

"Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land" (Jer. 32:15)



## Judean Kings

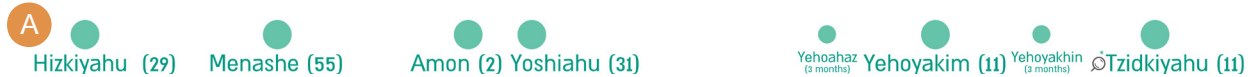
Study the chart and answer the following questions:

1 **Q** How many years transpired between the destruction of Samaria and the destruction of the Temple?

**A** 135 years from the destruction of Samaria in -721 to the destruction of the Temple in -586.



2 **Q** How long did Hizkiyahu, Menashe, and Yoshiyahu reign over Yehuda? How long were the reigns of the final kings of Yehuda – Yehoahaz, Yehoyakim, Yehoyakhin, and Tzidkiyahu?



3 **Q** What might the difference in these spans teach us?

**A** Hizkiyahu 29 + Menashe 55 + Yoshiyahu 31 = 115 years of stability, vs. Yehoahaz 3 months + Yehoyakim 11 + Yehoyakhin 3 months + Tzidkiyahu 11 = 22-23 years. Hizkiyahu, Menashe, and Yoshiyahu each reigned over Yehuda for many years and were active both on the political and religious planes. Yehuda's final kings – Yehoahaz, Yehoyakim, Yehoyakhin and Tzidkiyahu – reigned for only a short period.

4 **Q** The prophets compared the destruction of Yehuda with the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel (Jer. 3:6-11; Ez. 16:46). What is the connection between the behavior of the two kingdoms?

**A** Jer. 11-3:6

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵלַי, בְּיָמַי יָאֲשִׁיחַו הַמְּלָךְ, הַרְאִיתִי, אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂתָּה מְשֻׁבָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל; הַלֵּכָה הִיא עַל כָּל הַר גְּבוּהָ, וְאֶל תַּחַת כָּל עֵץ רֹעֵנָה וַתִּזְדַּנֵּי שָׁם.

6 And the LORD said unto me in the days of Josiah the king: 'Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel did? she went up upon every high mountain and under every leafy tree, and there played the harlot.

ז וְאָמַר, אַחֲרַי עָשׂוּתָה אֶת כָּל אֵלֶּה אֵלַי תָּשׁוּב וְלֹא שָׁבָה; וְתִרְאֶה (וְתִרְאֶה) בְּגִדְדָה אַחֲזָתָהּ, יְהוּדָה.

7 And I said: After she hath done all these things, she will return unto me; but she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

ח וַיִּרְאֵה, כִּי עַל כָּל אֲדוֹת אֲשֶׁר נֶאֱכָפָה מְשֻׁבָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל, שָׁלַחְתִּיהָ, וְאָתַן אֶת סִפְר כְּרִיתֶיהָ אֵלֶיהָ; וְלֹא יָרְאָה בְּגִדְדָה יְהוּדָה, אַחֲזָתָהּ וַתִּלְךְ, וַתִּזְדַּן גַּם הִיא.

8 And I saw, when, forasmuch as backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a bill of divorcement, that yet treacherous Judah her sister feared not; but she also went and played the harlot;

9 and it came to pass through the lightness of her harlotry, that the land was polluted, and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks;

10 and yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not returned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD-- {S}

11 even the LORD said unto me--backsliding Israel hath proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

Jer. 11-3:6

And thine elder **sister** is Samaria, that dwelleth 46 at thy left hand, she and her daughters; and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters

Yirmiyahu and Yehezkel both mention the sins of "the two sisters," referring to Israel (Samaria) and Yehuda, and expressing frustration at the fact that Yehuda did not learn the lessons of the disastrous results of the behavior of her "sister" Samaria.

The Kingdom of Yehuda did not learn from the fate of the Kingdom of Israel, and was destroyed for the same sins.



### Dominating Empires

What role did dominating empires play in the significant events of the kingdoms of Yehuda and Israel? Finds answers to the following questions in the diagram:

5 **Q** Who destroyed the Kingdom of Israel?

**A** Shalmanesar, King of Assyria



6 **Q** How did Yishayahu relate to the role of the Assyrian empire in these events (Is. 10:5)?

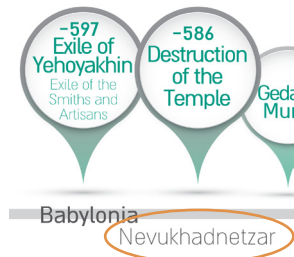
**A** הוּי אַשּׁוּר, שִׁבְט אֲפִי; וּמִטָּה-הוּא בְיָדָם, זַעֲמִי

O Asshur, the rod of Mine anger, in whose hand as a staff is Mine indignation!

