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## *Review Essay:*

# BRINGING THE PROPHETS TO LIFE: RABBI BINYAMIN LAU'S STUDY OF *JEREMIAH*

*Jeremiah: The Lot of a Seer*

BINYAMIN LAU

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Many readers find the books commonly called “*Nevi'im Aharonim*” (Latter Prophets) to be forbidding. Their cryptic poetic language, redundant themes, and general lack of a narrative make them less approachable than many other books in Tanakh.

R. Binyamin Lau has recently published a book on *Jeremiah* with the expressed goal of bringing the book to life by placing the prophet in his historical context and tracing the chronological development of Jeremiah's personality, values, and political positions. This is R. Lau's first book on Tanakh, following his studies on R. Ovadiah Yosef and a three-volume work entitled *Hakhamim*.<sup>1</sup> In those books, R. Lau employed a similar methodology of placing rabbinic statements into historical context and linking their ideas to human reality.

Yisrael Rozenson has suggested that Professor Nehama Leibowitz's work on *Jeremiah*<sup>2</sup> never gained popularity primarily because she did not

<sup>1</sup> R. Binyamin Lau, *Mi-Maran ad Maran: Mishnato ha-Hilkhatit shel ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot-Sifrei Hemed, 2005); *Hakhamim* (Jerusalem: Eliner Library, 2006). *Mi-Maran ad Maran* is a scholarly work based on his doctoral dissertation, and the *Hakhamim* series is aimed at a popular audience.

<sup>2</sup> Nehama Leibowitz, *Gilyonot le-Iyyun be-Sefer Yirmiyahu* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1974).

associate prophetic books with their historical periods. In her classical studies on the Torah, Nehama's method was productive even though her work lacked that dimension of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> Regarding *Nevi'im Abaronim*, however, too vital a component is lost by ignoring historical setting, since prophets delivered their messages to specific audiences.<sup>4</sup>

The Talmud states that the books of Tanakh were included in the canon because of their enduring religious value:

“Only the prophecy which contained a lesson for future generations was written down, and that which did not contain such a lesson was not written.” (*Megilla* 14a)

At the same time, however, Rashi distinguishes between the Torah and *Nakh*:

*Torat Moshe* is called “Torah” because it was given for all generations. The prophets are called only *kabbala*, since they received each prophecy through divine inspiration for the needs of their time and generation. (Rashi on *Hullin* 137a)

The Torah's primary audience is all Jews of all times. In contrast, the later prophets initially addressed the generations in which they lived. Only later were those words containing eternal messages preserved. To appreciate the eternal, we must delve into the temporal.

Contemporary scholarship has contributed significantly to the application of this principle. We have access to considerably more historical background than our forebears, thanks to the archaeological findings of the previous two centuries. R. Lau presents Jeremiah's prophecies to a popular audience in a clear, well-researched manner from a traditional viewpoint that incorporates contemporary scholarship. When possible, he refers to archaeological findings that add a tangible dimension of reality to his literary-theological analysis. R. Lau gives special thanks to the influence of one of the exemplars of this approach from the previous generation, Professor Yehuda Elitzur.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion, see Hayyim Angel, “The Paradox of *Parshanut*: Are our Eyes on the Text, or on the Commentators, Review Essay of *Pirkei Nehama: Nehama Leibowitz Memorial Volume*,” *Tradition* 38:4 (Winter 2004), pp. 112-128.

<sup>4</sup> Yisrael Rozenson, “The Exegete, the Interpretation, and History: An Observation on Nehama Leibowitz's Exegetical Approach” (Hebrew), in *Al Derekh ha-Ayot: Sheloshim Shana le-Mikhelet Yaakov Herzog*, Amnon Bazak, Shemuel Wygoda & Meir Monitz (eds.) (Alon Shevut: Tevunot Press, 2001), pp. 433-453, esp. p. 452.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 26, n. 10. R. Lau refers to Yehuda Elitzur's collected essays, *Yisrael ve-ha-Mikra: Mehkarim Geografi'im Histori'im ve-Hagoti'im* (Hebrew), Yoel Elitzur & Amos Frisch (eds.) (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1999).

