

Jeremiah 40:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

Analysis

Johanan's direct accusation—'Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee?'—demonstrates both the specificity of his intelligence and the gravity of the threat. The phrase 'dost thou certainly know' emphasizes that this wasn't vague rumor but definite information Johanan wanted Gedaliah to acknowledge. The conspiracy involved foreign instigation: 'Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael,' indicating this wasn't merely internal Jewish political rivalry but international intrigue aimed at destabilizing Babylon's governance in Judah. Ammon's motivation likely combined resentment of Babylonian hegemony with opportunistic desire to prevent Judean recovery that might threaten Ammonite interests. Ishmael's willingness to be 'sent' by a foreign king to murder a Jewish governor shows how deeply political ambition and nationalism had corrupted covenant faithfulness. The phrase 'to slay thee' (literally 'to strike your soul/life,' l'hakotekha nefesh) indicates not political neutralization but outright murder. Gedaliah's subsequent refusal to believe this warning (verse 16) reveals tragic naiveté—assuming everyone shared his good intentions and commitment to community welfare. This passage warns against both paranoid suspicion of everyone and foolish credulity that trusts without discernment. Wisdom requires believing truth even when it's uncomfortable and implicates people we prefer to trust.

Historical Context

Baal's king of Ammon ruled the territory directly east of Judah, centered around modern Amman, Jordan. Ammon had a long history of both alliance and conflict with Israel and Judah (see Judges 11, 1 Samuel 11, 2 Samuel 10). During Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of the region, Ammon initially submitted to Babylon (Jeremiah 27:3) but maintained independence and likely harbored ambitions to expand influence. A stable, recovering Judah under competent leadership threatened Ammonite interests by potentially becoming a significant Babylonian client state. Baal likely calculated that assassinating Gedaliah would create chaos in Judah, reduce Babylonian influence in the region, and perhaps allow Ammon to absorb territory or refugees. Ishmael son of Nethaniah's motivation for accepting Ammonite sponsorship combined personal ambition with royal blood (verse 1 notes he was 'of the seed royal'), suggesting he saw himself as a legitimate alternative to Gedaliah's appointed governance. From Ishmael's perspective, Gedaliah was a collaborator who legitimized foreign domination, while he represented authentic Jewish nationalism and royal authority. This tragic misunderstanding of God's purposes—viewing submission to Babylon as betrayal rather than faithful acceptance of divine discipline—exemplifies how political theology can become disastrously distorted.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does foreign instigation of internal conflict illustrate Satan's strategy of using external pressure to create division among God's people?
2. What warning does this conspiracy provide about how nationalism and political ambition can corrupt covenant faithfulness?
3. In what ways should church leaders balance trust in people with wise discernment of genuine threats to community welfare?

Interlinear Text

מִלְּגָד בָּעֵל יָסֵן כִּי יִאָמֶר וְ

And said H413 **know** H3045 **know** H3045 **that Baalis** H1185 **the king** H4428

H559

H3588

H1185

H4428

בָּנִים

עַמְּדָה

שָׁלַח

אֶת

יִשְׁמַעְתָּ

אֶל

בָּנִים

of the Ammonites H5983 **hath sent** H7971 **Ishmael** H3458 **of the Ammonites** H1121

H1121

H853

H3458

H1121

גַּמְתִּי הָ

לְהַכְתִּיב

לְפָנֶיךָ

וְלֹא

בְּפָנֶיךָ

believed

לְבָם

גְּדֹלִי הָוְהָ בְּתַךְ

of Nethaniah

to slay

H5315

H3808

believed

H0

thee But Gedaliah

H5418

H5221

H539

H1436

בָּנִים

אַחִיקָּם

of the Ammonites

of Ahikam

H1121

H296

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 41:10 (Kingdom): Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

Jeremiah 25:21 (Parallel theme): Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,