

Prophecy in the Days of Josiah - The Prophet

Jeremiah: 4

(0:47 - 1:16)

Good morning, Shabbat Shalom and welcome to United Israel World Union and the world and words of Jeremiah the prophet. This is class number four, prophecy in the days of Josiah, prophecy in the days of Josiah. So what I'm going to do today is I'm going to go a little bit wide on the approach.

(1:16 - 1:50)

I'm going to take us to a point where we put some parameters on the time of Josiah and I'm going to pull out some things from this period that I think are important and enable us to get inside the world and words of Jeremiah the prophet. Remember, we have five kings that make up the final 40 years, basically, of the kingdom of Judah. And so we want to begin to focus on the reign of each of those kings.

(1:50 - 2:14)

So we begin, obviously, in the beginning. We begin at the end, meaning we begin with the king, Josiah, who leads us to the very end, basically. So what we're going to do is we're going to be focused on a specific time frame, namely the year 640 BCE until 609 BCE.

(2:15 - 3:06)

We're looking at this 31 years, basically, of the time of Jeremiah. We're dealing with Josiah ben Ammon, Josiah ben Ammon, Yoshiyahu. He assumes the throne after the assassination of his father and he reigns until the time of his death on a battlefield or, now get this, or, and we have to go through both of these sources, either dies on a battlefield or he dies in Jerusalem as a result of injuries that he sustained on a battlefield when he is engaged with the reluctant King Necho of Egypt at a place called Megiddo.

(3:07 - 3:24)

We're going to talk about that as well. Now, I want to look at both of those texts to start us off. If you'll go with me this morning, I'm going to start with the JPS, but if you'll go with me this morning, let's look at 2 Kings chapter 23.

(3:24 - 3:36)

2 Kings chapter 23. I'm going to show you both of these accounts of the end of Josiah's time. Now, why am I going there? It will all make sense shortly.

(3:36 - 4:11)

So, if you go to chapter 23 of 2 Kings, verse, let's see, 2 Kings 23 and 30, let's go ahead and start in verse 29. In his days, Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, marched against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah marched toward him, but when he confronted him at Megiddo, Pharaoh Necho slew him.

(4:12 - 4:34)

His servants conveyed his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem, and they buried him in his tomb. Now, in the Hebrew, it says literally that he was killed, and they took his dead

body from Megiddo, where it was dead. They brought him to Jerusalem, and they buried him.

(4:34 - 4:47)

Now, go to the account, same account, same story, but a different source. You look at 2 Chronicles chapter 35. 2 Chronicles chapter 35.

(4:48 - 5:04)

And, let's begin in verse 20. After all his refurbishing of the temple by Josiah, all of this refurbishing, king Necho of Egypt came up to fight at Carcamesh on the Euphrates. A little more specific.

(5:05 - 5:21)

And Josiah went out against him. Necho sent messengers to him, saying, What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I do not march against you this day, but against the kingdom that wars with me. And it is God's will that I hurry.

(5:22 - 5:34)

Refrain them from interfering with God who is with me. This is the Egyptian king Necho to Josiah. That he'd not destroy you, but Josiah would not let him alone.

(5:34 - 5:43)

Instead, he donned his armor to fight him. Heedless of Necho's words from the mouth of God. And he came to fight in the plain of Megiddo.

(5:44 - 6:03)

Archers shot king Josiah, and the king said to his servants, Get me away from here, for I'm badly wounded. His servants carried him out of his chariot and put him in a wagon of his second-in-command and conveyed him to Jerusalem. There he died and was buried in the grave of his fathers.

(6:03 - 6:15)

And all Judah and Jerusalem went into mourning over Josiah. So we have two different accounts. That's not a big deal, but I want you to see both accounts.

(6:15 - 6:29)

One account says that the end of Josiah comes on a battlefield at Megiddo. He's shot, he dies, they bring his dead body back to Jerusalem and bury him in a tomb. Chronicles gives similar story.

(6:30 - 6:39)

Battle takes place at Megiddo. He goes up, he's shot, he's badly wounded. They load him in another cart, they bring him to Jerusalem.

(6:39 - 7:18)

You might say, well, what's the big deal? The bottom line is, Necho and the army of Egypt shoot and ultimately bring about the death of king Josiah. Now my question, beginning at the top of this class, is number one, why is it that Josiah is engaged in battle with Necho of

Egypt? What's the purpose of that battle? And did he not have anyone to warn him? Think about this. He's 39 years old.

(7:18 - 7:25)

We're going to take this apart. But I have questions when I look at this text. We're talking about the time of Josiah.

(7:25 - 7:33)

We're talking specifically about prophecy in the days of Josiah. Now here, I just touched it. We'll come back to it shortly.

(7:33 - 8:10)

But King Necho says, according to the mouth of God, don't mess with me because God has put me in this place to do this thing. Necho warns him supposedly from the mouth of God, which in a way is prophecy in the days of Josiah. Josiah doesn't listen.

Josiah is killed. Now, according to Chronicles, Necho was en route to Carchemish on the Euphrates. Both accounts tell us that he's not going to fight against Judah.

