

Ezekiel 7:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.

Analysis

But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. Amid overwhelming judgment, this verse introduces a remnant theme. A small group will survive, but their survival brings mourning rather than relief, as they fully comprehend the weight of their sin that brought calamity.

They that escape of them shall escape uses repetition for emphasis—those whom God purposes to preserve will indeed survive. This is not random chance but divine election. The remnant doctrine runs throughout prophetic literature (Isaiah 10:20-22, Romans 9:27). God preserves a people even through deserved judgment.

Shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys creates a powerful image. Doves are gentle, vulnerable birds whose cooing sounds like mourning. Mountains represent places of refuge but also isolation. The survivors are scattered, defenseless, and filled with grief. All of them mourning indicates universal grief among the remnant—none can boast in their survival.

Every one for his iniquity reveals the nature of their mourning: genuine repentance. This is not merely grief over consequences but godly sorrow over sin itself (2 Corinthians 7:10). From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates that true salvation includes conviction of sin, not just deliverance from judgment. The remnant is refined through suffering into repentance.

Historical Context

The exile remnant experienced exactly what Ezekiel predicted. After Jerusalem fall in 586 BC, survivors scattered throughout Judean countryside. Some fled to mountains and caves (Jeremiah 40:11-12). Others were taken captive to Babylon. Still others fled to Egypt against Jeremiah counsel (Jeremiah 43).

The dove imagery would resonate with those who experienced exile trauma. Ancient Near Eastern literature frequently used birds to represent displaced peoples. The survivors indeed found themselves vulnerable, scattered, grieving. Later biblical books like Lamentations and Psalms 137 preserve their mourning songs.

Significantly, the exilic and post-exilic periods produced Israel deepest spiritual reflection. Books like Daniel, Ezekiel, and later Ezra-Nehemiah show a people who had learned through suffering to take sin seriously. The second temple period Jews were far more careful about idolatry than pre-exilic Israel had been—the discipline accomplished its purpose.

This remnant theology became central to Paul understanding of Jewish-Gentile relations in the church (Romans 11:1-5), showing continuity in God redemptive purposes.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does the survival of a remnant reveal about God faithfulness despite judgment?
2. How does genuine repentance differ from mere regret over consequences?
3. What role does suffering play in producing godly sorrow and spiritual depth?

4. In what ways does the remnant theme anticipate the church as elect people?
5. How should those who escape judgment respond—with pride in survival or mourning over sin?

Interlinear Text

וְפָלֹתוֹ	פָּل יִטְבַּח מִ	אֵל וְבַּיִת	בָּבָר יָמִים
But they that escape	of them shall escape	H1961	and shall be on the mountains
H6403	H6412	H413	H2022
like doves	of the valleys	H3605	בְּעֵדָנוּ אֵל וְשָׁמַיִם כָּל מִתְבָּגֵד וְתַבְגֵּד
H3123	H1516	H1993	every one for his iniquity
			H376 H5771

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 59:11 (Parallel theme): We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.

Isaiah 38:14 (Parallel theme): Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

Ezra 9:15 (Parallel theme): O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

Isaiah 37:31 (Parallel theme): And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

Ezekiel 36:31 (Parallel theme): Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.