

**Could Yirmiyahu Have Saved Shushan?**  
**Finding Prophets in Megillat Esther**  
 Adina Blaustein

**1. Masechet Megillah 14a - 15a**

Who were the seven prophetesses? Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah and Esther...

Esther, as it is written: "And it came to pass on the third day that Esther clothed herself in royalty" (Esther 5:1). It should have said: Esther clothed herself in royal garments. Rather, this alludes to the fact that she clothed herself with a divine spirit of inspiration. It is written here: "And she clothed herself," and it is written elsewhere: "And the spirit clothed Amasai" (I Chronicles 12:19). ...

Rav Naḥman said: Malachi the prophet is in fact Mordecai, and why was he called Malachi? To indicate that he was second to the king [melekh], as Mordecai was appointed such, as is recorded at the end of the Megilla. Baruch, the son of Neriah; Seraiah, the son of Mahseiah; Daniel; Mordecai; Bilshan; Haggai; Zechariah; and Malachi; all prophesied in the second year of the reign of Darius. The fact that the baraita mentions Mordecai and Malachi separately indicates that they were two different people. The Gemara concludes: This is indeed a conclusive refutation....

The verse states: "Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her" (Esther 4:5). Rav said: Hathach is in fact the prophet Daniel. And why was he called Hathach? Because he was cut down [ḥatakh] from his greatness. And Shmuel expounded the name Hathach as derived from ḥatakh in the opposite sense, as he said: Daniel was called Hathach because all the affairs of the kingdom were decided [neḥtakhin] by his word.

שָׁבַע נְבִיאֹת מֵאֵן נִינְהוּ? שָׂרָה,  
 מִרְיָם, דְּבוֹרָה, חַנָּה, אַבְיגַיִל, חוּלְדָה  
 וְאֶסְתֵּר ...

אֶסְתֵּר — דְּכָתִיב: "וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם  
 הַשְּׁלִישִׁי וַתִּלְבַּשׂ אֶסְתֵּר מְלֻכוֹת",  
 בְּגָדֵי מְלֻכוֹת מִיבְעֵי לֵיהּ! אֲלֵא  
 שְׁלֵבֶשְׁתָּה רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ, כְּתִיב הָכָא:  
 "וַתִּלְבַּשׂ", וְכָתִיב הֵתָם: "וַיִּרְחַח  
 לְבָשָׁה אֶת עַמְשֵׁי וְגו'".

...  
 אָמַר רַב נַחֲמָן: מִלְאָכִי — זֶה  
 מְרַדְּכִי, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מִלְאָכִי?  
 שֶׁהָיָה מְשֻׁנָּה לְפָלֶה. מִיתִיבִי: בְּרוּךְ  
 כֹּן נִרְיָה וְשָׂרְיָה כֹן מַעֲשֵׂיָה, וְדַנְיָאֵל  
 וְיִמְרַדְּכִי בְלִשׁוֹ וְחַגִּי, זְכַרְיָה וּמִלְאָכִי  
 — כּוֹלֵן נִתְנַבְּאוּ בְּשֵׁנֵת שְׁתֵּימָם  
 לְדַרְיָוֶשׁ. תִּיּוֹבְתָא.

...  
 "וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתָּךְ", אָמַר רַב:  
 הַתָּךְ זֶה דַּנְיָאֵל, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ  
 הַתָּךְ — שְׁחַתְכוּהוּ מִגְדוּלָתוֹ.  
 וְשְׁמוֹאֵל אָמַר: שְׁפָל דְּבַרֵּי מְלֻכוֹת  
 נִחְתְּכִין עַל פִּיּוֹ.

## 2. Yirmiyahu Chapter 7

The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD:  
Stand at the gate of the House of the LORD, and there proclaim this word: Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD! Thus said the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel: Mend your ways and your actions, and I will let you dwell<sup>a</sup> in this place. Don't put your trust in illusions and say, "The Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD, the Temple of the LORD are these [buildings]." ... See, you are relying on illusions that are of no avail. Will you steal and murder and commit adultery and swear falsely, and sacrifice to Baal, and follow other gods whom you have not experienced, and then come and stand before Me in this House which bears My name and say, "We are safe"?—[Safe] to do all these abhorrent things! Do you consider this House, which bears My name, to be a den of thieves? As for Me, I have been watching—declares the LORD.