(8:11 - 8:42)

He's en route to fight the Assyrians, right? Nineveh had fallen in 612 BCE to Babylonia, but Assyrian troops are still fighting in the northwest of Assyria. And we know this from other historical sources as well. There is a Babylonian chronicle, a cuneiform text, that tells us that Necho was moving northward to support.

(8:42 - 8:52)

I said a minute ago he's fighting the Assyrians. He's not fighting the Assyrians. He's going to support the Assyrian forces against the Babylonians.

(8:53 - 9:03)

So he's not worried about Judah. He doesn't want to fight with Josiah. He's going to fight the Babylonians.

(9:04 - 9:42)

He's going to join up with the Assyrians. What comes across as being a very viable possibility, it's obvious actually, is that Josiah has allied himself with the Babylonians, apparently. You think, well, why is he siding with the Babylonians? Because in the politics of the day, Josiah apparently believes that the Babylonians are going to support and guarantee that he maintains control over an expanded kingdom of Judah.

(9:42 - 10:21)

So what does he do? He sides with the Babylonian horse. So he knows that if Necho is going to side with the Assyrians, Josiah is going to side with the Babylonians. Now, the question is, who told Josiah to do that? Now, Josiah, as a result of this choice, as a result of engaging in this battle, and if we believe the writer of Chronicles, Chronicles has even Necho warns him, this has nothing to do with you, Josiah.

(10:21 - 10:28)

Stay out. Because I'm doing God's work here. But he doesn't listen.

(10:29 - 10:46)

Now, we're talking about prophecy in the days of Josiah. Were there not a couple of prophets that were running around? Don't you think somebody might have said, hey, Josiah, you're the godliest king ever. Thus saith the Lord, don't engage in battle.

(10:46 - 11:34)

Now, the other option is, did God approve of Josiah being slain at the age of 39 on a battlefield? After all that he's done? These are some questions that I have. Readers of these stories are left with a big puzzle. This narrative in the 31st year, this takes place in the 31st year, and in the text, the way that the text flows, you go from the 18th year, you read about the 18th year and some great things that happened in Josiah's reign as a result of his righteousness, and then the next thing you read is the 31st year in this battle with Necho.

(11:34 - 11:58)

So it goes from the highest point in Josiah's life until he's getting killed on a battlefield. Now, my question is, I just find this puzzling. Because the 18th year, again, is the pinnacle of the greatest king, and it talks about a great discovery and a great reform.

(11:59 - 12:21)

There is the discovery, if you recall, of the Moses scroll. The original scroll that Moses wrote, according to the narrative in 2 Kings 22-23, 2 Chronicles 34-35, that scroll that Moses wrote would have been, let's say, 800-900 years old. That was found in the temple.

(12:21 - 12:40)

There's a great reformation which follows. The Passover of 622. Remember, in 2 Kings 23-32, it says that there has not been a Passover like this in the 18th year of Josiah's reign, the year 622.

(12:41 - 13:06)

There's not been a Passover like this since the days of the judges. The writer of Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 35-18, says that there's not been a Passover like this since the days of Samuel the prophet. Now, 2 Kings 23, look at 2 Kings 23 with me.

(13:06 - 13:16)

I've got a passage I want you to look at. 2 Kings 23, verse 25. Here's what it says about Josiah.

(13:17 - 13:42)

2 Kings 23-25. There was no king like him before him who turned back to the Lord with all his heart and soul and might in full accord with the teaching of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him. Now, that's a very nice statement about a king.

(13:43 - 14:08)

There's been none like him before, there are none like him after. In Deuteronomic language and in no uncertain terms, the writer of Kings puts Josiah at the top of all of the monarchy. Now, according to 2 Kings 23-25, that puts him above David, above Hezekiah.

(14:09 - 14:50)

Now, by the way, Chronicles doesn't say this about Josiah, but Kings does. So what happened? How did such a righteous king find himself dead or dying on a battlefield at Megiddo against an opponent in a battle that he could have, should have, or possibly both not been involved in in the first place? Why was he there? Was there no one around him? I mean, the Chronicle, as we read, says that Necho warns him, don't do this. He had a warning.

(14:50 - 15:15)

But was there no one around Josiah that was testifying that this was not a good idea? Who is advising Josiah? Had not his exemplary righteous life, we just read about. In other words, 2 Kings 23-25 says he's the greatest king ever. He's pursued God with all his heart, soul, and mind.

(15:15 - 15:25)

Just like in Deuteronomy 6, it says we should. Nobody like him ever before or after. Next thing we read is he gets killed on a battlefield.

(15:25 - 15:54)

Did he not deserve a heads up that this was a bad idea? He's 39. Had not Judah and Jerusalem gone through a great revival, a reformation because of his righteousness? Wasn't the temple restored in his day? By the way, all the answers to these questions, I'm going to give them to you. The answer is yes.

(15:54 - 16:06)

The temple was restored. Sacrifices were being offered on the altar. The original Torah, the one that Moses wrote, was found in his day.

(16:07 - 16:36)

We'll get into more detail of these things later in a later class. The Ark of the Covenant, which was not in the temple when the temple was restored, I'll show that clearly from the text later, was put back into the temple because the Levites could then trust that the king was not wicked and wouldn't do bad things. The Passover was restored.

