

Jeremiah's Burnt Scroll - The Prophet Jeremiah: 15

(0:00 - 1:19)

Good morning and Shabbat Shalom. Thank you very much for joining me this morning for my Saturday morning scripture study, coming to you live from St. Francisville, Louisiana. This is class number 15 in our ongoing series, The World and Words of the Prophet Jeremiah.

Before I get started today, I wanted to give a couple of announcements. Number one, if you have not yet and you intend to join us in Charlotte, North Carolina for the United Israel World Union Conference. This is our 80th annual meeting and conference.

Please do so. You can find the link on our website. I'm certain that one of our good friends will post that link.

So sign up. There's no charge. However, we do need you to register so that we can make you a nice name tag and we know you're coming and we can plan logistically for you to be there.

So that conference, we're less than 30 days out. The conference is April the 21st through the 23rd, Charlotte, North Carolina, the Hilton at South Park, the Hilton Doubletree at South Park in Charlotte. Please join us.

(1:19 - 1:55)

One other announcement. If you have not yet joined Jono Vandor and me on Thursday evenings, please do so. We're streaming exclusively to my YouTube channel, youtube.com slash Ross K. Nichols TV, and we're doing a study on a critical approach to the Hebrew Bible, textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.

That's Thursday evenings, 8 p.m. Central Time. I hope you can join us. So good morning.

(1:57 - 7:12)

Yesterday, a very interesting article was posted online from Biblical Archaeology Review Magazine, and the article was written by Nathan Steinmeier, and the subject of the article, it was called The Race to Read the Herculaneum Scrolls. So I'm kind of a scroll guy, so, and I've heard of the Herculaneum Scrolls, so I was interested as to why this article would be coming up in my newsfeed. So I read it, and the article is about an exciting opportunity that was called the Vesuvius Challenge.

The Vesuvius Challenge, and this Vesuvius Challenge was launched to encourage a competition to decipher the contents of scrolls that comprised a burnt-up library from Herculaneum, which is why the title is The Race to Read the Herculaneum Scrolls. Now these scrolls were carbonized from the heat caused from this cataclysmic Vesuvius eruption that took place in 79 of the Common Era. Now over time, there's been quite a bit of work to try to read the scrolls from this library.

It's fascinating. Imagine it's like this vast library, obviously somebody wealthy, there's speculation as to whose library this is, but they can't read the scrolls because the scrolls are, as it were, encased and sealed because of the extreme heat. So the Vesuvius Challenge is a

competition that's backed by two Silicon Valley multi-millionaires, billionaires, people with money, and they're offering over a million dollars in prize money.

Now I'm not telling you this because I think that we collectively could jump on this project, though if I could and I had time, I'd probably take a crack at it. But as they say, it's probably all Greek to me. Those scrolls are a little bit late in my taste, and the subject matter so far has not really piqued my interest.

But the idea of burnt, charred scrolls which need to be read caught my attention. So more than a million dollars in prize money. One of the prizes, the grand prize, is \$700,000 for the first team that can read four consecutive, at least four separate passages of continuous and plausible text from the scrolls.

Now they've got the technology to pull this off, and the backers are even providing some of the technology for teams that want to take a crack at this. And by the way, \$50,000 will be rewarded to anyone who can successfully detect ink on these scrolls, behind the charring, you know. Now, after three and a half centuries, less than one-third of this library has been successfully unrolled because of the condition of the scrolls.

When they try to unroll them, even with special care, special equipment, and techniques, it's just not very likely that they're going to be able to unroll them. So they're using other means to read through the charring and determine what it is that these scrolls contain. And we believe, based on the part of the scrolls that have been successfully read in all or in part, mainly in part, most of this is stoic philosophy.

If that interests you, and you have the skill sets, and you get all that money, you know, best to you. But I have something that I think is even more important, requires a little less skill, but nonetheless, it requires skill. Today's teaching is called Reading Jeremiah's Burnt Scroll.

You see how my mind works? I saw the ad, it was talking about burnt scrolls, it just so happened to be what I was thinking about. Relax, there's no prize money here. Not from me, and I doubt that you're going to send me prize money for what I have in store for you.

