

A scenic landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a small bird with grey and white plumage stands on a large, light-colored stone block. The stone blocks form a wall or a series of steps that lead down into a deep, dark crevice. The crevice is filled with rocks and some small, green plants. In the background, a hillside rises, covered in sparse vegetation. At the top of the hill, there are several small, white buildings with dark roofs, possibly a village or a fortress. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden light over the scene. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds.

THE SEVENTH MONTH

THE FALL OF GEDALIAH BEN ACHIKAM

A report of evil:
one must not accept it.
One must fear it.

TALMUD, NIDDAH 61a

THE SEVENTH MONTH

THE FALL OF GEDALIAH BEN ACHIKAM

GOLAN BEN-ONI

CREDITS & EDITION NOTE

Written by Golan Ben-Oni

Visual development and production edition created with OpenAI image generation and deterministic page composition.

Adult historical drama. Violence is restrained and non-graphic. No sexual content.

Scriptural passages are original contemporary-English renderings. Chabad.org was consulted as a textual reference; no modern translation is reproduced. Independent Jewish textual/sensitivity and Iron Age historical/archaeological reviews were not performed. The author waived those reviews as release conditions; no specialist approval is claimed.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

GEDALIAH BEN ACHIKAM

Fifties. Farmer's forearms, listener's face, no armor. He keeps the remnant alive under Babylon; his fatal error is treating every safeguard as condemnation.

ISHMAEL BEN NETANIAH

Late thirties. Davidic royal claimant, groomed even in dust. He calls Ammonite-backed dynastic violence independence and destroys the remnant he claims to restore.

YOCHANAN BEN KAREACH

Forties. Compact, scarred field commander. Right about Ishmael, he later lets fear become his only measure of truth.

YONATAN BEN KAREACH

Yochanan's younger brother and scout. He speaks little and sees clearly.

YIRMIYAHU / JEREMIAH

Sixties. Prophet freed from the exile column. Always head-covered in muted grey-blue linen or light wool; silent until the word comes.

BARUCH BEN NERIAH

Forties. Jeremiah's scribe, witness, and keeper of the seal.

TAMAR BAT TZIDKIYAHU

Twenties. Invented daughter of the blinded king. She protects her sisters and rejects a restored throne purchased with the people's lives.

YAAZANIAH

Thirty-something Judean captain, marked by the historical fighting-cock seal and killed at the feast.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SERAIAH AND THE SONS OF EPHAI

Captains of the field forces. Seraiah remains for the feast; the sons of Ephai ride with Yochanan.

AZARIAH BEN HOSHAIAH

A captain who later tells the prophet he speaks falsehood.

BAALIS

King of Ammon. He uses Ishmael's royal claim to turn Judah into a wall against Babylon.

NEBUZARADAN

Babylonian chief of the guard. Efficient, not sadistic; he frees Jeremiah with his own hands.

BEL-IDDIN

Invented Babylonian garrison captain. A professional who recognizes the threat too late.

THE TEN

Judean refugees east of the Jordan. Men who lost sons at the wall and follow Ishmael home.

THE EIGHTY

Northern pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria carrying offerings toward the ruined House.

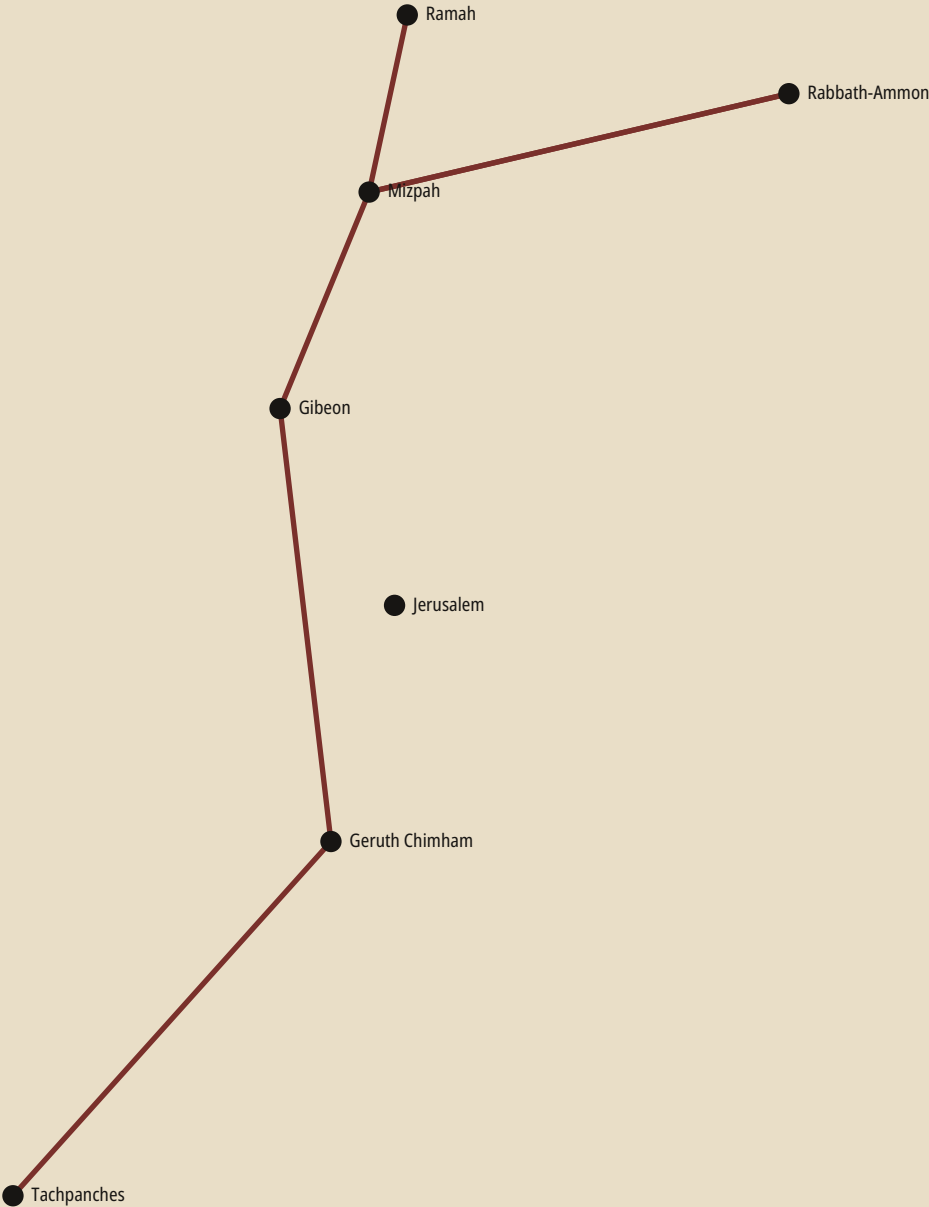
THE NURSE

Old servant of the royal house. She prepares the hiding place, creates an opening for escape, and bites when necessary.

THE ROAD OF THE REMNANT

MAPTIC ROUTE - NOT TO SCALE

MEDITERRANEAN SEA



BEFORE THE STORY

Jerusalem has fallen to Babylon after a long siege. The Temple is destroyed, King Zedekiah is blinded and carried away, and most of Judah's leaders are exiled. A poor remnant remains to work a devastated land.

Jeremiah had taught that Babylon's rule would last for an appointed time. During it, the people were to live, build, plant, and wait for the promised return—not try to force the old sovereignty back into existence.

Babylon appoints Gedaliah ben Achikam governor at Mizpah. He protects the remnant, gathers the harvest, and represents the people before the Chaldeans. Refugees return and the fields become productive. The kingdom is gone. The people are not.

Ishmael ben Netaniah is a surviving prince of the House of David, backed by Baalis king of Ammon. He sees survival under Babylon as surrender. This book reads his attack as a mistaken attempt to continue the story of independence after exile has begun; that contrast is the adaptation's interpretation, not a quotation from Tanakh or Chazal.

Yochanan warns that Ishmael is coming to kill Gedaliah. Gedaliah rejects both a secret assassination and ordinary safeguards. Jewish tradition makes a separate leadership judgment: an evil report must not be accepted as fact, but a credible danger still requires precaution.

This edition follows the author's traditional chronology: the House burns in Av 3338, Gedaliah is killed at the New Year of 3339, and the exiles return in 3390. Violence is shown through consequence rather than explicit wounds.

THE TEXT BEHIND THE STORY

ORIGINAL HEBREW · CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH · READER'S GUIDE

The graphic novel begins with an adaptation. These fixed twenty pages present Jeremiah 40–43 in Hebrew and contemporary English, followed by II Kings 25:22–26, two Talmudic passages, and a source-to-story guide.

Jerusalem has fallen. Gedaliah tells the remnant to remain, serve Babylon, and harvest the land; refugees return and the harvest becomes abundant. Ishmael, a royal-descended officer sent by Baalis, kills the governor and destroys that fragile order. The survivors turn toward Egypt even after Jeremiah commands them to stay.

Jeremiah 27 and 29 supply essential context without adding pages here: Babylon's rule has an appointed term, and Jewish continuity during it means building, planting, raising families, and waiting for the promised return. The book's sovereignty-versus-exile contrast is an interpretive synthesis, not a quotation from Tanakh or Chazal.

II Kings compresses the collapse. Rosh Hashanah 18b weighs Gedaliah's death against the burning of the House. Niddah 61a separately teaches that one must not accept an evil report as fact but must take precautions against credible danger.

The English is an original rendering checked against JPS 1917 and Chabad.org. English appears left, Hebrew right, and verse numbers align the columns. The final guide marks source, interpretation, and invention. An independent Jewish textual review was not performed. The author waived that review as a release condition; no specialist approval is claimed.

JEREMIAH 40

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 1–4

1 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan, chief of the guard, released him at Ramah. He had found Jeremiah bound in chains among the captives from Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon.

2 The chief of the guard took Jeremiah aside and said, “The LORD your God announced this disaster against this place.

3 Now the LORD has brought it about, just as He said. This happened because you sinned against the LORD and did not listen to His voice.

4 Today I am removing the chains from your hands. If you want to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. If you do not want to come, do not. The whole land is open to you; go wherever seems good and right to you.”

1 הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה אֵלַי יְרֵמְיָהוּ מֵאֵת יְהוָה אַחֵר וַיִּשְׁלַח
אֹתוֹ נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן רֹב־טַבָּחִים מִן־הַקֶּמֶה בִּקְהָתוֹ אֹתוֹ
וְהוּא־אֲסוּר בְּאַזְקִים בְּתוֹךְ כָּל־גָּלוּת יִרְנֵשׁלָם וַיְהִי־וְהָדָה
הַמֶּגֶלִים בְּבָלָה׃

2 וַיִּקַּח רֹב־טַבָּחִים לִיְרֵמְיָהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ דִּבֶּר
אֶת־הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה׃

3 וַיָּבֵא וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר כִּי־חָטְאֲתֶם לַיהוָה
וְלֹא־שָׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹלוֹ וְהָיָה לָכֵם (דְּבַר) [הַדְּבָר] הַזֶּה׃

4 וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה פִתְחוּתֶיךָ הַיּוֹם מִן־הָאֲזָקִים אֲשֶׁר עַל־יָדְךָ
אִם־טוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לָבוֹא אֵתִי בָּבֶל בָּא וְאִשִּׁים אֶת־עֵינִי
עָלֶיךָ וְאִם־רָע בְּעֵינֶיךָ לָבוֹא־אֵתִי בָּבֶל חֲדַל רְאֵה
כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לִפְנֶיךָ אִל־טוֹב וְאִל־הָיָשׁוּר בְּעֵינֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת שְׁמָה
לָךְ׃

JEREMIAH 40

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 5-8

5 Before Jeremiah had turned to leave, Nebuzaradan added, “Then return to Gedaliah son of Achikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the towns of Judah. Live with him among the people, or go wherever seems right to you.” The chief of the guard gave him provisions and a gift and released him.

6 Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Achikam at Mizpah and lived with him among the people who remained in the land.

7 The commanders of the forces still in the countryside, along with their men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Achikam over the land and had entrusted to him the men, women, children, and poorest people who had not been exiled to Babylon.

8 They came to Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Netaniah; Yochanan and Yonatan, sons of Kareach; Seraiah son of Tanchumeth; the sons of Ephai the Netophathite; Yaazaniah son of the Maacathite; and their men.

5 וְעָנְדָנוּ לֹא-יָשׁוּב וְשָׁבַח אֶל-גִּדְיָה בֶן-אֲחִיקָם בֶּן-שַׁפָּן
אֲשֶׁר הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וְשָׁב אִתּוֹ בְּתוֹךְ
הָעָם אֹי אֶל-כָּל-הָיֶשֶׁר בְּעֶנְיָךְ לָלֶכֶת לְךָ וְיָתְנָךְ לֵו
רַב-טָבָחִים אֶחָה וּמִשְׁאָת וְיִשְׁלַחֲהוּ:

6 וַיָּבֹא יִרְמְיָהוּ אֶל-גִּדְיָה בֶן-אֲחִיקָם הַמְצַפְתָּה וַיָּשָׁב אִתּוֹ
בְּתוֹךְ הָעָם הַנִּשְׁאָרִים בָּאָרֶץ: {פ}

7 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָל-יְשָׁרֵי הַחֲיָלִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׂדֵה הָמָה וְאֲנָשֵׁיהֶם
כִּי-הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל אֶת-גִּדְיָה בֶן-אֲחִיקָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכִי
הִפְקִיד אִתּוֹ אָנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְטָף וְנַמְדֵּלֶת הָאָרֶץ מֵאֲשֶׁר
לֹא-הֻגְלוּ בָבֶלָה:

8 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-גִּדְיָה הַמְצַפְתָּה וַיִּשְׁמַעְעֵאל בֶּן-נְתַנְיָהוּ וַיּוֹנָתָן
וַיּוֹנָתָן בְּנֵי-לֶחָח וְשִׁלְיָה בֶן-תְּנֻחֻמֶּת וְכַנִּי (א) עוֹפִי (א) עִיפִי
הַנְּטָפְתִּי וַיִּזְנִיחוּ בֶן-הַמַּעֲלָתִי הָמָה וְאֲנָשֵׁיהֶם:

JEREMIAH 40

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 9–12

9 Gedaliah son of Achikam, son of Shaphan, swore to them and their men: “Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Remain in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well for you.