א הדבֵר אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ, מֵאֵת ה' לֵאמֹר. ב עֲמֹד, בְּשַׁעַר בַּיִת ה', וְקִרְאתָ שָׁם, אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה; וְאָמַרְתָּ שְׁמֹעוּ דְבַר-ה', כָּל-יְהוּדָה הַבָּאִים בְּשַׁעְרֵים הָאֵלֶּה, לְהַשְׁתַּחֲוֹת, לַיהוָה. {ס} ג כֹּה-אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, הִיטִיבוּ דַרְכֵיכֶם, וּמַעַלְלֵיכֶם; וְאַשְׁכְּנָה אִתְּכֶם, בְּמָקוֹם הַזֶּה. ד אַל-תִּבְטְחוּ לָכֶם, אֶל-דְּבַרֵי הַשָּׁקֵר לֵאמֹר: הֲיִכַל ה' הֲיִכַל ה', הֲיִכַל ה' הִמָּה. ... ח הֲנֵה אַתֶּם בֹּטְחִים לָכֶם, עַל-דְּבַרֵי הַשָּׁקֵר--לְבַלְתִּי, הוֹעִיל. ט הֲגִבַּת רִצְחֹן וְנֶאֱפָא, וְהִשְׁבַּע לַשָּׁקֵר וְקִטַּר לַבָּעַל; וְהִלֵּךְ, אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרִים--אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יַדְעֶתֶם. י וּבְאֹתָם וּבְעֲמֻדָתָם לִפְנֵי, בְּבַיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עָלָיו, וְאָמַרְתֶּם, נִצַּלְנוּ--לִמְעַן עֲשׂוֹת, אֵת כָּל-הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה. יא הַמְעַרְתָּ פְרָצִים, הֲיָה הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא-שְׁמִי עָלָיו--בְּעֵינֵיכֶם; גַּם אֲנֹכִי הֲנֵה רְאִיתִי, נְאֻם-ה'.

## 3. Yirmiyahu Chapter 38

Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malchiah heard what Jeremiah was saying to all the people:  
"Thus said the LORD: Whoever remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but whoever surrenders to the Chaldeans shall live; he shall at least gain his life<sup>a</sup> and shall live.  
Thus said the LORD: This city shall be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon's army, and he shall capture it."  
Then the officials said to the king, "Let that man be put to death, for he disheartens the soldiers, and all the people who are left in this city, by speaking such things to them. That man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm!"  
King Zedekiah replied, "He is in your hands; the king cannot oppose you in anything!" ... King Zedekiah sent for the prophet Jeremiah, and had him brought to him at the third entrance of the House of the LORD. And the king said to Jeremiah, "I want to ask you something; don't conceal anything from me."  
Jeremiah answered the king, "If I tell you, you'll surely kill me; and if I give you advice, you won't listen to me."  
Thereupon King Zedekiah secretly promised Jeremiah on oath: "As the LORD lives who has given us this life,<sup>c</sup> I will not put you to death or leave you in the hands of those men who seek your life."

