

In the Days of King Yoshiyah

A story told by Miriam, wife of Racham

This was a time of great evil in Israel. It was such a bad time that rebellion was rampant. Even the King's servants reasoned that they could do better than he (for he was evil) and they murdered him in his own house. But the people were outraged because they knew that even if there was bad authority, it was better than no authority. So they found and killed all the king's murderer's and removed the rebellion from the land and made his son king in his place.

Now his son was just a boy, only eight years old. He hadn't known his abba much. He had always been gone doing his own selfish pleasures. But he hadn't been alone. He had been by his imma's side. We know that because, " a child left to himself brings shame to his imma." But this young man brought honor to his imma so he must have stayed by her side. Because of that he learned wisdom.

Her name was Yedidah, which means dove. Often she would think, " Oh that I had wings like a dove! I would fly , I would fly away to refuge." Because it hurt her so much to be around and in the midst of all the evil in the land. She did find one place of refuge, though, and that was in the temple.

There was someone else there, Hilkiyah. He was the High Priest, who had the same heart as her. He longed for the people to repent and turn back to their first love for our Father. Somehow he persevered through this hard time because he had hope- a hope that never disappointed him. And he talked about his hope. He passed it on to others, like Yedidah and his wife and children. They encouraged each other in this dark time so the little flicker of hope they had didn't go out. They fanned the flame in their hearts to keep it going.

And so, even though it was such an awful time, (people were burning up their little babies in the fire and listening to sorcerers and worshipping evil spirits) even though it was like this, our Father could come and speak to His people because there were a few who were loyal to Him and

who were willing to suffer to hear Him and please Him. They lived to please Him. They would have rather died than displease Him.

So Yedidah and others hung on to their hope. She spoke often of it to her little son Yoshiyah. She told him it didn't matter that he didn't have an earthly father. She told him, "Your father is David. You're one of his sons. You have the same heart that he did. Our God promised to raise up his descendants and establish His kingdom. He said it would endure forever. You are a part of this. You can live to see it happen."

She sang him many of David's songs, like "The eternal God is my light, my deliverance and my salvation..." and "If your sons will keep my covenant and my words which I will teach. Then their sons shall sit upon my throne and reign with me forever."

And Yoshiyah took on his imma's heart and his abba, David's heart. It was even written of him, "That he did what was right in the sight of ha-Shem and walked in the ways of his abba David and did not turn to the right or to the left."

When he was 16 years old he really began to seek the God of his father David. He wanted to know Him for himself, he yearned to know Him. He knew that if he sought Him with all his heart then he could find Him. Because Yoshiyah knew He was a God who hides Himself, He knew that He only revealed Himself to those who were humble and contrite of heart.

He started to see the things that kept him from our Father. He began to see that there was something in him that wanted to do his own desires, to make plans and think about things that pleased and soothed his own flesh. It was lawlessness. Yoshiyah began to hate this in himself. He cried out to be saved from lawlessness and his own desires. He knew it would kill him. It had killed his abba. He knew the truth, that it was in him too.

Our Abba heard his cries. He saw that Yoshiyah loved the truth and righteousness. It wasn't just in his mind, but deep in his heart. And so our Father began to show him the evil around him, too. Now that he was getting to be older, and not a youth anymore, 20 years old, he began cleansing the land.

He tore down the high places and the idols. He killed the priests who hated ha-Shem and defied his Name and burned their bones on their own altars. He broke the idols to powder and scattered the dust on their graves.

Seeing this young man grow up to love ha-Shem with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength really encouraged Hilkiyah. He had been getting a little older, (maybe age 40 or so), but he had just had a son himself. He was born when Yoshiyah was a little boy, maybe around 3 years old, just before he was made king. Even back then, Hilkiyah had had hope that His God was going to save them. They were so oppressed by the evil one. Surely His hands were stronger than the evil ones. They needed a Savior so badly.

Hilkiyah had named his son, in this troubled time, "exalted of Yah" or Jeremiah because he knew deep in his heart that this yoke of oppression was their discipline for all their sin and unfaithfulness. But he knew that if they held out their hands and received their spanking right into their hearts, then it would humble them and then our God could raise them up. He knew that our Father disciplined His sons. It encouraged him so much to know he was a son and that his abba's hand was in his life.

