

Jeremiah 42:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

Analysis

God directly addresses the remnant's fear: 'Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.' The repetition 'be not afraid...be not afraid' emphasizes the command—fear is disobedience when God promises protection. The phrase 'of whom ye are afraid' acknowledges their terror's reality without validating it; God recognizes their fear but commands them to overcome it through trust. The promise 'for I am with you' echoes assurances given to Abraham (Genesis 26:24), Isaac (Genesis 26:24), Jacob (Genesis 28:15), Moses (Exodus 3:12), Joshua (Joshua 1:5, 9), Gideon (Judges 6:16), and repeatedly throughout Scripture. Divine presence guarantees security regardless of circumstances. The verbs 'to save you, and to deliver you' promise both preservation (salvation from danger) and liberation (deliverance from oppression). The phrase 'from his hand' indicates God's power exceeds Babylon's—Nebuchadnezzar's 'hand' cannot reach what God protects. This verse offers what the remnant desperately needed: assurance that their rational fear (Babylonian reprisal for Gedaliah's assassination) could be overcome through trusting God's specific promise of protection if they remained in Judah. Their subsequent rejection of this promise revealed that fear had become more authoritative than faith.

Historical Context

The remnant's fear of 'the king of Babylon' was historically justified by Nebuchadnezzar's reputation for brutal reprisals against rebellion. His campaigns throughout the Levant (605-586 BC) included systematic destruction of resisting cities, mass deportations, and execution of leaders. The murder of Gedaliah (Babylon's appointed governor) and Babylonian officials at Mizpah (41:1-3) would normally trigger severe military response—likely a punitive expedition to crush remaining Jewish population. Ancient Near Eastern empires routinely practiced collective punishment, making the remnant's fear for their lives rational from a human perspective. However, God's promise 'I am with you' trumped these realistic dangers. Similar divine assurances throughout Israel's history consistently proved reliable when trusted: Israel survived Egyptian bondage, wilderness wandering, Canaanite opposition, Philistine threats, and Assyrian invasion when they relied on God's presence and promises. The tragedy was that the remnant, having witnessed Jeremiah's prophecies of judgment against Jerusalem prove accurate, should have trusted his prophecies of protection for the obedient remnant. Instead, they trusted their fear-driven calculations over God's explicit word. Their flight to Egypt (chapter 43) demonstrated that intellectual knowledge of God's past faithfulness doesn't automatically translate to present trust when fear dominates.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's acknowledgment 'of whom ye are afraid' show He understands our fears while still commanding we trust Him rather than be controlled by them?
2. What does the promise 'I am with you' teach about the sufficiency of divine presence to overcome even realistic threats?
3. Why do believers sometimes trust fear-driven risk assessment more than God's specific promises of protection, even after witnessing His past faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

אֵל תִּירָא מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה יִרְאֶה
H408 Be not afraid of the king of Babylon H834 H859 ye are afraid
H3372 H6440 H4428 H894 H3373

אֵל תִּירָא מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ נֹאֵם יְהוָה כִּי אַתָּה
H408 Be not afraid H4480 of him saith the LORD H3588 H854
H6440 H3372 H5002 H3068

אֵל לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אַתָּה וּלְהַצִּיל אַתָּה
H589 for I am with you to save H853 you and to deliver H853
H3467 H5337

מִיָּדוֹ
you from his hand
H3027

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:31 (Parallel theme): What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Isaiah 43:5 (Parallel theme): Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

Isaiah 43:2 (Parallel theme): When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Jeremiah 1:8 (References Lord): Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 1:19 (References Lord): And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Isaiah 41:10 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Psalms 46:11 (References Lord): The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Jeremiah 15:20 (Salvation): And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 27:17 (Kingdom): Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?

Jeremiah 41:18 (Kingdom): Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.