

**From Despair to Hope:  
Creativity and Innovation Biblical Style<sup>1</sup>**

Dr. Susie Tanchel

Shavuot, 5785

2 Kings 24:8-16

Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. He did what was displeasing to GOD, just as his father had done.

At that time, the troops of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. 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 GOD and the treasures of the royal palace; he stripped off all the golden decorations in the Temple of GOD—which King Solomon of Israel had made—as GOD had warned. He exiled all of Jerusalem: all the commanders and all the warriors—ten thousand exiles—as well as all the artisans and smiths; only the poorest people in the land were left. He deported Jehoiachin to Babylon; and the king's mother and wives and officers and the notables of the land were brought as exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the able men, to the number of seven thousand—all of them warriors, trained for battle—and a thousand artisans and smiths were brought to Babylon as exiles by the king of Babylon.

2 Kings 25:1, 8-12

And in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar moved against Jerusalem with his whole army. He besieged it; and they built towers against it all around.

On the seventh day of the fifth month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, an officer of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the House of GOD, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down the house of every notable person. The entire Chaldean force that was with the chief of the guard tore down the walls of Jerusalem on every side.

---

<sup>1</sup> Biblical texts and translations are from Sefaria



The remnant of the people that was left in the city, the defectors who had gone over to the king of Babylon—and the remnant of the population—were taken into exile by Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards.

But some of the poorest in the land were left by the chief of the guards, to be vinedressers and field hands.

#### Jeremiah 29:5-7

Thus, said GOD of Hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole community that I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their fruit.

You should take wives and beget sons and daughters; and you should take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters. Multiply there, do not decrease.

And seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to GOD in its behalf; for in its prosperity, you shall prosper.

#### Jeremiah 44:15-18, 20-23

Thereupon they answered Jeremiah—all the men who knew that their wives made offerings to other gods; all the women present, a large gathering; and all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt:

“We will not listen to you in the matter about which you spoke to us in the name of GOD.

On the contrary, we will do everything that we have vowed—to make offerings to the Queen of Heaven and to pour libations to her, as we used to do, we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty to eat, we were well-off, and suffered no misfortune.

But ever since we stopped making offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pouring libations to her, we have lacked everything, and we have been consumed by the sword and by famine.

Jeremiah replied to all the people, men and women—all the people who argued with him. He said, “Indeed, the offerings you presented in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem—you, your ancestors, your kings, your officials, and the people of the land—were remembered by GOD and brought to mind!

When GOD could no longer bear your evil practices and the abominations you committed, your land became a desolate ruin and a curse, without inhabitant, as is still the case.

Because you burned incense and sinned against GOD and did not obey GOD—whose Teaching, whose laws, and whose exhortations you did not follow—therefore this disaster has befallen you, as is still the case.”

#### Jeremiah 34:1-3,17-22

The word that came to Jeremiah from GOD, when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth and all the peoples under his sway, were waging war against Jerusalem and all its towns:



Thus said the ETERNAL, the God of Israel: Go speak to King Zedekiah of Judah, and say to him: “Thus said GOD: I am going to deliver this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it by fire.

And you will not escape from him; you will be captured and handed over to him. And you will see the king of Babylon face to face and speak to him in person; and you will be brought to Babylon.

Assuredly, thus said GOD: You would not obey Me and proclaim a release, each to your kin and neighbor. Lo! I proclaim your release—declares GOD—to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine; and I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

I will make the parties who violated My covenant, who did not fulfill the terms of the covenant that they made before Me, [like] the calf that they cut in two so as to pass between the halves: The officers of Judah and Jerusalem, the officials, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the halves of the calf shall be handed over to their enemies, to those who seek to kill them. Their carcasses shall become food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. I will hand over King Zedekiah of Judah and his officers to their enemies, who seek to kill them—to the army of the king of Babylon that has withdrawn from you.

I hereby give the command—declares GOD—by which I will bring them back against this city. They shall attack it and capture it, and burn it down. I will make the towns of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.

### Ezekiel 10:18-19

Then the Presence of GOD left the platform of the House and stopped above the cherubs.

And I saw the cherubs lift their wings and rise from the earth, with the wheels beside them as they departed; and they stopped at the entrance of the eastern gate of the House of GOD, with the Presence of the God of Israel above them.

### Ezekiel 11:22-25

Then the cherubs, with the wheels beside them, lifted their wings, while the Presence of the God of Israel rested above them.

The Presence of GOD ascended from the midst of the city and stood on the hill east of the city. A spirit carried me away and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God to the exile community in Chaldea. Then the vision that I had seen left me, and I told the exiles all the things that GOD had shown me.

### Ezekiel 11:16-21

Say then: Thus said the Sovereign 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 Sovereign 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.