(16:38 - 16:57)

He re-led a re-covenanting among the people of his day in the 18th year of his reign, 2 Kings 23. Listen to this. 23.3. This is this restoration.

(16:57 - 17:26)

He says, verse 3, The king stood by the pillar and solemnized the covenant before the Lord, that they would follow the Lord and observe his commandments, his injunctions, and his laws with all their heart and soul. There's that phrase again, Deuteronomy language, that they would fulfill all the terms of the covenant as inscribed upon the scroll, and all the people entered into the covenant. This is Josiah leading.

(17:28 - 18:13)

So things are going great. The greatest king ever leading the greatest revival, the greatest reform of all time. Was it not Josiah, who according to 1 Kings 13, like 300 years before he was born, was it not this King Josiah that was predicted by a man of God who approached

the altar as Jeroboam is offering illegal sacrifices and such, and the man of God in 1 Kings 13 says, Oh altar, altar, your end is coming, and all the wicked priests are going to die.

(18:14 - 18:46)

This is the guy. This is Josiah who fulfilled this. So my question is, who was advising King Josiah? Now we know, and you're going to know more and more about this in the coming weeks, we know that there were two prophets of God, one by the name of Zephaniah, and the other by the name of Jeremiah.

(18:47 - 19:36)

Zephaniah and Yirmiyahu, both of these prophets are operating in the rain during the reign of Josiah. Now what is quite strange to me, striking, is that Kings and Chronicles have no mention whatsoever of Josiah ever consulting with Zephaniah or with Jeremiah. You would think that that would be something that would be mentioned.

Stick with me. There is no record of either one bringing the word of the Lord to the palace. You know, we have stories in the Hebrew Bible.

(19:36 - 20:00)

The writers of the Hebrew Bible are always ready and willing to tell us about cases such as Nathan going before King David. The prophet comes and he says, Thus saith the Lord David, and David is, right? We have the prophets interacting with the kings. We have Isaiah going to Hezekiah.

(20:01 - 20:21)

Remember the story about the sundial and the sickness of Hezekiah. We have these interactions between the office of the prophet and the office of the king, but in the days of Josiah, there's not a mention. And we have a couple of places where we could find it if it were there.

(20:22 - 20:34)

Kings, 2 Kings 23, 22-23, 2 Chronicles 34-35, none. Zilch. We have the book of Jeremiah.

(20:35 - 20:46)

None. We have the book of Zephaniah. Not a single, not a single mention that these prophets went before the king.

(20:48 - 21:06)

Question. Did Josiah ever meet Zephaniah or Jeremiah? You might say, well, how could we know? Well, stick with me. Let's see if the text suggests that it ever happened.

(21:07 - 21:40)

Did he ever even hear the word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah or Zephaniah during his 31 year reign? Did he or did he not? We don't have any example. I'm going to go ahead and give you the answer, but we're going to keep digging deeper because this question is compelling us to look closer. We know, for instance, that the scroll of Moses was found in the 18th year of Josiah's reign.

(21:40 - 22:16)

Now, again, I'm touching some of these subjects which will be really drilled into in a further class, but I just want to build the case today for something much more important that builds a framework around the days of Josiah. 18th year of his reign, it's 622 BCE, the scroll is discovered, and this sets off his great reform. Now, while Zephaniah only tells us the opening of the book of Zephaniah, it says these are the words of Zephaniah.

(22:16 - 22:32)

Zephaniah received the word of the Lord in the days of Josiah, son of Ammon, but it gives no further qualification. In other words, it just says it's sometime during the reign of Josiah. Now, a lot of people don't know this.

(22:32 - 22:48)

They read the prophet Zephaniah if they read it. I like to ask people sometimes, when's the last time you read Zephaniah? And people go, I don't know that I've ever read Zephaniah. Well, let me ask you, because you're all good Bible students, you probably have just read it recently.

(22:48 - 23:30)

So if I ask you who read and study the Bible, when's the last time you read Zephaniah through the lens of the days of Josiah? Now that is a better question, because what we need to do is we need to think about are there things in Zephaniah's prophecies that we can make sense of if we look at it through the right lens in the right context. Look, we're not talking about Nostradamus and some vague mystical mumbo-jumbo here. These are supposedly prophets from God that are giving us the news of the day with the insight of God.

(23:31 - 23:51)

Now, we don't know if Zephaniah was prophesying at the beginning of Josiah's reign. We don't know if he's prophesying at the end of Josiah's reign or throughout the entire 31 years. We just don't know.

(23:51 - 24:12)

We don't know if it's before the Reform or after the Reform, or if his prophecies go beyond both, unless we really study this. Now, if we've studied it, we might, in fact, know what the deal is. We might be able to find and pinpoint a specific time.

(24:12 - 24:30)

But Josiah and Zephaniah, so far as we know, never met to discuss this great discovery. Think about it. The scroll that Moses wrote, it's discovered during the days of Josiah.

(24:31 - 24:44)

Zephaniah and Jeremiah are both prophesying. You would think that when the scroll was discovered, the king would say, bring in the prophets. Let me talk to Jeremiah and Zephaniah.

(24:45 - 24:49)

Bring those boys in. Let's talk about this. I just found the scroll of Moses.