9 וַיִּשְׁבַּע לָהֶם גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שַׁפָּן וְלָאֲנָשֵׁיהֶם
לֵאמֹר אַל־תִּירְאוּ מֵעֲבֹד הַכַּשְׂדִּים שְׁבוּ בָאָרֶץ וְעַבְדוּ
אֶת־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וַיֵּיטֵב לָכֶם:

10 I will stay at Mizpah to represent you before the Chaldeans who come to us. You are to gather wine, summer fruit, and oil, store them in your jars, and live in the towns you have taken over.”

10 וְאֲנִי הִנְנִי יֹשֵׁב בַּמִּצְפָּה לְעֹמֵד לִפְנֵי הַכַּשְׂדִּים אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ
אֵלֵינוּ וְאַתֶּם אֹסְפוּ יַיִן וְקִיץ וְשֶׁמֶן וְשִׁמּוּ בְכָל־כֵּס וְשָׁבוּ
בְעָרְכֶם אֲשֶׁר־תִּפְשֹׁתֶם:

11 Judeans in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and every other country heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah son of Achikam, son of Shaphan, over them.

11 וְגַם כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר־בַּמִּדְבָּר וּבְבִנְיָמִן וּבְיָדוּם
וְאֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי־נִתַּן מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל שְׂאֲרֵית
לַיהוּדָה וְכִי הִפְקִיד עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם
בֶּן־שַׁפָּן:

12 Then all the Judeans returned from the places where they had been scattered. They came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruit in great abundance.

12 וַיָּשׁוּבוּ כָל־הַיְּהוּדִים מְכָל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר נִדְּחוּ־שָׁם וַיָּבֹאוּ
אֶרֶץ־יְהוּדָה אֶל־גְּדַלְיָהוּ הַמִּצְפָּתָה וַיֹּאסְפוּ יַיִן וְקִיץ
הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד: {ס}

JEREMIAH 40

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 13–16

13	Yochanan son of Kareach and all the commanders still in the countryside came to Gedaliah at Mizpah.	וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּנֵי־קָרַח וְכָל־שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּל אֲשֶׁר־בְּשָׂדֵה בָּאוּ אֶל־גְּדַלְיָהוּ הַמַּצְפָּה׃	13
14	They said to him, “Do you know that Baalis, king of the Ammonites, has sent Ishmael son of Netaniah to kill you?” But Gedaliah son of Achikam did not believe them.	וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הֲיָדָע תִּדְעַתְּ׃ כִּי־בָעֲלִיס מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן שְׁלַח אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה לְהַכּוֹתְךָ נָפֶשׁ וְלֹא־הָאֱמִין לָהֶם גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם׃	14
15	Yochanan son of Kareach spoke privately to Gedaliah at Mizpah: “Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Netaniah. No one will know. Why should he kill you and scatter all the Judeans who have gathered around you, so that Judah’s remnant perishes?”	וַיֹּחֲנָן בֶּן־קָרַח אָמַר אֶל־גְּדַלְיָהוּ בְּסֵתֶר בַּמַּצְפָּה לֵאמֹר אֲלַכְּהָ נָא וְנָאֲכָה אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה וְאִישׁ לֹא יָדַע לָמָּה יַכְכֶּה נָפֶשׁ וְנִפְצֹו כָּל־יְהוּדָה הַנִּקְבָּצִים אֵלָיְךָ וְנִאֲבְדָה שְׂאֲרִית יְהוּדָה׃	15
16	Gedaliah son of Achikam answered Yochanan son of Kareach, “Do not do this. What you are saying about Ishmael is false.”	וַיֹּאמֶר גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם אֶל־יֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח אֶל־[תַּעֲשֶׂה] (תַּעֲשֶׂה) אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה׃ כִּי־שֶׁקֶר אַתָּה דֹּבֵר אֶל־יִשְׁמָעֵאל׃ }פ{	16

JEREMIAH 41

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 1–4

1 In the seventh month, Ishmael son of Netaniah, son of Elishama—of royal descent and one of the king’s officers—came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Achikam at Mizpah. They ate bread together there.

1 וַיְהִי אֶל־בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בָא יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה בֶּן־אֵלִישָׁמָע מִזֹּרַע הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלִבִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעֹשְׂרֵה אֲנָשִׁים אֹתוֹ אֶל־גִּדְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם הַמְצַפְתָּה וַיֹּאכְלוּ שָׁם לֶחֶם יָדָדוּ בַּמִּצְפָּה׃

2 Then Ishmael son of Netaniah and the ten men with him rose and struck Gedaliah son of Achikam, son of Shaphan, with the sword. They killed the man whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.

2 וַיָּקֻם יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה וְעֹשְׂרֵת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ אִתּוֹ וַיַּכּוּ אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שַׁפָּן בַּחֶרֶב וַיָּמָת אֹתוֹ אֲשֶׁר־הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בְּאֶרֶץ׃

3 Ishmael also killed all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, as well as the Chaldean soldiers who were there.

3 וְאֵת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ אִתּוֹ אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ בַּמִּצְפָּה וְאֵת־הַכַּשְׂדִּים אֲשֶׁר נִמְצְאוּ־שָׁם אֶת־אֲנָשֵׁי הַמְּלָחָמָה הָכָה יִשְׁמָעֵאל׃

4 On the second day after Gedaliah’s murder, before anyone knew about it,

4 וַיְהִי־בַיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי לְהָמִית אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ וְאִישׁ לֹא יָדָע׃

JEREMIAH 41

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH	ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 5–9
5 eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. Their beards were shaved, their clothes were torn, and they had cut themselves. They carried grain offerings and frankincense to bring to the House of the LORD.	5 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִשְׁכֶּם, מִשִּׁלוֹ וּמִמֶּרְחוֹן שְׂמֹנִים אִישׁ מִגִּלְחֵי וְקָרְעֵי בְּגָדִים וּמִתְגַּדְּדִים וּמִנְחָה וּלְבִנְנָה בָּלֶדֶם, לְהָבִיא בֵּית יְהוָה:
6 Ishmael son of Netaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he walked. When he reached them, he said, “Come to Gedaliah son of Achikam.”	6 וַיֵּצֵא שְׁמַעְיָאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה לְקִרְאָתָם מִן־הַמִּצְפָּה הַלֵּךְ, הֵלֵךְ וּבָכָה וַיְהִי כַפְגֹּשׁ אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם בָּאוּ אֶל־גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם:
7 When they entered the city, Ishmael son of Netaniah and his men slaughtered them and threw them into the cistern.	7 וַיְהִי כַבְּנֹאם אֶל־יְתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּשְׁחָטֻם שְׁמַעְיָאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה אֶל־יְתוֹךְ הַבּוֹר הוּא וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ:
8 Ten of the men said to Ishmael, “Do not kill us. We have hidden stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey in the fields.” So he spared them and did not kill them with their companions.	8 וַעֲשֹׂרָה אֲנָשִׁים נִמְצְאוּ־בָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־שְׁמַעְיָאֵל אֶל־יְתַמְתְּנוּ כִּי־יִשְׁלַחֵנוּ מִטַּמְנִים בְּשָׂדֶה וְחִטִּים וְשִׁעֳרִים וְשֶׁמֶן וְדָבַשׁ וַיַּחְדֵּל וְלֹא הָמִיתָם בְּיְתוֹךְ אַחֲיָהֶם:
9 The cistern into which Ishmael threw the bodies of the men he had killed—whom the verse describes as killed ‘by the hand of Gedaliah’—was the one King Asa had made as a defense against King Baasha of Israel. Ishmael son of Netaniah filled it with the dead.	9 וְהַבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר הָשֹׁלֵךְ שָׁם שְׁמַעְיָאֵל אֵת אֵל כָּל־פְּגָרֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה בְּיַד־גְּדַלְיָהוּ הוּא אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ אָסָא מִפְּנֵי בַעֲשָׂא מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹתוֹ מָלֵא שְׁמַעְיָאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָהוּ חֲלָלִים:

JEREMIAH 41

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 10–14

10 Ishmael took captive everyone left in Mizpah—the king’s daughters and all the people whom Nebuzaradan, chief of the guard, had entrusted to Gedaliah son of Achikam. Ishmael son of Netaniah led them away toward the Ammonites.

10 וַיִּשְׁבּוּ וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל אֶת־כָּל־שְׂאֲרֵיתָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־בְּמִצְפָּה
אֶת־בָּנוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעָם הַנִּשְׁאָרִים בְּמִצְפָּה אֲשֶׁר
הַפֶּלֶקֶד גָּבוּ וְרָאֹהוּ רַב־טַבָּחִים אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ בֶן־אָחִיקָם
וַיִּשְׁבֵם וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נִתְנִיָּהוּ לַעֲבֹר אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן {ס}

11 Yochanan son of Kareach and all the commanders with him heard about all the evil Ishmael son of Netaniah had done.

11 וַיִּשְׁמַע יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְכָל־שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּלִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ אֶת־
כָּל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נִתְנִיָּהוּ׃

12 They took all their men, went to fight Ishmael son of Netaniah, and found him beside the great pool at Gibeon.

12 וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־כָּל־הָאָנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ לְהִלָּחֵם עִם־יִשְׁמַעְאֵל
בֶּן־נִתְנִיָּהוּ וַיִּמְצְאוּ אוֹתוֹ אֶל־מַיִם וְרַבִּים אֲשֶׁר־בְּגִבְעוֹן׃

13 When all the captives with Ishmael saw Yochanan son of Kareach and the commanders with him, they rejoiced.

13 וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹת כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל אֶת־יוֹחָנָן
בֶּן־קָרַח וְאֶת־כָּל־שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּלִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ׃

14 Everyone Ishmael had carried away from Mizpah turned around, crossed over, and went to Yochanan son of Kareach.

14 וַיִּסְבּוּ כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־שָׁבָה וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל מִן־הַמִּצְפָּה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ
וַיֵּלְכוּ אֶל־יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח׃

JEREMIAH 41

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 15–18

- 15 But Ishmael son of Netaniah escaped from Yochanan with eight men and went to the Ammonites.
- 16 Yochanan son of Kareach and the commanders with him gathered the entire remnant they had rescued from Ishmael son of Netaniah after he murdered Gedaliah son of Achikam: soldiers, women, children, and court officials whom Yochanan had brought back from Gibeon.
- 17 They left and stayed at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, intending to enter Egypt.
- 18 They were afraid of the Chaldeans because Ishmael son of Netaniah had murdered Gedaliah son of Achikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.

- 15 וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה נִמְלֹט: בְּשֹׁמְנָה אֲנָשִׁים מִפָּנֵי יוֹחָנָן וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן: {ס}
- 16 וַיֵּלֶךְ יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְכָל־יְשָׁרֵי הָחַיִּלִּים אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ אֶת־כָּל־יִשְׁאָרֵי־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר־הָשִׁיב מֵאֵת יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה מִן־הַמִּצָּפָה אַחֵר. הָיְתָה אֵת־גְּדַלְיָה בֶן־אֲחִיקָם גְּבָרִים אָנָשִׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה וְנָשִׁים וְטָף וְסוֹהָסִים אֲשֶׁר־הָשִׁיב מִגִּבְעוֹן:
- 17 וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיָּשׁוּבוּ בְּגֵרוֹת (כְּמֹוהֶם) אֲשֶׁר־אָצַל בֵּית־לַחֵם לָלֶכֶת לְבֹוא מִצְרַיִם:
- 18 מִפָּנֵי הַכַּשְׂדִּים כִּי־רָאוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי־יָזִכָּה לְשִׁמְעַאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה אֵת־גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם אֲשֶׁר־הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בְּאֶרֶץ: {פ}

JEREMIAH 42

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 1–4

1 All the commanders, including Yochanan son of Kareach and Yaazaniah son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest approached Jeremiah.

2 They said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Please accept our plea and pray to the LORD your God for us, for this entire remnant. Once we were many; now only a few remain, as you can see.

3 May the LORD your God tell us the road we should take and what we should do.”

4 Jeremiah the prophet answered, “I have heard you. I will pray to the LORD your God as you ask. Whatever the LORD answers, I will tell you; I will keep nothing from you.”

1 וַיָּגֶשׁוּ כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַחַיִּלִּים וַיּוֹחֲנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וַיֵּזַנְיָה
בֶּן־הֹשִׁיָּהּ וְכָל־הָעָם מִקָּטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל׃

2 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵי־יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא תִפְלֶנָּה תַּחֲנֹתְנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
וְהַתְּפִלָּה בְּעֲדָנוּ אֱלֹהֵיךָ בְּעֵד כָּל־הַשְּׂאֲרִית
הָזֹאת כִּי־נִשְׁאַרְנוּ מְעַט מִהֶלְבֶּה כַּאֲשֶׁר עֵינֶיךָ רְאוּת
אֵתָנוּ׃

3 וַיַּגִּדְלֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר נֵלְכֶבָה
וְאֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה׃

4 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא שְׁמַעְתִּי הִנְנִי מִתְּפִלָּה
אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּדַבְּרֵיכֶם וְהָיָה כָּל־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־יֵעָנֶה
יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם אֲנִידֹלְכֶם לֹא־אֶמְנַע מִכֶּם דָּבָר׃

JEREMIAH 42

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 5–9

5 They said to Jeremiah, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not follow every word the LORD your God sends us through you.

6 Whether it seems good or bad to us, we will listen to the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well for us when we obey Him.”

7 Ten days later, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.

8 He called Yochanan son of Kareach, all the commanders with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest.

9 He said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says—the One to whom you sent me to present your plea:

5 וְהָמָּה אָמְרוּ אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ יְהִי יְהוָה בְּנוֹ לְעֵד אֱמֶת וְנִאֲמָן
אִם־לֹא כִבְלֵ־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַחְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵלֵינוּ כֵּן
נִעֲשֶׂה:

6 אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר (אֲנֹנִי)
[אֲנַחְנוּ] שְׁלָחִים אֹתְךָ אֵלָיו נִשְׁמָע לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִיטַב־לָנוּ
כִּי נִשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ: {פ}

7 וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ עֶשְׂרֵת יָמִים וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ:

8 וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־יֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְאֶל־כָּל־שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּלִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ
'וְלִכְלֵ־הָעָם לְמִקְטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל:

9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר
שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי אֵלָיו לְהַפִּיל תְּחִנָּתְכֶם לְפָנָיו:

JEREMIAH 42

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 10–13

10 If you remain in this land, I will build you and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I have relented from the disaster I brought upon you.

