

Jeremiah 50:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks.

Analysis

Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks. This command to flee Babylon anticipates Cyrus's decree allowing return but carries deeper theological significance. The verb *nudu* ("remove/flee") suggests urgency—not leisurely departure but escape from danger. God's people must not linger in the place of exile once opportunity for return emerges. This anticipates Revelation's call: "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4), applying Babylon symbolically to all worldly systems opposing God.

The phrase "be as the he goats before the flocks" uses the image of lead animals going first, showing the way for others to follow. This challenges returning exiles to courageous leadership rather than timid hesitation. Some must take initiative, pioneering the return and encouraging others to follow. Leadership in spiritual matters often requires stepping out in faith before the path seems entirely clear or safe.

Theologically, this verse teaches:

1. God's people mustn't settle permanently in worldly systems, however comfortable
2. spiritual pilgrimage requires courage to leave security for God's purposes
3. some are called to leadership that pioneers the way for others

4. the call to separation from Babylon anticipates the church's call to be "in the world but not of it" (John 17:14-18).

The Christian life involves perpetual tension between present engagement and ultimate otherworldly citizenship (Philippians 3:20).

Historical Context

Cyrus's decree (539 BCE) permitted but didn't compel return. Many Jews had established lives in Babylon—businesses, homes, relationships. The call to return required sacrifice, leaving relative prosperity for uncertainty in a devastated land. Archaeological evidence shows significant Jewish communities thrived in Mesopotamia for centuries, explaining why many remained even after return became possible.

Those who did return (approximately 50,000 under Zerubbabel, Ezra 2:64-65) faced enormous challenges: rebuilding Jerusalem, reestablishing temple worship, defending against opposition. They were indeed "he goats before the flocks," leading by example. This pattern of pioneering leadership recurs throughout redemptive history—Abraham leaving Ur, Moses leading the exodus, the apostles establishing churches. God always calls some to courageous firsts that enable others' following.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What might 'removing from Babylon' look like for Christians today in terms of not settling too comfortably in worldly systems?
2. In what areas might God be calling you to 'be as the he goats'—to lead courageously where others might follow?

3. How does understanding pilgrimage as normal Christian experience affect your relationship with comfort and security?

Interlinear Text

גִּדּוּ	מִתּוֹךְ	בְּבָבֶל	וּמֵאֶרֶץ	כַּשְׁדִּים	יֵצְאוּ
Remove	out of the midst	of Babylon	out of the land	of the Chaldeans	and go forth
H5110	H8432	H894	H776	H3778	H3318
וְהָיָה	כְּעֵתוֹךְ	לִפְנֵי	צֹאן:		
H1961	and be as the he goats	before	the flocks		
	H6260	H6440	H6629		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 48:20 (References Babylon): Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

Jeremiah 51:6 (References Babylon): Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.

Revelation 18:4 (Parallel theme): And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

Jeremiah 51:45 (Parallel theme): My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

Isaiah 52:1 (Parallel theme): Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Proverbs 30:31 (Parallel theme): A greyhound; an he goat also; and a king, against whom there is no rising up.

2 Corinthians 6:17 (Parallel theme): Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Numbers 16:26 (Parallel theme): And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of their's, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

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