(24:49 - 25:03)

Now, that doesn't happen. So what about Jeremiah? The Word of the Lord is coming to Jeremiah from the 13th year of Josiah's reign. The 13th year.

(25:04 - 25:19)

That means that if the scroll is discovered in the 18th year of Josiah, Jeremiah has been a prophet for five years. The Word of the Lord has been coming to him for five years. Next week we get into what's happening in those five years.

(25:19 - 25:30)

But he's been hearing the Word of the Lord for five years. Does Josiah say, I need to talk to a prophet. Bring me Jeremiah.

(25:31 - 25:51)

I need to discuss with him about this great reform that I'm going to do as a result of finding this scroll. Josiah, per our sources, doesn't go to Zeph or Jerry at all. He doesn't talk to either one of these guys.

(25:51 - 26:13)

What does he do? Who does he call? Who does he talk to? He contacts, he sends the discovery team to a prophetess by the name of Huldah. You remember this? Now, Huldah lives in the Mishneh. Huldah lives in the Mishneh, which is in the Jewish quarter.

(26:13 - 26:27)

Today, if you go to the Jewish quarter, it's in the area, we believe, where the Jewish and the Armenian quarter are. So they go there. They want to tell the prophetess Huldah about this discovery.

(26:27 - 26:38)

No mention of Jeremiah. No mention of Zephaniah. And Huldah tells them, the people who were sent to her, that destruction is coming.

(26:39 - 27:00)

Destruction is coming. And that, furthermore, she says, now look, you tell the king, the man that sent you, that because of his response and his reaction to this discovery, that he humbled himself and he's seeking repentance, that destruction is coming. Be assured of that.

(27:00 - 27:23)

However, that king, Josiah, what does she say? He will be gathered to his grave in peace. Now, why did I begin with the story of Josiah's death? Huldah said, look, you're not getting out of the destruction. It's coming.

(27:24 - 27:38)

But, Josiah is such a righteous king, he'll die peacefully. Destruction did, in fact, come. And Josiah did, in fact, go to his grave.

(27:39 - 27:55)

But I ask you, are injuries resulting from a battle, is that your idea of going to the grave in peace? I hope to live to be 120. And I don't know how I want to die. I don't want to die.

(27:56 - 28:10)

But, and that might be kind of cool to get shot with an arrow or something to give people stuff to talk about. But there's a much more peaceful way to go. Josiah died not in peace, but in battle.

(28:10 - 28:37)

And furthermore, he died in a battle that he seemingly had no business being involved in. There's no record of Josiah ever consulting Zephaniah or Jeremiah. And I would propose that he likely did not even know who they were.

(28:38 - 29:01)

Now here's what we do know about Josiah and Zephaniah. Neither, neither Zephaniah nor Jeremiah focus at all, focus at all on his reform. Neither of them get behind his reform, at least in the text.

(29:01 - 29:08)

Stick with me. I'm a Bible guy, I'm a text guy. I think it's important we stick with what we have as sources.

(29:09 - 29:22)

There's no source that said Jeremiah or Zephaniah said, hey everybody, things are going great now. We found the scroll. We need you to line up and keep the festivals.

(29:23 - 29:41)

You know, because thank God we have our good righteous king Josiah here. There's no mention of them getting behind, supporting it. And what is most striking to me, get this, I don't even think they were distracted by it.

(29:42 - 29:51)

In other words, with all that's going on, imagine the talk in the street. The priests are like, hey, we got us a good righteous king now. We can get back into business.

(29:51 - 29:58)

We got the temple fired up. The altar's going again. The Ark of the Covenant is finally back in the Holy of Holies.

(29:59 - 30:06)

I know some of you are saying, why does he keep saying that? The Ark's been there the whole time. No, it hasn't. Not if you read the text.

(30:06 - 30:11)

But the temple is back. Everything's going good. Revival is in the land.

(30:13 - 30:29)

And you know what? The prophets, they don't even, it's like they have blinders on. They're not at all focused on the good stuff going on around them. The question for them is, the promise of destruction is their constant warning.

(30:30 - 30:52)

And the plea for repentance is their constant cry. Now, didn't we just read in 2 Kings 23 that there's this great revival, verse 3, the King Josiah stands up and he says, everybody, we're going to all keep the law with our whole heart and soul. And everybody says, yes, yes, please.

(30:52 - 30:58)

We're going to do that. Yes, yes. So people get the idea that things are going lovely.

(30:58 - 31:12)

Guess what? Jeremiah and Zephaniah never mentioned. Well, you guys are doing a good job. Thank you, Josiah, for bringing them to this revival tent meeting and getting them going in the right direction because now everything's nice.

(31:14 - 31:30)

They never mentioned it. Their focus is on the destruction that's coming and they want the people to repent. Jeremiah prophesied for 19 years of Josiah's reign.

(31:31 - 31:52)

Josiah's name appears in the book of Jeremiah 18 times. Josiah's name appears in the book of Jeremiah 18 times. Remember, he's a prophet for 19 years of the 31 years of Josiah's reign.

