

Jeremiah 22:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

Analysis

But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return (וְעַל־הָאֲרָצִים אֲשֶׁר־הֵם מְנַשְּׂאִים אֶת־נַפְשָׁם לָשׁוּב שָׁם שְׁמָהּ לֹא יָשׁוּבוּ, v'al-ha'arets asher-hem m'nassim et-nafsham lashuv sham shammah lo yashuvu). The phrase נָשָׂא נֶפֶשׁ (nasa nefesh, 'lift up the soul/desire') indicates intense longing—they would yearn for homeland constantly. But the emphatic negative לֹא (lo) plus the threefold repetition of return language (שׁוּב, shuv—used three times) creates an insurmountable barrier.

The irony is profound: they can desire but never attain. This psychological torture—permanent homesickness—serves as temporal judgment for covenant breaking. Yet the verb שׁוּב (shuv) also means 'repent.' Physical return to the land required spiritual return to Yahweh. Jesus later taught that longing for earthly Jerusalem without seeking the heavenly city is futile (Hebrews 11:13-16). Jehoiachin's exile prefigures humanity's exile from Eden—we long for home but cannot return except through divine grace.

Historical Context

Despite persistent hopes among Judean exiles that return was imminent (refuted by Jeremiah in chapter 29), Jehoiachin never returned to Judah. He was released from prison in Babylon after 37 years (2 Kings 25:27-30) but died in exile. His descendants, including Zerubbabel, eventually returned, but Jehoiachin himself fulfilled this prophecy by dying in the land of his captivity.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What are you longing to 'return' to that God may be preventing for your spiritual good?
2. How does the inability to go back force you forward into God's future purposes?
3. In what ways does your homesickness for earthly things prevent you from seeking your true home?

Interlinear Text

וְעַל	הָאָרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר	הִיא	מִנְּשָׂא יָם	אֶת	נַפְשָׁם
H5921	But to the land	H834	H1992	whereunto they desire	H853	H5315
	H776			H5375		
	יָשׁוּבוּ:		שֶׁ	לֹא	שֶׁ	יָשׁוּבוּ:
	thither shall they not return	H8033	H8033	H3808	thither shall they not return	
	H7725				H7725	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 44:14 (Parallel theme): So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.