

Jeremiah 41:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,

Analysis

The phrase 'the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it' reveals Ishmael's calculated deception—he concealed the murders to avoid immediate alarm while he consolidated control. This detail emphasizes premeditation and cold calculation rather than passionate crime. The following verses (5-10) describe how Ishmael exploited religious pilgrims traveling to worship at Jerusalem's ruined temple, murdering 70 of 80 men after feigning friendship. This manipulation of religious devotion for murder shows the complete corruption of Ishmael's character. His ability to maintain normal appearances while corpses lay hidden demonstrates sociopathic detachment. The contrast is striking: these pilgrims came to mourn Jerusalem's destruction and worship God at the temple ruins, maintaining covenant faithfulness despite catastrophe, while Ishmael used their piety as opportunity for slaughter. The passage illustrates how evil can masquerade as normalcy, hiding violence behind ordinary activities. It also shows that during times of social collapse, maintaining appearance of order while working wickedness becomes easier.

Historical Context

That Ishmael could conceal multiple murders for a full day indicates Mizpah's size (large enough that bodies could be hidden) and the confusion following Gedaliah's assassination. The detail that 'no man knew it' suggests Ishmael controlled information flow, possibly having stationed his ten men at strategic points to prevent news spreading. The pilgrims arriving 'the second day' were likely

unaware of the previous day's murders, having traveled from northern territories (Shechem, Shiloh, Samaria, v.5). Their journey to Jerusalem's destroyed temple demonstrates continued worship practices even after the temple's destruction—people brought offerings and incense to the temple site itself, showing that sacred geography retained meaning even without functioning temple. This foreshadows how Jewish worship continued at the Western Wall centuries later. Ishmael's exploitation of these faithful worshippers represents perhaps his most heinous crime: using people's devotion to God as means to murder them.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Ishmael's concealment of evil behind normal appearances warn against assuming surface propriety indicates spiritual health?
2. What does the pilgrims' continued worship at the ruined temple teach about maintaining covenant faithfulness even when religious structures collapse?
3. In what ways do violent ideologies today exploit religious devotion for destructive purposes, and how can believers discern and resist such manipulation?

Interlinear Text

בַּיּוֹם יְנִינָה	וְשָׁנָה	לִפְנֵי	יָתַר	אֶת	הָיָה	גֵּדָלֵי
H1961	day	And it came to pass the second	after he had slain	H853	Gedaliah	
H3117		H8145	H4191		H1436	

לֹא	יְדַעַ:	וְאֵין
and no man	knew	
H376	H3808	H3045

