

Jeremiah 42:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

Analysis

God's promise continues with unexpected graciousness: 'And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.' The phrase 'I will shew mercies' (literally 'I will give you compassions/mercies') emphasizes divine initiative—God's mercy produces mercy from others. The result 'that he may have mercy upon you' indicates God will move Nebuchadnezzar's heart toward clemency rather than vengeance despite Gedaliah's murder. This echoes Proverbs 21:1, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.' God controls even pagan rulers' responses to accomplish His purposes. The promise 'cause you to return to your own land' addresses their deeper need: not just survival but restoration. The phrase 'your own land' recalls covenant promise—this is the land God gave them, and He intends them to remain and eventually flourish there. Remarkably, God promises mercy despite their complicity in circumstances leading to Gedaliah's death (they ignored warnings, trusted unwisely). This grace should have evoked grateful obedience, but instead they rejected it, choosing Egypt's false security over God's promised provision. Their rejection proved that fear dominated their hearts more than faith in God's grace.

Historical Context

The promise that God would cause Babylon to show mercy rather than exact vengeance represented extraordinary grace given ancient Near Eastern political realities. Normally, assassination of an appointed governor triggered automatic

military reprisal with no mercy shown to surviving populations. That God promised to turn Nebuchadnezzar's expected wrath into mercy demonstrated His sovereign control over even pagan kings' responses. Historical examples of such divine intervention include: Pharaoh releasing Israel at the Exodus, Cyrus decreeing Jewish return from exile (Ezra 1:1-4), Artaxerxes supporting Nehemiah's wall-rebuilding (Nehemiah 2:1-9), and Darius protecting temple reconstruction (Ezra 6:1-12). In each case, God moved pagan rulers to act favorably toward His people beyond natural political calculation. The promise to 'cause you to return to your own land' may seem odd since they were still in Judah (near Bethlehem), but it anticipates their intended flight to Egypt: God promised if they remained, they wouldn't permanently lose their ancestral territories but would be preserved in the land despite temporary instability. This contrasts with the judgment pronounced on those who fled to Egypt (verses 15-18)—they would die in Egypt by sword, famine, and pestilence, never returning to Judah. The historical irony is that those who trusted God's promise of mercy and remained in Judah participated in the eventual restoration under Cyrus (Ezra 1-2), while those who fled to Egypt vanished from redemptive history.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to give them mercies that produce mercy from Babylon illustrate His sovereignty over human political responses?
2. What does this extraordinary grace toward a partially complicit remnant teach about God's character and purposes?
3. Why did the remnant reject God's gracious promise of protection in favor of fear-driven flight to Egypt, and how do believers make similar choices today?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶתְתָּ	מִן	לְכָם	בְּקָמָם	וְרָם	מִרָּם	אֶתְתָּ
And I will shew	H5414	mercies	H7356	unto you that he may have mercy	H7355	H853
upon you and cause you to return	H7725	וְהַשְׁׁבָּה	H853	אֶל	אֶתְתָּ	אֶל מִתְּחַםְתֶּךָם:

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:7 (Parallel theme): When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Nehemiah 1:11 (Grace): O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

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