

Jeremiah 40:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

Analysis

Gedaliah's counsel establishes the practical framework for survival under Babylonian governance: 'dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.' The verb 'serve' (abad in Hebrew) means to work for, render service to, or be subject to—the same word used for serving God, indicating that submission to Babylon's temporal authority need not compromise covenant faithfulness to Yahweh. This echoes Jeremiah's longstanding message that accepting God's disciplinary judgment through Babylon opened paths to blessing, while resistance brought further destruction. Gedaliah's promise 'it shall be well with you' (yitab lakem) uses covenantal language of blessing, showing that prosperity could exist even under foreign domination if people aligned with God's revealed purposes. His personal commitment—'As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans'—modeled servant leadership, not merely commanding others while pursuing his own interests. The instruction to 'gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil' directed energy toward productive labor rather than political schemes, offering tangible hope through agricultural restoration. This vision of thriving through faithful labor under imperfect governance provides biblical wisdom for believers living under authorities they didn't choose and may not prefer.

Historical Context

Gedaliah's policy reflected both practical wisdom and theological insight shaped by his family's connection to Jeremiah. His grandfather Shaphan had led Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22), and his father Ahikam protected Jeremiah from execution (Jeremiah 26:24), establishing a legacy of supporting prophetic truth regardless of popularity. The agricultural tasks he assigned—gathering wine, summer fruits (figs, dates), and olive oil—represented August-September harvest season work, suggesting this occurred soon after Jerusalem's fall in July/August 586 BC. These crops could be harvested from vineyards and orchards that survived the devastation, offering immediate sustenance. Gedaliah's approach contrasted sharply with the rebellious nationalism that had led to Jerusalem's destruction. By accepting Babylon's authority while maintaining Jewish communal life, he sought what Jeremiah had counseled in his letter to earlier exiles: 'seek the peace of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its peace you will find your peace' (Jeremiah 29:7). Archaeological evidence shows Mizpah and surrounding areas did maintain agricultural production during this period, validating Gedaliah's practical strategy.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Gedaliah's counsel challenge Christian assumptions about the necessity of political independence for spiritual faithfulness?
2. What principles can believers draw from this passage about productive engagement versus destructive resistance under difficult governance?
3. In what ways does focusing on productive labor serve as both practical survival strategy and spiritual discipline during oppressive times?

Interlinear Text

לִפְנֵי י'	לַעֲמַד	בְּמִצְפָּה ה'	וְשָׁב ו'	הֲנֵנִי י'	וְאֲנִי י'
H6440	H5975	H4709	H3427	H2005	H589
	to serve	at Mizpah	As for me behold I will dwell		
אָסְפוּ	וְאַתֶּם מ'	אֵל יִנּוֹ	יָבֹאוּ	אֲשֶׁר ר'	הַכַּשְׂדִּים
H622	H859	H413	H935	H834	H3778
unto us but ye gather			which will come		the Chaldeans
בְּכֵלֶיךָ מ'	וְשָׂמוּ	וְשָׂמוּ	וְשָׂמוּ	וְשָׂמוּ	וְשָׂמוּ
H3627	H7760	H8081	H7019	H3196	
them in your vessels	and put	and oil	and summer fruits	ye wine	
תִּפְשְׁתֶּם:	אֲשֶׁר	בְּעָרֶיךָ מ'	וְשָׁב ו'		
H8610	H834	H5892	H3427		
that ye have taken		in your cities	As for me behold I will dwell		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 40:12 (Parallel theme): Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

Isaiah 16:9 (Parallel theme): Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen.

Jeremiah 35:19 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

Jeremiah 48:32 (Parallel theme): O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage.

Jeremiah 39:10 (Parallel theme): But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

Deuteronomy 1:38 (Parallel theme): But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

2 Samuel 16:1 (Parallel theme): And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

Proverbs 22:29 (Parallel theme): Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Jeremiah 40:6 (Parallel theme): Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

Luke 21:36 (Parallel theme): Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.