The prophet states that the disasters which befell the Kingdom of Israel are God's decree, and views Assyria as a messenger and deliverer ("rod") of God's wrath.

7 **Q** Who destroyed the Kingdom of Yehuda? (II Kings 25; Jer. 52)

**A** Nevuhadnetzar King of Babylonia. Read about the destruction of the Temple in II Kings 25 and Jer. 52



8 **Q** Who enabled the Return to Zion and restoration of the Temple?

**A** Cyrus King of Persia, who decreed that the exiles may return to their land and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Read Ezra chapter 1

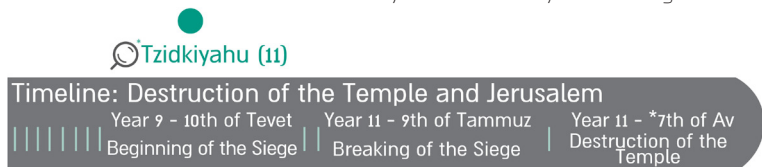


**Special Dates in the Final Days of Yehuda**

Note the bottom of the chart, which focuses on Tzidkiyahu, and find answers to the following questions:

9 **Q** How much time transpired from the start of the siege on Jerusalem, on the 10th of Tevet, until the destruction of the Temple in the month of Av?

**A** Two years and seven months, from the 10th of Tevet in the ninth year of Tzidkiyahu's reign, to the 7th of Av in the eleventh year of Tzidkiyahu's reign.



10 **Q** On what date was the Temple destroyed according to II Kings 25? What was the date according to Jeremiah 52?

**A** According to II Kings 25:8-9, the Temple was burned on the 7th of Av, while according to Jer. 52:12 the Temple was destroyed on the 10th of Av. Radak explains (according to Seder Olam Rabbah) that the destruction began on the 7th but the fire continued burning until the 10th.



**Destruction to Restoration**

11 **Q** Study the final verses of II Kings, Jeremiah, and II Chronicles. What do they have in common? In what way do the final verses in each chapter differ from the atmosphere described earlier in each of the chapters?

**A** The books of Kings and Jeremiah end with Yehoyakhin's release from prison and elevation in the king's court; the book of Chronicles ends with the Cyrus Declaration. These events occurred long after the destruction, as demonstrated in the timeline chart.

- 12 **Q** What is the purpose of the author's decision to end with these descriptions?
- A** The prophets strived to end difficult books with a hopeful outlook.
- 13 **Q** Read the final verses of the Book of Eikha (Lamentations). How does the book end? How does the public reading on Tisha B'Av end? Why?
- A** The final verse of Eikha (5:22) reads:
- כב 22 Thou canst not have utterly rejected us, and  
 קְצַפְתָּ עָלֵינוּ עַד-מְאֹד. be exceeding wrath against us!
- To prevent ending on a negative note and to create some hope, it is customary to end the traditional reading of Eikha on Tisha B'Av with the previous verse:
- כא 21 Turn Thou us unto Thee, O LORD, and we shall  
 הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנָשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ מִיָּמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם. be turned; renew our days as of old.
- 14 **Q** Read the first verse in the Book of Ezra, and compare to II Chronicles 36:20-21. Which prophet is referenced in Ezra? In which context?
- A** The verse is referencing Yirmiyahu. After 70 years of exile in Babylonia, Cyrus declares that the Jews may return to their land and rebuild their Temple. The Second Temple was inaugurated 70 years after the destruction of the First Temple.
- 15 **Q** Read the first verse of the Book of Ezra. In what way does Cyrus, King of Persia, dramatically change the aggressive policy enacted by his predecessors? How does his action affect the title he is given by Yishayahu in Is. 45:1?
- A** Cyrus enables exiled nations to return to their homelands, and allows the Jews to rebuild their destroyed Temple. Yishayahu refers to Cyrus as "God's anointed."
- 16 **Q** What event in Jewish history parallels the movement from destruction to restoration described from the destruction of the First Temple to the rebuilding of the Second Temple?
- A** Following 2000 years of exile, the Jewish people have returned to their land. Just like the return to Israel after the 70 year exile was instigated by the Cyrus Declaration, so too the 1917 Balfour Declaration was instrumental in the return to Israel in modern times.

Creating a literary movement from destruction to restoration is characteristic of many biblical texts. This perspective strives to end the story on a positive note, a custom which is upheld in the traditional reading of Eikha (Lamentations), in which a positive and hopeful verse is repeated at the end of the reading. The concept of ending a story with a positive outlook is particularly significant in our time, in the generation of the modern returnees to Zion, which turns to the Tanakh for inspiration in light of the similarities to the biblical Return to Zion.