

Deuteronomy 4:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

Analysis

And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen...

The verb *vehephits* (וְהַפֵּץ, 'scatter') describes dispersion like seed thrown to the wind—Israel would lose territorial cohesion and national identity among the *goyim* (גּוֹיִם, 'nations/heathen'). The phrase 'few in number' (*metei mispar*, מְתַתִּי מִסְפָּר) reverses the Abrahamic blessing of multiplication (Genesis 15:5); covenant curse undoes covenant blessing.

Remarkably, Moses attributes this scattering directly to the LORD (Yahweh)—not merely to Assyrian or Babylonian imperial ambition. Foreign armies would be instruments of divine judgment, not independent actors overcoming God's purposes. This theological interpretation of history pervades the prophets: exile is not divine defeat but divine discipline, God using pagan nations to judge His wayward people.

Yet even in this curse lies hidden mercy. Scattering preserves a remnant; total destruction would end the covenant line entirely. Being 'few' is not being 'none.' God's judgment, though severe, maintains the possibility of restoration. The scattered people retain their identity among the nations, awaiting the repentance and return that verses 29-31 will promise.

Historical Context

This prophecy of scattering among nations anticipated the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. Moses spoke these words before Israel even entered Canaan, demonstrating God's foreknowledge of Israel's future unfaithfulness. The dispersion among 'heathen' (Gentile nations) would occur some 700-800 years after Moses' speech.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God's sovereignty even over judgment and exile affect your understanding of difficult circumstances in your own life?
2. What does it mean that God's discipline, while severe, always preserves a remnant and possibility for restoration?

Interlinear Text

יְהִי	רָאשֵׁת	וְיִתְפֹּרְךָ	אַתָּךְ	בְּעֵמָה	יְמִינָה	וְנִשְׁאָרָתָם
shall scatter	And the LORD		H853	you among the nations	and ye shall be left	
H6327	H3068			H5971		H7604
מִתְּנַשֵּׁאָרָתָם	רָאשֵׁת	בְּגֹויִם	אַשְׁר	יְנִינָה	וְיִתְפֹּרְךָ	וְיִתְפֹּרְךָ
few	in number	among the heathen	H834	shall lead	And the LORD	
H4962	H4557	H1471		H5090	H3068	
אַתָּךְ	בְּעֵמָה:					
H853	H8033					

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 26:33 (Parallel theme): And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.

Nehemiah 1:3 (Parallel theme): And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

Ezekiel 32:26 (Parallel theme): There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living.

Ezekiel 12:15 (References Lord): And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

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