

# Jeremiah 41:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

## Analysis

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The report that 'Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites' reveals both success and failure in Johanan's rescue: he liberated captives but Ishmael escaped justice. The detail that only 'eight men' remained with Ishmael (down from the original ten in v.1) suggests two were killed, captured, or defected during the confrontation. Ishmael's escape to Ammon fulfilled his original plan (v.10) despite losing his captives, indicating Baalis king of Ammon was willing to harbor a murderer and traitor. This confirms Ammonite complicity in the plot (as Johanan had warned in 40:14) and shows that regional politics valued destabilizing Babylon's governance in Judah more than justice or ethics. Ishmael disappears from biblical record after this verse, his fate unknown. From a narrative perspective, his escape represents incompleteness typical of earthly justice—the guilty sometimes evade punishment in this life, awaiting divine judgment. His escape also meant he couldn't testify about Ammonite involvement, potentially complicating diplomatic fallout. Yet his failure to accomplish his goals (he lost captives, plunder, and any claim to leadership in Judah) demonstrates that wicked schemes rarely succeed completely even when perpetrators escape immediate punishment.

## Historical Context

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Ishmael's successful escape to Ammon (despite losing captives) suggests either Johanan prioritized rescuing people over pursuing Ishmael, or Ishmael knew escape routes Johanan couldn't easily block. The distance from Gibeon to

Ammonite territory was approximately 15-20 miles, crossable in a forced march. That eight men remained with Ishmael indicates significant loyalty or complicity—these weren't conscripts but willing participants in murder and kidnapping. Ammon's willingness to harbor Ishmael confirmed their hostility to Babylon's interests in Judah. However, Ammonite protection proved limited; Ishmael vanishes from history, suggesting even his refuge was temporary or insecure. Historical records indicate Ammon itself fell to Babylonian conquest not long after these events (see Ezekiel 25:1-11 for prophecies against Ammon), so Ishmael's supposed refuge was itself doomed. The irony is complete: he betrayed his people, murdered their leaders, kidnapped survivors, fled to foreign protection—and history forgot him. Only Scripture preserves his story as a warning.

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How should believers respond to the reality that perpetrators of evil sometimes escape earthly justice while waiting for divine judgment?
2. What does Ishmael's escape but ultimate historical insignificance teach about the futility of wicked schemes even when they partly succeed?
3. In what ways does this passage challenge simplistic expectations that good always triumphs immediately and completely in earthly affairs?

## Interlinear Text

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מִפְנֵן יְמִינָה יְמִינָה נִמְלָט נִתְבַּחַת בָּנֵן וְיִשְׁמַע אֶל

But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped with eight from

H3458

H1121

בָּנֵן הַ

נִמְלָט

נִתְבַּחַת

H376

from

H6440

עַמּוֹן: בָּנֵן וְיִזְבַּחַת אֶל יְלָה יְזַבֵּחַ

Johanan the son of Johanan

H3110

H1980

H413

the son

H5983

H1121

## Additional Cross-References

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**Job 21:30** (Parallel theme): That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.

**Proverbs 28:17** (Parallel theme): A man that doeth violence to the blood of any person shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

**1 Kings 20:20** (Parallel theme): And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen.

**1 Samuel 30:17** (Parallel theme): And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

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