

Joel 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.

Analysis

The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians—this verse specifies the human trafficking charge from verse 3. The Hebrew *bene Yehudah uvene Yerushalayim* (בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) emphasizes covenant identity—these aren't merely random slaves but God's covenant children from His chosen city. The verb *makar* (מָכַר, "sold") indicates commercial transaction, treating human beings as merchandise. "Unto the Grecians" (Hebrew *livne haYevanim*, לִבְנֵי הַיָּוָנִים, literally "sons of Javan") refers to Ionian Greeks, distant peoples representing the far reaches of the known world.

That ye might remove them far from their border (Hebrew *lema'an harchiqam me'al gevulam*, לְמַעַן הֲרַחֲקֵם מֵעַל גְּבוּלָם)—the purpose clause reveals calculated cruelty. Selling captives locally kept hope of return or ransom alive; selling them to distant lands like Greece severed all connection to homeland, family, and covenant community. This attempted to obliterate their identity as God's people, removing them from the promised land God gave them. Yet human schemes cannot thwart divine purposes—God promises in verse 7 to reverse this dispersion and bring retribution.

The mention of Greeks is chronologically significant. Greek (Ionian) trading colonies existed along Mediterranean coasts from the 8th century BC onward, but they became prominent slave traders particularly during the 6th-4th centuries BC. This reference has led some scholars to date Joel post-exilic. However, early Greek-

Phoenician trade contacts are well-documented, so this doesn't definitively settle dating questions. What matters theologically is God's comprehensive knowledge—He knows where His scattered people are, even in distant lands, and will restore them. This anticipates the worldwide dispersion and eventual regathering of Israel, and spiritually, the gathering of the elect from every nation into Christ's kingdom (Matthew 24:31; John 11:52).

Historical Context

The Phoenicians (Tyre and Sidon) were ancient world's foremost maritime traders, establishing colonies throughout the Mediterranean including Carthage. They traded extensively with Greek city-states, and slave trade was a major component of ancient commerce. The Philistines, controlling Gaza and other ports, similarly participated in this trade. Amos 1:6-9 condemns both Philistia and Tyre for the same offense: "they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom... they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant." The coordination between these peoples in human trafficking provoked God's united condemnation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's specific knowledge of His people's location—even sold to distant lands—demonstrate His omniscience and covenant faithfulness?
2. What does the calculated cruelty of removing people "far from their border" reveal about the depths of human sin when restraining grace is removed?
3. How does this ancient human trafficking foreshadow modern slavery and exploitation, and what does God's promised judgment say to perpetrators today?

Interlinear Text

לְבָנֵי י	יְהוּדָה	לְבָנֵי י	יְרוּשָׁלַם	מִכְרָתָם	לְבָנֵי י
The children	also of Judah	The children	of Jerusalem	have ye sold	The children
H1121	H3063	H1121	H3389	H4376	H1121
הָזֶנִּים	לִמָּעַן	הִרְחִיקָם	מֵעַל		
unto the Grecians		that ye might remove them far			
H3125	H4616	H7368	H5921		
גְּבוּלָם:					
from their border					
H1366					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 27:13 (Parallel theme): Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

Joel 3:3 (Parallel theme): And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

Deuteronomy 28:68 (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

Joel 3:8 (Parallel theme): And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.