

1 HOPE FOR A COMING MESSIAH

THE SEED in the tent of Y'hoyakhin
Part 6

2 WHO IS Y'HOYAKHIN ?

- ❑ Y'hoyakhin (Jeconiah) יְכִנְיָה meaning "Yah has established, also known as Coniah and as Jehoiachin.
- ❑ He was a king of Judah who was dethroned by the King of Babylon in the 6th century BC and was taken into captivity. He was the son and successor of King Y'hoyakim.
- ❑ Records of 's Y'hoyakhin's existence have been found in Iraq, such as the Y'hoyakhin's Rations tablets. These tablets were excavated near the Ishtar Gate in Babylon and have been dated to c. 592 BC. Written in cuneiform, they mention Jeconiah ("Ia-'-ú-kinu") and his five sons as recipients of food rations.

3 WHO IS Y'HOYAKHIN ?

The unedited full-text of the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia

- King of Judah; son and successor of Y'hoyakhin (II Kings xxiv. 6); reigned a little over three months. He was scarcely on the throne when Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Unable to resist, he soon surrendered with the queen-mother Nehushta, the servants, captains, and officers. With these he was sent captive to Babylon. The treasures of the palace and the sacred vessels of the Temple were also carried away. For thirty-six years Y'hoyakhin remained in prison at Babylon, his throne having been given by Nebuchadnezzar to Mattaniah (son of Yosiah), whose name was changed to "Zedekiah" (*ib.* xxiv. 11-17; II Chron. xxxvi. 9-10; Jer. xxxvii. 1). When Nebuchadnezzar died, his son Evil-merodach released Y'hoyakhin and gave him an honorable seat at his own table (II Kings xxv. 27-30; Jer. lii. 31-34).

12 

According to the genealogy in Matthew 1:12, Yeshua is a descendant of Y'hoyakhin. But Y'hoyakhin was cursed in Jeremiah 22:24 and 22:30:

- "As I live," says ADONAI, "even if KoniYahu the son of Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off."
- This what ADONAI says: "List this man as childless; he is a lifetime failure — none of his offspring will succeed, none will sit on David's throne or rule again in Y'hudah."
- Since no descendant of Y'hoyakhin could ever sit on the throne, if Yeshua is a descendant of this cursed king, he is disqualified from being the Messiah.

13 

If true, then what is Y'hoyakhin doing in Yeshua's genealogy in Matthew's gospel? And how can Yeshua qualify to be the Messiah?

- ❑ First of all, we have to wonder why Matthew would ever have included Y'hoyakhin among the ancestors of Yeshua if this so obviously disqualified him from being the Messiah. In fact, the Scripture shows that the curse was only short-term, if not altogether reversed by God.

There are three parts to the curse on Y'hoyakhin (who is also called Coniah):

1. He would be childless (this is how the Hebrew text literally reads)
2. He would not prosper in his lifetime

3. None of his descendants would rule in Judah

14 

The Scripture shows that in fact none of these took place.

1. Y'hoyakhin in fact had children. The descendants of Y'hoyakhin the captive: Shealtiel his son, Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama and Nedabiah – 1 chronicles 3:17-18

2. He did prosper in his day. In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Y'hoyakhin king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Y'hoyakhin from prison on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. 2 Kings 25:27-28

15 

3. His grandson Zerubbabel prospered and ruled.

- "'On that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,' declares the LORD, 'and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the LORD Almighty." Haggai 2:23
- Though Zerubbabel did not sit on the throne as king, the fact that Haggai 2:23 uses the same terminology as Jeremiah 22:24 "*even if Koniyahu the son of Y'hoyakim king of Y'hudah were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off.*" shows that Haggai intended to indicate a reversal of the curse.

16 

- We find rabbinic sources which also agree that God reversed the curse on Y'hoyakhin, which they attribute to repentance on Y'hoyakhin's part. We even find the idea that the Messiah will descend from Y'hoyakhin – exactly the opposite of what some say is impossible! Some of these sources are as follows:
- Y'hoyakhin's sad experiences changed his nature entirely, and as he repented of the sins which he had committed as king he was pardoned by God, who revoked the decree to the effect that none of his descendants should ever become king (Jer. xxii. 30; Pesik., ed. Buber, xxv. 163a, b); he even became the ancestor of the Messiah (Tan., Toledot, 20 [ed. Buber, i. 140]).
- It was especially his firmness in fulfilling the Torah that restored him to God's favor. He was kept by Nebuchadnezzar in solitary confinement, and as he was therefore separated from his wife, the Sanhedrin, which had been expelled with him to Babylon, feared that at the death of this queen the house of David would become extinct.