(7:12 - 19:54)

However, nonetheless, it's exciting. On a cold, wintry day in 604 BCE, I know the month, I don't know exactly the day, but I do know it was cold. I do know it was winter, as I said, I know the month.

The original Jeremiah scroll was cut up piece by piece. It would read, a man named Yehudi would read two or three, four columns, probably about when he would hit the stitching of the scroll, he would cut, toss it into the fire, until at last the entire manuscript, the precious manuscript, written by the hand of Baruch ben Niriah, which we happen to know, there is his seal on the screen, the entire manuscript was consumed in the flame. So, my question at the outset of today is, can we, together, you with me, with any degree of certainty, pull as it were, from ancient times, any of the charred remains of Jeremiah's original scroll out of the fire? Could we face a similar challenge, if someone said, Ross, there's prize money here, if we can just get four separate passages of continuous and plausible text? Now, in my mind, this is far more important, far more interesting than Stoic philosophy in a library at Herculaneum.

So, today, I'm basically announcing what I would call the Jehoiakim challenge, if you will allow me, whereas Vesuvius charred the remains of the Herculaneum scrolls, Jehoiakim was the one who burnt up the scroll that I'm interested in. Again, unfortunately, there is no real financial reward, but what could be more rewarding than identifying with a fair degree of certainty words of a scroll containing the actual message from God to Jeremiah, as the text would have it, to the people of his day, and quite possibly, as I will show you, laying the groundwork for the most important shift in ancient religion that's relevant even for today. Now, we're not going to be using x-ray tomography, but we will be required to be no less scientific in our approach, and what I mean by that is we'll use scientific method.

We will allow the text to speak for itself. We will look into the Bible as far as what does it say? What does the book of Jeremiah tell us about this scroll? Do we have other historical sources which we can lean on to discern, quite possibly, the message of the original scroll? Now, you might be thinking, well, we have the book of Jeremiah, and therefore we don't need this exercise, because unlike the Herculaneum scrolls, the book of Jeremiah is an accurate reflection of what Jeremiah actually wrote. Well, we shall see if that is the case.

So, if you're ready, I want to begin. In 605 BCE, God spoke to Jeremiah according to the book of Jeremiah. Go with me this morning to the book of Jeremiah chapter 36.

Jeremiah chapter 36, and I want to begin in 36 verse 1. In the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, son of Josiah of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord. Get a scroll and write upon it all the words that I have spoken to you concerning Israel and Judah and all the nations from the time I first spoke to you in the days of Josiah to this day. Perhaps, when the house of Judah hear of all the disasters I intend to bring upon them, they will turn back from their wicked ways, and I will pardon their iniquity and their sin.

So, Jeremiah called the Baruch b'nei Yah, and Baruch wrote down in the scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words which the Lord had spoken to him. So, I'm curious, what did this scroll contain? Can we follow textual clues to reconstruct it? In 36, chapter 36 verses 2 through 4, we know that it contained all of the words that God had spoken to Jeremiah, and then it qualifies it even more. It says, concerning Israel and concerning Judah and concerning all the nations.

So, the words that God spoke to Jeremiah, which ultimately, through the pen of Baruch, will end up on this scroll, we're already beginning to get clues. This scroll contained messages, follow me, from God to Jeremiah, from Jeremiah to Baruch, from Baruch's hand to the scroll, concerning Israel, Judah, and all the nations. But this is qualified even further.

It says, quote, from the time that I first spoke to you in the days of Josiah to this day. Okay, so now we know that the contents of, let's call this the original Jeremiah, is covering a period from 627 BCE until 605 BCE. In other words, from the 13th year of Josiah until the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

So, we know that this 23-year period is all that was in there. You understand what I'm saying? It's from the time God first spoke to him. We know we have a date for that, 13th year of Josiah's reign.

We know it from several places. Jeremiah is very consistent to report that. Now, remember, the Moses scroll is discovered in the 18th year of Josiah's reign.

Josiah reigns for 31 years. So, what that means is, this original book of Jeremiah would contain prophetic words, according to the text here, prophetic words that came from God to Jeremiah, that passed from Jeremiah to Baruch, that made it into the book. 19 years worth of messages.

We don't know how many there were yet. We're on a hunt. But 19 years of Josiah's reign, where there's an overlap between Josiah's 13th year to the 31st year, 19 years, and Jeremiah's prophetic career.

