

Jeremiah 8:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

This verse pronounces a chilling verdict: 'death shall be chosen rather than life.' The Hebrew *maveth yibbachar mechayyim* (מָוֶת יִבְחָר מַחְיִים) indicates that surviving exile would be so miserable that death would seem preferable. The phrase 'all the residue of them that remain of this evil family' refers to exiled survivors of judgment. Their scattering 'in all the places whither I have driven them' emphasizes divine agency—God Himself drove them into exile. The phrase 'saith the LORD of hosts' (neum YHWH Tseva'ot) adds prophetic authority. This anticipates Jeremiah's later counsel to the exiles (chapter 29) to build lives in Babylon, acknowledging their long captivity while trusting God's ultimate restoration.

Historical Context

The Babylonian exile (605-538 BC) scattered Judeans across the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Historical records and archaeological evidence confirm Jewish communities in Babylon proper, Egypt (Elephantine papyri), and other locations. The exile's psychological trauma is captured in Psalm 137's lament. Many who survived Jerusalem's destruction wished they had died in the siege rather than face the horrors of exile, starvation, and separation from their homeland and temple.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this judgment reveal the true cost of persistent rebellion against God?
2. What hope does the phrase 'whither I have driven them' offer, suggesting God's sovereign control even in judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְנִבְּחָם ר	מָוֶת	מִחַיִּים	לְךָ ל	הַשְּׂאִרִית	
shall be chosen	And death	rather than life	H3605	by all the residue	
H977	H4194	H2416		H7611	
הַנִּשְׂאָרִים	מִן	הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה	הַרָעָה	הַזֹּאת	בְּכָל
of them that remain	H4480	family	of this evil	H2063	H3605
H7604		H4940	H7451		
הַמְּקוֹמֹת	הַנִּשְׂאָרִים	אֲשֶׁר	הִדַּחֲתִים	שָׁם	
in all the places	of them that remain	H834	whither I have driven	H8033	
H4725	H7604		H5080		
נֹאֵם	יְהוָה	צְבָאוֹת:			
them saith	the LORD	of hosts			
H5002	H3068	H6635			

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 9:6 (Parallel theme): And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

Jeremiah 29:14 (References Lord): And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

Jeremiah 23:8 (References Lord): But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Jeremiah 23:3 (Parallel theme): And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

Deuteronomy 30:4 (References Lord): If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

Jonah 4:3 (References Lord): Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

Deuteronomy 30:1 (References Lord): And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

Daniel 9:7 (References Lord): O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.