comes to relate that the calamities that he prophesied until now have come true, he begins by saying that when the time drew close when his words would be fulfilled, a different king reigned over Yehuda in place of Konyahu the son of Yehoyakim." The new beginning of the chapter is evident from the style of verse 1: The words "*va-yimlokh melekh*" with the inverted future form often indicate a new topic that is not a direct continuation of the previous topic.

(1) And King Tzikiyahu the son of Yoshiyahu reigned instead of Konyahu the son of Yehoyakim, whom Nevuchadnetzar king of Bavel made king in the land of Yehuda. (2) But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, hearkened to the words of the Lord, which He spoke by the prophet Yirmiyahu. (3) And Tzidkiyahu the king sent Yehukhal the son of Shelemya and Tzefanyahu the son of Ma'aseya the priest to the prophet Yirmiyahu, saying: Pray for us to the Lord our God. (4) Now Yirmiyahu came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison.

The events in the previous chapter took place in the fifth year of Yehoyakim's reign (604 BCE), whereas in our chapter we jump to the end of the days of Tzidkiyahu. The background to the events in the chapter are briefly summarized in verse 1 – the new period begins with the rise to the monarchy of Tzidkiyahu, who was crowned in place of his nephew Yekhonya after he was exiled by Nevukhadnetzar to Bavel. The period of his reign is described concisely and in a negative manner, and it is characterized by a refusal to heed the words of Yirmiyahu (there might also be here an allusion to Tzidkiyahu's rebellion against Nevukhadnetzar, contrary to the words of Yirmiyahu, which led to the siege).

Immediately following the general description, the chapter shifts to a story that depicts Tzidkiyahu's appeal to Yirmiyahu. What is the background to this surprising appeal, which is contrary to Tzidkiyahu's general attitude toward Yirmiyahu? Later in the chapter (v. 5), it becomes evident that at the time the Kasdim were laying siege on Jerusalem and that as a result of the arrival of Pharaoh's army, they abandoned the siege.<sup>2</sup> It stands to reason that the difficult situation in Jerusalem, which accorded with Yirmiyahu's prophecies, left Tzidkiyahu with no alternative but to appeal to Yirmiyahu.<sup>3</sup>

Between Tzidkiyahu's appeal (3) and Yirmiyahu's prophecy (6-10), verse 5 describes the withdrawal of the Babylonians:

Then Pharaoh's army came out of Egypt; and when the Kasdim that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

Reality, as it were, strikes at Yirmiyahu, the prophet of destruction, as the Babylonians retreat, even without his prayer! Needless to say, this event was perceived as close to miraculous in the eyes of the people of Jerusalem and its leaders. But Yirmiyahu's prophecy relates fundamentally to the stopping of the siege, which is perceived as only temporary:

(6) Then came the word of the Lord to the prophet Yirmiyahu saying:

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<sup>2</sup> This event is also the backdrop for the story of the freeing of the slaves in chapter 34.

<sup>3</sup> Between the appeal and the response, a comment is made in verse 4 about Yirmiyahu's condition, that he comes in and goes out among the people. This note foreshadows what will happen later in the chapter, when Yirmiyahu will be placed in prison.

(7) Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Thus shall you say to the king of Yehuda, who sent you to me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come out to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. (8) And the Kasdim shall come back, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

(9) Thus says the Lord: Do not deceive yourselves, saying: The Kasdim shall surely depart from us, for they shall not depart. (10) For even if you had smitten the whole army of the Kasdim that fight against you and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent and burn this city with fire.

Yirmiyahu attempts to shatter the illusion that has taken hold of the people: "Do not deceive yourselves!"<sup>4</sup> If there will be a miracle, it will work in the opposite direction, against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, whose fate has already been sealed. Even if all of the forces of the Kasdim are beaten, they will burn Jerusalem to the ground, as they are but messengers sent out to execute the decree issued in the heavenly court. They come to destroy a destroyed Temple and to burn a burnt Sanctuary.