10 אִם־יֵשׁוּב תֵּשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ הָזֹאת וְבִנֵּיתִי אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא אֶהְרֹס וְנִטְעֵתִי אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא אֶתּוֹשׁ כִּי נִחַמְתִּי אֶל־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לָכֶם:

11 Do not fear the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not fear him, says the LORD, because I am with you to save you and rescue you from his hand.

11 אֲלִיתִּירָאוּ מִמֶּלֶךְ מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם יֹרְאִים מִפְּנֵיו אֲלִיתִּירָאוּ מִלְּמֹנּוּ וְנָאִם יְהוָה כִּי־אֶתְכֶם אֲנִי לְהַנְשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְלְהַצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיָּדוֹ:

12 I will show you compassion, so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your own land.

12 וְנָתַן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים וְרַחֵם אֶתְכֶם וְהָשִׁיב אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֲדָמְתְּכֶם:

13 But if you say, ‘We will not remain in this land,’ and refuse to listen to the voice of the LORD your God,

13 וְאִם־אָמַרְתֶּם אֵתֶם לֹא נֵשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הָזֹאת לְבַלְתִּי שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

JEREMIAH 42

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 14–18

14	saying, ‘No, we will go to Egypt, where we will see no war, hear no shofar, and suffer no hunger; there we will live,’	14	לֹא־אָמַר לֹא כִּי־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם נִבּוֹא אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִרְאָה מִלְחָמָה וְקוֹל־שׁוֹפָר לֹא נִשְׁמָע וְלֹחֶם לֹא־נִרְעַב וְנֶשֶׁם נִשְׁבּ׃
15	then hear the word of the LORD, remnant of Judah. This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: If you are determined to enter Egypt and settle there,	15	וְעֹלֶתָ לָכֵן שְׁמָעוּ דְּבַר־יְהוָה שְׂאֵרֵיתִי יְהוּדָה כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִם־אַתֶּם שׁוֹם תִּשְׁמוּן פְּנֵיכֶם לִבְּא מִצְרַיִם וּבְאַתֶּם לְגוֹר שָׁם׃
16	the sword you fear will overtake you in Egypt, and the famine you dread will pursue you there. In Egypt you will die.	16	וְהִזִּיתָה הַחֶרֶב אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יְרָאִים מִמֶּנָּה שָׁם תִּשְׁיֵג אֶתְכֶם כְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהָרָעַב אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם יֹדְאִיגִים מִמֶּנּוּ שָׁם יִדְבֹק אַחֲרֵיכֶם מִצְרַיִם וְשָׁם תָּמּוּתוּ׃
17	Everyone determined to settle in Egypt will die by sword, famine, and plague. No one will survive or escape the disaster I will bring upon them.	17	וְיָהִיו כָּל־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמוּ אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶם לִבְּא מִצְרַיִם לְגוֹר שָׁם יָמוּתוּ בַּחֶרֶב בַּרָּעַב וּבִדְבַר וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה לָהֶם שְׂרִיד נֶפֶלִיט מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מִבְּיֹא עֲלֵיהֶם׃
18	For this is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: Just as My anger and fury were poured out on Jerusalem’s inhabitants, My fury will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. You will become an object of horror, astonishment, curse, and disgrace, and you will never see this place again.	18	כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאֲשֶׁר נָתַךְ אֲפִי וַחֲמָתִי עַל־יְשׁוּבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם כֵּן תִּתָּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּבָאְכֶם מִצְרַיִם וְהִיִּיתֶם לְאֵלָה וּלְשִׁמָּה וּלְקַלְלָה וּלְחִלּוּפָה וְלֹא־תִרְאוּ עוֹד אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה׃

JEREMIAH 42

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 19–22

19 The LORD has spoken to you, remnant of Judah: Do not go to Egypt. Know clearly that I have warned you today.

19 יְבַר יְהוָה עֲלֵיכֶם שְׂאִרֵּי יְהוּדָה אֲלֵי־תִבְאוּ מִצְרַיִם יִדַּע תִּדְּעוּ כִּי־הָעִידֹתִי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם:

20 You deceived yourselves when you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the LORD our God. Tell us everything the LORD our God says, and we will do it.'

20 כִּי (הַתַּעֲתִּים) [הַתַּעֲתִּים] בְּנַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם כִּי־אַתֶּם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר הִתְפַּלֵּל בְּעַדְנוּ אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כֵּן תַּגְדִּילֵנוּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנוּ:

21 Today I told you, but you have not listened to the voice of the LORD your God in anything He sent me to tell you.

21 וְאֶגֶד לָכֶם הַיּוֹם וְלֹא־שְׁמַעְתֶּם בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלֹכַל אֲשֶׁר־שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם:

22 So know clearly that you will die by sword, famine, and plague in the place where you want to settle."

22 וְעַתָּה יִדַּע תִּדְּעוּ כִּי־בְחָרֵב בְּרָעָב וּבַדָּבָר תָּמוּתוּ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־חָפְצֵתֶם לָבוֹא לָגוֹר שָׁם: {ס}

JEREMIAH 43

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 1–4

1	Jeremiah finished telling all the people every word the LORD their God had sent him to speak to them.	וַיְהִי כִלְלוֹת יִרְמְיָהוּ לְדַבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם אֶת־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם אֵלָיהֶם, אֶת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה: {ס}
2	Then Azariah son of Hoshaiah, Yochanan son of Kareach, and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, “You are speaking falsely. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to settle there.’	וַיֹּאמֶר עֲזַרְיָה בֶן־הוֹשִׁיָּהוּ וַיּוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְכָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַזֵּדִים אֲמָרִים אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ שֶׁקֶר אַתָּה מְדַבֵּר, לֹא־שָׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לֵאמֹר לֹא־תָבֹאוּ מִצְרַיִם לְגוֹר שָׁם:
3	Baruch son of Neriah is turning you against us so that we will be handed over to the Chaldeans, killed, or exiled to Babylon.”	כִּי־בְרוּךְ בֶּן־נְרְיָה מַסִּית אֶתְךָ־בָנוּ, לְמַעַן תִּתֵּן אֶתָּנוּ בְּיַד־הַכַּשְׂדִּים, לְהַמִּית אֶתָּנוּ וְלִהְגְּלוֹת אֶתָּנוּ בָּבֶל:
4	Yochanan son of Kareach, all the commanders, and all the people refused to obey the voice of the LORD and remain in the land of Judah.	וְלֹא־שָׁמַע יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְכָל־אֲשָׁרֵי הַחַיִּלִּים וְכָל־הָעָם בְּקוֹל יְהוָה לְשׁוּבָת בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:

JEREMIAH 43

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 5–8

5	Yochanan son of Kareach and all the commanders took the entire remnant of Judah who had returned to live in Judah from all the nations where they had been scattered:	5 וַיִּקַּח יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְכָל־שָׂרֵי הָהָלָלִים אֶת־כָּל־שְׁאֵרֵית יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר־שָׁבוּ מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר נִדְחוּ־שָׁם לְגוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ יִהּוּדָה:
6	the men, women, children, king’s daughters, and every person Nebuzaradan, chief of the guard, had left with Gedaliah son of Achikam, son of Shaphan—along with Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch son of Neriah.	6 אֶת־הַגְּבָרִים וְאֶת־הַנָּשִׁים וְאֶת־הַטָּף וְאֶת־בָּנוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת־כָּל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר הִנִּיחַ נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן רֹב־טַבָּחִים אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שַׁפָּן וְאֶת־יֵרֵמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא וְאֶת־בָּרֻךְ בֶּן־נֶרְיָהוּ:
7	They entered Egypt because they would not listen to the voice of the LORD, and they came as far as Tachpanches.	7 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־תַּחְפָּנֶחַס: {ס}
8	Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tachpanches:	8 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יֵרֵמְיָהוּ בְּתַחְפָּנֶחַס לֵאמֹר:

JEREMIAH 43

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 9–13

9 “Take large stones in your hands. In the sight of the Judean men, bury them in the mortar of the pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh’s palace in Tachpanches.

10 Say to them: This is what the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, says: I will send for My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. I will set his throne over these stones I have hidden, and he will spread his royal canopy above them.

11 He will come and strike the land of Egypt: those marked for death will go to death, those marked for captivity to captivity, and those marked for the sword to the sword.

12 He will set fire to the temples of Egypt’s gods, burn them, and carry their idols away. He will wrap up the land of Egypt as a shepherd wraps his cloak, and he will leave there in peace.

13 He will smash the pillars of Beth-shemesh in Egypt and burn the temples of Egypt’s gods.”

9 קח בְּיָדְךָ אֲבָנִים גְּדֹלוֹת וְטַמְנָתָם בְּמִלֵּט בַּמִּלְבֵּן אֲשֶׁר בְּפֶתַח בֵּית פְּרָעֹה בְּתַחֲפָנְחָס לְעֵינֵי אַנְשֵׁי יְהוּדִים:

10 וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ וְלִקְחָתִי אֶת־נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ־כַּבְּלָעָדִי וְשִׁמְתִּי כִסְאוֹ מִמַּעַל לְאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר טַמַּנְתִּי וְנָטַח אֶת־[שִׁפְרִיָּו] (שִׁפְרוֹ) עֲלֵיהֶם:

11 (וּבָאָה) [וְ]בָא וְהָכָה אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר לְמָוֶת לְמָוֶת וְאֲשֶׁר לְשָׁבִי לְשָׁבִי וְאֲשֶׁר לְחֶרֶב לְחֶרֶב:

12 וְהִצַּתִּי אֵשׁ בְּבֵהֵי אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם וְשָׂרְפָם וְשָׂבָם וְעָטָה אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כְּאִשְׁר־יְעֹטָה הָרֹעֶה אֶת־בְּגָדוֹ וַיֵּצֵא מִשָּׁם בְּשָׁלוֹם:

13 וְשָׁבַר אֶת־מִצְבֹּת בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־בְּתֵי אֱלֹהֵי־מִצְרַיִם וְשָׂרַף בָּאֵשׁ: {פ}

II KINGS 25:22–26

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH

ORIGINAL HEBREW · VERSES 22–26

22 As for the people left in the land of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, he appointed Gedaliah son of Achikam, son of Shaphan, over them.

23 When the commanders and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah, they came to him at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Netaniah, Yochanan son of Kareach, Seraiah son of Tanchumeth the Netophathite, Yaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and their men.

24 Gedaliah swore to them and their men: “Do not be afraid of the Chaldean officials. Remain in the land, serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well for you.”

25 But in the seventh month, Ishmael son of Netaniah, son of Elishama, of royal descent, came with ten men. They struck Gedaliah and killed him, along with the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.

26 Then all the people, from the least to the greatest, and all the commanders rose and went to Egypt because they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

22 וְהָעָם הַנִּשְׁאָר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הֶשְׁאִיר נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וַיִּפְקֹד עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת גִּדְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שַׁפָּן׃

23 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כָל־שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּל הַמָּה וְהָאֲנָשִׁים כִּי־הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵל־גִּדְיָהוּ הַמְצָפָה וַיִּשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה וַיּוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קָרַח וְשֶׁרְיָה בֶן־תַּנְחֻמֶּתֶת הַנֶּטֹּפָתִי וַיֵּאזַנְיָהוּ בֶן־הַמַּעֲתִית הַמָּה וְאֲנָשָׁיהֶם׃

24 וַיִּשְׁבַּע לָהֶם גִּדְיָהוּ וְלָאֲנָשָׁיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אַל־תִּירְאוּ מֵעַבְדֵי הַכַּשְׂדִּים שְׂבוּ בָאָרֶץ וְעַבְדוּ אֶת־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְיָטֵב לָכֶם׃ {פ}

25 וַיְהִי ׀ בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בָּא יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה בֶן־אֵלִישָׁמָע מְזֹרַע הַמַּלְכוּת וְעֶשְׂרֵה אָנָשִׁים אִתּוֹ וַיָּכּוּ אֶת־גִּדְיָהוּ וַיָּמֹת וְאֶת־הַיְּהוּדִים וְאֶת־הַכַּשְׂדִּים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ אִתּוֹ בַּמְּצָפָה׃

26 וַיָּקֻמוּ כָל־הָעָם מִקָּטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וְשָׂרֵי הַחַיִּל וַיָּבֹאוּ מִצְרָיִם כִּי־יָרְאוּ מִפְּנֵי כַּשְׂדִּים׃ {ס}

THE TALMUDIC FRAME

ROSH HASHANAH 18B

צום השביעי זה שלשה בתשרי שבו נהרג גדליה בן אחיקם. ומי הרגו? ישמעאל בן נתניה הרגו. ללמדך ששקולה מיתתן של צדיקים כשריפת בית אלהינו.

‘The fast of the seventh’ is the third of Tishrei, when Gedaliah son of Achikam was killed. Who killed him? Ishmael son of Netaniah. This teaches that the death of the righteous is weighed like the burning of the House of our God.

This passage gives the fast its date and its moral scale: the loss of a righteous leader is placed beside the destruction of the Temple.

NIDDAH 61A

וכי גדליה הרגן? והלא ישמעאל הרגן! אלא מתוך שהיה לו לחוש לעצת יוחנן בן קרח ולא חש, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו הרגן. אמר רבא: האי לישנא בישא, אף על גב דלקבולי לא מבעי, מיחש ליה מבעי.

Did Gedaliah kill them? Ishmael killed them! Rather, because Gedaliah should have taken Yochanan son of Kareach’s warning seriously and did not, Scripture counts it as though he killed them. Rava said: although one must not accept an evil report as fact, one must take precautions against the danger it may disclose.

This is the book’s central leadership problem: refusing slander does not remove the duty to protect people from a credible threat.

FROM SOURCE TO GRAPHIC NOVEL

JEREMIAH 27 & 29

Prophetic context not reproduced in this fixed-length reader: Babylon's rule has a limit, and the people must build, plant, live, and wait for the appointed return.

JEREMIAH 40

Pages 1–30: Gedaliah asks the remnant to serve Babylon and gather the harvest; refugees return and his program begins to work before Yochanan warns him about Ishmael.

JEREMIAH 41 & II KINGS 25

Pages 31–54: a royal-descended officer sent by Baalis murders Gedaliah, kills pilgrims, fills the cistern, takes captives, and leaves the remnant exposed to flight.

JEREMIAH 42–43

Pages 55–64: Jeremiah again commands the remnant to remain and live. Yochanan, once right about Ishmael, answers the prophet with the same accusation of falsehood.