*Jeremiah* is presented out of chronological order and to this day scholars debate how to structure the book. R. Lau addresses this difficulty in his introduction and sets out to present *Jeremiah* in chronological order so that readers can appreciate how the prophet spoke to real people in different historical periods (pp. 25-26).

R. Lau also quotes how several past and present Israeli political leaders have characterized Jeremiah. They typically offered oversimplified and often inaccurate depictions. For example, Y.L. Gordon and David Ben Gurion thought that Jeremiah's policy of submission to Babylonia demonstrated him to be a passive "man of exile," unwilling to fight (pp. 22-23). Of all of *Jeremiah*, contemporary Israeli public schools teach only the assassination of Gedaliah in order to draw a parallel with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin (pp. 23, 245-246). R. Lau debunks these shallow misrepresentations and demonstrates the complexity, sophistication, and contemporary relevance of Jeremiah.

## II. JOSIAH'S REIGN

Many narratives in *Jeremiah* are dated to the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. Consequently, R. Lau's presentations of the prophet's relationships with Jehoiakim and Zedekiah have strong *peshat* foundations. Through speculative ascriptions of several undated prophecies to Josiah's reign, R. Lau attempts to trace Jeremiah's personal spiritual journey and his prophetic responses during Josiah's period (pp. 35-133).

R. Lau dates the condemnations of the undated chapter 2 to before Josiah's Reformation in 622 BCE. Jeremiah witnessed the effects of Manasseh's reign and was convinced that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Jeremiah's prophetic initiation in chapter 1—dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah's reign, or 627 BCE—likewise signaled that a northern invader would defeat Judah.

Josiah rebelled against this decree of destruction and attempted to induce the entire nation to repent. He also aspired to bring the northern Israelites who had survived the Assyrian exile under his reign. Despite his awareness of the decree against Judah from Manasseh's reign, Jeremiah was initially optimistic. For a time, he even thought that the messianic ideal could be realized by Josiah.

How would the northerners return to the Torah and to a Davidic king after centuries of hostility between north and south? Hezekiah already had attempted reunification and failed (*II Chron.* 30:1-11). Jeremiah understood that certain sensitive issues needed to be addressed. Judah

often had viewed the north as sinful, and there would be resistance to accepting a Davidic king. In chapter 3, which is dated to Josiah's period (see 3:6), Jeremiah prophesied that God would forgive the northerners' sins, and greatly desired their return. Jeremiah also carefully avoided reference to the Davidic line and spoke more generally about "shepherds":

Go, make this proclamation toward the north, and say: Turn back, O Rebel Israel—declares the Lord. I will not look on you in anger, for I am compassionate—declares the Lord; I do not bear a grudge for all time. Only recognize your sin; for you have transgressed against the Lord your God...And I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will pasture you with knowledge and skill. (*Jer.* 3:12-15)

Jeremiah also downplayed the Ark, which symbolized the rejection of Ephraim and Shiloh and the chosenness of Judah and Jerusalem. Jerusalem would become a united city of God populated by members of all twelve tribes (3:16-18). R. Lau dates the undated prophecy of redemption in chapter 31 to this period. Ephraim is God's firstborn (31:8). Rachel—Joseph's mother—cries for her children to return. God loves Ephraim and anxiously desires his return (31:14-15, 19).

Although Jeremiah was confused by the mixed messages of the decree from Manasseh's time and the potential in Josiah's Reformation, the undated potter's house prophecy (chapter 18) convinced him that all prophecies are reversible, subject to changes in behavior. Josiah's program of repentance could save Israel. The undated prophecy of redemption in chapter 30 likewise emerged from these early years of Jeremiah's optimism.

However, Jeremiah observed that many of the lesser leaders were, unfortunately, corrupt (23:1-8). He attacked the idolatry and Shabbat violation that persisted from Manasseh's time (chapters 10, 17). He perceived that the repentance of many was shallow and hypocritical (chapters 5, 8).<sup>6</sup> As Jeremiah became increasingly critical of the people, they began to persecute him. Jeremiah in turn cursed his tormentors (chapters 11, 18). He concluded that there was no future in Israel and did not get married there (chapter 16).