### The Parallel to Chapter 21

Tzidkiyahu's appeal and Yirmiyahu's response are mentioned in very similar terms in chapter 21:

(1) The word which came to Yirmiyahu from the Lord, when king Tzidkiyahu sent to him Pashchur the son of Malkiya and Tzefanya the son of Ma'aseya the priest, saying: (2) Inquire, I pray you, of the Lord for us; for Nevukhadnetzar, king of Bavel, is making war against us; perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wondrous works, so that he may go up from us. (3) Then said Yirmiyahu to them: Thus shall you say to Tzidkiyahu: (4) Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Behold I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Bavel and against the Kasdim, who besiege you outside the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. (5) And I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath... (10) For I have set My face against this city for evil, and not for good, says the Lord; it shall be given into the hand of the king of Bavel, and he shall burn it with fire.

There is a clear parallel between the two situations. Both take place when the army of Bavel rises up against Jerusalem. In both cases, Tzidkiyahu sends messengers to Yirmiyahu asking him to pray,<sup>5</sup> and in both cases

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<sup>4</sup> Yirmiyahu's struggle with the false illusions of the people is formulated with these words in 4:10: "Ah, Lord God surely **you have greatly deceived** this people and Jerusalem, saying: You shall have peace."

<sup>5</sup> In both stories, the name of one of the messengers is Tzefanya the son of Ma'aseya. Tzefanya is mentioned above in chapter 29, when Shema'ayahu the Nechelami sends him a furious letter in reaction to Yirmiyahu's letter. From the context, it appears that Tzefanya was close to Yirmiyahu, since he reads him Shema'ayahu's letter. The difference between the

Yirmiyahu refuses to do so, saying that God will fight against Jerusalem.

It might be that we are dealing with two parallel situations that occurred in close proximity, one after the arrival of the Kasdim and the other after their return. But it is possible that we are dealing with two parallel descriptions of the same situation.<sup>6</sup> The difference between the chapters may depend on their different contexts. In chapter 21, which is included in the unit of Yirmiyahu's prophecies, the context is the word of God, as is stated in the opening line: "The word which came to Yirmiyahu from the Lord, when he sent...." Therefore there is greater specification of the request and the response. The prayer is spelled out in detail: "For Nevuchadnetzar, king of Bavel, is making war against us; perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wondrous works." Yirmiyahu responds accordingly that God Himself will fight against them. In his words, he turns extensively to Tzidkiyahu and the people and emphasizes God's wrath, and later he also relates to the moral dimension. He calls upon them to choose and repair, as the way of prophecy is to instruct the audience about the right path, and not just to describe what is to happen in the future: "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He that abides in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. But he that goes out and falls away to the Kasdim that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be to him for booty."

In contrast, in chapter 37, the focus is the historical context: "And king Tzidkiyahu... reigned... and he sent." The appeal to pray is mentioned briefly: "Pray for us." Mention is then made of Yirmiyahu's situation as a preface to his imprisonment later in the story: "Now Yirmiyahu came in and went out among the people...." Later we come to the historical event of the Kasdim's retreat from Jerusalem: "Then Pharaoh's army was come out of Egypt...." Accordingly, in Yirmiyahu's response, he relates only to the return of the Kasdim and their victory. Here too mention is made of the fact that God will fight, and that even if the Kasdim are wounded they will succeed in burning the city.

### **Chizkiyahu and Yeshayahu vs. Tzidkiyahu and Yirmiyahu**

The two accounts together parallel the story of Ashur's campaign against Jerusalem in the days of Chizkiyahu and Yeshayahu. In the book of

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stories lies in the identity of the second messenger. In chapter 37, Tzefanya is joined by Yehukhal the son of Shelemya, while in chapter 21 he is joined by Pashchur the son of Malkiya. Both of them are mentioned in chapter 38 among the group of princes who hear Yirmiyahu's prophecy and wish to kill him. It is possible that in each place a different prince is mentioned, in accordance with the context of the chapter: In chapter 37, mention is made of Yehukhal the son of Shelemya, perhaps because he is connected to Yir'iyah the son of Shelemya, who arrests Yirmiyahu later in the chapter. In chapter 21, mention is made of Pashchur the son of Malkiya perhaps because in chapter 20 mention is made of Pashchur the son of Amar.