FAST & EXILE

Rosh Hashanah 18b weighs the righteous governor's death against the burning of the House. Rambam describes it as extinguishing Israel's remaining ember and completing the exile.

NIDDAH 61a

A separate teaching about responsible caution: Gedaliah may not accept an evil report as proven, but he must take precautions. It neither defines his Babylonian policy nor licenses assassination.

ADAPTATION

The exile-versus-sovereignty thesis is this book's interpretation, not a quotation from Chazal. Tamar, Bel-iddin, the Nurse, the proposed safeguards, and the feast and shofar staging are dramatic inventions.



1

Av, in the year 3338 from the creation of the world.

After a long siege, Babylon broke Jerusalem, destroyed the House that Solomon built, and carried away Judah's king.

The city burned for a day and a night. Then most of its survivors were marched north into exile.



1

Ramah. Two hours' walk north of the ruin.

Here Babylon sorted the captives; most would be deported east; a poor remnant would be left to work the land.

2

BARUCH: They are counting us like sheep.
JEREMIAH: Like tribute. Sheep are not written down.

3

AIDE (lettered in *italics* to mark Akkadian): This is the one the king asked about.

4

NEBUZARADAN: You told them to open the gates. For years. They put you in a pit for it.

JEREMIAH: A cistern. There was mud.

NEBUZARADAN: My king remembers who told the truth.

5

chnk

NEBUZARADAN: Come to Babylon and I will see to you myself. Or go where you like. The whole land is before you.



1

Behind him, everyone who had ever listened to him, walking to Babylon.

Ahead of him, everyone who had not.

2

Babylon had not restored Judah's monarchy. It appointed a Judean governor to keep the survivors alive, collect the harvest, and send tribute.

NEBUZARADAN: Gedaliah ben Achikam. The king has made him governor of what is left. He will sit at Mizpah.

NEBUZARADAN: He asked for you by name.

3

GEDALIAH: My father kept you alive once. In the court, when the priests wanted you stoned.

JEREMIAH: I remember his hand on my shoulder.

GEDALIAH: I would be a poor son to let you starve in Babylon.

4

NEBUZARADAN: The daughters of Zedekiah. The poor of the land. The vinedressers, the plowmen. They are yours to keep.

NEBUZARADAN: Keep them quiet, keep them alive, and send the tribute on the new moon.

5

GEDALIAH: I will keep them.



1
Jeremiah chose the fragile remnant at Mizpah over safety in Babylon.

"...and he went to Gedaliah ben Achikam at Mizpah and lived with him among the people who remained in the land."

2
BARUCH: You could have gone with them. They will need you there.

JEREMIAH: They have Ezekiel, and a river. This place has a governor with a plow and a Babylonian garrison. It needs someone who has already been wrong about how bad it can get.

3
GEDALIAH: My grandfather read a scroll to a king in this country, and the king tore his clothes.

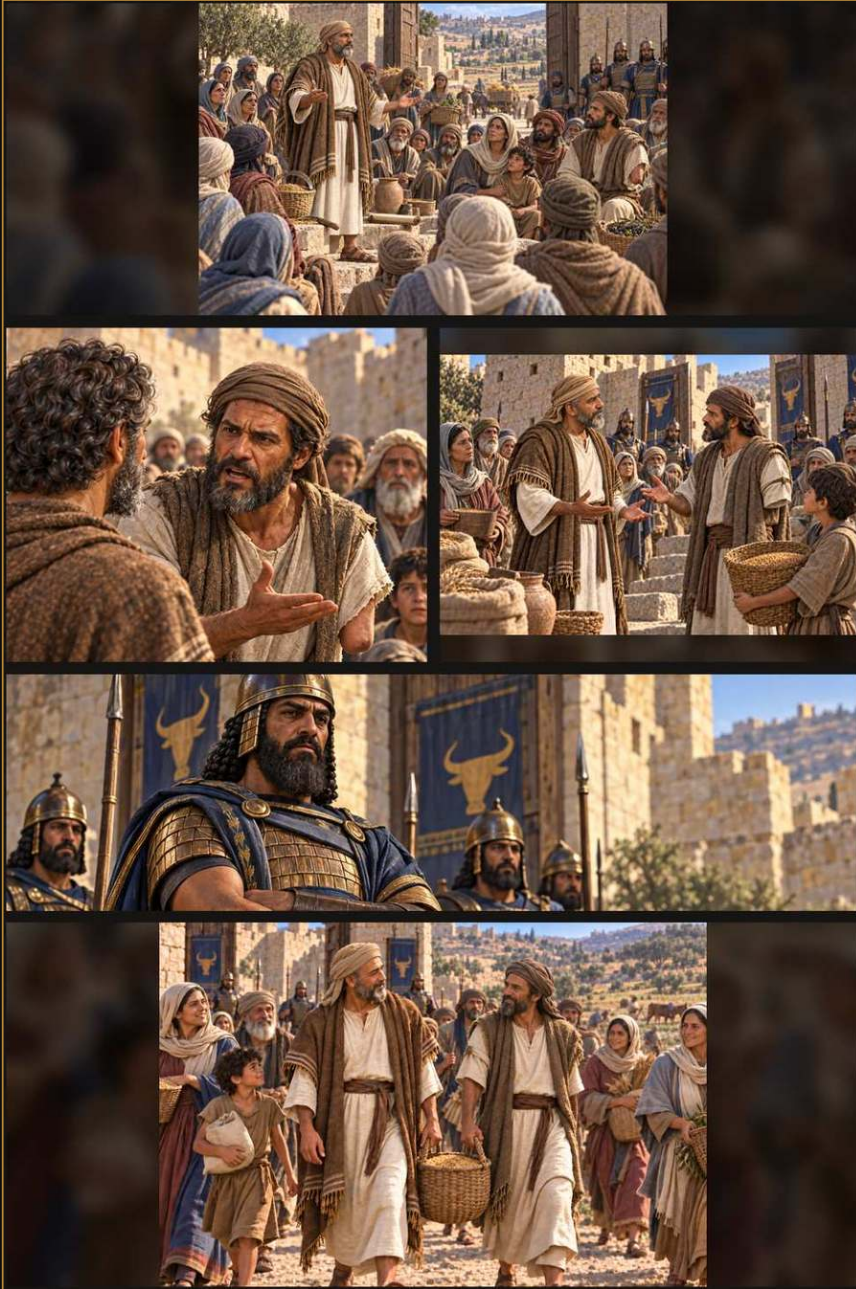
GEDALIAH: I have no scroll. I have seed.

4
THE SEVENTH MONTH



ONE. THE GOVERNOR OF MIZPAH

AV TO ELUL 3338



1

GEDALIAH: The kingdom is gone. The people are not.

GEDALIAH: Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Live here, and it will go well with you.

2

ONE-ARMED MAN: It went well with my brother. He is in Riblah with his eyes out.

3

GEDALIAH: I will stand at Mizpah before the Chaldeans who come to us. That is my part.

GEDALIAH: Yours is this. Gather the wine. Gather the summer fruit and the oil. Store them. Live in the towns you have taken.

4

BEL-IDDIN: He talks like a farmer.

SUBORDINATE: He is a farmer.

BEL-IDDIN: Good. Farmers pay.

5

GEDALIAH: I cannot give you your brother back. I can give you a harvest. Take the one I have.



1

They had not surrendered. They had simply run out of city.

2

YOCHANAN: Gedaliah ben Achikam. We heard Babylon left a Jew in charge. We came to see if it was a joke.

GEDALIAH: It is. But the harvest is real. Come eat.

3

Ishmael ben Netaniah ben Elishama: a surviving prince of Judah's deposed royal house. To him, Babylon's governor was not a beginning but a surrender.

4

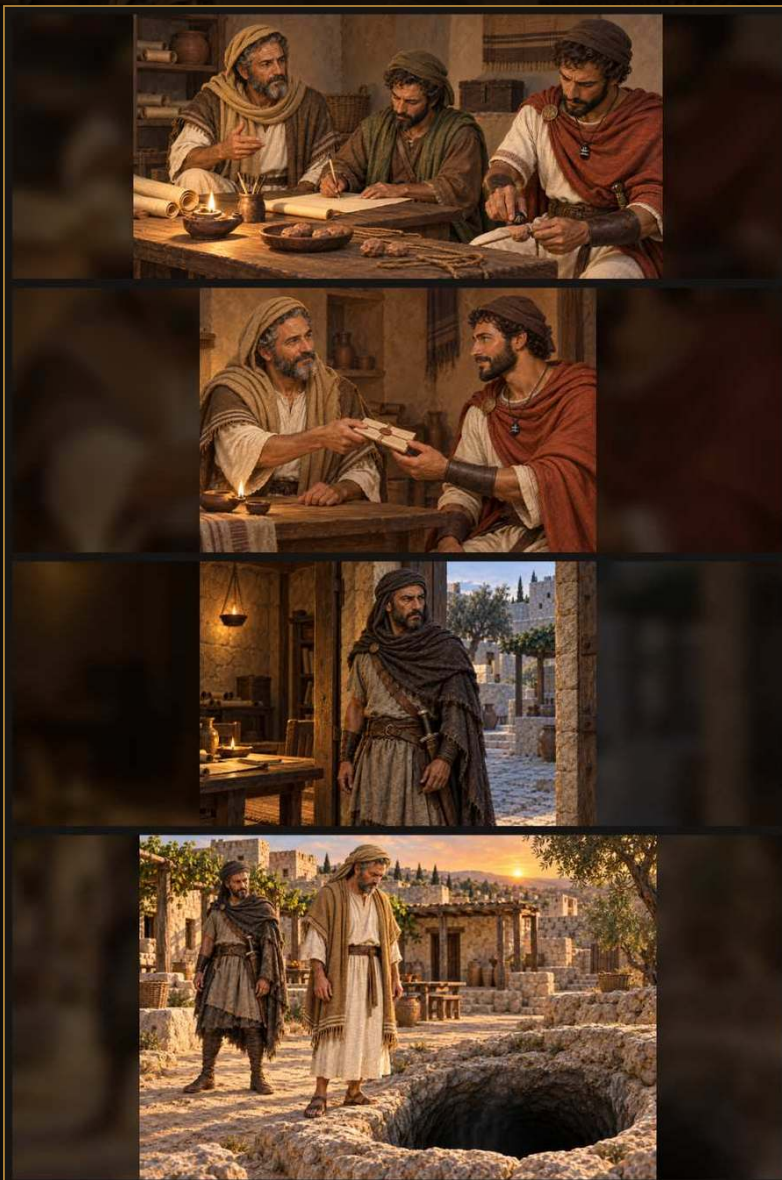
ISHMAEL: Governor.

GEDALIAH: You are part of my king's family. Welcome to my table.

ISHMAEL: Your king is in Babylon with his eyes in a jar.

5

GEDALIAH: Then we are both still his servants. Come in.



1

INSET: the seal. Three registers: top, "belonging to Yaazaniah"; middle, "servant of the king"; bottom, a fighting cock, wings back, spurs up.

Paleo-Hebrew. Artist: copy the real Tell en-Nasbeh seal (Appendix B).

YAAZANIAH: Servant of the king. I should have it recut.

GEDALIAH: Which king?

YAAZANIAH: That is my question.

2

GEDALIAH: Keep the cock. A soldier should own something that fights on his behalf.

3

YOCHANAN: A word, Governor. About Ishmael.

GEDALIAH: Later. I want to show you the cistern.

4

GEDALIAH: King Asa dug this when Baasha of Israel threatened the border. Three hundred years ago. It has never gone dry.

GEDALIAH: A man built for a war he feared and left water for a peace he never saw.

YOCHANAN: Water for the peace. Fine. Now about Ishmael.



1

NURSE: You hold it like a scepter, child.

TAMAR: I have never held a scepter. My brothers did.

2

TAMAR: They made Father watch. At Riblah. One after another. Then the eyes.

3

TAMAR: And Gedaliah ben Achikam bows to the men who did it and tells us to gather figs.

4

GEDALIAH: Yes.

GEDALIAH: And when the figs are gathered there will be people alive in Judah to hate Babylon properly. Dead women hate no one.

5

TAMAR: You should have been a priest. You would be good at explaining sacrifices.

GEDALIAH: My grandfather was a scribe. We explain everything. It is a curse.



1
Word went east of the river. There is a Jew at Mizpah, and he is not hanging anyone.

5
GEDALIAH: The land was worked by our sins for a hundred years. Let it be worked by our hands for one season and see what it says.

3
"...and they gathered a great abundance of wine and summer fruit."

6
ISHMAEL (small): Tenant farmers.



1

BARUCH: You have not spoken a word from Him since we came here.

JEREMIAH: He has not spoken one to me.

2

BARUCH: Forty years of "Woe," and now, when it might do some good...

JEREMIAH: When has it ever done good? Name the year.

3

JEREMIAH: I told Zedekiah: go out to them and you live. He wept and stayed and lost his sons. I told Jehoiakim; he cut my scroll in strips and fed it to the brazier.

JEREMIAH: I wrote the exiles: build houses. Plant gardens. Live through Babylon's years, and wait for the return G-d appointed.

4

BARUCH: And Gedaliah?

JEREMIAH: He is doing the same work without crossing the river. Not restoring the kingdom. Keeping the people alive until the years are complete.



1

ISHMAEL: You have done a thing here, Governor. I mean it.

GEDALIAH: The land did it. I held the seed bag.

2

ISHMAEL: And in the seventh year, when the Chaldean says the tribute doubles, what does the seed bag say?

GEDALIAH: It says we are still here when the appointed years are complete. The dead in the city cannot return.

3

ISHMAEL: My grandfather Elishama sat at Josiah's table. Your grandfather Shafan read to him. The king's house and the scribe's house. Now the scribe governs and the king's blood pays tribute.

ISHMAEL: Do you never think it is backwards?

4

GEDALIAH: Constantly. Then I think of Riblah.

GEDALIAH: Jeremiah gave Babylon its years. I will not spend Judah's last lives pretending those years are over.

5

ISHMAEL: You are a good man, Gedaliah. It is a shame what it does to your politics.

GEDALIAH: Stay for the New Year. We will argue over better wine.



1
He left on the new moon of Elul, with gifts.

2
YONATAN: East. His fields are in Benjamin. That road goes to the river.
YOCHANAN: I can read a road.

3
YOCHANAN: Nine months of siege. I was eating leather in the Kidron. Nobody saw Ishmael ben Netaniah inside Jerusalem.
YONATAN: Some say Ammon.

4
YOCHANAN: Follow him. Not close. Watch the fords.



1

BARUCH: Enough for the winter and for the tribute both. First time in my life I have written the word "surplus."

