

Nehemiah 1:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

Analysis

That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

Hanani appears again in 7:2 as one whom Nehemiah appoints over Jerusalem, likely indicating he was Nehemiah's biological brother. The phrase 'one of my brethren' could mean brother or fellow Jew, but the later reference suggests family relation. 'Certain men of Judah' indicates a delegation, perhaps traveling for business or bringing reports to exiled Jews. Nehemiah's immediate question reveals his heart's priority—despite years in Persia, Jerusalem remained central to his identity.

The phrase 'the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity' refers to those who survived exile and returned to Judah, distinguishing them from Jews still in dispersion. Sha'al (שָׁאַל, 'asked') suggests earnest, persistent questioning—not casual inquiry but deep concern. His dual focus on people ('the Jews') and place ('Jerusalem') shows balanced concern for both community and location. This reflects covenant theology where God chose both a people and a place for His name to dwell.

Historical Context

Travel between Judah and Persia occurred regularly for various reasons—commerce, official business, and maintaining family connections. The 900-mile journey took approximately four months, indicating this wasn't casual travel but purposeful undertaking. The term 'remnant' theology dominated post-exilic thought—Isaiah and Jeremiah had prophesied that a remnant would survive judgment and return. These weren't merely survivors but the covenant community through whom God would fulfill His promises.

Archaeological evidence from this period shows Jerusalem was a small, impoverished settlement compared to its former glory. The returned community struggled economically and politically, vulnerable to hostile neighbors. Yet covenant-faithful Jews like Nehemiah, despite comfortable lives in exile, maintained deep connection to the land and people of God's choosing.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What demonstrates your practical concern for struggling believers beyond your immediate context or comfort zone?
2. How do you maintain awareness of significant needs in God's kingdom while managing daily responsibilities?
3. Who are the 'remnant' in your generation—faithful believers persevering in difficult circumstances—and how can you support them?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּבֹא	כֵּן נִי	אֶחָד	מֵאַחֵי	וְהָיָה	וְאֶנְשֵׁי	מִיְהוּדָה
came	That Hanani	one	of my brethren			of Judah
H935	H2607	H259	H251	H1931	H376	H3063
וַאֲשָׁאֵל	עַל	בְּהוֹדֹת	הַפְּלִיטִים	אֲשֶׁר		
and I asked		them concerning the Jews	that had escaped			
H7592	H5921	H3064	H6413	H834		
נִשְׁאַר	מִן	הַשְּׁבִי	וְעַל	יְרוּשָׁלַם:		
which were left		of the captivity		and concerning Jerusalem		
H7604	H4480	H7628	H5921	H3389		

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 7:2 (References Jerusalem): That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.

Ezekiel 6:9 (Parallel theme): And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.