

Jeremiah 26:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt;

Analysis

And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death (וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמִּיתוֹ) —the verb בָּקַשׁ (baqash, 'seek') with מוֹת (mut, 'to kill') indicates deliberate intent to execute. **But when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt**—unlike Jeremiah who stood firm, Urijah fled (נָס, nas). This isn't condemned; it's human.

The text doesn't criticize Urijah's fear (יָרָא, yare) or flight. Even true prophets experience terror before tyranny. Jesus instructed disciples to flee persecution (Matthew 10:23). David fled from Saul. Flight isn't failure when confronting murderous power. What matters is that Urijah had already delivered God's message faithfully. The contrast with Jeremiah (who remained) shows different callings—some prophets stay and face lions; others flee and still get caught. Both are faithful.

Historical Context

Egypt was traditional refuge for those fleeing Judean kings—Jeroboam fled there from Solomon (1 Kings 11:40), and later Jewish refugees would settle there (Jeremiah 43-44). Egypt and Judah had complex political relationships; Egypt

couldn't refuse extradition requests from Judean kings without damaging alliances. The distance (200+ miles) shows Urijah's desperation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you respond to the reality that faithfulness sometimes includes fear and flight?
2. What determines when to stand firm versus when to flee persecution?
3. How does Urijah's fear make him relatable rather than diminish his prophetic integrity?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמַע	הַמֶּלֶךְ	וְהַנְּקִימָה	וְכָל	גִּבּוֹרֵי יוֹ	וְכָל
heard	the king	And when Jehoiakim	H3605	with all his mighty men	H3605
H8085	H4428	H3079		H1368	
וְכָל	הַמֶּלֶךְ	וְהַנְּקִימָה	וְכָל	גִּבּוֹרֵי יוֹ	וְכָל
and all the princes	H853	his words	sought	the king	to put him to death
H8269		H1697	H1245	H4428	H4191
וְשָׁמַע	אֲזַי הוּא	וְכָל	וְכָל	וְכָל	מִצְרָיִם:
heard	but when Urijah	it he was afraid	and fled	and went	into Egypt
H8085	H223	H3372	H1272	H935	H4714

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 10:23 (Parallel theme): But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

Jeremiah 36:26 (Kingdom): But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

Matthew 14:5 (Parallel theme): And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

2 Chronicles 16:10 (Parallel theme): Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.