<sup>6</sup> The problem of double accounts in the book of *Yirmiyahu* is found in several places. We saw in the past the duplication found in chapters 7 and 26, and there we took the approach which views in the two chapters two accounts of the same event from two different perspectives. A similar phenomenon is found in chapters 39 and 40, which will be discussed in a future *shiur*. I wish to adopt the same approach here.

*Yeshayahu*, the historical section opens with this story. This is what it says immediately after the speech of Ravshakeh, one of the messengers of the king of Ashur (II *Melakhim* 19):

(1) And it came to pass, when king Chizkiyahu heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord. (2) And he sent Elyakim who was over the household, and Shevna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Yeshayahu the prophet, the son of Amotz. (3) And they said to him: Thus says Chizkiyahu: This day is a day of trouble, and of reviling, and blasphemy; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bear forth. (4) Perhaps the Lord your God will hear all the words of Ravshakeh, whom the king of Ashur his master has sent to taunt the living God and to revile with words as the Lord your God has heard; wherefore send up a prayer for the remnant that are left. (5) So the servants of king Chizkiyahu came to Yeshayahu. (6) And Yeshayahu said to them: Thus shall you say to your master: Thus says the Lord: Be not afraid of the words which you have heard with which the servants of the king of Ashur have blasphemed Me. (7) Behold, I will send another spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumor and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

There are several striking similarities between the two situations:

1. The background in both stories is a siege imposed upon Jerusalem by the army of the greatest empire of the day: Ashur in the days of Chizkiyahu and Bavel in the days of Tzidkiyahu.
2. A king of Israel sends messengers to a prophet: Chizkiyahu sends messengers to the prophet Yeshayahu asking him to pray for the city against Ashur, and Tzidkiyahu sends messengers to Yirmiyahu, expecting a prophecy of consolation and salvation. The wording of the requests is also similar. Chizkiyahu says: "**Perhaps the Lord your God will hear...** send up **a prayer for the remnant that are left.**" And Tzidkiyahu says: "**Perhaps the Lord will deal** with us according to all His wondrous works, so that he may go up from us"; "**Pray for us** to the Lord our God."
3. A temporary cessation of the siege: The king of Ashur leaves in order to fight against Tirhaka, king of Kush, whereas the king of Bavel retreats in the wake of the arrival of the Egyptian army.

This striking parallel joins the many parallels between the period of Yeshayahu and that of Yirmiyahu, which we discussed at length in several *shiurim*. However, Yirmiyahu's response is the opposite of that of Yeshayahu, who prophesies about the return of the king of Ashur to his land: "Behold, I will send another spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumor and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." Indeed, it parallels, oddly enough, the words of Ravshakeh!

This is what Ravshakeh says to Chizkiyahu after the temporary cessation of the siege:

(9) And he sent messengers again to Chizkiyahu, saying: (10) Thus shall you speak to Chizkiyahu king of Yehuda, saying: **Let not your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying: Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Ashur.** (11) Behold, you have heard what the kings of Ashur have done to all the lands, by destroying them utterly; and shall you be delivered?

Yirmiyahu says similar things to Tzidkiyahu using similar words: "Thus says the Lord: **Do not deceive yourselves, saying: The Kasdim shall surely depart from us;** for they shall not depart."

In both cases, the prophecy is contrary to manifest reality. Yeshayahu prophesies that the army of Ashur that is besieging Jerusalem will return to its land, whereas Yirmiyahu prophesies that the retreat of the army of Bavel is only temporary.

What accounts for the profound difference in the responses of these two prophets?

