



## Haftarah for Bo Jeremiah 36:13-28 January 16, 2016 / 6th Sh'vat 5775

In this week's haftarah for Bo, Jeremiah the prophet tells of a war between two great powers, the Babylonian empire and the Egyptian empire. In this part of the book of Jeremiah he is prophesizing in Egypt where he is in exile, after the destruction of the first temple in 586 BCE. Jeremiah and his people are currently living under Egyptian rule, as the Babylonians and Egyptians fight each other for power and control of the area. Jeremiah tells his fellow exiles of the impending defeat of Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. Jeremiah also explains that this defeat is divine punishment for the Egyptians, and Nebuchadnezzar is carrying it out (Jeremiah 46:25-26).

As Jeremiah prophesizes Pharaoh's downfall he speaks of Egyptian soldiers fleeing and going back to their own land to get away from the violence. Those soldiers then call Pharaoh (Jeremiah 46:17) "Big noise who missed his chance." Meaning that Pharaoh was so concerned with boasting and making loud noise with his army that he missed his chance of winning the battle.

This epithet the soldiers gave to Pharaoh can serve as a reminder for ourselves. Are there times where we make a big noise about something and then miss our chance? One example that came to mind for me is when I spend a lot of time talking and worrying about a specific task I have to do like a paper for school or something for my job, and the more time I spend worrying or complaining about it, the less time I have to actually do it. I make a big noise, and then I lose my time.

Has this ever happened to you? Have we ever been like Pharaoh is described here, talking big and then missing our chance? Another instance of this could take place in competition. We talk big game and end up focusing more on what we are saying, and less on actually playing. Just the other day I was playing air hockey with a friend and as soon as I started talking about how amazing I am at air hockey was when I lost focus and she scored on me.

This idea that Pharaoh got caught up in making noise, in trying to show his power, and missed his chance to defeat his enemies, can also apply to us. When we get caught up in the worrying or complaining or talking big talk, we can also miss out on the chance to actually accomplish the task in the best way possible. Is there something this week we've been talking a lot about, but haven't done yet? This week's haftarah is telling us to stop making noise and instead get down to business before the opportunity passes.

*This week's Unraveller commentary was written by Becca Walker, who is in her final year of rabbinical school at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles and is currently the Rabbinic intern at Or Tzion, a Conservative congregation in Scottsdale Arizona.*