א וַיִּשְׁמַע שְׁפָטְיָה בֶן-מַטָּן, וְגַדְלִיָּהוּ בֶן-פִּשְׁחֹור, וַיּוֹכַל בֶּן-שְׁלֵמְיָהוּ, וּפִשְׁחֹור בֶּן-מַלְכִּיָּהוּ: אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים--אֲשֶׁר יִרְמְיָהוּ מְדַבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-הָעָם, לֵאמֹר. ב כֹּה, אָמַר ה', הִישָׁב בְּעֵיר הַזֹּאת, יָמוּת בַּחֶרֶב בְּרָעַב וּבַדָּבָר; וְהִיצֵא אֶל-הַכַּשְׂדִּים יַחִיהַ (וְחָיָה), וְהִיִּתְהַ-לּוֹ נִפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל וְחַי. {ס} ג כֹּה, אָמַר ה': הַנִּתָּן תִּנְתֵּן הָעִיר הַזֹּאת, בְּיַד חַיִל מְלֹךְ-בָּבֶל--וּלְכַדָּה. ד וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַשָּׂרִים אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ, יוֹמֵת נָא אֶת-הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה--כִּי-עַל-כֵּן הוּא-מִרְפָּא אֶת-יְדֵי אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּלָחָמָה הַנִּשְׁאַרִים בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת וְאֵת יְדֵי כָל-הָעָם, לְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם בְּדְבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: כִּי הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה, אֵינָנו דֹרֵשׁ לְשָׁלוֹם לְעַם הַזֶּה--כִּי אִם-לְרָעָה. ה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ צְדַקְיָהוּ, הֲנֵה-הוּא בְּנִדְכָם: כִּי-אִין הַמֶּלֶךְ, יוֹכַל אִתְּכֶם דְּבַר ... י ז וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ צְדַקְיָהוּ, וַיִּקַּח אֶת-יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנְּבִיא אֲלָיו, אֶל-מְבוֹא הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, אֲשֶׁר בְּבַיִת ה'; וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ, שְׂאֵל אֲנִי אֵתָּה דְבַר--אֵל-תִּכְחַד מִמֶּנִּי, דְּבַר. טו וַיֹּאמֶר יִרְמְיָהוּ, אֵל-צְדַקְיָהוּ, כִּי אֲגִיד לְךָ, הַלּוֹא הֵמֶת תְּמִיתֵנִי; וְכִי, אֵינְעָדָה, לֹא תִשְׁמַע, אֲלֵי. טז וַיִּשְׁבַּע הַמֶּלֶךְ צְדַקְיָהוּ, אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ--בַּסֶּתֶר לֵאמֹר: חִי-ה' אֵת אֲשֶׁר עֲשֶׂה-לְנוּ אֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַזֹּאת, אִם-אֶמְתָּה, וְאִם-אֶתְנֶה בְּיַד הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר מְבַקְשִׁים

Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus said the LORD, the God of Hosts, the God of Israel: If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down. You and your household will live.

But if you do not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans, who will burn it down; and you will not escape from them."

King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am worried about the Judeans who have defected to the Chaldeans; that they [the Chaldeans] might hand me over to them to abuse me."

"They will not hand you over," Jeremiah replied. "Listen to the voice of the LORD, to what I tell you, that it may go well with you and your life be spared.

For this is what the LORD has shown me if you refuse to surrender: All the women who are left in the palace of the king of Judah shall be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and they shall say: The men who were your friends/ Have seduced you and vanquished you. / Now that your feet are sunk in the mire, They have turned their backs [on you]. / They will bring out all your wives and children to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from them. You will be captured by the king of Babylon, and this city shall be burned down."<sup>f</sup>

Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Don't let anyone know about this conversation, or you will die."<sup>g</sup> If the officials should hear that I have spoken with you, and they should come and say to you, "Tell us what you said to the king; hide nothing from us, or we'll kill you."<sup>h</sup> And what did the king say to you?" say to them, 'I was presenting my petition to the king not to send me back to the house of Jonathan to die there.'" All the officials did come to Jeremiah to question him; and he replied to them just as the king had instructed him. So they stopped questioning him, for the conversation had not been overheard. Jeremiah remained in the prison compound until the day Jerusalem was captured.