<sup>6</sup> Several *midrashim* similarly assume that the national repentance in Josiah's time was insincere: *Ta'anit* 22b: "Josiah, however, did not know that his generation found but little favor [in the eyes of God]." *Lam. Rabbah* 1:53: "[Josiah] was, however, unaware that all the people of his generation were idolaters. Josiah had sent two disciples [of the Sages] to eradicate idolatry from the people's houses. When they entered the houses they found nothing. As they went out they were told to shut the doors; and when they shut the doors the people inside could see the idol." See R. Lau's discussion of these *midrashim*, pp. 94-99.

The abrupt death of Josiah in 609 BCE completed Jeremiah's downward spiral toward despair. He prophesied the destruction of the Temple (chapters 7, 26). The prophecy of the shattered earthenware and explicit naming of Babylonia as the enemy in chapters 19-20 clinched that this process of doom now was irreversible.

Although R. Lau has developed an intricate narrative, it must be stressed that with the exceptions of chapters 1, 3, and 26 (and its associated prophecy in chapter 7), nearly all of the aforementioned chapters are undated. Therefore, it is speculative that they were revealed in Josiah's time.

### III. CAVEATS

There are two methodological weaknesses in R. Lau's book: (1) he plays to his strengths—focusing on where he thinks he can date prophecies with confidence, or has a subjective angle; (2) there is not enough discussion of traditional commentaries to enable readers to debate his approach. Consequently, the lines between *peshat* and *derash* are blurred. If R. Lau were offering a more homiletically leaning interpretation of *Jeremiah* aimed at making some points about contemporary society, then he would need only to say that and then not contradict the text. However, R. Lau's extensive use of scholarship and general *peshat* presentation makes it appear that he is presenting his approach to *Jeremiah* as the primary meaning of the book. Therefore, his interpretations are subject to more critical scrutiny.<sup>7</sup> After considering these areas separately, we will turn to the broader discussion of divine decrees to illustrate the interrelationship between them.

#### *Speculative Dating*

There is great educational value in teaching *Jeremiah* in chronological sequence, and R. Lau's book is a shining example of this approach. However, many chapters in *Jeremiah*—particularly among chapters 1-20—are not dated. R. Lau often makes assumptions in order to place these undated prophecies into historical context.

In the foregoing example of Josiah's reign, for example, it is unclear that the prophecies of redemption date to Josiah's time, and it also is unclear that many of the critical chapters R. Lau assigns to Josiah's time

<sup>7</sup> For further analysis of midrashic methodology, see Hayyim Angel, Review Essay: "A Modern *Midrash Moshe*: Methodological Considerations," *Tradition* 41:4 (Winter 2008), pp. 73-76.

derive from that era. Although R. Lau's interpretation for the most part does not contradict the text, there is little textual evidence to support his analysis.

*Overemphasis on the Subjective Element in Prophecy*

In general, R. Lau seeks human dimensions and personal struggles underlying Jeremiah's prophecies.<sup>8</sup> There is no question that elements of Jeremiah's personality emerge through his personal confessions. Ascertaining human layers in prophetic oracles is more difficult textually, but it is a vital discussion.<sup>9</sup> However, R. Lau's overemphasis on the personal dimension of prophecy often ignores rhetorical context and leads to readings that are unconvincing or even untrue to the text.

For example, in his interpretation of the showdown between Jeremiah and Hananiah (chapter 28), R. Lau maintains that Jeremiah was unsure that Hananiah was wrong and therefore responded "amen" to his words (p. 185). However, Jeremiah's rebuttal of Hananiah yields a different conclusion, namely, that Jeremiah wished that Hananiah was correct since his prediction that Babylonia would fall in only two years was more benign to Israel than Jeremiah's own prediction. Jeremiah then insisted that Hananiah was wrong even if he could not prove his falsity until the destruction came. R. Lau appears to ignore the rhetorical context of this chapter as well as other prophecies where Jeremiah consistently pleaded for Israel to submit to the yoke of Babylonia or face imminent doom.

In another instance, R. Lau asserts that one of Jeremiah's prayers intimates that he doubted his own prophecy since so many false prophets were conveying contrary messages. God reassured Jeremiah that he was a true prophet and the others were fraudulent (p. 188):

I said, "Ah, Lord God! The prophets are saying to them, 'You shall not see the sword, famine shall not come upon you, but I will give you unflinching security in this place.'" The Lord replied: It is a lie that the prophets utter in My name. I have not sent them or commanded them. I have not

<sup>8</sup> To a good extent, he follows and credits an article by Yair Hoffmann on this subject ("Then I knew that it was indeed the word of the Lord" [Hebrew], *Bet Mikra* 42 [1997], pp. 198-210). R. Lau cites it on p. 221, n. 85.

