

Jeremiah 52:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

Analysis

But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king—Zedekiah's escape attempt lasted only hours before Babylon's cavalry caught him. **And overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho** (בְּעֶרֶבּוֹת יְרִיחֹו, be'arvot Yericho)—approximately 15 miles from Jerusalem, near where Israel had first entered the Promised Land under Joshua. The location carries bitter irony: where Joshua led Israel into covenant blessing, Zedekiah flees in covenant curse, experiencing the very judgment Moses warned of in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

And all his army was scattered from him (וְכֹל-חֵילוֹ תִּפְצֹא מֵעַלְיוֹ, vekhol-cheilo nafosu me'alaiv)—the Hebrew puts means to scatter, disperse, or break apart, describing complete military disintegration. Zedekiah's bodyguard and warriors abandoned him in terror, each fleeing to save himself. The king who refused to trust God's promise of survival through surrender (Jeremiah 38:17-18) now stands alone, captured and helpless. This fulfills Ezekiel's prophecy: 'I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare' (Ezekiel 12:13). No human army could protect Zedekiah from God's appointed judgment—his only safety lay in the obedience he refused.

Historical Context

The plains of Jericho are a low-lying desert region nearly 1,000 feet below sea level, offering little cover for fugitives. Babylonian cavalry, superior in open

terrain, easily overtook Zedekiah's fleeing foot soldiers. Ancient Near Eastern warfare tactics included pursuing fleeing enemies to prevent regrouping—scattering the army ensured no future resistance. Zedekiah's capture fulfilled both Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's detailed prophecies: he would see the king of Babylon face-to-face (Jeremiah 34:3), yet would die in Babylon without seeing the land (Ezekiel 12:13)—both literally fulfilled when his eyes were gouged out at Riblah (52:11). The irony of his capture at Jericho resonated deeply: Israel's first conquest victory became the site of the last king's defeat. Archaeologically, Babylon's military records confirm their systematic pursuit of fleeing enemies, ensuring complete subjugation. Zedekiah's scattered army likely attempted to escape toward the Transjordan or southward to Edom, but historical sources indicate most were killed or captured.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why is it significant that Zedekiah was captured at Jericho, the site of Israel's first victory in the Promised Land?
2. How does the scattering of Zedekiah's army illustrate the collapse of human strength when opposing God's purposes?
3. What does this verse teach about the difference between God's protection through obedience versus false security in rebellion?

Interlinear Text

1	וַיַּדַּפֵּעַ	וְיַחַל	פְּשָׁדִים	בְּמַלְךָ	בְּמַלְךָ	וְיַשְׁגַּבְתָּ
pursued	But the army	of the Chaldeans	after	the king	and overtook	H853
H7291	H2428	H3778	H310	H4428	H5381	
2	צְדָקִי הָנָ	תְּבִרְבָּעָה	וְיַרְחָה	וְיַכְלָה	וְיַחַל	מִצְלָיו:
Zedekiah	in the plains	of Jericho	But the army	was scattered		H5921
H6667	H6160	H3405	H2428	H6327		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 38:23 (Kingdom): So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

Jeremiah 32:4 (Kingdom): And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;

Jeremiah 34:21 (Kingdom): And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

Jeremiah 21:7 (Kingdom): And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.