2

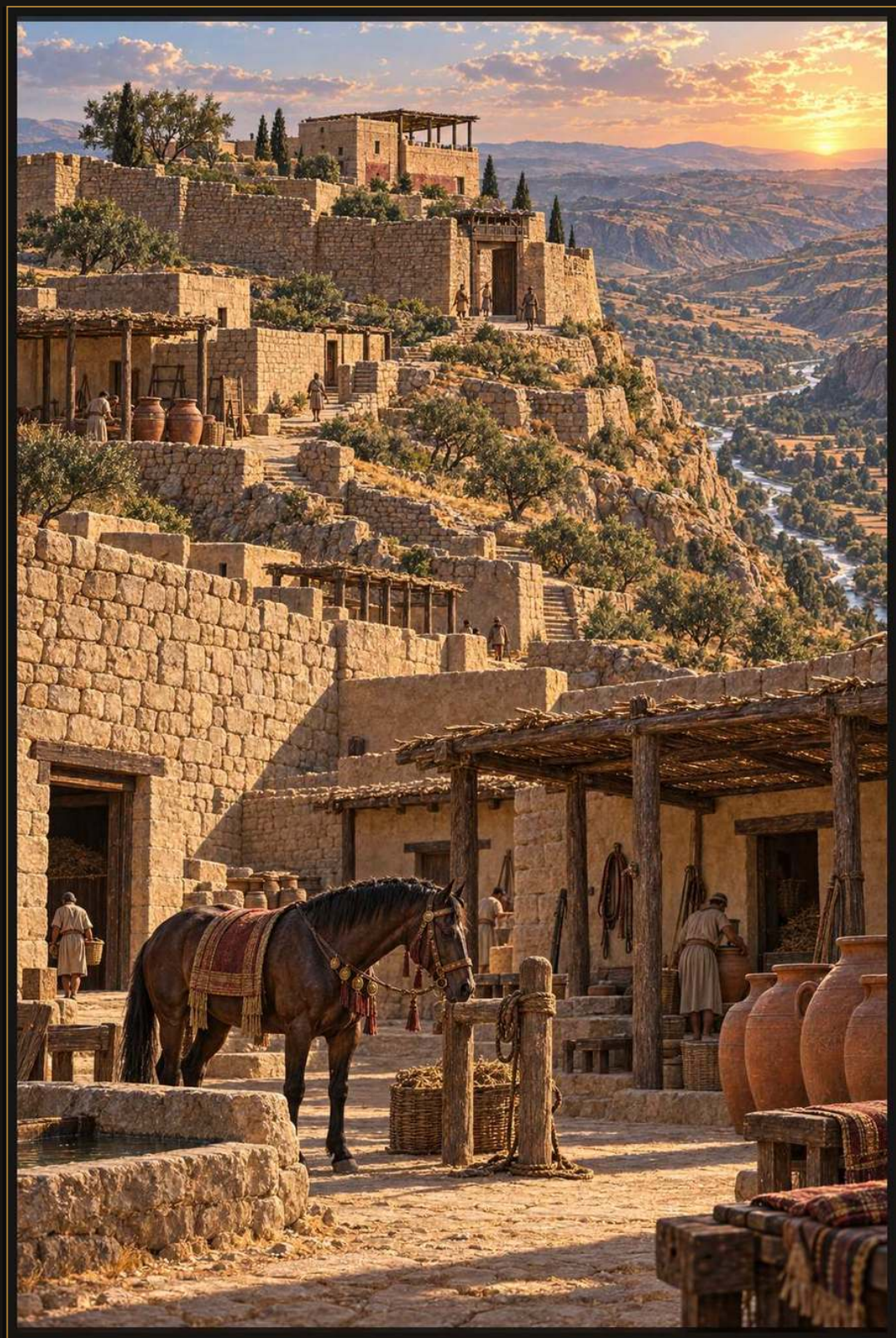
CHILD: For the governor.
GEDALIAH (kneeling to her): The governor is honored.

3

TAMAR: The nurse says you dug out the old terraces with your own hands.
GEDALIAH: The Chaldeans took the men with hands. I had to use mine.

4

In the study houses of a later age they would say of him: he could not believe that a Jew would lie to him.
They would not say it as praise.



TWO. RABBAT-AMMON

ELUL 3338



1

East of the Jordan, King Baalis of Ammon feared that a stable, tribute-paying Judah would carry Babylon's power to his border.

BAALIS: The farmer lives.

ISHMAEL: The farmer thrives. That is your problem, Ba'alyasha. Not mine.

2

BAALIS: A Judah that pays Babylon on time is a Babylonian road to my gate. A Judah on fire is a wall.

BAALIS: You told me you wanted your grandfather's chair. Yet here you are, asking from mine.

3

ISHMAEL: I want my people off their knees. The chair comes with that.

BAALIS: Then begin on your knees here.

4

BAALIS: Gold, then. And thirty of my men.

ISHMAEL: No gold. Gold gets found. No Ammonites. Ammonites get recognized.

ISHMAEL: Ten Jews. Men who lost sons at the wall. If Judah is to call this freedom, it must look Judean. And a holiday.

5

BAALIS: A holiday?

ISHMAEL: The New Year. The day the horn is blown. A man who bows to Babylon still keeps the feast, and a man who keeps the feast opens his table.

BAALIS: My war. Your flag.



1

Nine months earlier.

MESSENGER: The wall is breached in the north. Inside, they are eating their children.

3

ISHMAEL: When it falls, the Chaldean will appoint someone. Someone tame.

BAALIS: And?

ISHMAEL: A tame man is easy to reach.

4

BAALIS: You watched your kingdom fall from my table. You never intended to be inside.

ISHMAEL: I kept a son of David alive.

5

BAALIS: To the claimant.

ISHMAEL (not drinking): To Judah.

BAALIS: From an Ammonite cup.



1

ISHMAEL: I know what you are. You are the ones who did not go back when the farmer sent word.

2

THE FIRST: He asks us to serve the men who took our sons.
ISHMAEL: He does. Politely.

3

ISHMAEL: I am not asking you to go back and serve. I am asking you to finish the war.
THE FIRST: With Ammon's bread?
ISHMAEL: With Judean hands.

4

YOUNG MAN: And the garrison? Thirty spears.
ISHMAEL: Thirty men drunk on Judean wine at a Judean feast, guarding a man who has told everyone there is nothing to fear.

5

ISHMAEL: I have fear enough for all of them. Ten. Who comes?



2

YONATAN: Who sent you. Where.

RIDER: To the prince... Ishmael... at Mizpah... on the feast... King Baalis asks... is it done...



1

FARMER A: My father's field.

FARMER B: Abandoned. I plowed it.

GEDALIAH: Then you both love it. Split this year's harvest. Next year the one who did not plow, plows.

2

BEL-IDDIN: In Babylon we would flog one of them. For clarity.

GEDALIAH: In Babylon you have more men than fields.

3

GEDALIAH: Prophet. A word for the New Year?

JEREMIAH: When I have one.



1

YONATAN: Baalis's rider. Bound for Ishmael. Asking whether it is done "on the feast."

2

SERAIAH: Whether what is done?
YOCHANAN: What do you think.

3

YAAZANIAH: He is of the royal seed. If we accuse him and we are wrong...

YOCHANAN: If we are wrong, we are embarrassed. If we are right and silent, we are dead.

4

YOCHANAN: All of us go. Together. In daylight. So he cannot call it one man's grudge.



2

THE FIRST: Gedaliah dies, Baalis owns the road, and we call that freedom?

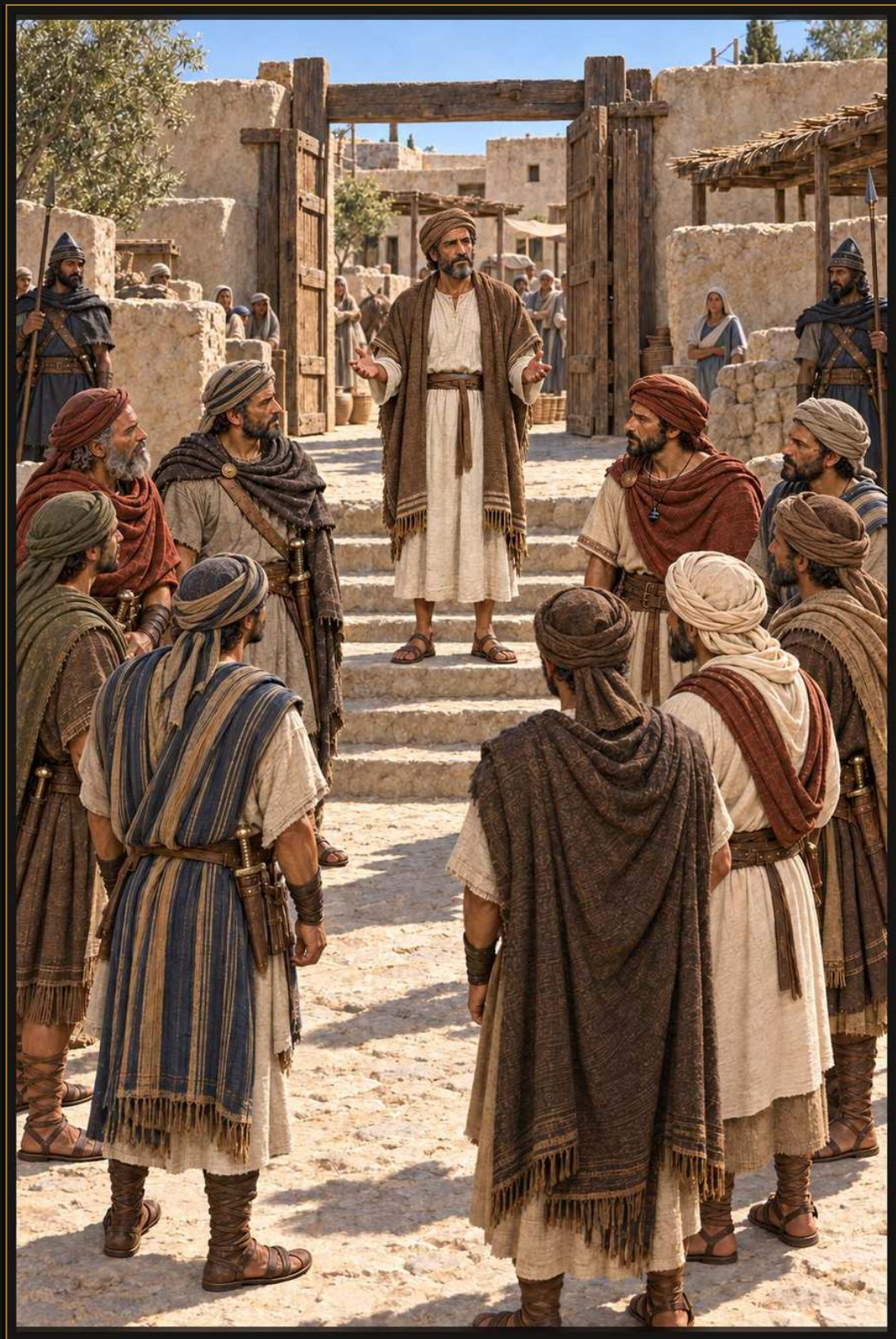
ISHMAEL: Baalis opens a door. I decide what passes through it. The Babylonians are not the problem. Gedaliah is. Men like him make servitude survivable. That is the most dangerous thing a man can do to a nation.

3

ISHMAEL: I will eat his bread first. I owe him that much honesty.

4

The month of Elul ran out.



THREE. SHEKER

LAST DAYS OF ELUL 3338



1

Yochanan had intercepted a message linking Baalis, Ishmael, and the New Year feast.

YOCHANAN: Governor. Do you know that Baalis king of Ammon has sent Ishmael ben Netaniah to take your life?

3

GEDALIAH: Ishmael ate at my table. He gave me his hand.

YOCHANAN: He gave Baalis his hand first. We took a rider at the fords.

4

GEDALIAH: A rider. An Ammonite with a knife at his throat told you what fear expected to hear.

YONATAN: I did not want to hear it.

5

GEDALIAH: I will not condemn him on this.

"But Gedaliah ben Achikam did not believe them."



1

BEL-IDDIN: Governor. My king pays me to keep you breathing. Give me the name, and I will send the head to Babylon and the problem to the crows.

2

GEDALIAH: You will not kill a son of David on the word of a courier.

BEL-IDDIN: Then let me double the watch.

GEDALIAH: Not for one guest.

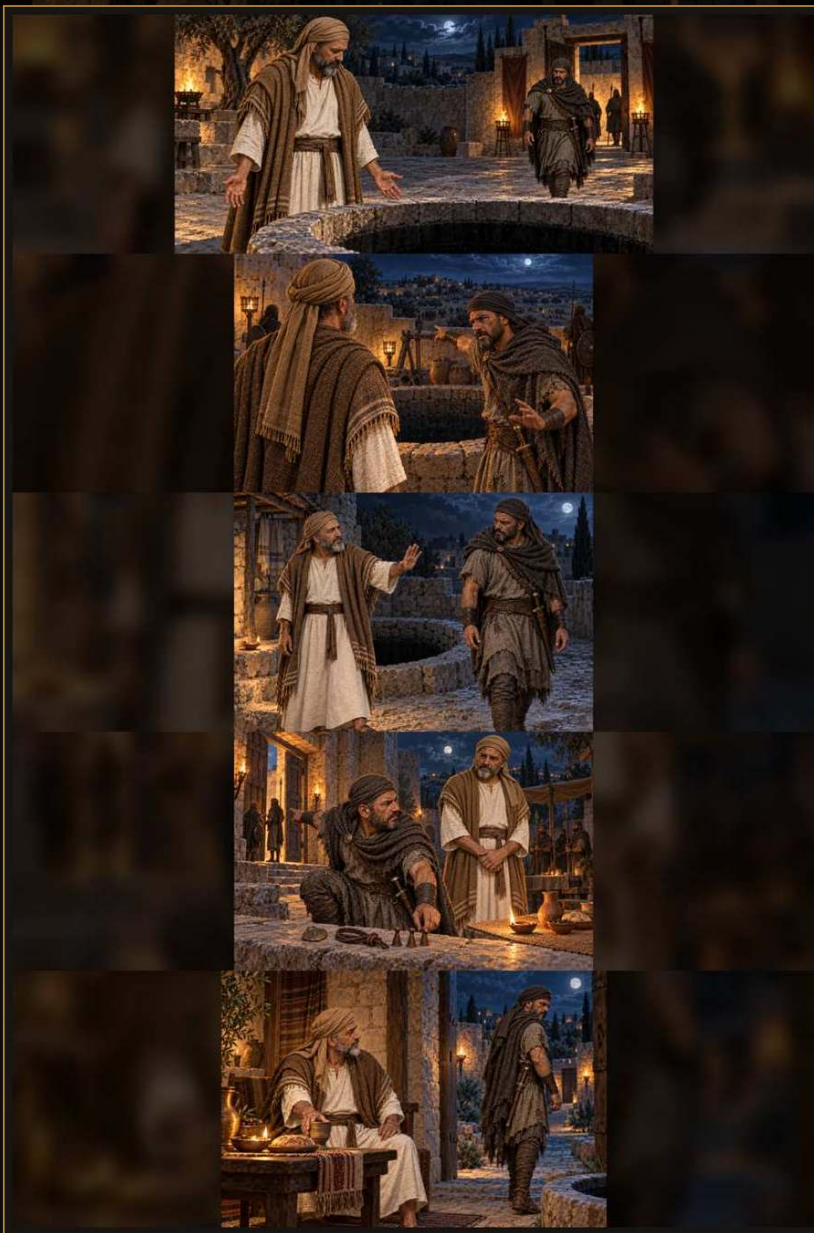
3

GEDALIAH: Go home. Bring in the last of the grapes. The New Year is in nine days.