<sup>9</sup> See further in Hayyim Angel, *Through an Opaque Lens* (New York: Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2006), pp. 15-20; Yehudah Elitzur, "Samuel the Prophet and Kingship" (Hebrew), in *Yisrael ve-ha-Mikra*, pp. 110-112; Moshe Greenberg, "Jewish Conceptions of the Human Factor in Biblical Prophecy," in *Justice and the Holy: Essays in Honor of Walter Harrelson*, eds. Douglas A. Knight & Peter J. Paris (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 145-162.

spoken to them. A lying vision, an empty divination, the deceit of their own contriving—that is what they prophesy to you! (*Jer.* 14:13-14)

However, Jeremiah was consistently confident in his prophetic message. He heroically risked his life against the religious establishment in chapter 26. Later in his career, Jeremiah contrasted himself with false prophets and was certain that he was right and they were frauds (23:28-29).

Rather than interpreting Jeremiah's plea in 14:13 as one of personal insecurity, then, it seems more likely that Jeremiah interceded to God on Israel's behalf. Additionally, his subsequent revelation of this prophecy to the public would be a rhetorical method of rebuking them for listening to the false prophets.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, there is no way of proving that Jeremiah harbored no personal doubts in his struggle against Hananiah or in his intercession on behalf of the people. However, there is no positive evidence for R. Lau's thesis, and other evidence points in a different direction.

One textually plausible interpretation advanced by R. Lau in the area of Jeremiah's personal doubts is when God commanded the prophet to redeem his cousin Hanamel's field shortly before the destruction (pp. 220-221):

And just as the Lord had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the prison compound and said to me, "Please buy my land in Anathoth, in the territory of Benjamin; for the right of succession is yours, and you have the duty of redemption. Buy it." Then I knew that it was indeed the word of the Lord. (*Jer.* 32:8)

Jeremiah used the unparalleled expression that he then "knew that it was indeed the word of the Lord." Our classical commentators generally reinterpreted this expression based on the assumption that Jeremiah must have known that he had received genuine prophecy prior to Hanamel's

<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, Jeremiah accused the people of actively supporting the false prophets, and therefore had no excuse for being innocently misled: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule accordingly; and My people like it so..." (5:31).

Our *mefarshim* often are sensitive to rhetorical context regarding Jeremiah's confessions, when the prophet spoke for himself rather through revelation. Even in such instances, these prayers at some later point were revealed to others. For example, Shadal (on *Jer.* 20:7, 14) maintains that Jeremiah later revealed his personal prayers when he complained about his mission to teach the people that he loved them and did not enjoy criticizing them. Jeremiah hoped that by revealing his suffering he would increase his credibility and people might repent or at least stop persecuting him. Once the prophet shares his innermost thoughts with his audience, even the most intimately personal dimensions of *Jeremiah* take on prophetic layers of interpretation.

arrival. R. Lau's reading is supported by Jeremiah's subsequent prayer when he expressed further astonishment (32:24-25). Jeremiah's prophecy of redemption shortly before the destruction appears to have stunned the prophet himself.

### *General Avoidance of Classical Parshanut*

In his introduction, R. Lau entreats the more traditional reader not to take him to task for rarely citing our classical *mefarshim*. There is no implied criticism in the fact that they did not know what we know about geography, archaeology, or comparative chronology (pp. 26, 181). R. Lau is largely correct that our classical *mefarshim* do not generally focus on the historical-critical dimension of prophecy, nor did they have access to our contemporary knowledge. However, R. Lau's work is weakened by the paucity of classical commentators, who offer alternative perspectives that broaden the discussion.

Perhaps more surprisingly, R. Lau all but ignores Menahem Boleh's 1983 *Da'at Mikra* commentary.<sup>11</sup> Boleh weaves together traditional and contemporary scholarship and places many of Jeremiah's prophecies into historical context. In R. Lau's 273 page book, there are only two references to Boleh's commentary on *Jeremiah*, and both are to dismiss Boleh's religious apologetics (pp. 181, 221).