17 

RABBINIC SOURCES: THE UNEDITED FULL-TEXT OF THE 1906 JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA

- As he then manifested great self-control and obedience to the Torah, God forgave him his sins (Lev. R. xix., end). Y'hoyakhin lived to see the death of his conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, which brought him liberty; for within two days of his father's death Evil-merodach opened the prison in which Y'hoyakhin had languished for so many years.

Sanhedrin 37b-38a

- R. Johanan said: Exile atones for everything, for it is written, *Thus saith the Lord, write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days, for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah.* Whereas after he [the king] was exiled, it is written, *And the sons of Y'hoyakhin, — the same is Assir — Shealtiel his son etc.*(1) [He was called] *Assir*, because his mother conceived him in prison. *Shealtiel*, because God did not plant him in the way that others are planted. We know by tradition that a woman cannot conceive in a standing position. [yet she] did conceive standing. Another interpretation : *Shealtiel*, because God obtained [of the Heavenly court] absolution from His oath.(2)

18 

Pesikta de-Rab Kahana (5th c.)

- I accepted the repentance of Y'hoyakhin: shall I not accept your repentance? A cruel decree had been imposed upon Y'hoyakhin: Scripture says, *This man Coniah is a despised, shattered image* (Jer. 22:28)....R.Meir's statement: The Holy One swore that He would raise up no king out of Y'hoyakhin king of Judah. Thus Scripture: *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim . . . were the signet on a hand, yet by My right, I would pluck thee hence* (Jer. 22:24), words by which God was saying, explained R. Hanina bar R. Isaac, "Beginning with thee, Y'hoyakhin, I pluck out the kingship of the house of David." It is to be noted, however, that the Hebrew for "pluck thee" is not as one would expect *'tkk*, but the fuller and less usual *'tknk*, which may also be rendered "mend thee"—that is, mend thee by thy repentance. Thus in the very place, [the kingship], whence Y'hoyakhin was plucked, amends would be made to him: [his line would be renewed].
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19 **YALE JUDAICA EDITION TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM G. BRAUDE AND ISRAEL J. KAPSTEIN (PHILADELPHIA: JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY OF AMERICA, 1975), PP. 376-77**

- Aha bar Abun bar Benjamin, citing R. Abba bar R. Papi, said..... And the proof that a man's repentance led God to set aside a decree He issued in the verse *Thus saith the Lord: Write ye this man childless, etc.* (Jer. 22:30)? The proof is in the verse where Scripture says, *The sons of Jeconiah — the same is Asir — Shealtiel his son, etc.* (1 Chron. 3:17). R. Tanhum bar Jeremiah said: Jeconiah was called *Asir*, "one imprisoned," because he had been in prison (*'asurim*); and his sons called "Shealtiel" because he was like a sapling, newly set out (*hustelah*), through whom David's line would be continued.
- Tanhuma said: Jeconiah was called *Asir*, "imprisoned," because God imprisoned Himself by His oath in regard to him; and Jeconiah's son was called Shealtiel, "God consulted," because God consulted the heavenly court, and they released Him from His oath.

20 

Leviticus Rabbah XIX:6 (5th-6th c.)

- The Holy One, blessed be He, then said: *In Jerusalem you did not observe the*

precept relating to issues, but now you are fulfilling it,' as it is said, As for you also, because of the blood of thy covenant I send forth your prisoners out of the pit (Zech. IX, 11) [which means], You have remembered the blood at Sinai, and for this do 'I send forth your prisoners'. R. Shabbethai said: He [Jeconiah] did not move before the Holy One, blessed be He, pardoned him all his sins. Referring to this occasion Scripture has said: You are all fair, my love, and there is no blemish in you (S.S. IV, 7). A Heavenly Voice went forth and said to them: 'Return, you backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings' (Jer. III, 22).
 —Soncino Midrash Rabbah vol. 4, p. 249

21 

Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 47 (6th-7th c.)

- R. Joshua ben Levi, however, argued as follows: Repentance sets aside the entire decree, and prayer half the decree. ... But as soon as he avowed penitence, the Holy One, blessed be He, set aside the decree, as is shown by Scripture's reference to *The sons of Jeconiah — the same is Assir — Shealtiel his son*, etc. And Scripture says further: *In that day . . . will I take thee, O Zerubbabel . . . the son of Shealtiel . . . and will make thee as a signet*. Behold, then how penitence can set aside the entire decree!

