

Jeremiah 43:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah;

Analysis

But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah—The verb **took** (laqah, לקח) can mean to seize, capture, or carry away, often implying force. While some may have willingly fled to Egypt, the language suggests coercion—the leaders compelled the entire community, including those who might have preferred obedience to God's command.

The phrase **all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah** carries tragic irony. These were refugees who had fled to surrounding nations during Jerusalem's siege (40:11-12) but **returned** (shavu, שבו, from shuv, שוב, meaning to return/repent) **to dwell in the land of Judah** (lashevet be'erezt Yehudah, לשבת בארץ יהודה). They had literally returned to the covenant land—a small-scale restoration foreshadowing the eventual return from Babylon. Yet now they abandoned that restoration to flee to Egypt.

This represents a reversal of the Exodus pattern: instead of leaving Egypt for the promised land, they left the promised land for Egypt. Instead of shuv (return/repentance) toward God's promises, they pursued apostasy. The prophets consistently used shuv for both physical return to the land and spiritual return to covenant faithfulness (Jeremiah 3:12, 14, 22; 4:1). This community did the former without the latter.

Historical Context

When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (588-586 BC), many Judeans fled to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and other surrounding territories (Jeremiah 40:11). After Jerusalem fell and Gedaliah was appointed governor, these refugees returned, encouraged by relative stability (40:11-12). They resettled, harvested crops, and began rebuilding. This represented hope for restoration even amid judgment. However, Gedaliah's assassination shattered this fragile peace. Rather than trust God's promise of protection (42:11-12), the entire community—both original remnant and returned refugees—fled to Egypt. This fulfilled the tragic pattern Jeremiah had prophesied: the people would abandon the covenant land, bringing final judgment upon themselves (42:15-18). The irony is profound: those who had returned to the land now abandoned it, those who survived Jerusalem's destruction now pursued the very path leading to destruction.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the irony of 'returning' to Judah only to flee to Egypt illustrate incomplete repentance—outward return without heart transformation?
2. What does the leaders' apparent coercion ('took') of the community teach about how corporate disobedience can sweep up even unwilling participants?
3. In what ways might we make initial steps toward obedience (returning to the land) only to abandon God's will when circumstances become difficult?

Interlinear Text

וְקָח	יֹחָנָן	בֶּן	קָרֵחַ	וְכָל	שָׂרֵי	הַחֲיָלִים
took	But Johanan	the son	of Kareah	H3605	and all the captains	of the forces
H3947	H3110	H1121	H7143		H8269	H2428
אֵת	כָּל	שְׂאֵר יֵת	יְהוּדָה:	אֲשֶׁר	שָׁבוּ	מִכָּל
H853	H3605	all the remnant	of Judah	H834	that were returned	H3605
		H7611	H3063		H7725	
הַגּוֹיִם	אֲשֶׁר	נִדְחוּ	שָׁם	לָגור	בְּאֶרֶץ	
from all nations	H834	whither they had been driven	H8033	to dwell	in the land	
H1471		H5080		H1481	H776	
יְהוּדָה:						
of Judah						
H3063						