

STAY WHERE YOU ARE

After the Babylonians conquered Judah, they left a small remnant (mainly poor people) in the land. These people were given land in exchange for taxes to the king. In addition, the king of Babylon made one of them (Gedaliah) governor in the land. Gedaliah's job was to maintain order and encourage the people to serve the king of Babylon.

Gedaliah did just that and things went well for a while. Refugees, who had fled from Judah during the invasion, began to return, and soon the people and the land began to thrive again. But, there arose a man, Ishmael, who began to conspire against the Gedaliah. He was of the royal line of David and had designs to reclaim the throne for himself.

Eventually, Ishmael carried out his evil plot and assassinate Gedaliah. This was a reprehensible act that endangered the lives of every Jew in Judah. Everyone feared that once the king of Babylon learned of this assassination, he would bring judgment upon the people.

A man named Johanan arose and, together with a small army of men, sought to bring Ishmael to justice. Unfortunately, Ishmael escaped out of their hands never to be heard from again. But, the people still had a problem. What were they to do about Gedaliah's death? They feared the king of Babylon would still seek retribution for his death. Therefore, they decided to go to the prophet Jeremiah for advice. (Jeremiah had been given the courtesy by the king of Babylon whether to remain in Judah or be deported to Babylon. Jeremiah chose to remain in Judah with this small remnant.)

Jeremiah 42:1–3

¹ Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshai, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, ² And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) ³ That the Lord thy God may shew us THE WAY WHEREIN WE MAY WALK, AND THE THING THAT WE MAY DO.

The people asked Jeremiah to ask God whether they should “stay” in the land, or “go” (flee) into a neighboring country? (Somebody here has been asking the same question, “Do I stay, or do I go and take my chances somewhere else?”)

Jeremiah 42:4–6

4 Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. **5** Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. **6** Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when **WE OBEY THE VOICE OF THE LORD OUR GOD.**

Therefore, it seems pretty clear that the people wanted to know God's will so they could follow it.

Jeremiah 42:7–16, 18

7 And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. **8** Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest, **9** And said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him; **10** **IF YE WILL STILL ABIDE IN THIS LAND,** then will I **BUILD YOU,** and **NOT PULL YOU DOWN,** and I will **PLANT YOU,** and **NOT PLUCK YOU UP:** for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. **11** **BE NOT AFRAID** of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; **BE NOT AFRAID** of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to **SAVE YOU,** and to **DELIVER YOU** from his hand. **12** And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. **13** But if ye say, **WE WILL NOT DWELL IN THIS LAND,** neither obey the voice of the Lord your God, **14** Saying, No; but **WE WILL GO** into the land of Egypt, where we shall see **NO WAR,** nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: **15** And now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; **16** Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall **OVERTAKE YOU** there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall **FOLLOW CLOSE AFTER YOU** there in Egypt; and there **YE SHALL DIE.** **18** For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; **As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you,** when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an

astonishment, and a CURSE, and a REPROACH; and YE SHALL SEE THIS PLACE NO MORE.

Apparently, God was willing to show them mercy and deliver them from the hands (wrath) of the king of Babylon, IF they remained in the land! In fact, God said that He would “build” and “plant” them so they would never be “pulled down” or “plucked up.” But, again, this was ONLY if they remained in the land! If, however, they rejected this offer and tried to flee to Egypt for safety, they would surely be destroyed and “carried away from this place”.

This word is a warning even for us today. We, like these Israelites, must “remain where we are.” We must not move from this place. What “place” are we talking about? –The Promised Land. We must remain and continue to abide in the Promised Land or in the “promises of God.”

Hebrews 2:3

³ HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

Notice how this verse is talking about a salvation that was “spoken.” This tells us that what we’re being warned not to neglect is the WORD or promise of salvation! Those who neglect or fail to abide in the promises of God will not escape the curse nor the judgment of the king of Babylon. (In Scripture the king of Babylon is compared to satan or the devil.)

Isaiah 14:4, 12

⁴ That thou shalt take up this proverb against the KING OF BABYLON, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! ¹² How art thou fallen from heaven, O LUCIFER, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Now, I asked God to confirm whether this word was truly for us today, and He gave me the following passage in Isaiah 57.

Isaiah 57:18–20 *New International Version*

¹⁸ I have seen their ways, but I WILL HEAL THEM; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners, ¹⁹ CREATING PRAISE ON THEIR LIPS. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the Lord. “And I WILL HEAL THEM.” ²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which CANNOT REST...

Here are a few examples of how other versions translate **Isaiah 57:20**.

Isaiah 57:20 HCSB

20 But the wicked are like the storm-tossed sea, for it CANNOT BE STILL...

Isaiah 57:20 CEB

20 But the wicked are like the churning sea that CAN'T KEEP STILL...