

Jeremiah 36:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

Analysis

And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. The princes' caution in depositing the scroll (Hebrew *paqad*, פָּקַד, meaning to entrust or deposit for safekeeping) before approaching Jehoiakim reveals their awareness of the king's volatile temperament. They reported the scroll's content orally rather than bringing it directly to the king—a prudent decision given what follows.

The phrase **in the ears of the king** (be'ozne hammelek, בְּאָזְנוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ) emphasizes oral proclamation and the king's hearing, creating dramatic tension: will Jehoiakim respond like his father Josiah, who tore his garments in repentance upon hearing God's word (2 Kings 22:11-13)? The princes' intermediary role shows a measured approach—they understood the scroll's weight but feared the king's wrath. Their placing it in Elishama's chamber rather than presenting it directly foreshadows the coming confrontation. This moment captures the tension between divine authority (God's written word through Jeremiah) and human authority (the king's power to accept or reject it).

Historical Context

This occurred in 605/604 BC, during Jehoiakim's fourth year (v. 1), shortly after Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion and Judah's vassalage to Babylon. The princes

who heard Baruch read the scroll included members of the royal court who still maintained some fear of the LORD. Their caution reflected the political reality: Jehoiakim was a king installed by Egypt (2 Kings 23:34-35), who taxed his people heavily and built lavish projects through forced labor (Jeremiah 22:13-17). Unlike his godly father Josiah, Jehoiakim despised prophetic critique and had already killed the prophet Uriah for speaking against Jerusalem (Jeremiah 26:20-23). The princes' decision to store the scroll safely and report its contents verbally shows they anticipated the king's hostility while trying to preserve both the message and the messengers.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does the princes' caution in approaching the king teach about wisdom in presenting difficult truth to those in authority?
2. How does the contrast between Jehoiakim's expected response and Josiah's repentant response illustrate differing postures toward God's word?
3. In what ways might we show similar caution or courage when confronting powerful people with biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּבְאוּ	אֶל	הֵם לְ	חֵצְיָה	וְאֵת	הַמִּגֵּל הַ
And they went in	H413	of the king	into the court	H853	the roll
H935		H4428	H2691		H4039
הִפְקֵדוּ	בְּלִשְׁכַּת	אֶלִישָׁמָע	הַסֵּפֶר	וַיֹּדֹעַ	בְּאָזְנוֹ י
but they laid up	in the chamber	of Elishama	the scribe	and told	in the ears
H6485	H3957	H476	H5608	H5046	H241
הֵם לְ	אֵת	כָּל	הַדְּבָרִים:		
of the king	H853	H3605	all the words		
H4428			H1697		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 36:12 (Kingdom): Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.