A difference can be detected already in the responses of the two kings. Chizkiyahu's initial reaction to the words of Ravshakeh is deep shock – rending of garments and donning of sackcloth. This shock stems from the blasphemy sounded by Ravshakeh against the God of Israel: "Perhaps the Lord your God will hear all the words of Ravshakeh, whom the king of Ashur his master has sent **to taunt the living God.**" It is evident from here that Chizkiyahu rends his garments not over the fate of his kingdom, but over the blasphemy against God sounded by the representative of the king of Ashur. The *gemara* even learns from here that one who hears blasphemy must rend his garments:

[Rents] on [hearing] God's name blasphemed – from where do we derive this? As it is written: "Then came Elyakim the son of Chilkiya who was over the household and Shevna the scribe and Yo'ah the son of Asaf the recorder to Chizkiyahu with their clothes rent and told him the [blasphemous] words of Ravshakeh." (*Mo'ed Katan* 26a)

To this Yeshayahu responds in his prophecy: "(6) And Yeshayahu said to them: Thus shall you say to your master: Thus says the Lord: Be not afraid of the words which you have heard **with which the servants of the king of Ashur have blasphemed Me.**"

This is the reason for God's salvation: "For I will defend this city, to save it, **for My own sake and for my servant David's sake**" (II *Melakhim* 19:34).

This fits in with one of the basic messages in the prophecy of Yeshayahu, who warns about human arrogance in relation to God. The fall of

the grand and mighty Assyrian empire at the wall of Jerusalem expresses in the clearest manner the nullity of human pride in the face of God's actions.

As we have seen, the prevailing perception among the people in the days of Yirmiyahu, as it emerges in chapters 7 and 26, was that God's Temple and the city of Jerusalem would never be destroyed. This perception is based on Yeshayahu's prophecy against Ashur and Jerusalem's marvelous rescue from the army of Ashur – when an angel of God destroyed Ashur's army in one night. More than a hundred years later, when Jerusalem in the days of Tzidkiyahu is once again under siege, this time by Bavel, Tzidkiyahu turns to Yirmiyahu, relying on the past precedents when God performed miracles and delivered Israel: "Perhaps the Lord will deal with us according to all His wondrous works..." It would appear that this refers primarily to the salvation from Ashur in the days of Chizkiyahu. But here you can also see the difference between them. Unlike Chizkiyahu, who performs actions of repair and repentance, rending his garments and going to the Temple, Tzidkiyahu contents himself with sending messengers to Yirmiyahu with the request to repeat the miracle from the days of Chizkiyahu. Whereas Chizkiyahu sets God's honor in the center and prays for the cessation of the insults hurled at God by the king of Ashur, Tzidkiyahu asks Yirmiyahu to pray for him and the people.

This explains the differences in the responses. Ravshakeh is confident and boastful about the strength of his king, and therefore he is convinced that he will return and conquer Jerusalem: "Let not your God in whom you trust deceive you...." Yeshayahu responds that God will overcome the army of Ashur. In contrast, Tzidkiyahu relies on the withdrawal of the army of Bavel, which was merely for political reasons, and regarding this Yirmiyahu tells him that since there was no internal reform among the people themselves, this political turnaround has no significance, and the king of Bavel would soon return: "Thus says the Lord: Do not deceive yourselves, saying: The Kasdim shall depart from us..." The people and their kings must not put their trust in the king of Egypt and his army, as they cannot cancel the heavenly decree against Jerusalem. The only thing that can possibly change Jerusalem's fate is listening to the voice of the prophet and the word of God, and this they have not done.

### **Yirmiyahu's Arrest**

Immediately afterwards, Yirmiyahu decides to leave Jerusalem:

(11) And it came to pass that when the army of the Kasdim had withdrawn from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army. (12) Then Yirmiyahu went out of Jerusalem into the land of Binyamin, to slip out (*la-chalik*) from these among the people.

Why did Yirmiyahu wish to leave? It stands to reason that this is connected to the end of the siege, as noted by R. Yosef Kara:

"And it came to pass that when the army of the Kasdim had withdrawn

from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army" – and the inhabitants of Jerusalem opened the city gates. At that point, "Then Yirmiyahu went out."

