

THE CURSE OF JECONIAH

And the Signet Ring



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Perhaps one of the most standard, cookie cutter arguments against the Messiahship of Yeshua from anti-missionaries is the infamous “Curse of Jeconiah”. Many Christians, who know little about the Tanakh are stunned to see this argument. Before we begin, it is important to understand that Jeconiah is called by several different names in the Bible, i.e. Jeconiah, Jehoiakhin and Coniah.

"As I live," says HaShem, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand of those whose face you fear--the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans. So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die. But to the land to which they desire to return, there they shall not return. "Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol - A vessel in which is no pleasure? Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, And cast into a land which they do not know? O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of HaShem! Thus says HaShem: 'Write this man down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; **For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.**"

Jeremiah 22:24 – 29

The "problem" arises in the Gospel of Matthew, in the genealogy of Yeshua:

" . . . Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah, and Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. Then after the exile to Babylon Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel . . . "

Matthew 1:10

The anti-missionary argument, therefore, is that since Jeconiah is listed in the genealogy of Yeshua, and the curse of Jeconiah excludes ANY of his descendants from ruling on the throne of David, then Yeshua cannot be the Messiah. However, the Tanakh seems to indicate that the curse on Jeconiah was reversed, through the person of Zerubbabel. Compare this text in Haggai 2 to Jeremiah 22 above:

"In that day, says HaShem Tzva'ot, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says HaShem, and will make thee as a signet ring: for I have chosen thee, says HaShem Tzva'ot."

Haggai 2:23

Notice the phraseology:

" . . . though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the **signet ring** (khotahm, חֹתֶמֶת) on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off..."
Jeremiah 22:24

Now, as noted above, he says to Zerubbabel, the grandson of Jeconiah:

" . . . O Zerubbabel, my servant, and will make thee as a **signet ring** (khotahm, חֹתֶמֶת): for I have chosen thee, says HaShem Tzva'ot."
Haggai 2:23

The phraseology of the "signet ring" here implies that the curse was lifted. Moreover, this argument is in full agreement with Jewish tradition, unlike the arguments of the anti-missionaries. The Talmud says,

"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.* (Jer. XXII, 30). Whereas after he [the king] was exiled, it is written, *And the sons of Jeconiah, — the same is Assir — Shealtiel his son etc. (1 Chr. III, 17)*³³. [He was called] Assir, (Imprisoned) 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.⁴ Zerubbabel [was so called] because he was sown in Babylon. But [his real name was] Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.

Footnotes

33. I Ch. III, 17. Notwithstanding the curse that he should be childless and not prosper, **after being exiled he was forgiven.**

4. Which He had made, to punish Jeconiah with childlessness."

Sanhedrin 37b - 38a, Soncino Press Edition

This is the "death blow" to the Jeconiah curse argument. Numerous places in Judaic literature note that the curse on Jeconiah was annulled:

" . . . they made the Calf and deserved to be exterminated, and I would have thought that He would curse and destroy them, yet, 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, *I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations... In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee 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* (Jer. XXII, 24)."

Numbers Rabbah XX:20, Soncino Press Edition

Pesikta Rabbati, one of the most fascinating works in Rabbinic literature, says:

"R. Joshua ben Levi, however, argued as follows: Repentance sets aside the entire decree, and prayer half the decree. You find that it was so with Jeconiah, king of Judah. For the Holy One, blessed be He, swore in His anger, *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakhim king of Judah were the signet on a hand, yet by My right* - note, as R. Meir said, that is was by His right hand that God swore - *I would pluck thee hence* (Jer. 22:24). And what was decreed against Jeconiah? That he die childless. As is said *Write ye this man childless* (Jer. 22:40). 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.* (1 Chron 3:17). And Scripture says further: *In that day . . . will I take thee, O Zerubbabel . . . the son of Shealtiel . . . and will make thee as a signet* (Haggai 2:23). Behold, then, how penitence can set aside the entire decree!
Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 47, translated by William G. Braude, Yale University Press, pg. 797-798

