

Jeremiah 43:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

Analysis

Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln

—God commands Jeremiah to perform a prophetic sign-act, a form of enacted prophecy common among the prophets (Isaiah 20:2-4; Jeremiah 13:1-11, 19:1-13; Ezekiel 4-5). **Great stones** (avanim gedolot, אַבְנִים גְּדוֹלֹת) were large rocks, probably foundation stones. **Hide them** (taman, טָמַן) means to bury or conceal. The location is specific: **in the clay in the brickkiln** (ba-melet ba-malben, בַּמֶּלֶט בַּמַּלְבֵּן)—either a brick pavement or clay mortar in a brick structure.

The location is crucial: **which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes**. This was the royal residence or administrative building of Pharaoh's representative in Tahpanhes, a public and politically significant location. **In the sight of the men of Judah** (le'enei anshei Yehudah, לְעֵינֵי אַנְשֵׁי יְהוּדָה) means the symbolic act was performed publicly before the Jewish refugees as witnesses.

The stones symbolized Nebuchadnezzar's throne (v. 10)—they marked the spot where Babylon's king would establish his authority over Egypt. The irony is devastating: the remnant fled to Pharaoh's house for safety, yet God declares that very location will become Nebuchadnezzar's throne platform. They cannot escape divine judgment through geographical relocation.

Historical Context

Prophetic sign-acts were embodied proclamations, making the message tangible and memorable. Jeremiah had previously performed such acts: wearing a yoke to symbolize Babylonian servitude (27:2), burying a linen belt to illustrate corruption (13:1-11), breaking a potter's vessel to picture Jerusalem's destruction (19:10-11). This act at Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes was particularly bold—performing a symbolic act predicting Egypt's conquest at an Egyptian royal building was politically dangerous and could be viewed as sedition. The witness of 'the men of Judah' ensured the prophecy was publicly recorded. When Nebuchadnezzar later invaded Egypt (circa 568 BC, attested by Josephus and fragmentary Babylonian chronicles), this prophecy was vindicated. The stones Jeremiah buried may have literally marked where Babylonian authorities set up their pavilion or throne, though the prophecy's fulfillment was more important than the physical stones' preservation.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do prophetic sign-acts make God's word tangible and memorable in ways that mere verbal proclamation cannot?
2. What does the location at 'Pharaoh's house'—the very symbol of Egyptian security—teach about the futility of trusting human power over God?
3. How might God's judgment pursue us to the very places we flee for safety from His will?

Interlinear Text

בְּמָה לָטוּ וּטְמִינֵתָם גְּדֹלֹת אֲבָנֵי יָם בְּיָדְךָ קַח
Take in thine hand stones great and hide them in the clay
H3947 H3027 H68 H1419 H2934 H4423

בְּתַחֲפֻנְהֵי סַפְרֵעַ הַבַּיִת בְּפֶתַח אֲשֶׁר רַבְמַלְכָּהּ
in the brickkiln which is at the entry house of Pharaoh's in Tahpanhes
H4404 H834 H6607 H1004 H6547 H8471

יְהוּדִים: אֲנָשֵׁי יָם לְעֵינַי
of Judah of the men in the sight
H3064 H582 H5869

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