

Jeremiah 12:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

Analysis

This verse extends invitation to nations: 'And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal.' The Hebrew *lamad* (לִמְדָה, learn) applies to nations learning Israel's ways—reversing their previous teaching Israel Baal worship. 'Then shall they be built in the midst of my people.' 'Built' (nivnu) indicates establishment, incorporation into covenant community. The former teachers of Baalism can become learners of YHWH worship and be included among God's people. This remarkable promise anticipates gentile incorporation through faith.

Historical Context

This verse anticipates gentile inclusion in God's people—remarkable given Israel's election theology. The requirement is genuine worship ('swear by my name, YHWH lives') replacing Baal allegiance. Post-exilic Judaism did incorporate some gentile proselytes, prefiguring the church's universal mission. The reversal of 'teaching'—nations who taught Baal worship learning YHWH worship—demonstrates complete transformation.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does inviting pagan nations to 'learn the ways of my people' anticipate gentile inclusion in the church?
2. What does requiring 'swearing by YHWH' rather than Baal indicate about the heart of genuine conversion?

Interlinear Text

וְיֹאמֶר יְהוָה
H1961 H518 **And it shall come to pass if they will diligently**
H3925

לִמְדֹה
H3925 **And it shall come to pass if they will diligently** אַתָּה
H853 **the ways** עַמִּים
H1870 H5971 **to swear**
H7650

בָּאֵשׁ רָאֵה יְהוָה כִּי בְּשָׁמָיִם
by my name liveth **The LORD** H834
H8034 H2416 H3068

לִמְדֹה
H3925 **And it shall come to pass if they will diligently** אַתָּה
H853 **my people** עַמִּים
H5971 **to swear** **by Baal**
H7650 H1168

בְּבָבֶן וְבַת וְעַמִּים
then shall they be built in the midst **my people**
H1129 H8432 H5971

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 4:2 (References Lord): And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

Joshua 23:7 (Parallel theme): That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

Zephaniah 1:5 (References Lord): And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

Isaiah 45:23 (Parallel theme): I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Isaiah 65:16 (Parallel theme): That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Isaiah 49:6 (Parallel theme): And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Jeremiah 5:2 (References Lord): And though they say, The LORD liveth; surely they swear falsely.

Jeremiah 3:17 (References Lord): At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Zechariah 2:11 (References Lord): And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