(31:52 - 32:19)

His name of Josiah appears 18 times. But 14 of those are talking about someone else because it's hooked to the phrase son of the son of Josiah, the son of Josiah. 14 of the 18 deal with not Josiah, not Josiah, but with the son of or a son of one of Josiah's sons.

(32:19 - 32:58)

Now there's only one. There's only one text that says the Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah and we're going to get into that next week but that's chapter 3 verse 6. The Lord said to me in the days of Josiah. Now I will tell you that there are things that take place during the reign of Josiah that context shows us but as far as the actual literal specific reference to a word of the Lord in the days of Josiah one passage.

(32:59 - 33:18)

Jeremiah chapter 3 verse 6. Now, what I want you to do though is go with me to Jeremiah 22. Jeremiah chapter 22 and I want to read verse 15. Now, this message is interesting.

(33:20 - 33:52)

It's set off by white spaces from chapter 22 verse 13 to chapter 22 verse 17. I'm only going to read 15 and 16 but this is the word of the Lord or Jeremiah saying do you think he's not talking to Josiah I want you to see he's referring to Josiah but he's talking to one of his sons and don't be too quick to identify which son it is. It's not as clear as you think.

(33:52 - 34:10)

Verse 15. Do you think you're more a king because you compete in cedar? Your father, meaning Josiah, ate and drank and dispensed justice and equity. Then all went well with him.

(34:10 - 34:22)

He upheld the rights of the poor and the needy. Then all was well. This is truly heeding me declares the Lord.

(34:23 - 34:43)

That's the JPS. But the message to one of Josiah's sons is you think that you're a king and you tie your monarchy to the idea of building projects? Let me tell you what God really wants. And so Josiah is spoken of in a very positive light.

(34:44 - 34:59)

He dispensed justice and equity. He upheld the rights of the people and the needy. But this would have been a great opportunity if the timing was right to say and he led the people into a great covenant renewal and so forth and so on.

(35:00 - 35:42)

But the bottom line is we have very little precious little in the book of Jeremiah and I will show even less so in the book of Zephaniah where the focus is on Josiah or his wonderful deeds of reformation. According to 2 Chronicles 35 25 we read that when Josiah died Jeremiah lamented. Go with me to 2 Chronicles 2 Chronicles 35 and we want to go to verse 25.

(35:42 - 36:19)

35 25 Jeremiah it says well let's look at verse 24 his servants, talking about Josiah carried him out of his chariot and put him in the wagon of his second in command and conveyed him to Jerusalem. There he died and was buried in the grave of his fathers and all Judah and Jerusalem went into mourning over Josiah. Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah which all the singers, male and female recited in their laments for Josiah as is done to this day.

(36:20 - 36:45)

They became customary in Israel and were incorporated into the laments. Now, Kings doesn't report this and the vague reference to the laments is not helpful. In other words, we don't know based on this what the lament consisted of.

(36:45 - 36:59)

Now a lot of people have said well maybe it's in the book of Lamentations. Well, the book of Lamentations does it contain anything that sounds like it's talking about Josiah? That's a good study project for you. Go see.

(36:59 - 37:32)

Or is it talking about something else? Then the other thing is there's this comment that says to this day. So when you look at 2 Chronicles 35 it's saying that these laments over Josiah became the custom. Men and women, singers and whoever is writing this they're writing at a time much later because they said look the mourning for Josiah still goes on to this day.

(37:33 - 37:41)

Well if that's written like right after he dies somebody would say well yeah, he just died. Of course they're still going on. The funeral is still in procession.

(37:42 - 37:47)

This is someone writing at a later period. It's called an anachronism. Remember we learned this term.

(37:48 - 38:02)

It's taking something that isn't contemporary and it's putting it into an earlier story. Now does that mean I don't believe that they lamented for Josiah for long periods of time? Maybe. I mean they could have.

(38:03 - 38:08)

But that's not the point. The point is it's written at a later date. That is clear.

(38:09 - 38:57)

Now I want to shift gears just for a few moments and I want to look at Zephaniah. Go with me to the book of Zephaniah. Now in Zephaniah we are dealing with a prophet that is prophesying at the time of Josiah.

Let's start let's look first at Jeremiah chapter 1. I'm sorry Zephaniah. I apologize. Zephaniah 1.1 The word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah Zephaniah son of Cushi son of Gedalia son of Amariah son of Hezekiah during the reign of King Josiah son of Ammon of Judah.

(38:59 - 39:25)

Now you remember in Jeremiah it says the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah from the 13th year of his reign. It also came in the days of Jehoiakim and it also came in the days of Zedekiah until the 11th year of his reign in the carrying away of captivity. This says simply the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah in the days of Josiah son of Ammon.

(39:26 - 39:50)

So that's not very specific is it? It gives us a window from 640 to 609 BCE. The question is, is there anything in the text of Zephaniah that says you know what? I think this happens early in the reign. I think this indicates that it's coming later in the reign of Josiah.

(39:50 - 40:27)

This is before, this is after the discovery of the scroll. Are there any details like that? Listen, you can read Zephaniah if you will, I encourage you to do that, and you cannot get anything and you can read it through a lens that is totally not focused on the days of Josiah. But my question is if you understand that we do know some things that happened in the days of Josiah, and then you read it, would you be able to see anything relevant? And the answer to that is yes.