And they shall return there, and do away with all its detestable things and all its abominations.



I will give them one heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh, that they may follow My laws and faithfully observe My rules. Then they shall be My people and I will be their God.

But as for them whose heart is set upon their detestable things and their abominations, I will repay them for their conduct—declares the Sovereign GOD.”

Ezekiel 18:1-4

The word of GOD came to me: What do you mean by quoting this proverb upon the soil of Israel, “Parents eat sour grapes and their children’s teeth are blunted”?

As I live—declares the Sovereign GOD—this proverb shall no longer be current among you in Israel.

Consider, all lives are Mine; the life of the parent and the life of the child are both Mine. Only the person who sins shall die.

Isaiah 40:1, 11

Comfort, oh comfort My people,  
Says your God.

Like a shepherd who pastures the flock,  
[God] gathers up the lambs  
And carries them in the divine bosom,  
While gently driving the mother sheep.

Isaiah 41:8-14

But you, Israel, My servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
—Seed of Abraham My friend

You whom I drew from the ends of the earth  
And called from its far corners,  
To whom I said: You are My servant;  
I chose you, I have not rejected you—

Fear not, for I am with you,  
Be not frightened, for I am your God;  
I strengthen you and I help you,  
I uphold you with My victorious right hand.

Ezra 1:1-6



In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled, the LORD roused the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to issue a proclamation throughout his realm by word of mouth and in writing as follows:

“Thus said King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD God of Heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has charged me with building Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Anyone of you of all His people—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem that is in Judah and build the House of the LORD God of Israel, the God that is in Jerusalem; and all who stay behind, wherever he may be living, let the people of his place assist him with silver, gold, goods, and livestock, besides the freewill offering to the House of God that is in Jerusalem.”

So, the chiefs of the clans of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, all whose spirit had been roused by God, got ready to go up to build the House of the LORD that is in Jerusalem. All their neighbors supported them with silver vessels, with gold, with goods, with livestock, and with precious objects, besides what had been given as a freewill offering.

#### Ezra 7:6, 10

Ezra came up from Babylon, a scribe expert in the Teaching of Moses which the LORD God of Israel had given, whose request the king had granted in its entirety, thanks to the benevolence of the LORD toward him.

For Ezra had dedicated himself to study the Teaching of the LORD so as to observe it, and to teach laws and rules to Israel.

#### Nehemiah 8:1-12

The entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the LORD had charged Israel. On the first day of the seventh month, Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation, men and women and all who could listen with understanding.

He read from it, facing the square before the Water Gate, from the first light until midday, to the men and the women and those who could understand; the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching.

Ezra the scribe stood upon a wooden tower made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaijah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah at his right, and at his left Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, Meshullam.

Ezra opened the scroll in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; as he opened it, all the people stood up.

Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” with hands upraised. Then they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD with their faces to the ground. Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites explained the Teaching to the people, while the people stood in their places.

They read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading.

#### Nehemiah 9:32-34



“And now, our God, great, mighty, and awesome God, who stays faithful to His covenant, do not treat lightly all the suffering that has overtaken us—our kings, our officers, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all Your people—from the time of the Assyrian kings to this day. Surely You are in the right with respect to all that has come upon us, for You have acted faithfully, and we have been wicked.

Our kings, officers, priests, and fathers did not follow Your Teaching, and did not listen to Your commandments or to the warnings that You gave them.

#### Nehemiah 13:15-18

At that time, I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the sabbath, and others bringing heaps of grain and loading them onto asses, also wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of goods, and bringing them into Jerusalem on the sabbath. I admonished them there and then for selling provisions. Tyrians who lived there brought fish and all sorts of wares and sold them on the sabbath to the Judahites in Jerusalem.

I censured the nobles of Judah, saying to them, “What evil thing is this that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day! This is just what your ancestors did, and for it God brought all this misfortune on this city; and now you give cause for further wrath against Israel by profaning the sabbath!”

#### Ezra 9:1-3

When this was over, the officers approached me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land whose abhorrent practices are like those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. :

They have taken their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed has become intermingled with the peoples of the land; and it is the officers and prefects who have taken the lead in this trespass.” When I heard this, I rent my garment and robe, I tore hair out of my head and beard, and I sat desolate.

#### Ezra 9:10-12

“Now, what can we say in the face of this, O our God, for we have forsaken Your commandments, which You gave us through Your servants the prophets when You said, ‘The land that you are about to possess is a land unclean through the uncleanness of the peoples of the land, through their abhorrent practices with which they, in their impurity, have filled it from one end to the other.

Now then, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or let their daughters marry your sons; do nothing for their well-being or advantage, then you will be strong and enjoy the bounty of the land and bequeath it to your children forever.’