However, the possibility of leaving does not explain the motive of Yirmiyahu's exit. It seems that the reason lies in the difficult word "*la-chalik*." Targum Yonatan understands that he went to his plot of land that was located there outside the city among the people. He seems to understand *la-chalik* in the sense of *chelek*, parcel of land. However the vocalization of the word with a *chirik* under the *lamed* indicates otherwise, as suggested by the Radak:

"*La-chalik* from these among the people" – That is, *le-hachalik*. The word is missing the *heh*, which marks the conjugation, and its vowel is placed under the *lamed*... This means: "To slip himself away." For he was among the people, and he was afraid that he would be put in prison, because he had said: "For even if you had smitten the whole army of the Kasdim." ... That is, he wished to slip himself away from there.

According to this interpretation, there is a deeper connection between Yirmiyahu's departure and his words above. On the surface level, it appeared that Jerusalem was saved from the Babylonian siege, just as it had been saved from the siege of Ashur. The dire predictions were proven false, and Jerusalem once again emerged as an invulnerable city that is miraculously protected by God. Yirmiyahu feared that he would now suffer for his words, and that he would be arrested as a false prophet who seeks the detriment of the city. He therefore decided to slip out of the city to the land of Binyamin in the stream of people exiting the city.

(13) And when he was in the gate of Binyamin, a sentry was there, whose name was Yir'iyah, the son of Shelemyah, the son of Chananya; and he seized Yirmiyahu the prophet, saying: You are deserting to the Kasdim. (14) Then Yirmiyahu said: It is false; I am not deserting to the Kasdim. But he did not hearken to him; so Yir'iyah seized Yirmiyahu, and brought him to the princes. (15) So the princes were angry with Yirmiyahu, and struck him, and put him in prison in the house of Yehonatan the scribe, for they had made that the prison. (16) When Yirmiyahu was entered into the pit, and into the cells, and Yirmiyahu had remained there many days.

Yirmiyahu's attempt to leave secretly aroused the suspicions of Yir'iyah, the son of Shelemyah, the son of Chananya, an official who sat at the city gate and oversaw those leaving it. Yir'iyah accused Yirmiyahu of trying to fall into the hands of the Kasdim – that is, to defect to the enemy. This is a serious charge, especially during a time of siege and battle, and Yirmiyahu rejects it vehemently: "This is false!" But to no avail.

This accusation reflects the perception of officials and princes of Jerusalem, who saw Yirmiyahu as a traitor who was helping the Babylonians against his people. This fundamental misunderstanding of the people and

their ministers concerning Yirmiyahu's objectives has accompanied Yirmiyahu throughout his mission.

*Chazal* identified this Yir'iyah who brought charges against Yirmiyahu with the grandson of Chananya the son of Azur, the false prophet.<sup>7</sup> This is the way that the *gemara* explains the meaning of the family lineage:

R. Elazar also said: Whoever flatters his neighbor will in the end fall into his hand; if he does not fall into his hand, he will fall into the hand of his sons; and if he does not fall into his sons' hand, he will fall into the hand of his grandsons. As it is stated: "And Yirmiyahu said to Chananya: Amen; the Lord do so; the Lord perform your words." And it is written: "And when he was in the gate of Binyamin, a sentry was there, whose name was Yir'iyah, the son of Shelemyah, the son of Chananya; and he seized Yirmiyahu the prophet, saying: You are deserting to the Kasdim. Then Yirmiyahu said: It is false; I am not deserting to the Kasdim." And it is written: "So Yir'iyah seized Yirmiyahu, and brought him to the princes." (*Sota* 41b-42a)

According to R. Elazar, Yirmiyahu's arrest by Yir'iyah was a heavenly punishment for his words to Yir'iyah's grandfather, Chananya the son of Azur. According to him, Yirmiyahu's hesitation in his response to Chananya's false prophecy in chapter 28 was a sin, and in our story, Yirmiyahu receives his punishment and falls into the hand of Chananya's grandson.