(40:28 - 40:52)

We're going to look at this. Now we're going to make a lot more sense of Zephaniah even though our study is on the world and words of Jeremiah. Notice how I can bring this in though because the world of Jeremiah includes the contemporary prophetess Huldah, the prophet Zephaniah, and a whole host of other characters.

(40:52 - 41:33)

So that's how I'm bringing that in. Now, if you look at Zephaniah 1-4, let me bring this in. This is God speaking through Zephaniah according to the text.

He says, I will stretch out my arm against Judah and against all who dwell in Jerusalem and I will wipe out from this place every vestige of Baal and the name of the priestlings along with the priests. Now in Hebrew, it's Kimarim. It's a term that's used for pagan priests.

(41:34 - 41:52)

Now, what I want to do is stop here just for a moment. Zephaniah is looking at the world he lives in and he recognizes it's corrupt, it's wicked as hell. He's got vestiges of Baal, Baal worship in Jerusalem.

(41:52 - 42:42)

He's predicting a destruction coming and it's tied to this bad worship and you have bad priests, you have Kimarim, these pagan priests, and guess where they're working? They're not at the Baptist church. They're in the temple. You know, we can't blame this on some other pagan religion.

They're part of the priesthood but God through the prophet is referring to them as Kimarim. Now look at this. Whenever I read this, I think about what he just said.

He's talking about cutting off the remnant vestiges of JPS. In Hebrew, it's the remnant of Baal destroy the wicked priest and the end of false religion is on its way. That's what Zephaniah is saying.

(42:42 - 43:02)

Let me ask you something. If you go back to 1 Kings 13 there is a prediction that there's coming a king by the name of Josiah and what's he gonna do? This is what he's gonna do. So now when you look at Zephaniah, you understand Zephaniah is in this world.

(43:02 - 1:06:51)

There's a prophecy about Josiah. He's gonna do all this against the prophets of Baal and Zephaniah is saying hey it's coming. Now look at verse 7. Zephaniah 1.7 Be silent before my Lord God for the day of the Lord is approaching the day has prepared for the Lord has prepared a sacrificial feast has bidden his guests purify themselves and on the day of the Lord's sacrifice I will punish the officials and the king sons and all who don a foreign vestment I will also punish on that day everyone who steps over the threshold who fill their masters palace with lawlessness and fraud in that day there shall be declares the Lord and it goes on.

Now look I mentioned the prophecies quote unquote air quotes of Nostradamus. People say yeah it says this and he predicted this and you ever read those? I mean my God man. It's so fantastical and I've read them believe me.

This is different but if you don't understand the context it feels a little Nostradamacy if that's a word. It feels a little like what in the world is Zephaniah talking about? Let me give you a couple of clues. When I look at this the first thing that I want to point out is people talk about the day of the Lord is coming the prophets always talk about people have written books on this and they think they understand the day of the Lord is it some future eschatological major event that's coming or is it something that they're predicting that's coming soon like in their day is this day of the Lord that he's talking about some future event that's coming? A lot of prophecy students who don't know prophecy think that but

look at this this says he's prepared a sacrificial feast what I'm going to suggest to you is that that language shows up in other places for instance Isaiah 34 6 refers to a sacrificial feast that's coming in the days of Isaiah it's talked about I'm going to suggest to you that already happened Ezekiel chapter 39 verse 17 and verse 19 talk about a sacrificial feast that seems to be pointing forward my question is well the answer is coming at you real soon I think that this is talking about something that he sees on the immediate horizon what is this feast that's coming up sacrificial thing that's coming well I want you to go with me remember Zephaniah has a contemporary his name is Yirmiyahu so if Jeremiah is talking about a sacrificial feast that's coming in Zephaniah maybe they're talking about the same feast go to Jeremiah hold your hand here by the way you're going to need a few hands to do this right Jeremiah 46 or get good at finding Zephaniah Jeremiah 46 let's go to verse 10 but that day shall be for the Lord God of hosts a day when he exacts retribution from his foes the sword shall devour it shall be sated and drunk with their blood for the Lord God of hosts is preparing a sacrifice in the north land by the river Euphrates now wait a minute where have I heard that this morning there's a sacrificial feast let me tell you where it's at because everybody wants to know the address if you're being invited to a feast where is this feast well it's going to be up by the river Euphrates the Lord is preparing a sacrifice it's going to be in the north country interesting now if I look at Zephaniah he said that there's an invitation that's going out and on the day of the Lord's sacrifice where is it at hold your hand there go back to Jeremiah 46 10 it's up in the north by the river Euphrates and so you get oh okay I've got two prophets who are talking about the same sacrificial priest now go back to Jeremiah 46 verse 1 let's get a little bit of context the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the nations verse 2 concerning Egypt and about the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt which was at the river Euphrates near Carchemish and which was defeated by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah first thing I want you to recognize is this sacrificial feast that's being referred to in Zephaniah and in Jeremiah is taking place in this region near the Euphrates Carchemish this battle that's going on now remember Zephaniah is prophesying in the days of Josiah not in the day like Jeremiah 46 is giving us we're zoomed in on the fourth year of Jehoiakim and so it's giving us like an on the spot whereas Zephaniah is predicting this sacrifice is coming it makes sense now the battle at Carchemish you have Egypt and Babylon this is by the way where Josiah goes and gets shot and either dies on the field or goes to Jerusalem and dies but it was ultimately here that the death blow was administered to the most righteous king ever at the sacrificial feast spot now perhaps again Zephaniah 17 is looking towards the battle yet to happen and Jeremiah is the man on the ground during the time when it happens perhaps that's right but he's referring to it and by the way if you look at in Jeremiah where I just read you can just think about this if you've gone back to Zephaniah it's ok in chapter 46 of Jeremiah it says it's the 4th year of Jehoiakim now a lot happens in that 4th year remember that's the year that Jeremiah's original scroll was written how do we know that? because of Jeremiah 36 4th year of Jehoiakim we also know that chapter 25 the 4th year of Jehoiakim is set in the context of that same year we also know that chapter 44 and 46 are all in that same time frame but we're not there yet we're not even in the days of Jehoiakim I'm just using this to illustrate something now look back at Zephaniah 1.8 and on that day in the day of the Lord's sacrifice I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who don a foreign vestment here's what Zephaniah sees he says look at here this thing is coming and I'm going to punish officials I'm going to punish the king's sons and there's one other group and that group is those who array themselves in foreign clothing I'm going to ask you a question