5

BARUCH: Say something.

JEREMIAH: I was not sent.



1

YOCHANAN: Let me go. Tonight. I will kill Ishmael ben Netaniah and no one will know it.

2

YOCHANAN: Why should he kill you, scatter all Judah gathered here, and destroy what remains of Judah?

3

GEDALIAH: Do not do this thing.
GEDALIAH: You are speaking falsehood about Ishmael.

כִּי שֶׁקֶר אַתָּה דֹּבֵר אֵלַיִשְׁמַעֵאל

"For it is falsehood you speak of Ishmael."

4

YOCHANAN: Falsehood.
YOCHANAN: Then do not kill him. Search his men at the gate. Keep me in Mizpah. Put sober guards between them and the table.

5

GEDALIAH: No knife. No arrest. No public shame. We receive him as a guest.
GEDALIAH: If I build the first table of this remnant on suspicion, I have built Babylon with smaller walls.



1

YOCHANAN: You told kings to their faces they were finished. Tell him.

JEREMIAH: Tell him what? That a man I have not seen sin is a murderer?

2

YOCHANAN: You are a prophet.

JEREMIAH: I am a prophet when He speaks. Between His words I am an old man with opinions. But you need no prophecy to post a guard.

3

YOCHANAN: Then tell him that.

JEREMIAH: He knows. He thinks watchfulness would betray the peace he is trying to make.

4

YOCHANAN: I have lived through worse insults.

5

JEREMIAH (small): He is not silent. He is waiting. Forty years and I still cannot tell which.



1

TAMAR: The women say Yochanan called Ishmael a murderer to your face.

GEDALIAH: The women are accurate.

2

TAMAR: I grew up in a palace. My uncle was made king by Babylon and my father was made king by Babylon, and both were hated for it, and both were sold by the men nearest them.

TAMAR: It is always the nearest men.

3

GEDALIAH: Your father trusted no one. Where did it put him?

TAMAR: Alive. Blind, in Babylon. Alive.

4

GEDALIAH: I am not rebuilding the old Judah. That Judah burned. I am keeping a people on the land until G-d opens the next chapter.

TAMAR: Then keep them alive long enough to read it.



1

GEDALIAH: The caravans from Edom reach Tekoa by the new moon. Take your men south and bring them in safe.

YOCHANAN: You are sending away the only force that believes the warning.

GEDALIAH: Yes. Ishmael will not enter a town braced to accuse him. Take your men south.

2

YOCHANAN: Sit near the door. Keep your knives.

YAAZANIAH: At a New Year feast?

YOCHANAN: Especially.



1

NURSE: If the gate closes wrong, the little one goes here.

TAMAR: You believe Yochanan.

NURSE: I believe doors need bars and children need places to hide.

2

BEL-IDDIN: Weapons.

ISHMAEL: We are Judeans in Judah, Captain. We do not travel naked.

BEL-IDDIN: Then travel dressed and dine naked. Swords at the gatehouse.

3

ISHMAEL: I came back for the better wine.

GEDALIAH: I opened the jar this morning.

4

The first of Tishrei. The Day of the Shofar Blast.

The year 3339 from Creation began at nightfall.



FOUR. THE SEVENTH MONTH

1 TISHREI 3339



1
TEKIAHHHH

2
GEDALIAH (small): Remember us.

4
BARUCH: He will not come to the table. He says he has not eaten with a governor since Josiah.
GEDALIAH: Then bring him a plate. And Baruch. Sit with him. Someone should.



1

GEDALIAH: A year ago on this day we ate the leather off our shields.

GEDALIAH: This year we eat figs from Mizpah and drink wine from Gibeon. This is not a throne. It is not freedom. It is a people still alive.

3

ISHMAEL: Tell me one thing honestly. When you bow to the Chaldean, what do you tell yourself?

GEDALIAH: Jeremiah gave Babylon its years. Our work is to outlive them. Clothes tear. Vines grow. I chose vines.

4

ISHMAEL: If I asked you, tonight, to hold the tribute one month. Just one. To see what happens.

GEDALIAH: I would say no, and pour you more wine.

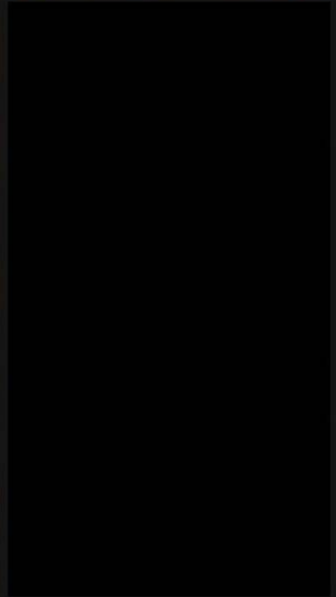
5

ISHMAEL: Then pour.



5

ISHMAEL: A word. For the New Year.



1

ISHMAEL: To the House of David.

2

(a cup shattering)

4

GEDALIAH: ...Ishmael...

5

ISHMAEL: I ate your bread first.

6

"...and they attacked Gedaliah ben Achikam ben Shafan with swords and killed the man the king of Babylon had appointed over the land."



6

"...and Ishmael killed all the Judeans with Gedaliah at Mizpah, along with the Chaldean soldiers who were there."

With Gedaliah dead, Judah had lost its only recognized government. With Babylonian soldiers dead beside him, everyone left behind could be punished as a rebel.



1

There were thirty Chaldeans at Mizpah. By morning there were none.

2

BARUCH: It has happened.

JEREMIAH: Yes.

BARUCH: You knew.

JEREMIAH: I feared. It is not the same thing. My whole life I have been punished for saying what I feared. Tonight I am punished for not.

3

TAMAR: Not a sound. Not even if you hear me scream.

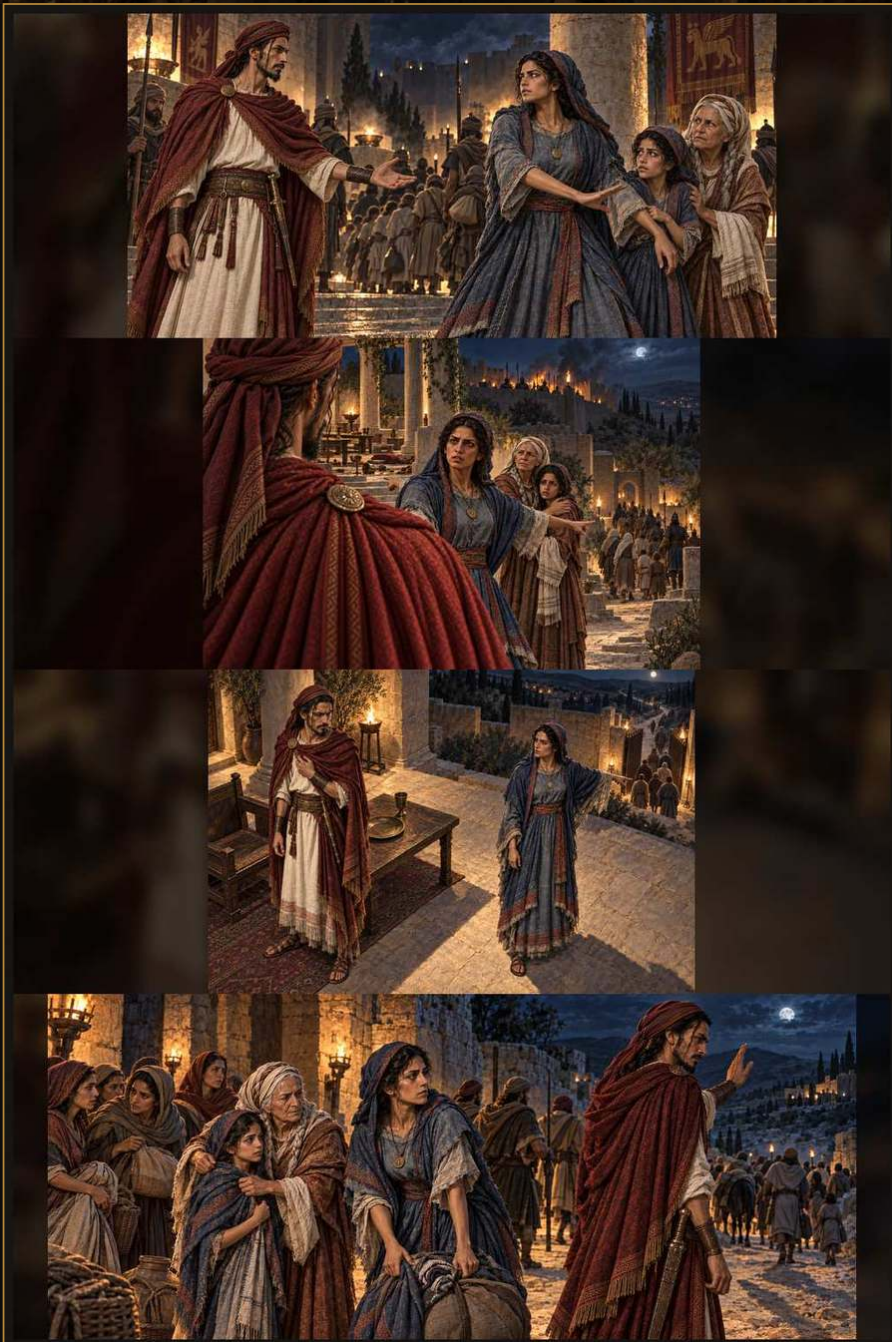
4

THE FIRST: Daughters of the king. Ishmael wants you whole.

TAMAR: Then he wants more than my father got.

5

ISHMAEL: Cousin. You are free.



1

TAMAR: Free.

ISHMAEL: The Chaldean's dog is dead. His garrison is dead. In a month Baalis and I hold Benjamin, and your father's house has a throne again.

2

TAMAR: A throne over whom? The men at the table? The soldiers whose deaths will bring Babylon? The people you are dragging to Ammon?

3

ISHMAEL: I kept the House of David alive.

TAMAR: Gedaliah used his life to keep a people here. You used theirs to make yourself a prince.

4

ISHMAEL: Pack them. All of them. We move when the road is dark.



2
THE FIRST: The bodies. Forty. If a herdsman comes through the gate...

3
ISHMAEL: The governor was fond of King Asa's cistern.

4
THE FIRST: It is the town's water.
ISHMAEL: The town is coming with us.

5
A king dug it three hundred years before, for fear of a war that never came.



1
a wet sound

3
THE FIRST: The women are watching from the wall.
ISHMAEL: Let them. They should know what it costs.

4
The second of Tishrei. No one outside the walls knew.



FIVE. THE PIT OF ASA

2 TISHREI 3339



1

From Shechem. From Shiloh, where the Ark once rested. From Samaria, where a kingdom had ended a hundred and thirty years before.

Israelites of the north, who never stopped walking south for the feasts.

2

ELDER: We will lay it on the stones. There is no altar. G-d will know what it was for.

BOY: Grandfather, there is no House.

ELDER: There is the place where the House was. That is where you bring the grain.

3

YOUNGER PILGRIM: Mizpah first. The governor gives water, and a Chaldean pass to the ruins.

5

"Ishmael ben Netaniah left Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he walked."



1
ISHMAEL: Brothers. You have come to weep at the place. Come and weep with us first.
ELDER: Who are you?
ISHMAEL: Of the House of David. Come in to Gedaliah ben Achikam.

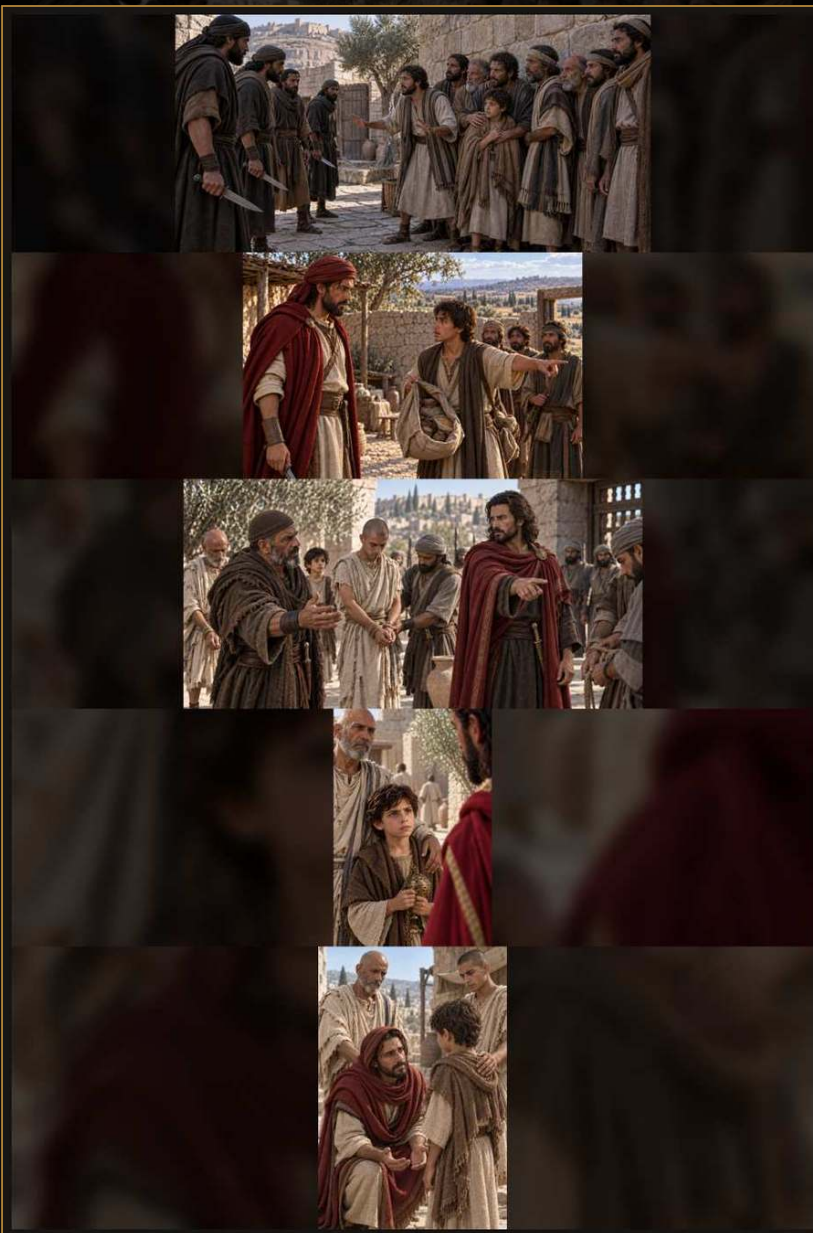
4
YOUNGER PILGRIM: Where is the garrison?
ISHMAEL: Feasting.