Now, it did not, hear me, the original book of Jeremiah contained absolutely nothing after that, right? From the fourth year, when this mission comes to write down the words that God spoke to him, everything after that was not in the original. And how do I know that? Because that's what we're doing, is following textual clues. So, anything related to the events from the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which is an 11-year reign, by the way.

So, the seven years of Jehoiakim, which follow the writing of the scroll, that's not in this scroll. From the end of Jehoiakim's reign unto Jehoiakim's reign, and then unto Zedekiah's reign, which was an 11-year reign, up to the fifth month, and the exile into Babylon, none of that was in the original scroll. So, you see my mission is tight.

I'm trying to recover the message of Jeremiah edition one. Not worried about the rest yet. We'll get to that.

I'm just focused on version one. So, by a careful reading of the book of Jeremiah, I believe, and I will put forth to prove to you, that we can begin to make some inroads, a preliminary list of possibilities of what could have been in Jeremiah version one, the original Jeremiah scroll. Now, how will I rank these the way I do everything? I make lists.

So, here's the way my list works on paper. Imagine this. I have four columns, and I even have them color-coded, and column one is likely.

In other words, it's very likely that this would have been in Jeremiah edition one. I have another column immediately to the right, going left to right, likely. Then I have possible, and then I have a column three that is not likely, and all the way to the right is not possible.

You say, well, how do you know what is not possible? Because we're following textual clues. So, events occurring in the 23-year period between 627 BCE and 605 BCE, those are going to be in my initial list either in a likely or a possible category. Why? Because they're not excluded by being outside of the window of possibility.

Now, of course, anything that occurs after 605 BCE and beyond, I'm not questioning the divine inspiration, I'm not telling you that was not in Jeremiah version one. So, hopefully that makes sense. So, it's really fairly simple in that sense to begin to develop through textual clues what is contained in Jeremiah's original book.

We use words and phrases and chronological clues as well, particularly when we have a name. So, for instance, if I'm reading along in our current book of Jeremiah, which is my

main searching document, I'm peering through a charred document looking for clues as to what it said before it was sealed at a later point. So, follow me on the quest.

(19:54 - 21:08)

But if I see a king, if it says in the days of King Zedekiah, it was not in the original, you see. Zedekiah is later. If it talks about in the such-and-such year of Nebuchadnezzar, I can do the math because I know according to the book of Jeremiah that the fourth year of Jehoiakim is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar.

So, if I'm reading about a later time, I can say, well, that's outside my window. Now, let me give you an example of something that probably is one of those words that was originally written in the original Jeremiah. Remember, this scroll is burned up.

It's whacked up by Yehudi, and he cast it into the fire. He reads a column, reads a column, reads a column, whack, and he tosses it in the fire. And then God tells Jeremiah, we're going to get into this in a few moments, you and Baruch make another scroll and put in it the same words that were in the first scroll.

All right. So, here's something. Go with me to Jeremiah chapter three.

(21:14 - 22:39)

Jeremiah chapter three and verse six. The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah. Now, I know that according to Jeremiah, the word of the Lord didn't come into him until the 13th year of Josiah.

So, if he's reporting a word of the Lord in the days of Josiah, put a check mark by that. This section of text is part of the original Jeremiah. It is likely at least possible.

You see what I'm saying? It's certainly not unlikely or impossible, but it's got the possibility of being something that was in that original scroll. So, let me read a little bit of it. Have you seen what rebel Israel did? Now, this is talking about the northern kingdom, not Judah.

Going to every high mountain and under every leafy tree and whoring there. I thought after she's done all these things, she'll come back to me, but she didn't come back. And her sister, faithless Judah saw it.

I noted because rebel Israel had committed adultery. I cast her off and handed her a bill of divorce. Yet her sister, faithless Judah was not afraid.

(22:40 - 25:25)

She too went and whored and it goes on. So, you can imagine this being in Jeremiah version one and being read not once, not twice, but three times leading up to it being cut up and destroyed in the fire. Now, let me tell you this.

As I built my list, I'm dealing first with levels of probability. You would put together a table, a distribution of possibilities, right? Some of you do this kind of thing in your personal work outside of biblical studies. It's a very methodical way of doing things.