It is interesting to note that in both stories there is a confrontation between Yirmiyahu and another person on the question of the veracity of Yirmiyahu's words. In his prophecy, Chananya challenges Yirmiyahu's prophecy, and only at a later stage does Yirmiyahu tell him that his prophecy is a false prophecy. Here Yir'iyah levels a charge at Yirmiyahu – apparently related to his prophecy of calamity that seemed to prove false – and Yirmiyahu responds with the word "false." In light of the words of the *midrash*, it may be suggested that since Yirmiyahu did not immediately reject Chananya's prophecy as a false prophecy, he was unable to push aside his grandson Yir'iyah's accusation as a false charge.

### **The Meeting Between Tzidkiyahu and Yirmiyahu**

The chapter ends with a secret meeting between Tzidkiyahu and Yirmiyahu after Yirmiyahu was imprisoned by Tzidkiyahu's princes:

(17) Then Tzidkiyahu the king sent and took him out; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said: Is there any word from the Lord? And Yirmiyahu said: There is: for, said he, you shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Bavel. (18) Moreover, Yirmiyahu said to

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<sup>7</sup> In general, Scripture traces a person's lineage only to his father. Mention is made of a person's grandfather only when the grandfather is familiar to us from somewhere else. Thus, for example, Betzalel is traced to his father Uri and to his grandfather Chur, whom we know from other places in the Torah. It stands to reason, then, that Yir'iyah's grandfather is a known figure.

king Tzidkiyahu: How have I offended against you, or against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? (19) Where are now your prophets who prophesied to you, saying: The king of Bavel shall not come against you, nor against his land? (20) Therefore hear now, I pray you, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray you, be accepted before you; that you cause me not to return to the house of Yehonatan the scribe, lest I die there. (21) Then Tzidkiyahu the king commanded that they should commit Yirmiyahu to the court of the guard, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Yirmiyahu remained in the court of the guard.

This is Tzidkiyahu's second appeal to Yirmiyahu in this chapter, but these two appeals are different in nature in many ways:

1. The first appeal was made at the end of the first siege, whereas this appeal takes place apparently during the second siege. This follows from what Yirmiyahu says to Tzidkiyahu: "Where are now your prophets who prophesied to you, saying: The king of Bavel shall not come against you...?"
2. The first time, it says who made the appeal; this was an open appeal. The second time, we read: "And he took him out," and the matter was done "secretly in his house," as Yirmiyahu was imprisoned on orders of the princes, and Tzidkiyahu apparently did not want them to know what he had done.
3. The first time, Tzidkiyahu asked Yirmiyahu to pray for them, whereas the second time, he asks him: "Is there any word from the Lord?"
4. The first time, it is emphasized that Yirmiyahu was still a free man and had not been put in prison. The second time, the situation is the opposite, as he says to Tzidkiyahu: "That you have put me in prison."

The meaning of these differences seems to be as follows. The first time, Tzidkiyahu thought Yirmiyahu would offer protection with his prayers, as Yeshayahu had done in his day. But Yirmiyahu's sharp response clarified his position. This position was apparently proven false by reality – Bavel's retreat in the wake of the arrival of the Egyptian army painted Yirmiyahu as a false prophet. As mentioned, perhaps for this reason he tried to escape, and he was therefore also accused of being a traitor. The second time, Tzidkiyahu sends for Yirmiyahu in secret, after Bavel's return and the renewal of the siege imposed upon Jerusalem. The situation was reversed – Yirmiyahu's words proved to be true, while the words of the other prophets were proven false, as Yirmiyahu says sarcastically. His words are dedicated primarily to his request of the king that he be released, as it has been proven that he is not a traitor and that he does not wish evil upon the people.

This episode once again reveals the tragic figure of Yirmiyahu, who wants the best for his people but is perceived as their enemy, as opposed to the false prophets who supposedly seek what is best for the people and prophesy salvation, but actually bring destruction.

(Translated by David Strauss)