5
(a heavy gate)



2
ELDER: You are not...
ISHMAEL: No.

5
The offering went up after all.



1

YOUNGER PILGRIM: Do not. Do not kill us. We have stores. Hidden in the field. Wheat, barley, oil, honey. Enough to feed a hundred men through the winter.

2

ISHMAEL: Where?
YOUNGER PILGRIM: Take us. We will show you.

3

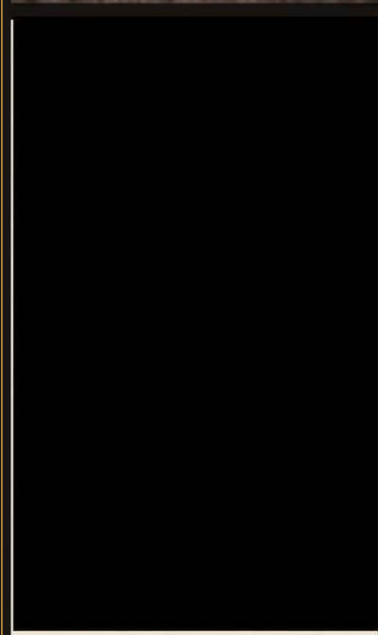
THE FIRST: They will run.
ISHMAEL: A man does not run from the only thing keeping him alive. Bind them.

4

BOY: You cried.

5

ISHMAEL: Yes.
"But ten of the men said to Ishmael, 'Do not kill us. We have hidden stores in the field: wheat, barley, oil, and honey.' So he spared them and did not kill them with their companions."



1

THE FIRST: It is full.

3

"Now the cistern where Ishmael threw the bodies of the men he had killed—'by the hand of Gedaliah'—was the one King Asa made in fear of Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael ben Netaniah filled it with the dead."

By the hand of Gedaliah.

The Sages of a later age stopped at those words and asked: Gedaliah killed them? Ishmael killed them.

4

And they answered: he should have feared the counsel of Yochanan ben Kareach, and he did not fear it. So the verse counts them to him.



1

"Ishmael took captive everyone who remained in Mizpah: the king's daughters and all the people Nebuzaradan, chief of the guard, had placed in Gedaliah ben Achikam's care."

2

ISHMAEL: You are the one who told my relatives to open the gates to Babylon.
JEREMIAH: I told them Babylon's years had begun. You called Gedaliah a servant, then carried out Baalis's design.

3

ISHMAEL: Baalis served Judah's freedom.
JEREMIAH: You killed a Judean governor for an Ammonite king and carried Judean prisoners toward his gate. The cistern has already answered you.

4

BARUCH: I picked it up in the hall.
JEREMIAH: Keep it. Someone will want to know they were here.

5

Toward the river. Toward Ammon.



1

Gedaliah had sent Yochanan south before the feast. That is why the man who gave the warning was still alive to answer it.

ONE-ARMED MAN: Mizpah. Ishmael. The governor. All of them. The pit.

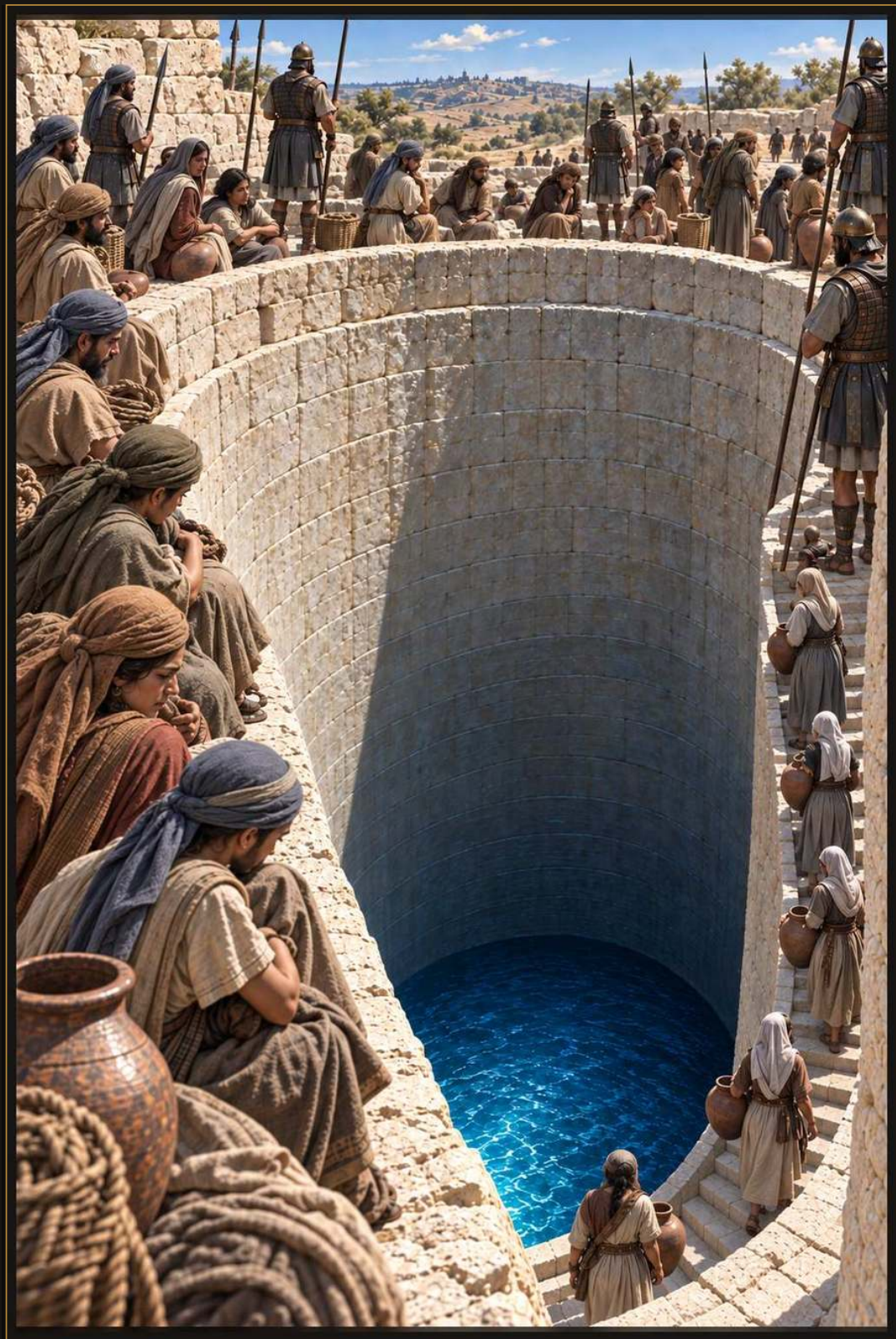
3

YOCHANAN: Which way did he go?

ONE-ARMED MAN: East. With the women. With the prophet.

4

YOCHANAN: Gibeon. He has to water at Gibeon. Ride. The third of Tishrei.



SIX. THE GREAT WATERS

3 TISHREI 3339



1
NURSE (small): When I drop mine, look at him. Not me.

3
THE FIRST: Riders. Fifty. Sixty.
ISHMAEL: Yochanan.

5
"All the people with Ishmael rejoiced when they saw Yochanan ben Kareach and the captains with him."



2
(the jar) / (a splash, far below)

3
"All the people Ishmael had taken captive in Mizpah turned back and went to Yochanan ben Kareach."



3

YONATAN: We can take them at the fords.

YOCHANAN: And leave the women here with no water and no walls? He has eight men. Baalis has a kingdom.

4

YOCHANAN: Let Ammon have him. Ammon will learn what he is.

"But Ishmael ben Netaniah escaped from Yochanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites."



1

YOCHANAN: I told him.

JEREMIAH: You did.

YOCHANAN: Say I was right.

JEREMIAH: You were right. Sit with it. It will not warm you.

2

AZARIAH: Yochanan. Thirty Chaldeans dead at Mizpah. The governor Nebuchadnezzar appointed, dead. Who does Babylon blame?

3

YOCHANAN: The Jews standing nearest.

AZARIAH: That is us.

4

YOCHANAN: We go back to Mizpah for what can be carried. Then south.

YONATAN: South is Egypt.

YOCHANAN: South is away from Nebuzaradan.



1

"Yochanan ben Kareach and the captains with him took charge of all the people they had rescued from Ishmael ben Netaniah after he killed Gedaliah ben Achikam: soldiers, women, children, and officials brought back from Gibeon."

3

BARUCH: Yaazaniah ben the Maachathite. Servant of the king. Whichever king.

Two and a half thousand years later a man named Badè would open this tomb, find the seal, and not know why it was there.

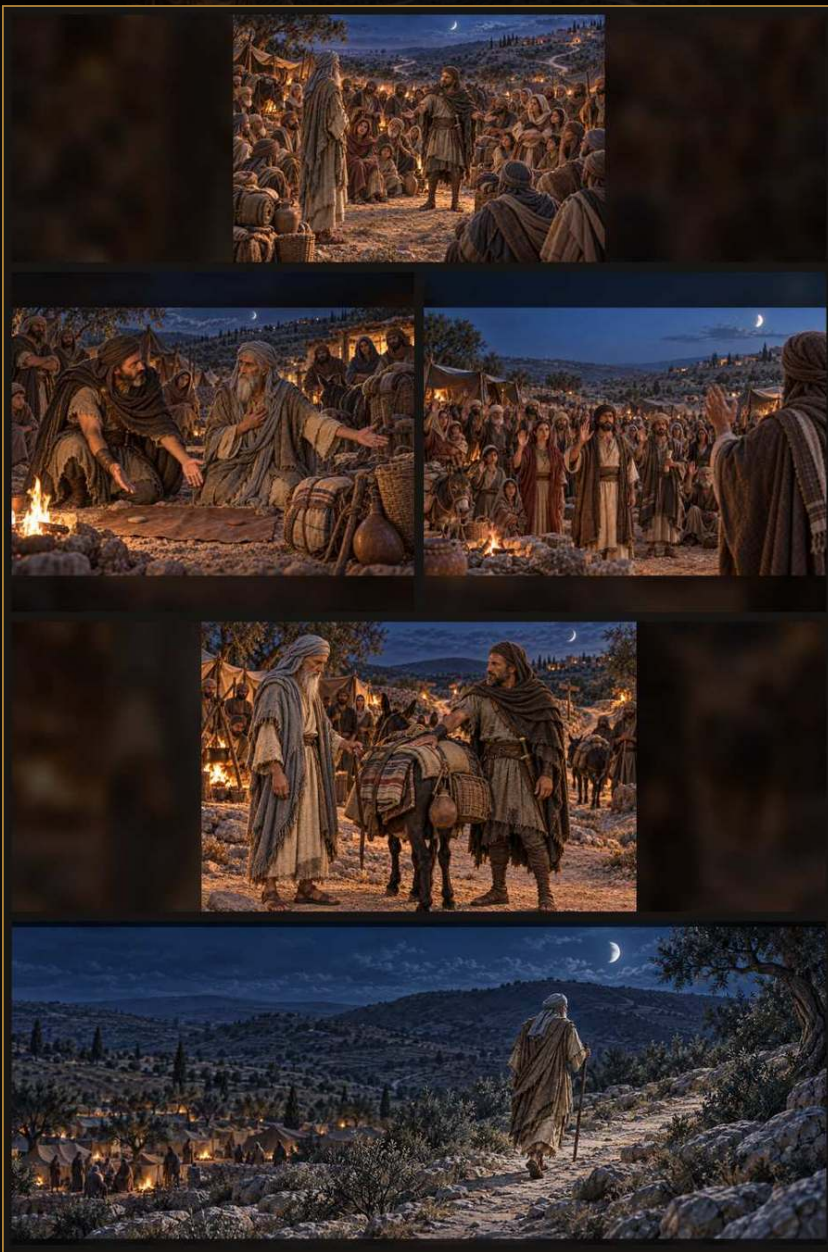
4

They left the water to whoever came.



SEVEN. TEN DAYS

TISHREI 3339



1

At Geruth Chimham, near Bethlehem, the refugees paused on the road to Egypt. They asked Jeremiah whether to remain under Babylonian rule or flee the land.

YOCHANAN: Pray to the L-rd your G-d for all of us who remain. You can see how few of us are left.

2

YOCHANAN: Let Him tell us the way we should go and the thing we should do.

JEREMIAH: I have heard you. I will pray. And whatever He answers I will tell you. I will hold nothing back.

3

ALL: Good or bad, we will obey the L-rd our G-d, whose word we asked you to seek, so things may go well for us.