Given that a diverse population is reading his book—which quickly made bestseller lists in Israel, R. Lau is poised to connect the wider public with *Jeremiah* and also with the continued relevance of our classical interpreters. Instead, readers might conclude that traditional scholarship has little to add to a contemporary discussion. Significant dimensions of interpretation are lost by his downplaying their relevance, and R. Lau's presentation reduces the opportunity for fruitful debate of the meaning of *Jeremiah*. It may be wondered whether cutting down the references to our *mefarshim* plays well to the intended secular audience.

## IV. DIVINE DECREES

The application of the methodologies of R. Lau and classical *parshanut* can be appreciated in their respective understandings of the possibility of repentance warding off the destruction or whether there was an irreversibly sealed decree at some point prior to the destruction.

<sup>11</sup> Menahem Boleh, *Da'at Mikra: Yirmiyahu* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1983).



*The Text Evidence*

Jeremiah refers to the decree from the time of Manasseh (697-642 BCE), which predated Jeremiah's prophetic career which began in 627 BCE:

I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, on account of King Manasseh son of Hezekiah of Judah, and of what he did in Jerusalem. (*Jer.* 15:4)

This prophecy is consistent with *Kings* (e.g., *II Kings* 21:10-15; 22:15-20; 23:25-27; 24:3-4).

Some undated verses in *Jeremiah* make it appear that Israel had no chance to repent:

Though you wash with natron and use much lye, your guilt is ingrained before Me—declares the Lord God. (*Jer.* 2:22; cf. 13:23)

In other undated prophecies, God orders Jeremiah not to pray on Israel's behalf, since his prayers would not alter Israel's fate (7:16; 11:14; 14:11). The undated prophecy of the shattered pottery in chapter 19 similarly indicates that Israel's fate was irreversibly sealed.

Despite these and related references, Jeremiah also preached repentance and later submission to Babylonia as means of averting destruction. His prophecy in the Temple precincts dated to the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign (609 BCE) came with the hopes of achieving repentance and saving the Temple (26:3). Similarly, Jeremiah appeals to the positive effects of repentance in an undated prophecy:

Wash your heart clean of wickedness, o Jerusalem, that you may be rescued. How long will you harbor within you your evil designs? (*Jer.* 4:14)

The undated potter's house prophecy in chapter 18 is rooted in the premise that all prophecies—both positive and negative—can be overturned by a change in behavior.

Finally, Jeremiah composed a scroll in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 BCE) with the intent of inspiring repentance to ward off destruction (36:1-3). Barukh read the scroll in the following year (36:9). In the dated narratives after Jehoiakim burnt this scroll, Jeremiah no longer called for repentance. Instead, his message was primarily political, i.e., the nation must submit to the Babylonian yoke or face dire consequences.

*R. Lau's Approach*

R. Lau attributes some of the aforementioned conflicts to Jeremiah's personal confusion. Jeremiah was conflicted over the decree from Manasseh's time, opposing his initial optimism during Josiah's Reformation (p. 74). R. Lau's primary interpretive strategy is diachronic. He dates chapter 2 which proclaims irreversible doom to the pre-Reformation era, when Jeremiah still accepted the decree from Manasseh's time. He dates prophecies that offer repentance such as chapter 18 to the period of 622-609 BCE, and dates prophecies that proclaim irreversible doom, such as chapters 19-20, to post-609 BCE.

This thesis founders on several counts. First, there is no evidence that Jeremiah ever was confused. He spoke in God's Name and repeatedly risked his life to confront a population who violently opposed him religiously and politically. More significantly, Jeremiah offered the chance to repent as late as 605-604 BCE, with the scroll read to Jehoiakim in chapter 36. R. Lau's dating Jeremiah's proclamation of a decree to 609 BCE, then, runs counter to the text. Finally, R. Lau dates other undated prophecies in a manner inconsistent with his thesis. For example, he places chapter 4 in 605 BCE after his dating of the decree (pp. 136-137), but 4:14 calls for repentance. It appears that R. Lau's analysis has not adequately addressed this issue.

