

Jeremiah 40:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

Analysis

This verse provides a detailed roster of military leaders who came to Gedaliah, establishing the historical specificity of these events and the potential that existed for stable governance under Babylonian oversight. The inclusion of names—"Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite"—demonstrates these were real individuals making consequential choices. Particularly significant is Ishmael son of Nethaniah, who will later assassinate Gedaliah (41:1-3), showing that even among those who initially accepted the new order lurked those plotting its destruction. Johanan son of Kareah emerges in later chapters as the voice warning Gedaliah about Ishmael's plot and later leading survivors to Egypt against Jeremiah's counsel. The geographical identifiers (Netophathite from near Bethlehem, Maachathite from northeast of the Sea of Galilee) indicate these leaders came from diverse regions, suggesting Gedaliah's potential influence extended throughout surviving areas of Judah. The phrase 'they and their men' shows each captain brought military forces—essential for maintaining order but also making them potential threats if they turned against Gedaliah. This assembly represented a critical juncture where cooperation could have led to stability, but human sinfulness and political intrigue would soon shatter this fragile hope.

Historical Context

The commanders' gathering at Mizpah circa late 586 BC represented what could have been a turning point for Judah's remnant. These were not Jerusalem's former elite (most were dead or deported) but secondary leaders who had maintained forces in the countryside during and after the siege. Their willingness to come to Mizpah rather than continue independent operations or flee to Egypt, Moab, or Edom (where other refugees had gone) suggested openness to working within Babylon's administrative structure. The diversity of their origins (Netophah south of Jerusalem, Maachah far north) indicates Judah's military structure had fragmented regionally during the chaos of Babylon's conquest. Each captain likely controlled limited territory and resources, making cooperation beneficial but also requiring trust they ultimately couldn't sustain. The appearance of Ishmael son of Nethaniah is particularly ominous in retrospect—he came claiming peaceful intent but was already plotting assassination, motivated by both political ambition (he had royal blood) and possibly instigation from Baalis, king of Ammon (40:14), who sought to prevent stable pro-Babylonian government in Judah. This assembly thus contained the seeds of its own destruction, as happens when human power politics supersedes faithful obedience to God's revealed will.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this passage illustrate the persistent danger of political ambition even among those who outwardly accept God's disciplinary judgments?
2. What warning does Ishmael's presence among these leaders provide about discerning true versus false cooperation?
3. Why do we often fail to recognize those who pose the greatest danger to godly community, and how can spiritual discernment be cultivated?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 42:1 (Parallel theme): Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,

Deuteronomy 3:14 (Parallel theme): Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the coasts of Geshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day.

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.

Jeremiah 42:8 (Parallel theme): Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest,

Jeremiah 43:2 (Parallel theme): Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou

speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there:

Nehemiah 7:26 (Parallel theme): The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight.

Joshua 12:5 (Parallel theme): And reigned in mount Hermon, and in Salcah, and in all Bashan, unto the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and half Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.

2 Samuel 10:8 (Parallel theme): And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah, were by themselves in the field.

2 Samuel 10:6 (Parallel theme): And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men.

Ezra 2:22 (Parallel theme): The men of Netophah, fifty and six.