

# Jeremiah 41:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

## Analysis

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The tragedy foretold unfolds: 'in the seventh month' (October 586 BC), approximately two months after Gedaliah's appointment, Ishmael son of Nethaniah arrived with 'ten men' to murder the governor. The detail that Ishmael was 'of the seed royal' explains his motivation—royal blood gave him claim to leadership that Gedaliah, from a scribal family, lacked in his view. The phrase 'the princes of the king' suggests Ishmael brought others of noble lineage, creating the appearance of legitimate authority. The setting—'they did eat bread together in Mizpah'—emphasizes the betrayal: Ishmael accepted Gedaliah's hospitality, sharing covenant fellowship expressed through common meals, while plotting murder. This echoes Psalm 41:9, 'mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me,' which Jesus applied to Judas (John 13:18). The parallel is instructive: covenant meals signify trust and fellowship, making betrayal during such occasions particularly heinous. Ishmael's treachery demonstrates how political ambition and nationalist ideology can corrupt covenant faithfulness completely. Despite Johanan's warning (40:13-16), Gedaliah extended trust and hospitality, which Ishmael exploited lethally.

## Historical Context

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The seventh month (Tishri, September/October) held religious significance as the month containing the Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:23-43). Ishmael's choice to attack during this period added sacrilege to murder. That he brought exactly 'ten men' may be significant—ten represented the minimum for a Jewish assembly (minyan), suggesting Ishmael intended his action to carry communal authority. Eating bread together created covenant obligation in ancient Near Eastern culture; violating hospitality was among the most serious breaches of honor. Archaeological evidence from Mizpah shows signs of destruction during this period, consistent with the violent events described. Ishmael's royal lineage (possibly descended from David through a cadet branch) made him view Babylon's appointment of Gedaliah as illegitimate usurpation. From Ishmael's nationalist perspective, he was restoring rightful Davidic authority, though Scripture presents him as a traitor and murderer who destroyed the remnant's hope.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## Study Questions

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1. How does Ishmael's betrayal of Gedaliah's hospitality illustrate the depth of sin's corruption of human relationships and covenant obligations?
2. What does this passage teach about the danger of nationalist ideology and political ambition masquerading as covenant faithfulness?
3. How should believers respond when trust is betrayed despite our faithful extension of hospitality and grace?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיָּהּ יוֹן	בַּחַדָּשׁ	הַשְּׁבִיעִי	בָּא	וַיָּשָׁמַע אֶל־		
H1961	month	Now it came to pass in the seventh	with him came	that Ishmael		
	H2320	H7637	H935	H3458		
בֶּן־	נִתְנָהּ הַ	בֶּן־	אֶלִישָׁמָע עַ	הַ מְלוּכָה		
the son	of Nathaniah	the son	of Elishama	royal		
H1121	H5418	H1121	H476	H2233		
				H4410		
וְכִבְיָ	הַמֶּלֶךְ לְ	וְעֶשְׂרָה הַ	אֲנָשִׁים יָם	אֶת־וְ	אֶל־	גִּדְלִי הוֹ
and the princes	of the king	even ten	H376	H854	H413	unto Gedaliah
H7227	H4428	H6235				H1436
בֶּן־	אֲחִיקָם	בְּמִצְפָּה:	וַיֵּאָכְלוּ	שֶׁם	לֶחֶם	וַיֵּחָדּוּ
the son	of Ahikam	to Mizpah	and there they did eat	H8033	bread	together
H1121	H296	H4709	H398		H3899	H3162
בְּמִצְפָּה:						
to Mizpah						
H4709						

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 40:8** (Parallel theme): Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nathaniah, 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.

**Psalms 41:9** (Parallel theme): Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

**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.