

Jeremiah 39:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

Analysis

When Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them... then they fled (וַיַּרְא (vayyivrach)—After 18 months of defiant resistance, Zedekiah's courage collapsed at the crucial moment. The verb barach (ברך) denotes panicked flight, not strategic retreat. He escaped **by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls**—a secretive escape route through the southeast passage toward the Kidron Valley.

This flight fulfilled Ezekiel's symbolic prophecy: the prince would 'dig through the wall' and flee in darkness (Ezekiel 12:5-12). Zedekiah's cowardice contrasts sharply with Jeremiah's counsel to surrender and live (38:17-23). He chose political preservation over prophetic wisdom and lost everything. The way of the plain (ערבה, arabah) toward Jericho proved not an escape but the path to judgment.

Historical Context

The 'king's garden' was located in the Kidron Valley at the southeastern corner of Jerusalem, providing a natural escape route away from the main Babylonian forces positioned at the northern gates. The double-wall system (likely the old Jebusite

fortification) created a narrow passage. Ancient military tactics anticipated such escape attempts and positioned forces accordingly.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Zedekiah's flight illustrate the futility of resisting God's declared judgment?
2. When have you attempted to 'escape' God's correction rather than submit to His wisdom?
3. What does Zedekiah's failure teach about trusting political solutions over prophetic truth?

Interlinear Text

בְּאַמְתָּה	רֵאֵה	וְ	צִדְקִיָּהוּ	בְּפָנֵי	לְגָדִילָה
H1961	H834	H7200	saw	And it came to pass that when Zedekiah	of the king's
				H6667	H4428
וְ	אֶתְשָׁ	וְ	מִלְחָמָה	וְ	בְּרִיחָה
of Judah	H3605	them and all the men	of war	then they fled	
H3063		H582	H4421	H1272	
וְ	אֶלְאָ	לְ	בָּעֵיר	בְּ	גָּדִילָה
and he went out	by night	H4480	out of the city	by the way	garden of the king's
H3318	H3915		H5892	H1870	H4428
בְּ	בֵּין	בְּ	חַמְמָתָה	בְּ	פְּנִים
by the gate	H996	H2346	betwixt the two walls	and he went out	by the way of the plain
H8179			H3318	H1870	H6160

Additional Cross-References

Amos 2:14 (Parallel theme): Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:

2 Chronicles 32:5 (Parallel theme): Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

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