

Jeremiah 37:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

Analysis

And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah—the sha'ar Binyamin (שער בנימין, gate of Benjamin) was Jerusalem's northern gate leading toward Benjamin territory. The ba'al pekudah (בעל פקודה, captain of the ward) was a sentry officer responsible for monitoring traffic. Irijah's genealogy is recorded, perhaps because his grandfather Hananiah was the false prophet who opposed Jeremiah in chapter 28, creating family animosity.

And he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans—the accusation uses nofel (נִפְלֵל, falling away/deserting), technical terminology for defection to the enemy. This charge carried extreme gravity during siege conditions; desertion was punishable by death. The verb's participial form suggests habitual action: 'you are deserting,' implying intent to join Babylon's forces.

The irony is profound: Jeremiah had consistently advocated submission to Babylon as God's will (21:8-9; 38:2), but never for personal advantage or national betrayal. His counsel was prophetic, not political; theological, not treasonous. Yet speaking God's word made him appear disloyal to nationalistic leaders who confused political allegiance with covenant faithfulness.

Historical Context

Desertion was a serious problem during Jerusalem's siege. Jeremiah himself had prophesied that those who surrendered to Babylon would live while those who remained would die (21:9; 38:2). Some did defect based on his prophecies (38:19; 39:9). This made Jeremiah appear to encourage desertion, though his message was theological (submit to God's decreed judgment) rather than political (betray your nation). Irijah's charge, though false regarding Jeremiah's personal intent, reflected genuine tension between prophetic counsel and patriotic loyalty. The authorities could not distinguish between submitting to God's will and betraying Judah.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do we distinguish between submitting to God's will and betraying legitimate earthly loyalties when they seem to conflict?
2. What role might Irijah's family history (grandson of the false prophet Hananiah) have played in his willingness to arrest Jeremiah?
3. When have you been accused of disloyalty for obeying God's word that contradicted popular expectations?

Interlinear Text

בְּשַׁעַר	בְּתִים	בֶּן	בֶּן	בֶּן	בֶּן
וְאֵת יְהִי	וְאֵת יְהִי	וְאֵת יְהִי	וְאֵת יְהִי	וְאֵת יְהִי	וְאֵת יְהִי
H1961	H1931	And when he was in the gate	of Benjamin	H8033	a captain
		H8179	H1144	H1167	
פֶּלֶד תְּ	וְשָׁמוֹ	וְרָאֵי יְהִי	בֶּן	שָׁלְמִי הַ	בֶּן
of the ward	was there whose name	was Irijah	the son	of Shelemiah	the son
H6488	H8034	H3376	H1121	H8018	H1121
שְׁנִית הַ	וְרָמִי הַוְּ	וְרָמִי הַ	הַגְּבִיא	לְאָמֵר	אֶל
of Hananiah	and he took	Jeremiah	the prophet	saying	H413
H2608	H8610	H3414	H5030	H559	
נִפְלֵ	אָתָה	הַפְּשָׁד יָמִ			
to the Chaldeans	H859	Thou fallest away			
	H3778	H5307			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 38:7 (Parallel theme): Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

Zechariah 14:10 (Parallel theme): All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

Acts 24:13 (Parallel theme): Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Acts 6:11 (Parallel theme): Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

Jeremiah 21:9 (Parallel theme): He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

Jeremiah 18:18 (Prophecy): Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

Jeremiah 20:10 (Parallel theme): For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

Jeremiah 38:1 (Parallel theme): Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

Luke 23:2 (Parallel theme): And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

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