He talked to Jeremiah about this, for it was much on his heart. He also talked to him about the purpose of discipline. How it builds our character and helps us to endure harder times in the future. How it cleanses us from sin and purifies us to be vessels our God can use. How he longed that our Father would have a voice in the land, speaking His word to the people. There hadn't been a voice, and they had even lost the law on the land. Isaiah the prophet had just died a little while before when Manasseh was king. No one else had been raised up to speak for our God. It was a dark, quiet time. But Hilkiyah spoke to Jeremiah of his hope that once again our Father's voice could be heard in the land. He told him that's what kept him going to persevere and receive his purification. He wanted to be someone our Father could use. He lived to please our Father. He wanted Jeremiah to be the same way.

He talked to him about the great prophet Moses, what a worthy vessel he was! Our God gave him His laws (which revealed his heart towards man.) But he warned Jeremiah about

getting indignant. That had kept Moses from the kingdom. He told him we must suffer to the point of death our own indignation, our anger. When we see something wrong, when we see our brother in sin, we can't speak to them as if they aren't our brother or as if we are better than them. We can't be indignant like that. Our God can't use us if we are.

Hilkiah suffered to not be like that. He was a righteous man, but he didn't come down hard on the people, making them feel like dirt. He came under his brothers and spoke things to build them up and encourage them to love ha-Shem. He taught Jeremiah to be the same way. It was so hard, thought Jeremiah. How he suffered to be like this. Sometimes he thought it was too hard. Sometimes he wished he'd never been born. He even said, "Woe to my imma that you gave birth to me as a man of strife and contention to all the land."

But Jeremiah was an overcomer. He didn't give up. He wasn't afraid to suffer. He'd grown up disciplined. It gave him courage to press on. And so because he persevered, because he kept receiving his father's hand in his life to purify him, something wonderful happened. When Jeremiah was just a youth, maybe 16 or maybe 19 years old, our Father came to him, and spoke deep in his heart. He told Jeremiah that he knew him, he knew his heart, that before he was born, He had planned his life and set him apart for a holy purpose, to be his mouthpiece, to speak for him on the earth. Jeremiah said, "Alas, I am just a youth. I don't even know how to speak."

But our God said, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you to save you. Behold, I have put my words in your mouth."

Jeremiah was excited! This was just one year after King Yoshiyah had started to tear down the high places. I think Jeremiah and Yoshiyah must have talked some and gotten to be friends. They were only about 3 years apart in age. They had the same heart. They loved our God with all their heart and all their soul and they were giving all their strength to Him. Their zeal and passion for our Father's house consumed them.

Yoshiyah was zealous to purge the land of all it's idolatry. He worked hard at it for 6 years. Then he turned his attention to the temple. He saw that the house of God was in ruins. He got his officials to collect the money that the people had been collecting from all over Israel.

They brought the money in to Hilkiah, the high priest. And he distributed it to the carpenters and builders to do the work. While they were bringing him the money, an amazing thing happened. Hilkiah found the Book of the Law. It had been lost for at least 50 years! (Because while everyone was doing evil they hadn't paid any attention to it and it had been misplaced and forgotten.)

Everyone was so excited! It meant Our God was with them. He was entrusting them with His Law. He was speaking to them again! They had been receiving their discipline and he was raising them up! They were so happy. They sent the Law to King Yoshiyah and right away he read it and, Oh; He was so sad! He ripped his clothes. They had been trying so hard to seek our Father and obey Him. For 6 years they had been destroying the high places and now they were giving all their strength to raising up the temple, but all this time they had been so disobedient to the law. What were they to do? They didn't know what to do! The King said, "Go and inquire of our God what we should do."

So Hilkiah and those who were there when the king said that, thought, "Let's go ask Huldah! She'll know what to do!" Huldah was a prophetess. She knew our Father's heart. So if you asked her something she could tell you what He thought about it. That was because she was devoted to prayer. That's how she knew our Father's heart because she was always talking to Him in her prayer closet and asking Him what he thought of things.