*Approaches in Parshanut*

Although R. Lau is correct that our classical *parshanim* generally do not employ a historical-diachronic approach (p. 26), sometimes they do. Rashi (on *Jer.* 25:1) follows *Seder Olam Rabbah* 24 which states that the decree was irreversibly sealed in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 BCE). Before the reading of the scroll in chapter 36, there still was an opportunity to annul the decree from Manasseh's time.

Chapter 36 connects to the "cup of wrath" prophecy in chapter 25, also dated to 605 BCE. This pronouncement heralds a transition in Jeremiah's career. No longer did he call upon the people to repent. In the dated narratives after this period, Jeremiah's message became political, i.e., the nation must submit to the Babylonian yoke in order to survive. Thus, Rashi's midrashic-diachronic reading fits the text evidence well. 605 BCE also was the year that Babylonia crushed the Egyptian-Assyrian alliance at Carchemish (see *Jer.* 46:1-2), and Nebuchadnezzar assumed the throne of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.

Several other *mefarshim* adopt a synchronic approach and attempt to harmonize the conflicting verses. They often stress the role of rhetoric in

prophecy rather than accepting the most literal reading of each verse. Radak suggests that the sins of the people were so grave from the time of Manasseh that they had to receive some punishment. Jeremiah offered repentance as a means of mitigating the decree rather than annulling it.

Alternatively, Abarbanel and Shadal reject the notion that there ever is a moment when God would reject genuine repentance. Had the nation repented sincerely in Josiah's time, the decree from Manasseh's time would have been entirely abrogated. Tragically, their repentance was insincere:

The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah...after all that, her sister, faithless Judah, did not return to Me wholeheartedly, but insincerely—declares the Lord. (*Jer.* 3:6-10)

To reconcile the conflicting verses in *Jeremiah*, Abarbanel and Shadal explain that in 2:22, Jeremiah criticizes surface changes (“Though you wash with natron and use much lye, your guilt is ingrained before Me”). In contrast, 4:14 calls for genuine repentance (“Wash your heart clean of wickedness”). They reinterpret the decree dated to Manasseh in 15:4 to mean that the people in later generations persisted in Manasseh's sins and therefore were accountable. Menahem Boleh interprets Jeremiah's telling the people that they were unable to repent in 2:22 as rhetorical exaggeration to shock the people into repenting.<sup>12</sup>

It is worth noting that *Kings* blames the sins of Manasseh and his generation for the destruction. *Chronicles* blames the sins of Zedekiah and his generation.<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah blames the sins of Manasseh and his generation (15:1-4), the sins of Jehoiakim and his generation (chapters 25-26, 36), and Zedekiah and his generation for their political blunder in revolting against Babylonia. Given this complex scheme, it should come as little surprise that different messages emerge from his diverse prophecies.

To summarize, R. Lau's diachronic solution prompted him to speculate (inconsistently) about dating the undated chapters. His suggestion that Jeremiah was confused is not supported by the evidence. His choice of a chronological point of transition in 609 BCE runs counter to the text, whereas Rashi's date of 605 BCE fits more smoothly. By adopting a combination of diachronic and synchronic approaches, our *mefarshim* offer more textually sound avenues of interpretation.

<sup>12</sup> *Da'at Mikra: Yirmiyahu*, p. 25, n. 51.

<sup>13</sup> See further discussion in Sara Japhet, *Emunot ve-De'ot be-Sefer Divrei ha-Yamim u-Mekomam ba-Olam ha-Mahshava ha-Mikra'it* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1977), pp. 138-154; Yehuda Kiel, *Da'at Mikra: I Melakhim* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1989), pp. 124-127.

## V. CONCLUSION

R. Lau's book is valuable for people of all backgrounds who want to access the prophetic world of Jeremiah. It particularly is a valuable resource to High School educators and those who teach adults. R. Lau's book renders *Jeremiah* alive and accessible to a wide audience. Although there are several ways in which the book can be improved, educators can use R. Lau's book as a template to teach *Jeremiah* specifically, and *Nevi'im Aharonim* in general. It is hoped that R. Lau will continue to publish exceptional materials in this spirit. Through them a broader segment of the Jewish population will be able to connect to the most difficult—and oftentimes the most powerful—books in Tanakh.

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