So, I would go if I have a distribution, if I look at there are 52 chapters in the book of Jeremiah. As I work through those, I'm able to quickly say, this chapter belongs in the likely or the possible column. These chapters belong in the not likely and not possible columns.

And then you begin to look. So, you can quickly begin to assess how difficult will it be because some we don't know. You just have to say, well, it's possible.

We don't have a date. We don't have any real clues in the text. So, we have to kind of place.

And we can't, by the way, we cannot trust the order of the current book of Jeremiah. You just can't do it. It's jumbled.

It's jumbled very much so. So, you're going to find out as we work through this study. This is sort of a study within our bigger study.

Over the next few weeks, you're going to see that far more of the known chapters deal outside of our distribution table of likely and possible. What am I saying? I'm saying that a lot of what we have in our present book of Jeremiah is not likely and absolutely not part of the original Jeremiah scroll. So, it becomes sort of a challenge.

Now, let me give you a few of the examples, a few examples of what could be. Let me do it this way. What could not possibly be part of the original Jeremiah scroll? And you'll see this rather quickly.

All right. Look at Jeremiah chapter 21. Jeremiah 21.

(25:27 - 27:43)

Here we go. The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashur son of Malkiah and the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseah to say, you see, now that can't be part of the original Jeremiah. Why? I know this.

I don't want to just talk down to people. I know you get it. See, that's the time of Zedekiah.

It's after 605 BCE. All right. So, can't be.

Look at chapter 22 and go down to verse 24. As I live, declares the Lord, if you, O King Konyah, son of Jehoiakim of Judah, were a signet on my right hand, I would tear you off even from there. Not part of the original scroll.

It's the time of Jeconiah. Look at chapter 24. We're just going to scroll through a few.

Chapter 24. Here we go. The Lord, verse 1, showed me two baskets of figs.

When, Jeremiah, when did the Lord show you this? They were placed in front of the temple of the Lord. This was after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had exiled King Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim of Judah and the officials of Judah. You see, that's after, not part of the original.

Look at chapter 27. Now, 27 is a little bit tricky because it's got a textual corruption. It's got a mistake in the text.

It says, at the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim, son of Josiah. Now, this would trick you like you'd go, wait a minute, this could be part of the original scroll because it's the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim. But there's a problem because if you keep reading, you'll see, look down at verse 3, and send them to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, the king of Sidon by envoys who have come to King Zedekiah of Judah of Jerusalem.

(27:43 - 29:03)

In other words, it gives itself away. The rest of this text clearly indicates that this is from the time of Zedekiah and not Jehoiakim. Now, the Hebrew text here does say Jehoiakim, but it's clearly a error, possibly because the previous chapter is in the proper time frame.

It is at the beginning of the time of Jehoiakim, so what we have here is a scribe had just finished writing the previous section, most likely. This is a very logical way to think about this, and at the end of finishing that one, began a new section, and just in the scribe's mind, he says, at the beginning of the reign, you know, he says, Bre'shi, and he's working his way. He just wrote this phrase, and he accidentally, inadvertently puts the wrong name.

So that could trick you, but this text is not, cannot be part of the original scroll. Look at chapter 28. That year, early in the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, wrong king, can't be part of the original.

(29:03 - 29:31)

Look at chapter 29. This is the text of a letter which the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the priest, the prophets, the rest of the elders of the exile community, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon, after King Jeconiah, the queen mother, the, you see, Jeconiah. Too late.

Sorry, not part of it. Now notice I'm skipping. I'm skipping.

(29:31 - 29:36)

You're going to wonder why. Some of you think you know already. Chapter 32.

(29:36 - 29:54)

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the 10th year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. So this is way late. This can't possibly be.

(29:54 - 35:42)

Not only is it the wrong king, but this is almost at the end. Notice chapter 32. Again, the chapters are, none of these are in order.

Now it wasn't done in some mystical, magical way. It wasn't, there's not some design, a divine design here that put them out of order. This is just a corruption.

And the reason I know that for sure, it's not like you're, like it's to hide it from some bad sources or whatever. It ultimately, it's just not in the right order. And it's clear, it's easy to figure out because I just read.

It's the 10th year of King Zedekiah. A person with any time and industry could put these in order. You know, you go, well, that goes late.

