

Jeremiah 49:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

Analysis

Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. Amid judgment's severity, this verse reveals God's compassionate character. The command to leave ('azav, אָזַע) thy orphans means to entrust them to God's care. I will preserve them alive uses achayeh (אֲחַיֵּה), from the root chayah (חַיָּה, to live, sustain life). Despite destroying the nation, God promises to preserve the most vulnerable—orphans and widows who lack protectors.

This mercy reflects God's consistent character throughout Scripture as defender of the fatherless and widows (Exodus 22:22-24, Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 68:5, 146:9). Even in judgment, God's compassion extends to the innocent and helpless. The call for widows to trust (batach, בָּטַח, to rely on, have confidence in) God shows that faith remains possible even amid national catastrophe. God invites personal trust when national structures collapse.

This verse demonstrates that divine judgment targets the guilty, not the helpless. It also reveals that even among condemned Edom, individuals could find mercy by trusting God—foreshadowing the gospel's offer of salvation to all nations through faith in Christ (Romans 10:12-13).

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern warfare, orphans and widows were especially vulnerable to slavery, starvation, or abuse when protective male relatives died. God's promise

to preserve Edomite orphans and widows shows His justice distinguishes between guilty parties and innocent dependents. This mercy contrasts with Edom's own cruelty toward Judah's vulnerable after Jerusalem fell (Obadiah 12-14). While Edom showed no compassion, God extended mercy even to Edomite innocents. Historically, some Edomites likely survived by fleeing to other regions or integrating into surrounding peoples. The principle established here—that God judges the guilty while protecting the vulnerable—echoes throughout redemptive history and finds ultimate expression in Christ's sacrifice for sinners.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to preserve Edomite orphans and widows reveal His justice and compassion working together?
2. What does this verse teach about personal faith as a refuge when national or corporate structures collapse?
3. In what ways does God's defense of the vulnerable challenge how we treat the powerless in society?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא־מִנּוֹת יְבָשָׂת הַנְּזִקְנָתִים אֲנָשִׁים אֲנָשִׁים יְבָשָׂת הַנְּזִקְנָתִים
Leave thy fatherless children I will preserve them alive and let thy widows

H5800

thy fatherless children

H3490

H589

I will preserve them alive

H2421

and let thy widows

H490

תְּבָטְחוּ בְּעָלָיו

H5921

trust

H982

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 68:5 (Parallel theme): A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

James 1:27 (Parallel theme): Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Hosea 14:3 (Parallel theme): Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

1 Timothy 5:5 (Faith): Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

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