אֶת-נַפְשִׁי. {ס} יִזְוֵאמַר יְרֵמְיָהוּ אֶל-צְדָקְיָהוּ  
{ס} כֹּה-אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲלֵי-צְדָקְיָהוּ  
אֵם-יֵצֵא תֵצֵא אֶל-שָׂרֵי מַלְךְ-בָּבֶל וְחִיתָה נַפְשִׁי,  
וְהָעִיר הַזֹּאת, לֹא תִשְׂרַף בְּאֵשׁ; וְחִיתָה, אַתָּה  
וּבֵיתְךָ. יַחַד וְאִם לֹא-תֵצֵא, אֶל-שָׂרֵי מַלְךְ  
בָּבֶל--וְנִתְּנָה הָעִיר הַזֹּאת בְּיַד הַכַּשְׂדִּים, וְיִשְׂרְפוּהָ  
בְּאֵשׁ; וְאַתָּה, לֹא-תִמָּלֵט מֵיָדָם. {ס} יִזְוֵאמַר  
הַמֶּלֶךְ צְדָקְיָהוּ, אֶל-יְרֵמְיָהוּ: אֲנִי דֹאֵג  
אֶת-הַיְהוּדִים, אֲשֶׁר נָפְלוּ אֶל-הַכַּשְׂדִּים--פֶּן-יִתְּנוּ  
אֹתִי בְיָדָם, וְהִתְעַלְלוּ-בִּי. כִּי וַיֹּאמֶר יְרֵמְיָהוּ, לֹא  
יִתְּנוּ; שָׁמַע-נָא בְקוֹל ה', לֹאֲשֶׁר אָנִי דֹבֵר  
אֲלֵיךָ--יִיטֵב לָךְ, וְתַחֲיוּ נַפְשִׁי. כֹּה וְאִם-מָאֵן אַתָּה,  
לְצִאת--זֶה הַדָּבָר, אֲשֶׁר הִרְאֵנִי ה'. כִּב וְהִנֵּה  
כָּל-הַנְּשִׁים, אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאָרוּ בְּבֵית מַלְךְ-יְהוּדָה,  
מוֹצְאוֹת, אֶל-שָׂרֵי מַלְךְ בָּבֶל; וְהִנֵּה אִמְרָתָם, הִסִּיתוּךָ  
וַיְכַלּוּ לָךְ אַנְשֵׁי שְׁלֹמֹה, הַטְּבַעוּ בְּבִצְרֵי רִגְלֶךָ, נִסְגּוּ  
אֲחֹרָי. כֹּה וְאֶת-כָּל-נְשִׂיךָ וְאֶת-בְּנֵיךָ,  
מוֹצְאִים אֶל-הַכַּשְׂדִּים, וְאַתָּה, לֹא-תִמָּלֵט מֵיָדָם: כִּי  
בְיַד מַלְךְ-בָּבֶל תִּתְּפֵשׂ, וְאֶת-הָעִיר הַזֹּאת תִּשְׂרַף  
בְּאֵשׁ. {ס} כִּד וַיֹּאמֶר צְדָקְיָהוּ אֶל-יְרֵמְיָהוּ, אִישׁ  
אֶל-יָדַע בְּדָבָרִים-הָאֵלֶּה--וְלֹא תָמוּת. כֹּה  
יָכִי-יִשְׁמְעוּ הַשָּׂרִים, כִּי-דִבַּרְתִּי אִתְּךָ, וּבָאוּ אֲלֵיךָ  
וְאָמְרוּ אֲלֵיךָ הַגִּידָה נָא לָנוּ מֵה-דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ  
אֶל-תִּכְחַד מִמֶּנּוּ, וְלֹא נִמְיָתָה; וַיֵּמַר-דָּבָר אֲלֵיךָ,  
הַמֶּלֶךְ. כִּי וְאִמְרָתָ אֲלֵיכֶם, מִפִּיל-אֲנִי תַחֲנֹתִי לִפְנֵי  
הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְבַלְתִּי הַשִּׁיבֵנִי בֵּית יְהוֹנָתָן, לָמוּת שָׁם.  
{פ} כִּז וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים אֶל-יְרֵמְיָהוּ, וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ  
אֹתוֹ, וַיַּגִּד לָהֶם כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה  
הַמֶּלֶךְ; וַיַּחֲרְשׁוּ מִמֶּנּוּ, כִּי לֹא-נִשְׁמַע הַדָּבָר. כֹּח  
וַיֵּשֶׁב יְרֵמְיָהוּ בְּחֹצֵר הַמַּטְרָה, עַד-יוֹם אֲשֶׁר-נִלְכְּדָה  
יְרוּשָׁלַם; {ס} וְהִנֵּה, כָּאֲשֶׁר נִלְכְּדָה יְרוּשָׁלַם.

When Hathach came and delivered Mordecai's message to Esther... Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: "Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis." Then Esther sent back this answer to Mordecai: "Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf..."

ט ויבוא, התף; ויגד לאסתר, את דברי מרדכי. ...  
יג ויאמר מרדכי, להשיב אל-אסתר: אל-תדמי בגופיך,  
להמלט בית-המלך מכל-היהודים. יד כי אם-החוש  
תחרישי, בעת הזאת--רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים  
ממקום אחר, ואת ובית-אביך תאבדו; ומי  
יודע--אם-לעת פזאת, הגעת למלכות. טו ותאמר אסתר,  
להשיב אל-מרדכי. טז לך פגוס את-כל-היהודים ...