That chapter 32 ought to be almost at the very end of the book. Someone wrote me and said, are you going to do this? It's on the list. How's that? Hopefully I live to be 120 and I can get to that.

Look at chapter 34. Notice I'm skipping 33, 34. The word, which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth and all the people under his sway were waging war against Jerusalem and all its towns.

You'd go, well, there were a couple of invasions. Could this be? Well, here we go. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, go speak to King Zedekiah of Judah.

You see, outside of our focus. Now chapter 36, we're going to skip over. Most of 36 concerns events after the scroll was written.

Chapter 37, I'm going to pick it up, pick up my pace a little bit here. Chapter 37 is Zedekiah's time. Chapter 38 and 39, the time of Zedekiah.

Chapter 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, all deal post exile. Now, according to my initial list, my first pass through, I'm looking for what can I, with a reasonable degree of certainty, put in the likely or possible columns and which, what chapters or sections of chapters would I put in the not likely, not possible columns? 18 of 52 chapters. You do the math.

18 of 52 are clearly not part of the original scroll. Okay? Now, the writing and the composition of Jeremiah's original scroll. Look with me at chapter 36.

We're going to look at what do we know? You know, we begin with what we know. We may have to speculate some, but I don't like to do that until I get everything nailed down that I know with a high degree of certainty before I get into any kind of, you know, speculation. So, look at 36, Jeremiah 36, verse 4. So, Jeremiah called Baruch ben Neriah, the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote down in the scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words which the Lord had spoken to him.

So, we want to want to know what we know. What we know from the text is that Jeremiah is speaking, he's telling Baruch, Baruch is writing, Jeremiah is saying, thus said the Lord to me, and Baruch is writing down what he tells him. Later in the story, in the same narrative block, remember, Jeremiah is detained.

He can't go to read the scroll. Now, this is in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, but they either, they take a while to record all of this, like I've written a book, it doesn't just happen. So, you gotta, it takes a little while.

They're working on this, and so what we have to know is, at the end of this time, they're, they don't, he doesn't read the scroll. Baruch is told to go read the scroll and read it during a fast day. Well, that doesn't take place until the fifth year of Jehoiakim, and then we read the story, but after it's read, Baruch is questioned.

Baruch is questioned, how does this go on? You tell us how this process works, and I'm going to go to verse 17. Verse 17 of 36 says the following, and they questioned Baruch

further, tell us how you wrote down all these words that he spoke. In verse 18, he answered them, he himself recited all those words to me, and I would write them down in the scroll in ink.

(35:42 - 36:09)

You see? So, he tells him that he's repeating, he's telling us how this process goes about. As we get into the contents of Jeremiah's first edition, it is worth remembering that this scroll was burned by Yehoiakim, or you could say by Yehudi. It's a little bit unclear.

(36:09 - 42:48)

Look at chapter 36, verse 22. Since it was the ninth month, the king was sitting in the winter house with a fire burning in the brassiere before him, and every time Yehudi read three or four columns, he would cut it up with a scribe's knife and throw it into the fire until the entire scroll was consumed by the fire. So, you see we have this, the fire is burning, he reads a little bit, he cuts it.

We don't know, is it Yehoiakim or is it Yehudi? It seems to me most logically that it is Yehudi who's doing this, but either way, I wouldn't put it past Yehoiakim. Remember, Yehoiakim is the prophet slayer. He is an evil man.

Now, what's interesting to me is that we actually have evidence as to what led them to burn the scroll. We know what it was that set King Yehoiakim off and caused him to burn the scroll, and you could say, it was just the whole scroll. No, it wasn't.

In fact, I think what we have here is evidence of something that was in the scroll, a particular passage from the scroll that's reported in the book of Jeremiah. So, listen to this. I think you'll be sort of interested to hear this clue.

It's presented as a word of the Lord in our present book of Jeremiah, and it's revealed after the burning of the scroll, and it tells us what it was that led Yehoiakim to want this scroll consumed in the flames. Okay, so look with me at chapter 36 of Jeremiah, verse 27. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah after the king had burned the scroll containing the words that Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation.