The Jewish Encyclopedia says, not only was the curse revoked, but that **Jeconiah was the ancestor of the Messiah!**

"Jehoiachin's sad experiences changed his nature entirely, and as he repented of the sins which he had committed as king he was pardoned by G-d, who revoked the decree to the effect that none of his descendants should ever become king (Jer. xxii. 30; Pesi., ed. Buber, xxv. 163a, b); **he even became the ancestor of the Messiah** (Tan., Toledot, 20 [ed. Buber, i. 140])"
Jewish Encyclopedia, Entry on Jehoiachin¹

Many anti-missionaries don't quote these references in their attempts to prove Yeshua's Messiahship is invalidated by the curse of Jeconiah, as it would destroy the foundation of their entire argument. However, Shlomo Ishtov, writing for Messiah Truth, [an anti-missionary organization](#), provides an extensive list of Judaic references to the lifting of the curse from Jeconiah, totally uprooting the initial argument of the anti-missionaries, EVEN after he makes a case as to why, "This curse affects Christian genealogies as found in the New Testament." At first glance, I couldn't tell if he was making the case for or against the "Coniah Conundrum". He cites (Talmud, Sanhedrin 37b-38a, Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 47, Numbers Rabbah XX:20, Pesikta deRab Kahana, Tanhuma Genesis, Rabbi A.J. Rosenberg, and the Jewish Encyclopedia). This brings up a good question: Knowing that Judaism accepts that the curse of Jeconiah was lifted, why do anti-missionaries continue to use it? Do they not know about these numerous references or are they being deceptive, playing on the ignorance of those whom they are seeking to turn away from the Messiah?

Ishtov has a very strange answer, "No Christian, past or present has tried to face the curse in the Jewish manner, and according to Jewish tradition. . . Nor can Evangelical Christianity use the Jewish perspective. To embrace the words of our sages, and the clear proof of the Tanach that the curse is lifted, is to prove that one can attain forgiveness of sin without blood . . ." ²

Again, here we have a classic case of unequal weights and measures. Dr. Michael Brown, a Jewish believer in Yeshua, used the argument concerning the phraseology of the "signet ring" to refute Rabbi David Blumofe's recitation of this argument, back in the 1990's. Moreover, I'm a believer in Yeshua, and I am facing the curse from a Jewish perspective. Therefore, his first argument is completely false. Secondly, to say that believers cannot use Judaic literature is a prime example of the logical fallacies employed by the anti-missionaries. If I cannot use the Talmud to prove my point, then why can anti-missionaries use the New Testament to prove theirs?

1. Jewish Encyclopedia, <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=198&letter=J>
2. *The Curse of Jeconiah Revealed*, Shlomo Ishtov, MessiahTruth.com

Shlomo Ishtov says, of the believers position that Yosef is the legal, adoptive father of Yeshua, "This still makes Jesus, not of the line of David. He isn't David's offspring. Matthew's genealogy serves no purpose. . . According to Evangelical Christians, the genealogy of Luke is that of Mary, his mother. Through this line Jesus makes his connection with David. This is still a problem, as the cursed line appears in Mary's genealogy as well. The virgin birth therefore didn't work, according to this theory."³

Ishtov is correct in noting that Luke's genealogy is that of Miryam's, and therefore nullifies his own point that Yeshua "isn't David's offspring". However, he says that the curse infiltrates even Miryam's genealogy! His "proof" is that Miryam's genealogy cites "Shealtiel and Zerubbabel". To quote Glenn Miller's "death blow" answer to this point:

" The argument is that THEY are descendants of the 'bad Jeconiah' and THEY show up in BOTH the legal (Joseph's) AND the physical (Mary's) lineages of Jesus. And, if the prophecy in Jeremiah is taken to mean a long-range restriction (which I do NOT believe is the case), then we clearly have a problem in the Lukan, physical/gene-stream lineage of Jesus.

