

# 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

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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וְשָׁמַע אֶל בְּאַת בְּזִבְחָה יְהִי יְהִי

H1961 month Now it came to pass in the seventh with him came that Ishmael

H2320 H7637 H935 H3458

בְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם אֶלְישָׁמָע בְּנֵי נְתַנְיָהוּ בְּנֵי

the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama of the seed royal

H1121 H5418 H1121 H476 H2233 H4410

וְגַדְלֵי הָאָתָה אֶל אֶלְישָׁמָע וְעִשְׂרֵה בְּנֵי יְהוָה וְבְנֵי

and the princes of the king even ten unto Gedaliah

H7227 H4428 H6235 H376 H854 H413 H1436

וְיַחַד בְּלִבְנֵי אֲחִיקָם בְּמִצְפָּה אֶלְישָׁמָע וְיַאֲכִילוּ שְׂמִינִי בְּנֵי

the son of Ahikam to Mizpah and there they did eat together

H1121 H296 H4709 H398 H8033 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 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.

**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.