Get yourself another scroll and write upon it the same words that were in the first scroll that was burned by King Yehoiakim of Judah. I see there, according to the Lord, according to our current book of Jeremiah, Yehoiakim is the one who burned the scroll, but we don't know, does he just get, he gets credited for it, if you will, because he's part of it, right? You're the king. The book stops here.

Now look, here's what it says in verse 29, and concerning King Yehoiakim of Judah, you shall say, thus said the Lord, you burned that scroll saying, how dare you write in it that the king of Babylon will come and destroy this land and cause man and beast to cease from it. Now that's interesting. He's saying that in the scroll, Jeremiah, the first edition, there is a passage that set him off and caused King Yehoiakim to say, you wrote this, Jeremiah, that the king of Babylon will come and destroy this land and cause man and beast to cease from it.

Now, if we take this at face value, it means that within version one, there was this threat, namely that the king of Babylon would come and destroy the land and cause man and beast

to cease from it. So I want to know, let me see if I can find anything close to that in the current book of Jeremiah. Remember, God tells Jeremiah, Jehoiakim burned the scroll up.

You're going to make another one, put the same words in it and add some more. So it ought to have at least what was in version one. Well, at least when I read this, Jeremiah 36, 27 to 29, I get evidence that in version one was this verse or something like it.

Now, I would also assume that it would occur or appear in edition one early because if this threat of Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and causing man and beast to cease, the reason I suggest it had to be read early, this is one of the way I think, is because from the beginning of the reading of the scroll, Yehudi would read a and cut and throw it in the fire. So either it's an exaggeration on Jehoiakim's part to suggest that that's the reason he burned it, or maybe I'm being too strict. Quite possibly, it is something which is not exact.

Maybe it's a paraphrase or something. So we could say that those possibly, those who heard the scroll read, we had two groups prior to Yehudi reading it to King Jehoiakim, we had two groups read, listen, hear the scroll of Jeremiah edition one read. How do I know that? It was read the first time by Baruch in the chamber of Gamar-Yahu, the son of Shaphan.

(42:48 - 47:52)

Remember we did a class on the Shaphan family. So the first time it's read, it's on the Temple Mount, it's in the chamber of Gamar-Yahu, and then those that were there heard it. One of the people who was there was Shaphan's grandson, Gamar-Yahu's son, who then runs to the king's palace in verse 14 of 36.

He tells about the reading of the scroll, and they send and fetch and bring Baruch and the scroll to the palace to read it. All right, so you remember that. Now some of those who heard the scroll read did urge the king not to burn it.

You had Gamar-Yahu. Gamar-Yahu is the son of Shaphan. He tries to tell, he begs the king, don't burn the scroll.

All right, there's another person that we know. The name of this man is Elnatan Ben-Akbar. Elnatan Ben-Akbar just happens to be the guy who Jehoiakim sends to fetch Uriah the prophet from Egypt and bring him back, and then Jehoiakim kills him with the sword.

So Elnatan, the son of Akbar, was in the room as they're trying to, they're burning the scroll, and he and Gamar-Yahu are saying, please don't burn the scroll. Because they know, they know this is authentic, and they know it's a real message from God, and that they're going to bring all hell down on them when they do what this they're doing, and that's exactly what happens. But it was burned anyway as it was read.

Now look with me at chapter 36, Jeremiah 36, verse 28. This, it says, God said, get yourself another scroll, write upon it the same words that were in the first scroll that was burned by King Jehoiakim of Judah. Now look down at verse 32.

So Jeremiah got another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and at Jeremiah's dictation, he wrote in it the whole text of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned, and more of the like was added. So if we have an accurate record and reason

that Jehoiakim burned the scroll, and that was because Jeremiah's original scroll contained this threat that the king of Babylon was coming, and he would eliminate man and beast, etc. If it was in version 1, it ought to be in version 2. You see, because we have this verse here, he wrote down the whole text that was in the scroll that Jehoiakim burned.

So my thinking was that I could find that in version 2 or 3 or whatever it is we have in the current book of Jeremiah. We don't have that passage any longer. It's not in our current Meseretic text.

Now that opens up a whole nother question. Could I find that in the Septuagint? Might it be in one of the Dead Sea Scroll versions of Jeremiah? That's what I'm curious about, because it is not in the edition of Jeremiah that we have. I looked.

