

Jeremiah 37:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

Analysis

Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah—their anger (qatsap, קָצַף, intense displeasure/fury) reveals predetermined hostility unrelated to evidence. They were angry at Jeremiah's message and seized the arrest as opportunity to punish him. **And smote him**—the Hebrew hikou (חָקַו, beat/struck) indicates violent assault, likely flogging. This official beating recalls the earlier assault when Pashur struck Jeremiah and put him in stocks (20:2).

And put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison—this improvised prison in beit hasofer (בֵּית הַסֹּפֵר, house of the scribe) suggests Jerusalem's regular facilities were overwhelmed or destroyed during siege conditions. Scribes were educated officials who managed administrative functions; Jonathan's house was commandeered as detention center. The phrase ki-oto asu beit hakele (כִּי־אֵתוּ אֶשׁוּ בֵּית הַכֶּלֶל, for they had made that the prison) explains this unusual arrangement.

The beating and imprisonment constitute official persecution for prophetic ministry. This pattern runs throughout Scripture: Elijah fled Jezebel's wrath, Micaiah was imprisoned for true prophecy (1 Kings 22:27), John the Baptist was beheaded, Jesus was crucified, apostles were beaten (Acts 5:40). Faithful proclamation often provokes violent opposition from those whose power or ideology is threatened by God's word (John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12).

Historical Context

Jerusalem's conditions during the extended siege (18 months total) were desperate. Famine, disease, and military pressure created chaos. Normal civic institutions broke down. Jonathan the scribe's house being repurposed as prison suggests official facilities were unavailable or needed for military purposes. The dungeon mentioned in verse 16 was particularly harsh—likely a cistern or underground chamber. Jeremiah's treatment contrasts sharply with Zedekiah's later private consultations (vv. 17-21), showing the king's conflicted posture: respecting the prophet privately while allowing officials to persecute him publicly.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why does faithful proclamation of God's word often provoke violent opposition from civil authorities?
2. How should we respond when officially punished for speaking biblical truth?
3. What does the princes' anger at Jeremiah (despite flimsy evidence) reveal about the real nature of opposition to prophetic ministry?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּקְצֹפּוּ	הַשָּׂרִים	עַל	יִרְמְיָהוּ	וַיִּהְיוּ	אֹתוֹ
were wroth	Wherefore the princes	H5921	with Jeremiah	and smote	H853
H7107	H8269		H3414	H5221	
וַיִּנְתְּנוּ	אֹתוֹ	לְבֵית	הָאֵסוּר	לְבֵית	יְהוֹנָתָן
him and put	H853	in the house	him in prison	in the house	of Jonathan
H5414		H1004	H612	H1004	H3083
הַסֹּפֵר	כִּי	אֹתוֹ	עָשׂוּ	לְבֵית	הַכְּלָא:
the scribe	H3588	H853	for they had made	in the house	that the prison
H5608			H6213	H1004	H3608

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 38:26 (Parallel theme): Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

Acts 5:18 (Parallel theme): And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

Jeremiah 26:16 (Parallel theme): Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

Matthew 21:35 (Parallel theme): And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Genesis 39:20 (Parallel theme): And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

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.

2 Chronicles 18:26 (Parallel theme): And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace.

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