And this is what she told them: "Tell the King of Judah, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before Me and cried and tore your clothes, truly I have heard you. And you shall live your life and go down to the grave in peace and so your eyes shall not see the evil which I shall bring on this place and its inhabitants."

Then King Yoshiyah gathered the people in Jerusalem and Benjamin. He stood before them and made a covenant before ha-Shem to walk in His ways, keeping His commandments and laws with all his heart and soul- to keep the covenant in the Book of the Law. And he made everyone there stand with him. And throughout his life they didn't turn from following Him and Yoshiyah continued to remove the abominations from the land.

Now Jeremiah was about 23 years old when they found the Book of the Law. He wrote down that when the words were found, he ate them, he devoured them, and they became a joy and the delight of his heart. That's because he delighted in the fear of YHWH, and so He gave him the oil of gladness and inner joy.

Jeremiah trusted YHWH in his heart. Sometimes his mind had a hard time trusting Him though, because outward situations were contrary (confusing to him). Sometimes it seemed to him that the more he thirsted for God, the more he sought Him, the further away he seemed. It was like He was to him a sneaky, treacherous brook that dried up when he needed Him the most. But this is exactly how our Father treats those who love Him the most, who cry out to Him the most. It's a high calling to be God's mouthpiece- to speak for Him. Those like Jeremiah will suffer greatly, they will be more greatly tested than anyone besides Yahshua. They must suffer in their flesh to come to an end of sin. Because if you have sin in you, then you are not a clean worthy vessel our Father can speak through. His precious words can't come from what's vile and filthy. We must suffer to extract the precious from the vile, to remove the precious things from deep within our hearts from what's corrupt and dirty in our flesh. Then we can speak His words. Everyone who doesn't do this is a false prophet. Jeremiah was a true prophet of Yah. He labored to get out what was in him. He knew our Father had put it there. Sometimes the only way he could get it out and release his passions was to sing.

He had a lot in him. The song we sing, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," came from Jeremiah. He was in love with our God and he wanted everyone else to love Him also. He was faithful to tell the people how much our Father cared for them and desired them. How He longed to satisfy the weary ones and refresh those who were suffering. How He wanted to heal them.

But sadly enough, not everyone listened to Jeremiah. He was thankful for those who did, like Yoshiyah. He was Jeremiah's dear friend. When Yoshiyah died, he cried and cried. That didn't fully release the grief him though, so he wrote a lament. That's a special kind of song — like a poem and kind of like a song. It enabled him to totally get out what was in him.

As Jeremiah grew older the people's hearts grew even harder and he had to speak sternly to them. Over the years he had learned to judge himself and not get angry at the people when they were disobedient. Because of that our Father could speak all of His word to His people, even when He was indignant over their evil ways. Jeremiah didn't care about himself anymore — what happened to him. He was down in a pit once, up to his knees in mud and filth and he was just totally trusting our Father. He wasn't mad at the people who put him down there. If it was his time to die he was ready to die and if it wasn't then that was fine, too. Our Father had mercy on him and allowed him to live.

He lived to see all of Jerusalem destroyed and carried off to Babylon. How it hurt him. "My soul! My soul! I am in anguish! Oh my heart!... Disaster upon disaster." But he wrote all the people a letter, all those who had been taken off to captivity. He encouraged them to go on with their lives and to not just mope around — but to build houses and gardens and have their sons and daughters marry — but to never forget Jerusalem.

He told them that if they prayed for the good of Jerusalem they would have good too. And that in 70 years He would bring them back home. "Call upon Him, seek and pray to Him with all your heart and you will find Him," Jeremiah said.

He told them YHWH said, "I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the places where I have driven you." This was the cry of Jeremiah's heart too, and it has never been fulfilled. He is in the cloud of witnesses looking at us, longing for us to fulfill it.

This story is from Jeremiah, chapters 1, 15, 29, and 38, 2 Chronicles 34 and 35, and the teaching, "Jeremiah's Complaint," of February 6, 1984.