Now, the first thing I did was I looked in the sections that clearly fit within the time frame. What's the time frame? 23 years from 627 BCE to 605 BCE. I wanted to see, is it in the material that falls within the right window? But then I looked also in other texts.

I looked for individual words and phrases, because we know that our current book of Jeremiah has some textual difficulties. It has some mistakes in it, like the one in chapter 27, where it says that it's in the days of Jehoriakim, but it's really the days of Zedekiah. Then I said, well, just look in every bit of Jeremiah, see if we can find it.

So I did. I searched the whole text. I searched for the phrase, the king of Babylon will come.

(47:53 - 48:21)

King of Babylon turns up plenty of times, but every single reference deals with a later time. I looked for he will come. Perhaps it was someone else that would come.

That phrase does not occur. I look for the phrase come and destroy. It's not there.

I look for destroy this land. It's not there. I look for destroy and cut off.

Not there. I look for cut off from it. Man and beast.

(48:21 - 48:29)

Not there. Man and beast is the only match, but it's something else. We'll talk about that later.

(48:29 - 52:40)

Zero hits. Now, why am I bringing this up? It's a puzzle. Is that really the reason it's presented as the word of the Lord saying, the word of the Lord says, you tell Jehoriakim this.

Jehoriakim, you said, how dare you write this in the scroll? You see how that makes me think it must have been in the original scroll. We're going to come back to this. Now, it could be, it could be that the overall sense that Jehoriakim got from hearing the words of the scroll is that an attack was imminent, that Babylon was coming.

Now, he would have had reason to believe, even if he didn't say the king of Babylon, that it would be the king of Babylon who would do that. Why would I say that? Because we know

from history that Nebuchadnezzar that very year defeated Egypt, Necho at Carchemish. Remember last week, I had the map up.

He defeated him at the Euphrates and drove Necho out of the land of Judah back into Egypt, and then he stationed himself in the land of Israel. We know that. So, if you're Jehoiakim and you're listening to Yehudi read the scroll, and it even suggests that destruction is coming, you can look out the window and see these big Babylonian troops.

So, you're like, how dare you say that the king of that, you see what I'm... So, he could be making a leap, and maybe, but I'm trying to... Now, I'm in the possible window. I'm not in the likely window. You see how I'm working to determine what's very likely what happened, what's possible, that was a possible, what is not likely, and what is impossible.

These are the kind of things that we have to work through in order to determine what it is that was in the original. Now, look at chapter 36, verse 30. Again, this is a continuation of the word of the Lord that began in verse 27.

Listen to verse 30. By the way, this is a problem that we have to work through. I'm just going to touch on it today.

Assuredly, verse 30, thus said the Lord concerning King Jehoiakim of Judah, he shall not have any of his line sitting on the throne of David, and his own corpse shall be left exposed to the heat by day and the cold by night. And I will punish him and his offspring and his courtiers for their iniquity. I'll bring on them and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and on all the men of Judah all the disasters of which I've warned them, but they would not listen.

Now, why do I say that's a problem? It is a problem because King Jehoiakim here is told that no one, any of his line will sit on the throne of David. Guess what happens? His son sits on the throne of David. His name is Jeconiah.

Now, he doesn't sit long, but he does sit on the throne. And then what about his death? What do we know? It says in chapter 30, verse B, or verse chapter 36, 30B says that Jeconiah's corpse will be left out in the sun and in the cold. Look with me.

(52:40 - 53:13)

Let's see what the historians say about that. Look at second Kings 24 in verse six. Well, look at verse five.

The other events of Jehoiakim's reign and all of his actions are recorded in the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. Jehoiakim slept with his father and his son Jeconiah succeeded him as king. You see how we got a different story going in Jeremiah.

(53:13 - 53:40)

Uh, well, let's look at Chronicles and see maybe Chronicles is closer. Look at second Chronicles 30, second Chronicles 35, 35 verse five through eight, 36, five through eight. Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem.

(53:40 - 54:12)

He did what was displeasing to the Lord is God. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched against him. He bound him in fetters to convey him to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar also brought some vessels of the Lord to Babylon and set them in his palace in Babylon. The other events of Jehoiakim's reign and the abominable things he did and what was found against him are recorded in the book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. His son, Jehoiakim succeeded him as king.

