

Ezekiel 11:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

Analysis

God promises scattered Israel: "I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." Despite losing the physical temple, exiles would experience God's presence in Babylon. The phrase "little sanctuary" (miqdash me'at, מִקְדָּשׁ מֵעַט) can mean "sanctuary for a little while" or "small sanctuary"—both emphasizing temporary provision until restoration. This promise reveals God's faithfulness: He doesn't abandon His people even in judgment. The synagogue system emerged from this promise, providing places for worship without temple or sacrifice. Ultimately, Christ became the true temple (John 2:19-21), and believers constitute God's dwelling place (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Historical Context

This prophecy (592 BC) addressed exiles mourning the temple's impending destruction. Jewish identity centered on Jerusalem and temple worship, so losing both threatened their covenant relationship with God. God's promise to be their sanctuary in exile provided hope and theological foundation for maintaining worship in dispersion. Archaeological and historical evidence documents the development of synagogue worship during the exile, fulfilling this promise. The principle that God's presence isn't limited to buildings or geography sustained

Jews through diaspora and continues to comfort Christians living as strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:11).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to be a sanctuary to exiles encourage believers living in spiritual exile in this world?
2. What does this passage teach about the relationship between physical buildings and God's spiritual presence?

Interlinear Text

לְכִי	אָמַר	כֹּה	אָמַר	אֲדֹנָי י	יְהוָה	כִּי י
H3651	Therefore say	H3541	Therefore say	the Lord	GOD	H3588
	H559		H559	H136	H3069	
הִרְחַקְתִּים			בְּגוֹיִם		וְכִי י	
Although I have cast them far off			among the heathen		H3588	
H7368			H1471			
וְהִפְצִיתִי יָם			בְּאַרְצֵי וְת		וְאֵהָ י	לְמִקְדָּשׁ שׁ
and although I have scattered			in the countries		H1961	H0 sanctuary
H6327			H776			H4720
מָעַ ט			בְּאַרְצֵי וְת		אֲשֶׁר	בְּאוֹ שָׁם:
yet will I be to them as a little			in the countries		H834	where they shall come H8033
H4592			H776			H935

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 8:14 (Temple): And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Psalms 90:1 (References Lord): Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

Psalms 91:1 (Parallel theme): He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalms 44:11 (Parallel theme): Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

Psalms 31:20 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Proverbs 18:10 (References Lord): The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Jeremiah 31:10 (References Lord): Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

Jeremiah 30:11 (References Lord): For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

Leviticus 26:44 (References God): And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.