

Jeremiah 32:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

Analysis

Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch...I prayed unto the LORD—Having completed the prophetic sign-act of purchasing the field, Jeremiah immediately turned to prayer (palal, פָּלַל, to intercede or meditate). This transition from obedient action to earnest prayer models the proper response to God's mysterious providence. Jeremiah had obeyed God's command to buy the field (vv. 6-15), performing a seemingly irrational act of faith. Yet obedience didn't eliminate perplexity—it drove him to prayer.

The timing is significant: Jeremiah prayed **when I had delivered** (after completing the legal transaction), not before. He acted in faith on God's revealed will, then sought understanding through prayer. This pattern appears throughout Scripture—Abraham obeyed God's call before understanding the full plan (Genesis 12:1-4), Mary submitted to God's purpose before comprehending the incarnation (Luke 1:38). Faith precedes full understanding. Jeremiah's prayer (vv. 17-25) wrestles honestly with the apparent contradiction between God's promise of future restoration (v. 15) and the present reality of divine judgment. This demonstrates that genuine faith coexists with honest questions. God's response (vv. 26-44) doesn't rebuke Jeremiah for questioning but provides deeper understanding, showing that prayer is the proper forum for wrestling with divine mysteries.

Historical Context

This prayer occurred during the final months of Judah's existence as an independent kingdom (588/587 BC). Jerusalem was under siege, famine gripped the city, Babylonian armies surrounded the walls, and destruction was imminent. Jeremiah himself was imprisoned for prophesying Judah's defeat. In this desperate context, having just completed the absurd act of buying condemned land, Jeremiah turned to prayer—not as an escape from reality but as engagement with the God who governs reality. Ancient Near Eastern religion typically involved mechanical rituals designed to manipulate deities. By contrast, Jeremiah's prayer demonstrates covenant relationship—honest dialogue with a personal God who invites His people to bring their questions and perplexities before Him. This prayer tradition continued in post-exilic Judaism (see Daniel 9, Nehemiah 9) and was fulfilled supremely in Jesus, who taught His disciples to address God as 'Our Father' (Matthew 6:9) and who Himself prayed honestly in Gethsemane about the difficulty of the path before Him (Luke 22:42).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why might God sometimes call us to act in faith before providing full understanding of His purposes?
2. How does Jeremiah's example of moving from obedient action to honest prayer provide a model for responding to God's mysterious providence?
3. What perplexing situations in your life need to be brought before God in prayer rather than resolved through human reasoning alone?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶתְפַּלֵּל לֵאלֹהֵינוּ הָאֲחֵרִי I prayed H6419	אֲתֵּן H413	אֵלֶיךָ יְהוָה unto the LORD H3068	כֵּן Now when H310	אֲנִי I had delivered H5414	אֵת H853	אֵת הַפֶּה the evidence H5612
הַמִּקְנֶה הָאֵל of the purchase H4736	אֲתֵּן H413	בָּר וְכֵן unto Baruch H1263	בֶּן the son H1121	נֶרְיָה of Neriah H5374	לֵאמֹר: saying H559	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 12:1 (References Lord): Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?
