

Jeremiah 40:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

Analysis

Johanan son of Kareah's arrival 'and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields' marks a critical juncture—these military leaders came with intelligence about a conspiracy against Gedaliah. The phrase 'in the fields' indicates these men maintained military presence outside Mizpah, possibly as security forces or because they didn't fully trust the new arrangement. Their coming to Gedaliah shows a communication structure existed and at least some leaders felt loyalty and concern for the governor's safety. This verse begins a sequence (verses 13-16) where Johanan attempts to warn Gedaliah about Ishmael's plot, demonstrating that not all military leaders were conspirators. Johanan emerges as a complex figure: initially protective of Gedaliah, warning him of danger, but later leading survivors to Egypt against Jeremiah's counsel (chapter 43). This shows how the same person can exercise wisdom in one area while failing in another, and how human character contains contradictions. The passage also reveals that political intelligence gathering occurred—somehow Johanan learned of Baalis king of Ammon's involvement in plotting Gedaliah's assassination. This sets up the tragic irony that Gedaliah, despite being warned, refuses to believe the threat (verse 16), showing how even wise leaders can have fatal blind spots.

Historical Context

Johanan son of Kareah first appeared in verse 8 among the military captains who came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. That he now returns with urgent warning suggests he had been operating at some distance, perhaps patrolling borders or monitoring

regional developments. His role 'and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields' indicates he led or coordinated multiple military units outside Mizpah proper, making him a significant power broker. These forces were likely guerrilla units that had operated during Jerusalem's siege, avoiding direct confrontation with Babylon while maintaining presence in Judean countryside. Their continued existence under Gedaliah's governorship provided security but also potential instability if they turned against him. Johanan's warning about Ishmael reflects the complex political situation: Gedaliah governed with Babylonian backing, but other powers (particularly Ammon) resented Babylon's hegemony and sought to destabilize pro-Babylonian governance in neighboring territories. Ammon likely saw an unstable Judah as beneficial, preventing any revival of Judean power on their western border. That Johanan had intelligence about foreign involvement shows these military leaders maintained information networks throughout the region.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Johanan's character arc illustrate that wise action in one situation doesn't guarantee faithful choices in future circumstances?
2. What does this passage teach about the importance of taking security threats seriously even when they seem unlikely or uncomfortable to acknowledge?
3. Why do leaders sometimes refuse to believe warnings about people they trust, and how can this spiritual vulnerability be addressed?

Interlinear Text

פָּנִים יְמִינֵנוּ בֶּן קָרְאָה וְכָל שָׁרִים
Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces
H3110 H1121 H7143 H3605 H8269 H2428

הַמִּצְפָּתָה גִּדְלֵי הָוֹא אֶל בְּאֹו בְּשַׁדְּ הַנְּאָשָׁר
that were in the fields came to Gedaliah to Mizpah
H834 H7704 H935 H413 H1436 H4708

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