

Jeremiah 41:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

Analysis

Johanan's immediate response to news of Ishmael's murders—gathering 'all the captains of the forces that were with him' and preparing pursuit—shows leadership and military competence. His swift action prevented Ishmael's complete success, eventually rescuing the captives (v.14). The phrase 'when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done' emphasizes the wickedness ('evil') of Ishmael's actions from the narrator's perspective. This vindicates Johanan's earlier warning to Gedaliah (40:13-16) that proved tragically accurate. Johanan emerges as both the prophet who warned and the warrior who attempted to limit the damage of the catastrophe his warning couldn't prevent. However, while Johanan showed wisdom and courage in opposing Ishmael, his later decision to flee to Egypt against Jeremiah's counsel (chapter 43) shows that military competence and tactical wisdom don't guarantee spiritual discernment. This passage illustrates how the same person can make wise choices in one area while failing in another, showing human inconsistency.

Historical Context

Johanan's ability to quickly gather 'all the captains of the forces' suggests he maintained communication networks and command structures among Judean military remnants despite Gedaliah's assassination. These were likely the same 'captains of the forces that were in the fields' (40:7, 13) who had initially

recognized Gedaliah's governorship. That they responded to Johanan's leadership indicates his standing among these commanders. The speed of their response—Ishmael was overtaken before reaching Ammonite territory (about 20-25 miles from Mizpah)—demonstrates military efficiency. However, this same military capability couldn't preserve stability; after rescuing captives, these leaders led the remnant to Egypt rather than attempting to restore order (chapters 42-43). This shows how military strength without spiritual wisdom leads to pragmatic rather than faithful choices. The tragedy is that the military competence that could have protected the remnant if properly directed instead led them into exile in Egypt, completing the disaster Ishmael initiated.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Johanan's validated warning to Gedaliah illustrate the tragedy of being proven right about catastrophes that could have been prevented?
2. What does Johanan's mixture of tactical wisdom and strategic spiritual failure teach about how competence in one area doesn't ensure wisdom in others?
3. Why do people who show courage and wisdom in crisis response sometimes make poor decisions about long-term direction and purpose?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּשִׁמְעוּ | יְהוָה | בְּנֵי קָרְאָה מִכָּל
that were with him heard But when Johanan the son of Kareah H3605
H8085 H3110 H1121 H7143

כָּל אֲנָשָׁר הַמְּפִלֵּל יְמִינֵי אֶת קְרֻעָה
and all the captains of the forces of all the evil H7451
H8269 H2428 H3605 H7451

בֶּן נְתָנִיאָה: אֶל שָׁמֵעַ הַעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר
had done that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah H5418
H834 H6213 H3458 H1121

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