But let me ask an impertinent question here. Why do we believe the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of the two lineage's are THE SAME PEOPLE? Think about it:

- They have different parents
- They have different children.
- They are descended from different sons of David.
- Their chronological placements on a time line could differ by as much as a CENTURY! (depending on how the omissions in Matthew are accounted for, and on what the average age of child-bearing was.)

THE ONLY THING THEY HAVE IN COMMON ARE THEIR NAMES! This can hardly be a strong argument for their identity: 1. Zerubbabel was a common name from the early Persian period (539-331bc.), as shown by cuneiform inscriptions from Babylonia (see *ZPEB*, V. 1057) 2. The genealogies themselves have numerous names that repeat WITHIN the genealogy (e.g. Joseph, Mattathias, Judah) without being the same individuals; These names could also be common names. 3. The names in the genealogies are standard, common, everyday names. We have NUMEROUS people named Levi, Amos, Nahum, etc. in the OT accounts. There is just NO REASON to associate the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Luke with the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew. (And even the pattern of S-followed-by-Z doesn't carry much weight-- families often honored prominent people this way.)

What this means is that:

1. The Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew are the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Jeremiah, 2. The Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Luke (whose genes DO reach to Jesus) **are a different set**, descended from Nathan and not through Solomon-thru-Jeconiah. So, as I said at the beginning, I don't even see a problem here at all.³

Ishtov says, noting problems in the apologist argument, states, "Virgins don't give birth." In a simple, yet direct response: "Neither do barren women." Yet, open the Tanakh, and read about numerous instances of this MIRACLE

3. Glenn Miller, *Response to the Fabulous Prophecies of the Messiah*, "Problems in the Genealogies of Jesus". <http://christian-thinktank.com/fabprof4.html>

occurring. Moreover, in our upcoming article, *The Mystery of the Mem*, we demonstrate that the miraculous births in the Tanakh, and other Judaic literature form the prophetic pattern upon which Yeshua's virgin birth occurred.

Although the argument against Yeshua's Messiahship based on the Jeconiah curse has now been totally shattered, we're going to take it a step further. Considering the above, Jewish tradition teaches that Zerubbabel will be the ancestor of the Messiah. Yeshua is descended from David legally through Yosef, and physically from David, through Miryam, whose ancestry traces back through Nathan, not Jeconiah. If this curse were still in effect, it is absolutely impossible for anyone *physically* descending from Zerubbabel to be the Messiah, in contradiction with Jewish tradition. It seems that HaShem has painted Himself into a corner. *Chas v'Sholem!*

Therefore, there is really only one way out of this: A woman of Judah, who is physically from David must have a virgin birth, and be married to a man descending from Jeconiah, so as to confer upon the virgin born son the *legal* heritage necessary to occupy the Throne of David, all the while meeting the prophecy as to be a *physical* descendant of David. This pretty much narrows it down to One Person: Yeshua of Nazareth.

In conclusion, we have seen that A.) the Curse of Jeconiah was lifted, as evidenced in the Tanakh and Judaic literature. B.) That anti-missionaries continue to press on, in error, with the Jeconiah argument, despite the fact that Jewish tradition and the Tanakh pulls the rug right out from under them, totally destroying their argument, and that to maintain their faulty position, they must use unequal weights and measures. C.) If indeed the Jeconiah argument is valid, then it excludes everyone except Yeshua of Nazareth from being the Messiah, thus their own arguments against his Messiahship are actually proof that He is the Messiah.

In light of the above facts, using Ockham's Razor, the simplest explanation is usually the correct one. And, as demonstrated above, the simplest explanation is that Yeshua is the Son of David the Scriptures speak about. Therefore, as we have demonstrated, it is not HaShem who has painted himself into a corner with the Jeconiah curse, it is the anti-missionaries.