Numbers Rabbah XX:20 (date uncertain; 9th c.?)

- *...no sooner had they repented, than the danger was averted, And the Lord repented of the evil (ib. XXXII, 14). And so in many places. For example, He said about Jeconiah: For no man of his seed shall prosper (Jer. XXII, 30) and it says. . In that day, said the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, said the Lord, and will make you as a signet (Hag. II, 22 f.). Thus was annulled that which He had said to his forefather, viz. As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim King of Judah were the signet upon My right hand, yet I would pluck thee thence* —Soncino Midrash Rabbah vol 6, pp. 812-13

22 

—A. J. ROSENBERG, JEREMIAH: A NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION (NEW YORK: JUDAICA PRESS, 1985), VOL. 1 P. 185. "REDAK" IS AN ACRONYM FOR RABBI DAVID KIMCHI (13TH C.), WHOSE OPINION ROSENBERG CITES.

Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg, on Jeremiah 22:20 (20th c.)

- In this, too, no man of his seed shall prosper, namely that no one will occupy the throne of David nor rule in Judah. Although we find that Zerubbabel, his great grandson, did rule over Judah upon the return of the exiles, the Rabbis (*Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* p. 163a) state that this was because Jehoiachin repented while in prison. They state further: Repentance is great, for it nullifies a person's sentence, as it is stated: 'Inscribe this man childless.' But since he repented, his sentence was revoked and turned to the good, and he said to him, "I will take you, Zerubbabel, and I will make you a signet" (Haggai 2:23). They state further: Said Rabbi Johanan: Exile expiates all sins, as it is said: "Inscribe this man childless," and after he was exiled, it is written: '(1 Chron. 3:17 And the sons of Jeconiah, Assir, Shealtiel his son'—[Redak].

23 

2. Sources stating that the Messiah will descend from Jeconiah.
 Tanhuma Genesis, Toledot (8th-9th c.)

- Scripture alludes here to the verse *Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain* (Zech 4:7). This verse refers to the Messiah, the descendant of David. . . .From whom will the Messiah descend? From Zerubbabel.
- –Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu, translated by Samuel A. Berman (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1996), p. 182.

24 

Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg on Jeremiah 22:24 (20th c.)

- *Malbim* calls to our attention that in the prophecy of Haggai (2:23), God says, “On that day I will take you, Zerubbabel, and I will make you like a signet,” for the King Messiah will be like a signet ring on God’s right hand, so to speak. Just as the name of the owner of the ring is engraved on his signet ring, through which he makes himself known, so will God’s name be known in the world through the King Messiah, through whom His miracles will be known. He says here that, though, in the future, Coniah will be the signet on My right hand, for the Messiah will spring from his seed, now I will remove him from there.
- –*Ibid.*, p. 183. *Malbim* is an acronym for Meir Loeb ben Jehiel Michale, a 19th c. rabbi and commentator. 22:24.

25 

Archeological findings

- During his excavation of Babylon in 1899–1917, Robert Koldewey discovered a royal archive room of King Nebuchadnezzar near the Ishtar Gate. It contained tablets dating to 595–570 BC. Four of these tablets list rations of oil and barley given to various individuals—including the deposed King Y’hoyakhin—by Nebuchadnezzar from the royal storehouses, dated five years after Y’hoyakhin was taken captive.
 - 1. One tablet reads: 10 (sila of oil) to the king of Judah, Yaukin; 2 1/2 sila (oil) to the offspring of Judah’s king; 4 sila to eight
 - 2. Another tablet read: 10 sila to Ia-ku-u-ki-nu, the son of Judah’s king[1]; 2 1/2 sila for the five sons of the Judean king.
- The Babylonian Chronicles are currently housed in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin.

29 

CONCLUSION:

It is fair, from all the evidence gathered here, that whatever the denunciation against Y’hoyakhin, it was pardoned by God, even as the king of Babylon pardoned Y’hoyakhin and released him from prison: therefore the Messiah would not be prevented genealogically from being of the seed of David, Solomon and Hezekiah through Y’hoyakhin to whom the Messianic promises were given.

Though some skeptics may not buy this, there is another position by some intermarriage within the Davidic family – Zerubabel, the grandson of Y’hoyakhinm, through Nathan, the son of David, was Yeshua’s ancestor on his mother, Miriam’s (Mary) side. Hence, even should Y’hoyakhin present a stumbling stone to the Jewish people, still Yeshua traces his ancestry back through David on his mother’s side.