

Jeremiah 21:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Analysis

And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine—the phrase 'and afterward' (ve'acharei-chen, וְאַחֲרֵיכֶם) indicates sequential judgment: first pestilence will devastate the population (v. 6), then survivors will face captivity. Those who survive the siege's horrors—sword, famine, pestilence—face an even more specific fate. **Into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life**—the triple repetition 'into the hand' (beyad, בְּيַד) emphasizes complete subjugation with no escape. The phrase 'those that seek their life' (mevakshei naphsham, מְבַקְשִׁים נֶפֶשׁ) indicates active pursuit to kill, not merely imprison.

And he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy—the Hebrew piles up negatives: lo yachmol ('לֹא יָחַמֵּל, no sparing), velo yachus (וְלֹא יָחֻסֵּן, no pity), velo yerachem (וְלֹא יְרַחֵם, no mercy).

מִנְאָה, no mercy). Three terms for compassion are systematically denied. This reverses God's self-description as compassionate and merciful (Exodus 34:6-7) by declaring His chosen instrument—pagan Nebuchadnezzar—will show none. This was precisely fulfilled: Zedekiah witnessed his sons' execution before his eyes were gouged out, then was taken in chains to Babylon (2 Kings 25:6-7). Judah's leadership who rejected mercy from God received no mercy from Babylon.

Historical Context

The prophecy's fulfillment is documented in 2 Kings 25:6-21. After Jerusalem's walls were breached in 586 BC, Zedekiah fled but was captured near Jericho. Nebuchadnezzar executed Zedekiah's sons at Riblah (a Babylonian military headquarters in Syria), then blinded Zedekiah and took him to Babylon, where he died in prison (Jeremiah 52:11). The nobility and priests were systematically executed—2 Kings 25:18-21 lists specific officials killed at Riblah. Archaeological evidence from Tel Lachish and other Judean sites shows widespread destruction circa 586 BC, with burn layers, arrowheads, and evidence of violent conquest. The Babylonian policy was harsh toward rebels: Zedekiah had sworn loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar but broke his oath, making his punishment exemplary. The brutality served Babylon's imperial strategy—deterring other vassal states from rebellion. Ezekiel 17:16-20 emphasizes that Zedekiah's oath-breaking, not merely political rebellion, triggered God's judgment: covenant fidelity mattered even in international treaties.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the systematic denial of mercy (no sparing, no pity, no mercy) illustrate the principle that those who reject God's mercy ultimately face judgment without mercy (James 2:13)?

2. What does the specific fulfillment of Zedekiah's fate teach about the certainty of God's prophetic word, even when it pronounces judgment?

Interlinear Text

מֶלֶךְ	אֶצְדָּקִיָּהוּ	אֶת	אֶת	יְהֹוָה	נָאָם	כִּי	אַתָּה
king	Zedekiah	at	at	the LORD	saith	And afterward	And afterward
H4428	H6667	H853	H853	H3068	H5002	H3651	H310
הַנִּשְׁאָרִים	וְאֵת	בַּעַד	וְאֵת	בַּעַד	וְאֵת	וְאֵת	וְאֵת
and such as are left	and the people	and his servants	and his servants	and the people	and the people	such as are left	such as are left
H7604	H5971	H5650	H853	H5971	H5650	H853	H3063
וְמִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן	מִן
from the sword	from the pestilence	from the sword	from the sword				
H4480	H4480	H1698	H4480	H1698	H4480	H2719	H2063
בְּכָל	מֶלֶךְ	נְבוּכָדְרָאצֵר	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל
of Babylon	king	of Nebuchadrezzar	and into the hand	and into the hand	and into the hand	and from the famine	and from the famine
H894	H4428	H5019	H3027	H3027	H3027	H7458	H7458
נֶפֶשׁ	מִבְקָשׁ	אִיבִּיחַ	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל
their life	of those that seek	of their enemies	of their enemies	of their enemies	of their enemies	and into the hand	and into the hand
H5315	H1245	H341	H3027	H3027	H3027	H3027	H3027
וְהַ	לֹא	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְבָבֶל	וְהַ	וְהַ
he shall not spare	he shall not spare	from the sword	from the sword	from the sword	from the sword	he shall not spare	he shall not spare
H2347	H3808	H2719	H2719	H2719	H2719	H5221	H5221
וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא
עָלֵיכֶם	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	them neither have pity	them neither have pity
H5921	H3808	H2550	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808
וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא	וְלֹא
יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	יְרַחֲמֶנּוּ	nor have mercy	nor have mercy
H7355	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H3808	H2347	H2347

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 37:17 (Kingdom): Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the

LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

Ezekiel 7:9 (References Lord): And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth.

Jeremiah 13:14 (Grace): And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

Deuteronomy 28:50 (Parallel theme): A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young:

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