(54:12 - 54:40)

So now we've got three different stories. You see how this is a mystery. This may be harder than the Herculaneum scrolls because we've got three different accounts.

We have one account says that he's not going to have any, none of his seed will succeed him as king. He's going to be, his dead body is going to be left out in the heat and the cold. Second Kings 24 says he sleeps with his fathers and his son reigns in his stead.

(54:41 - 55:06)

Second Chronicles says that he's carried away captive into Babylon and his son reigns in his stead. So we've got to, we've got to really dig deep to figure out which of these accounts represents a more accurate view of the historical record here. But these issues are outside of the scope of really digging in to fully explore them today.

(55:06 - 55:22)

My question has become, can we with any confidence reconstruct any of the burn scroll? We know several things. We know when it was written. It's written in 605 BCE.

(55:22 - 55:34)

We know other things that are going on around us. We know that in the same year that the scroll was written, Nebuchadnezzar rose to power. It's his first year.

(55:35 - 56:41)

We also know that in Nebuchadnezzar's first year, he defeats Necho at Carchemish along the Euphrates and drives Egypt southward through the land of Israel out of the land of Israel and into Egypt and then remains in Judah with, in Judea with some forces. We'll learn more about that in future classes. We know that it contained the words that the Lord spoke to Jeremiah from the 13th year of Josiah until the fourth year of Jehoiakim and nothing else.

The fifth year of Jehoiakim wasn't in there. We also know what the intended result was. Look back at Jeremiah 36 and verse 3. This is what was supposed, what the scroll was supposed to produce.

(56:42 - 57:07)

Perhaps when the house of Judah hear of all the disasters I intend to bring upon them, they will turn back from their wicked ways and I will pardon their iniquity and their sin. That's what's supposed to happen. What happens instead is Jehoiakim and Yehudi burn the scroll piece by piece as it's read.

(57:09 - 57:50)

Jehoiakim says what really set him off was a reference in the scroll, in the scroll, to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar would come and destroy, leaving neither man nor beast. Now interestingly enough, the intended result is that they will turn back from their wicked ways

and I'll pardon their iniquity and their sin. There is only one passage that uses that precise phrase as we read here in the Hebrew, only one in biblical literature.

(57:51 - 1:01:41)

And it happens to come from a place in the book of Jeremiah that's described as being written in a scroll. And it's a very interesting passage. And we're going to get into that.

Now I want you to go with me to Jeremiah chapter 1. Jeremiah chapter 1. The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, one of the priests of Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin, the word of the Lord came to him in the days of King Josiah, the son of Ammon of Judah in the 13th year of his reign. Ladies and gentlemen, I propose to you that that was part of the original scroll. Now how can I be certain? It's in the likely column because it accurately reflects the timing and most of the evidence that we have from antiquity says that most of these ancient scrolls begin with a prologue, if you will, something at the beginning which introduces the work in the author.

Now if you look at verse 3, and throughout the days of King Jehoiakim, son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the 11th year of King Zedekiah, son of Josiah of Judah, when Jerusalem went into... see that? None of that in this present form was part of the original scroll. But it could be that what we're looking at here is an example of scribal method that the latter was added to bring up to date the current edition. You see what I'm saying? Because the initial one just says these are the words that Jeremiah spoke that the Lord spoke to him in the day, and then it gives you... oh, and in this time.

Zedekiah, by the way, notice it says the 11th year of King Zedekiah, son of Josiah of Judah. We're also going to have to take a look at that later because Zedekiah is not Josiah's son. So we've got some difficult days ahead in this study, but they're fascinating as we unpack this.

We read that Jehoiakim, according to chapter 36, Jehoiakim is told no son of yours will sit upon the throne, but Jehoiakim does sit upon the throne. Short period of time, but he does. We also read that Jeconiah would be cut off and so forth.

So we have to look at what do we know about this throne of the kingdom of David, and what is the future of that? When we read in Jeremiah about a coming monarch, how do we bring that into the focus of these other texts which suggest that a son of that line can't sit upon the throne? Interesting stuff. Interesting things ahead. So don't miss a single class in this series as we work to recover the original scroll of Jeremiah.

(1:01:42 - 1:01:44)

Shabbat Shalom. Shavua Tov.