could this be knowing what we as good bible students know that's setting in the context could it be that Zephaniah is saying if you ally yourself you become an ally with these foreign groups you're going to be among those who get punished I think it could very well you know why? because it's the only thing that makes sense historically Zephaniah paints Judah and Jerusalem in a let's say it nicely not so favorable way he's not at all favorable about the goings on where we think when we read about what's going on in Jerusalem yay we've got Josiah, he's come he's the one that was predicted he's gotten rid of all the false religion everyone's going to Shabbat services they're all praying in the temple they're bringing sacrifices holy holy holy are the people that is not what Zephaniah and Jeremiah say at all, they never mention it they say repent repent destruction is coming and you think people on the street are like what is the big deal with these two guys look at things they're going okay I mean we've got our side won the election it's going alright Zephaniah paints a picture that looks like this the corruption of political leaders is off the chain and listen you think well at least the religious leaders have it all together that's not what Jeremiah says and it's not what Zephaniah says they paint a picture of corruption that is in the political and the religious realm all of it's bad Zephaniah's second chapter is a call to the humble of the land we're not going to read through this today but it's a call to the humble of the land let me tell you what he does not say he doesn't say I'm appealing to you humble God fearing people because if you get your act together you can avert the destruction that's not what he says destruction is imminent you know what he tells them the humble of the land he said please I pray that you're hidden in the time of the Lord's anger you know what the one thing that Jeremiah and Zephaniah never lose focus of this bad boy is going down this place is going up in flames all of it is going to be destroyed nothing is going to last you read the opening words of Zephaniah it's apocalyptic it's the end of the world everything will be destroyed not a single person left you know he paints this if you heard this on the street you'd be like golly man we got the temple back were you not at the thing where we all promised to obey God, Zephaniah my goodness man, ease up none of that none of that happens now he says Zephaniah tells them Ulay that they will be hidden perhaps he's not even sure get this, that even the elect will be saved it's bad make no mistake the prophecies prophecy in the days of Josiah was consistent on one point, Huldah got it right Zephaniah got it right Jeremiah got it right and what's that consistent point the end the end is coming and listen ladies and gentlemen history obliged because that's exactly what happened now Zephaniah I want to look at Zephaniah chapter 3 Zephaniah chapter 3 and I want to read verse 3, Zephaniah 3 this is what Zephaniah taught, let's start in verse 1, so you get a feel for what Zephaniah thought about this beautiful land of Judah and the lovely religion that was going on there, ah sullied, polluted overbearing city she's been disobedient has learned no lesson she's not trusted in the Lord has not drawn near to her God the officials within her are roaring lions roaring lions her judges are wolves of the step that leave no bone until morning her prophets are reckless faithless fellows her priests profane what is holy they give perverse rulings by the way literally you know what it says they violate Torah or they do violence to Torah who is that we're talking about the priest those who handle the Torah of God in the days of Josiah are doing bad things to the text listen to this officials, you go tell me about your officials Zephaniah we're here with channel 2 news, tell us what do you think about the officials, they're like roaring lions yeah well what about the judges Zephaniah let me tell you, they're like evening wolves that leave nothing until the morning, they're going to eat all night to make sure that everything is gone yeah but surely the priest Zephaniah, how are the priest the priest let me tell you about the priest, not only do they profane what is holy

