

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, נִקְחָה) 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, שָׁבָע, from shuv, שׁוּב, meaning to return/repent) **to dwell in the land of Judah** (lashevet be'eretz Yehudah, לָשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה). 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

מִקֶּל שׁ בָּו אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה שָׁאַר יִתְּכֻל אֵת H853 H3605 all the remnant H7611 H3063 H834 H3605 that were returned H7725

בָּאָרֶץ	לְגַם	וְשָׁם	הַגּוֹיִם	רָאשָׁן	נְדַחֲוָה	אָשָׁר	רְאֵבֶן
from all nations	H834		whither they had been driven	H8033	to dwell	in the land	

יְהוּדָה of Judah

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