

# Jeremiah 41:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren.

## Analysis

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The ten survivors who declared, 'Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey' reveal human desperation and Ishmael's greed. These men bought their lives by offering hidden stores —'treasures in the field' suggests supplies buried or concealed outside Mizpah for security during unstable times. The list (wheat, barley, oil, honey) represents comprehensive agricultural wealth, indicating these were prosperous pilgrims. Their willingness to reveal and surrender these resources shows both wisdom (valuing life over possessions) and the desperation of facing imminent death. Ishmael's acceptance—'so he forbore, and slew them not'—reveals his opportunistic evil: willing to murder innocent pilgrims but also willing to spare some for financial gain. This transaction demonstrates the complete moral bankruptcy of his actions: the murders weren't ideological (eliminating enemies) but merely opportunistic violence, interruptible when profit presented itself. The contrast between these ten pragmatic survivors and the seventy murdered shows different responses to crisis: some attempted negotiation, most apparently didn't. Whether this reflects the others' poverty (having nothing to offer) or Ishmael's unpredictability (perhaps killing some before they could speak) remains unclear.

## Historical Context

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Burying or concealing grain and oil in fields was common practice during periods of instability, protecting food stores from raiding armies or bandits. Archaeological excavations throughout ancient Israel have uncovered storage jars and chambers in agricultural areas consistent with this practice. The specific foods mentioned (wheat, barley, oil, honey) represent staples of ancient Near Eastern diet and economy. Wheat and barley were primary grain crops, olive oil was essential for cooking and lamps, honey (possibly date honey, 'dibvash,' rather than bee honey) was the primary sweetener. That these pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria (northern territories) carried knowledge of hidden stores in Judean fields suggests either they owned land in Judah or had received information from those who did. Their willingness to reveal these locations indicates they valued survival over property rights. Ishmael's acceptance of their offer shows pragmatic evil—ideology gave way to greed when profit appeared. This pattern appears throughout history: revolutionary violence often morphs into banditry when maintaining ideological purity proves less profitable than simple theft.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. What does this transaction between the pilgrims and Ishmael teach about how even evil people can be negotiated with when self-interest is engaged?
2. How should believers balance practical wisdom (preserving life through material sacrifice) with refusing to compromise moral principles?
3. In what ways does Ishmael's opportunistic mixture of ideology and greed illustrate how sin rarely maintains consistency but adapts to circumstances?

## Interlinear Text

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אֶל	וַיֹּאמֶר	וְאֵת	בְּמִן	נִמְצָאוּ	אֲבָשׂ יִם	וַיַּעֲשֶׂה	הָ
But ten	H376	were found	H0	among them	that said	Al	H413
H6235		H4672		H559			
unto Ishmael	H408	Slay	H3588	us not for we have	H0	מִטְמְנִים	H4301
H3458		H4191		H3426		treasures	
in the field	H7704	of wheat	H2406	and of barley	H8184	and of oil	H8081
						and of honey	H1706
						So he forbore	H2308
							H3808
בְּתַת	וְרֹ	הַמִּיתָּה	מִ	אֲחִיכָּם:			
Slay	H4191	them not among	H8432	their brethren	H251		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Job 2:4** (Parallel theme): And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

**Proverbs 13:8** (Parallel theme): The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.