but they do violence to the Torah that's the priest that's not the political leaders that's the people who've been tasked with taking care of holy things by the way there's another prophet that prophesied at the same time, his name is Jeremiah you may have heard of him, he also talks about violence done to the Torah, Jeremiah chapter 8 verse 8, I think it's about the same time as this prophecy here comes through, he says this, because Zephaniah just said the priest do violence to the Torah and Jeremiah says who are we to say that we are wise and the Torah of the Lord is with us when the lying pen of the scribes has made it a lie what somebody is putting things into the Torah in the days of Zephaniah and Jeremiah or at least that's what they say I know it's a bit shocking Zephaniah and Jeremiah both prophets in the days of Jeremiah and Zephaniah, both prophets in the days of Josiah neither of these two prophets focus on Josiah or his reform they see destruction is unavoidable and near now they do encourage repentance but you know what that repentance is going to do, it's not going to stop the destruction but you still want to have your life right, the end is coming, but that doesn't you should still worry about am I living right, am I right with God, even more so they also do see by the way both Jeremiah and Zephaniah see good days coming you know Jeremiah, we're going to talk about all this, he sees and it's exemplified, it's shown in his writings he sees days coming when this or that's going to happen remember because we're going to really get into next week about Jeremiah and his calling but what's he there to do he's to tear down and destroy and then he's to build and to plant well in his tear down and destroy phase you know why that's part of his job because guess what, it's going to happen, now he's also got to tell you that we're going to have some good things coming, you won't see them in your lifetime by the way is his message but days are coming saith the Lord when I will do these things, now the main question that we have when we look at Jeremiah and Zephaniah and the prophecies of both of these people we have to look at can we discern the timing of their words where do these prophecies of Jeremiah and Zephaniah align I just gave you one example, Zephaniah is looking at the priesthood the days of Josiah, he's saying the priest are bad, they're spoiled, they're evil and they're doing violence to the Torah, whatever that means Jeremiah says the priest are bad, they're doing bad things and oh by the way, somebody is putting things in the Torah that don't belong, so they're saying the same thing, that means that at that time we ought to be able to find evidence of such and we can and we will now if one were to read the words of Zephaniah and Jeremiah and just those two books, let's say you didn't read Kings and Chronicles about the revival and the reformation of Josiah, if you read Kings and Chronicles alone, you have a pretty favorable picture of the reign of Josiah but if you didn't have those and you just read Jeremiah and you just read Zephaniah you would not at all have a favorable position on Josiah's reign if you read Zephaniah, you wouldn't even know his name you would know about the sons of the kings the king that's going to be punished but if you don't have the historical context who's the king? Josiah so when he says the king's sons are going to be punished ultimately guess who he's talking about Shalom, Yehoiachaz, Yehoiakim, Jeconiah Zedekiah, and guess what happens to them? They're punished that's who he's talking about you're not looking to Hezekiah historically you're looking at a specific place you have to read to figure it out it's a clue, it's a hint and it's not a hard one either but when we look at these texts if I read Jeremiah and I said is Josiah a good guy? you know the only thing that Jeremiah says that could be about Josiah is Jeremiah chapter 22 verse 15 and 16 he's talking to one of Josiah's sons, hard to tell which one and I know people can say well right above it's talking about Shalom which is Yehoiachaz don't think that, we'll get to that but whoever, he's talking to

one of Josiah's sons and he says you think you're a king because you got nice cedar buildings? Your father meaning Josiah, was a good guy.

He doesn't say anything about this reformation again, my point is is that why? Because Jeremiah is focused on what God tells him to focus on. Don't be distracted by all the bells and whistles and the pretty smoke coming up from the temple that stuff, you're going to see some smoke coming up from the temple and it's not a pleasing odor. That's what the message is.

It's bad is coming not good but if you just read Zephaniah and Jeremiah no favorable pictures. Here's what you get in those days this is what we read from the prophets they tell us that there's a false sense of security people think, oh look at us, we're holy, we have the Torah, we got the temple, we're keeping the feast we're just holy, holy, holy as us. The confidence is not in God but it's in their own wealth and in foreign alliances see we can almost see the thought processes in Josiah.

He says, you know I see that Egypt, Necho is going to be is going to ally with the Assyrians against Babylon but I think if I support Babylon and this is the thing we read all the way through the prophets who are you supporting and at times God even tells them who to side with my point is he didn't tell Josiah at this point side with Babylon and he did and he died for it. So their alliances, their confidence is in Egypt will save me or Babylon will save me or Assyria will save me or my wealth but bad leadership political and religious is ultimately what leads to the demise of everything Zephaniah says it's going to come to pass in the days of Josiah's sons and history would oblige. We have no evidence that Zephaniah knew Jeremiah or that Jeremiah knew Zephaniah we don't read about them going together to eat lunch.

We don't know that they ever met nothing indicates that Josiah knew Jeremiah or Zephaniah or that their messages ever reached his palace. I know this is shocking because we want to think oh there's a prophet in the day and we know stories like Nathan and David and Hezekiah and Isaiah we don't know the details about Zephaniah's appointment or his calling as a prophet only that he was a prophet during the days of Josiah's son of Ammon. Jeremiah is different and as we work through his prophecies and we look for similarity in words and phrases and concepts and such we'll be able to make more sense of Zephaniah.

This is what's going to be interesting as we work through. Now with this background we are ready to take a closer look at the words of Jeremiah and Zephaniah as they apply in the days of Josiah. We're going to begin with Jeremiah's call.

(1:06:52 - 1:07:15)

What did God tell him when he spoke to him the first time in the 13th year of Josiah's reign? What is his mission? What is he going to do? What is he going to say? And we're going to get into all of that beginning next week. Shabbat Shalom Shavua Tov