

Out of the Whirlwind #2:

The Chariot's Ascent

The exile of Yechonya (Jehoiachin) marks a major turning point in Jewish history, particularly in the decline of the Kingdom of Judah before the destruction of the First Temple.

Summary:

- Who was Yechonya?

Also known as Jehoiachin or Coniah, he was the son of King Yehoyakim and became king of Judah at the age of 18 (some sources say 8, but this is generally interpreted as a scribal error or reference to a co-regency). His reign lasted only three months and ten days.

- Historical Context:

His reign occurred during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar II. Yechonya succeeded his father just as Babylon tightened its grip over Judah.

- The Exile:

In 597 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem. Rather than destroy the city outright, he exiled Yechonya, his family, and 10,000 others—including the elite: officers, craftsmen, and leaders. This is recorded in Melakhim II 24:8–17 and Divrei HaYamim II 36:9–10.

- Aftermath:

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Yechonya's uncle, Tzidkiyahu (Zedekiah), as a puppet king in his place. This exile is often called the First Babylonian Exile or Golah Yechonya, distinct from the final destruction in 586 BCE.

- In Babylon:

Yechonya was imprisoned for 37 years until Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk) succeeded Nebuchadnezzar and released him from prison (Melakhim II 25:27–30), granting him a place of honor among the exiled kings.

- Religious Significance:

According to Jewish tradition, the exile of Yechonya marked the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora in Babylonia, where a strong Torah-centered community eventually flourished. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 37b, Megillah 14b) and Midrashim regard Yechonya's exile as the start of the "seeds" of redemption, as some descendants of Davidic lineage were preserved in Babylon.

Certainly. Here's a slightly more concise chapter-by-chapter summary of Yechezkel 1–24:

1–3: Prophetic Calling

Yechezkel sees a dramatic vision of the Divine Chariot (merkavah), symbolizing God's presence in exile. He is appointed a watchman for Israel and eats a scroll with messages of lamentation—internalizing his mission.

4–5: Symbolic Siege

Yechezkel performs symbolic acts: lying on his side, eating famine rations, shaving his head. These acts foretell Jerusalem's siege, famine, and scattering.

6–7: Judgment on Idolatry

God condemns Israel's idolatrous worship in high places and predicts total destruction—pestilence, war, and exile—culminating in the refrain, "You shall know that I am the Lord."

8–11: Temple Corruption and Shekhinah's Departure

In a vision, Yechezkel sees the idolatry inside the Temple, prompting divine judgment. Angels punish the wicked, and the Divine Presence departs Jerusalem, signifying abandonment.

12–14: Exile Enacted and False Prophets Condemned

Yechezkel acts out Tzidkiyahu's exile. God denounces false prophets and emphasizes that even great figures (Noah, Daniel, Job) cannot save a sinful nation.

15–17: Allegories of Rebellion

- 15: Israel is a useless vine, fit for fire.

- 16: Jerusalem is an unfaithful wife who betrayed God.
 - 17: A parable of two eagles represents Judah's political treachery, but ends with hope for messianic restoration.
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18: Personal Responsibility

Rejects inherited guilt: each person is judged individually. Repentance is always possible—even the wicked can live if they turn from sin.

19–20: Lament and History of Sin

- 19: Lament for fallen kings.
 - 20: Review of Israel's rebellious history, emphasizing divine patience and repeated betrayal.
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21–22: The Unsheathed Sword

God's sword of judgment is ready. Jerusalem is full of bloodshed, corruption, and injustice. No one is righteous—leaders and people are condemned.

23: Oholah and Oholivah

An extended allegory of two sisters—Samaria and Jerusalem—who committed spiritual adultery through idolatry and alliances. Jerusalem's destruction is foretold in graphic terms.

24: Boiling Pot and Personal Tragedy

A parable of a boiling pot represents Jerusalem's impurity. That same day, Yechezkel's wife dies, and he is commanded not to mourn, symbolizing the public's stunned reaction to the Temple's destruction.

ואראה והנה רוח סערה באה מן־הצפון, ענן גדול ואש מתלקחת ונגה לו סביב, ומתוכה כעין החשמל מתוך האש.

And I looked, and behold, a **stormy wind** came from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing up, and a brightness round about it, and out of its midst like the color of electrum, out of the midst of the fire.

2. יחזקאל ג:כג

ואקם ואצא אל־הבקע, והנה שם כבוד־ה' עומד ככבוד אשר ראיתי אל־נהר־כבר, ואפל על־פני.

So I rose and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the Lord was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the River Chebar, and I fell on my face.

3. יחזקאל ח:ד

והנה־שם כבוד א־להי ישראל כמראה אשר ראיתי בבקעה.

And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I had seen in the plain.

4. יחזקאל ט:ג

וכבוד א־להי ישראל נעלה מעל הכרוב אשר היה עליו אל־מפתן הבית...

Now the glory of the God of Israel **had gone up from the cherub**, upon which it had been, to the threshold of the House...

5. יחזקאל י:ד

וירם כבוד־ה' מעל הכרוב על מפתן הבית...

Then the glory of the Lord rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the House...

6. יחזקאל יח:ט

ויצא כבוד־ה' מעל מפתן הבית ויעמד על־הכרובים.

וישאו הכרובים את־כנפיהם וינשאו מן־הארץ לעיני בצאתם... ויעמד כבוד א־להי ישראל עליהם מלמעלה.

Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the House and stood above the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight... and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

7. יחזקאל יא:כג

ויעל כבוד-ה' מעל תוך העיר ויעמד על-ההר אשר מקדם לעיר.

And the glory of the Lord went up from within the city and stood on the mountain which is east of the city.

8. בראשית רבה סח:יב

אמר רבי אחא: גלו לאדום – שכינה עמהם, גלו לבבל – שכינה עמהם.

R. Aḥa said: They went into exile to Edom—the Shekhinah was with them. They went into exile to Babylon—the Shekhinah was with them.

9. מגילה כט ע"א

ומקדש מעט – אלו בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שבבבל.

...שכן אומר: ואהי להם למקדש מעט בארצות אשר באו שם.

"And I was to them as a small sanctuary (mikdash me'at)" – These are the synagogues and study halls in Babylon.

10. שמות רבה ב:ה

בשעה שנגאלו – שבה שכינה למקומה.

When they were redeemed, the Shekhinah returned to its place.

11. ילקוט שמעוני, יחזקאל רמז שמ

עשר מסעות נסעה שכינה... מכפרת לכרובים... לחומת העביר... לעילי הזיתים...

Ten stages did the Shekhinah travel... from the Ark-cover to the cherubim... to the wall of the Temple... to the Mount of Olives...

12. סנהדרין צה ע"א

אמר רבי יוחנן: שלשה שהלך הקדוש ברוך הוא עמהם – אחד מהם גולי בבל.

R. Yoḥanan said: There are three whom the Holy One, blessed be He, went with into exile—one of them was the exiles to Babylon.