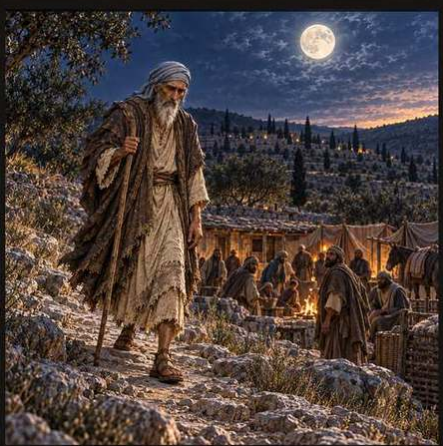
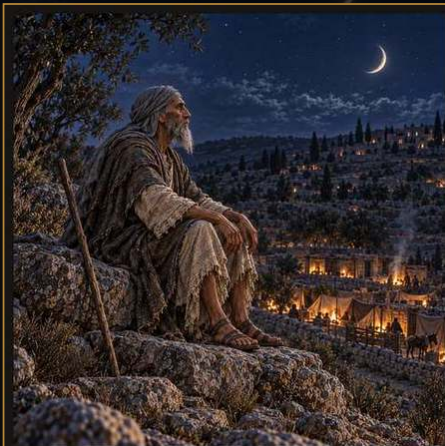
4

JEREMIAH: Good or bad.

YOCHANAN: Good or bad.

5

Then nothing.



2

AZARIAH: How long does he take?

YOCHANAN: As long as he takes.

4

YOCHANAN: Wait.

5

BOY: Does He always take this long?

BARUCH: Longer, usually.

6

The New Year of a later tradition counts ten days between the shofar and the Day of Atonement. Days of turning.

The remnant of Judah spent them waiting for a word.



1

JEREMIAH: This is what the L-rd, the G-d of Israel, says in answer to your request:
JEREMIAH: If you will stay in this land, I will build you and not tear down. I will plant you and not uproot. For I regret the evil I have done to you.

2

JEREMIAH: Do not fear the king of Babylon, whom you fear. Do not fear him, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand.

3

This was not a promise of immediate independence. It was a command to remain, plant, and live through the years already decreed.

4

JEREMIAH: But if you say: we will not stay in this land; we will go to Egypt, where we will see no war and hear no shofar and not hunger for bread; and you go, and settle there...
JEREMIAH: ...then the sword you fear will overtake you there, and the famine you dread will follow you there, and there you will die.

5

AZARIAH: He always says that.



1
AZARIAH: You speak falsehood. The L-rd our G-d did not send you to say: do not go to Egypt.

2
YOCHANAN: Baruch ben Neriah has set you against us. To hand us to the Chaldeans, to kill us or carry us to Babylon.

3
JEREMIAH: Sheker.
JEREMIAH: Yochanan. That is the word he said to you. At the cistern. "You speak falsehood."

שקר אתה מדבר

"You speak falsehood."

4
YOCHANAN: And he was wrong.
JEREMIAH: He was wrong to dismiss danger. You are wrong to make danger your only truth.

5
YOCHANAN: I trusted a warning and a good man died because he did not. I will not make his mistake.
JEREMIAH: Gedaliah refused every precaution. You refuse every promise. One error is not wisdom's answer to the other.



1

"Yochanan ben Kareach and all the captains took everyone who remained in Judah—the men, the women, the children, the king's daughters, Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch ben Neriah. They went to Egypt because they did not obey the voice of the L-rd."

2

TAMAR: Gedaliah stayed because you said the remnant could live under Babylon.
JEREMIAH: He understood the time.

3

TAMAR: Then why go with us?
JEREMIAH: Because exile is not permission to abandon the people. Someone who warned them should stand beside them when the warning comes true.

5

The kingdom had fallen in Av. In the seventh month, the remaining life of Judah went into exile.



1

Tachpanches. Pharaoh's fortress at the edge of Egypt, on the road from Canaan.

2

JEREMIAH: Take great stones and hide them in the mortar, in the brick pavement at the entry of Pharaoh's house, in the sight of the men of Judah.

4

JEREMIAH: This is what the L-rd says: I will summon Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, My servant. I will set his throne over these stones I have hidden, and he will spread his royal canopy over them.

5

They had run from Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah told them where he would sit.



1

JUDEAN WOMAN: When we burned it in Jerusalem, we had bread. When we stopped, we had the sword. Which god would you like us to fear, old man?

2

JEREMIAH: You had bread because it was harvest. You had the sword because it was the harvest of that.

4

Two and a half thousand years later, when a man named Petrie came with shovels, the villagers called the mound "Qasr Bint el-Yahudi."

The Castle of the Jew's Daughter.

No one remembered why.



1

In the fifth year after the city fell, Nebuchadnezzar came for Ammon and Moab.

2

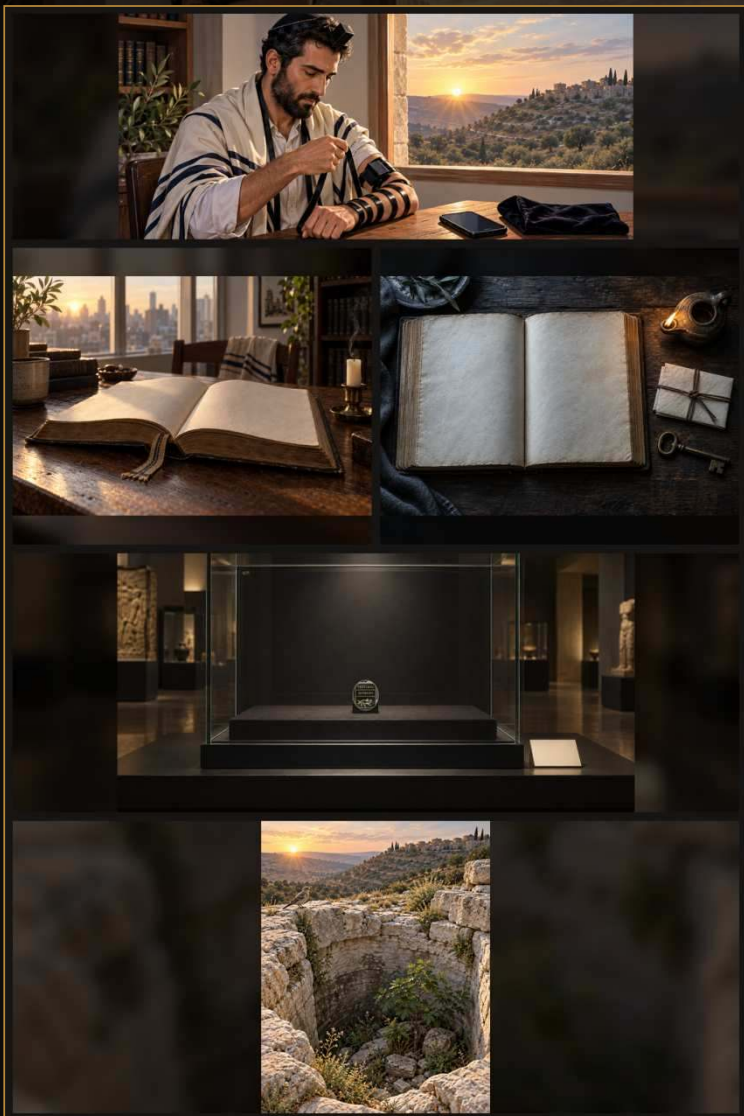
Of Ishmael ben Netaniah the record says nothing more.

3

And in his thirty-seventh year, Egypt.

4

3390 from Creation. The exiles returned, as he had said, when the years were counted. They returned when the appointed years were complete, with tools instead of the sword Ishmael had raised. They passed Mizpah on the way to Jerusalem. Someone must have looked down the cistern.



1

The third of Tishrei. The day after the second day of the New Year.

A fast older than Rome.

2

ללמדך ששקולה מיתתן של צדיקים כשריפת בית אלקינ

"The fast of the seventh month: this is the third of Tishrei, on which Gedaliah ben Achikam was killed. To teach you that the death of the righteous weighs as much as the burning of the House of our G-d."

3

האי לישנא בישא אף על גב דלקבולי לא מבעי, למיחש ליה מבעי

"A report of evil: one must not accept it. One must fear it."

The two teachings are related, but they are not the same.

Gedaliah was not blamed for Ishmael's choice or for living under Babylonian rule. He was held responsible for dismissing a credible warning when he could have protected others without condemning the accused.

4

Belonging to Yaazaniah, servant of the king.

5

The kingdom was gone. The people were not. He left water for a peace he never saw.

SOURCES & DEPARTURES

SOURCES, RESEARCH NOTES, AND DEPARTURES

What each source contributes

Jeremiah 27 and 29. The prophetic frame. Jeremiah 27 presents Babylonian rule as a divine decree with an appointed end: accept the yoke, remain on the land, cultivate it, and live. Jeremiah 29 tells the exiles to build houses, plant gardens, establish families, seek the welfare of the place where they live, and wait for the promised return after Babylon's appointed years. Neither chapter says that Gedaliah consciously built his administration from these instructions. The script's connection between that prophetic program and Gedaliah's work is an interpretation.

Jeremiah 39:11 to 41:18. The backbone. Nebuzaradan releases Jeremiah from the exile column at Ramah and gives him the whole land to choose from (40:1 to 6). Gedaliah's charge to the remnant: do not fear serving the Chaldeans, gather wine, summer fruit and oil (40:9 to 10). The returnees from Moab, Ammon and Edom and the abundant harvest (40:11 to 12). The public warning by Yochanan "and all the captains of the forces in the field" naming Baalis king of Ammon, and Gedaliah's refusal to believe (40:13 to 14). The private offer to kill Ishmael, and the reply "you speak falsehood about Ishmael" (40:15 to 16).



SOURCES & DEPARTURES (CONT.)

The feast "in the seventh month," the killing of Gedaliah, the Judeans with him, and the Chaldean soldiers (41:1 to 3). The eighty from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria, shaven, torn, gashed, carrying grain offering and frankincense; Ishmael's weeping; the slaughter; the ten spared for their hidden stores (41:4 to 8). The pit of Asa "filled with the dead" and the phrase "by the hand of Gedaliah" (41:9). The captives, the king's daughters, the march toward Ammon (41:10). Yochanan's pursuit, the great waters at Gibeon, the captives' joy and return, Ishmael's escape with eight (41:11 to 15). Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem and the fear of Chaldean reprisal (41:16 to 18).

Jeremiah 42 to 44. The request for prayer, the promise to obey "whether good or bad," the ten days, the word to stay, the accusation "sheker atah medaber" by Azariah ben Hoshaiah and Yochanan, the descent to Egypt with Jeremiah, Baruch and the king's daughters, the stones in the brick pavement at Tachpanches, the Queen of Heaven dispute.

II Kings 25:22-26. The compressed parallel. Adds that Ishmael was "of the royal seed" and that after the murder "all the people, small and great," went to Egypt.

Zechariah 8:19. "The fast of the seventh month," identified by the Talmud with the day of Gedaliah's death.



SOURCES & DEPARTURES (CONT.)

Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 18b. Identifies the fast of the seventh month as the third of Tishrei, the day Gedaliah ben Achikam was killed, and gives the reason: to teach that the death of the righteous is weighed against the burning of the House of G-d. Rashi there records the tradition, followed by the author's source and by this script, that the killing was on Rosh Hashanah itself and the fast was moved off the festival to the third.

Talmud, Niddah 61a. The question on Jeremiah 41:9, "Did Gedaliah kill them? Ishmael killed them!" and the answer that because Gedaliah should have feared Yochanan's counsel and did not, Scripture counts the deaths to him. Rava's ruling follows: one must not accept a report of evil, but one must be wary of it. This is the chorus caption on Page 46 and the second Talmud page on Page 64.

Rambam, Hilchot Ta'aniyot 5:2. Describes Gedaliah's killing as the extinguishing of Israel's remaining ember and the completion of the exile. This supports the book's national frame: the assassination ends the organized Jewish remnant still living under its own local governor in the land.

Mesillat Yesharim 20. Uses Gedaliah as an example of piety applied without adequate judgment: the refusal to credit an evil report did not remove the duty to weigh foreseeable danger. The script applies this by distinguishing Yochanan's proposed assassination, which Gedaliah rightly forbids, from nonlethal precautions, which he wrongly rejects.



SOURCES & DEPARTURES (CONT.)

Traditional commentaries on Jeremiah 41:1. Rashi connects the former royal officers' jealousy to Gedaliah's elevation. Abarbanel develops Ishmael's royal grievance and Baalis's opposition to Babylonian authority. These support a dynastic and political motive; they do not record the independence speeches written for Ishmael in this adaptation.

Interpretive boundary. No cited verse or teaching of Chazal states the book's exile-versus-sovereignty thesis in its exact language. The book reads the sources together: Gedaliah accepts the work of preserving the remnant through Babylon's appointed period, while Ishmael answers lost sovereignty with dynastic violence. This is the adaptation's synthesis. It must not be presented as a direct quotation or explicit formulation of Chazal.

Josephus, Antiquities X.9. Supplies three things the script uses: that Ishmael spent the siege at the court of Baalis (the flashback on Page 17); that Ishmael made a first visit to Mizpah, was feasted and given gifts, and returned thirty days later with his ten (Pages 12 to 13 and 30); and that after killing the guests he went out by night and killed the Chaldean garrison in the town (Page 37). Josephus also says Nebuchadnezzar campaigned against Ammon and Moab in his twenty-third year, five years after Jerusalem fell (Page 63).



SOURCES & DEPARTURES (CONT.)

Josephus, departure. Josephus writes that Gedaliah was drunk and asleep when he was killed. The script does not use this. Neither Jeremiah nor the Talmud says it, and the book's argument depends on Gedaliah being awake, sober, and still unable to believe.

The "sheker" echo

The word שֶׁקֶר (falsehood) appears at 40:16, spoken by Gedaliah to Yochanan about Ishmael, and at 43:2, spoken by Azariah and Yochanan to Jeremiah. It is the same word in the same story with the roles reversed. The script treats this as the book's spine and stages Pages 23 and 59 with the same composition so the echo is visual first.

Chronology

The author specified the traditional count: the House burns in Av 3338, Gedaliah dies at the New Year of 3339, the exiles return in 3390. Within that count the entire story runs inside one agricultural season, from the vintage of Av and Elul to the New Year, which is why the script leans on the harvest. Josephus's thirty days between Ishmael's first visit and the feast fits neatly: the first visit ends on the new moon of Elul.



SOURCES & DEPARTURES (CONT.)

For the publisher's historical reader: academic dating puts the destruction at 586 or 587 BCE and the return under Cyrus at 538 BCE. Scholars also debate the length of Gedaliah's tenure. The traditional reading is roughly two months. Some modern readers, combining Jeremiah 52:30 (a third deportation in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year) with Josephus's twenty-third-year campaign against Ammon and Moab, argue Gedaliah governed for several years and that the assassination triggered the reprisal. The script follows the author's chronology and notes the alternative here only.

The ten days

Jeremiah 42:7 says the word came "at the end of ten days." The script's New Year framing makes those the ten days between the shofar and the Day of Atonement. This is a structural rhyme chosen by the author, not a midrashic claim; the captions on Page 57 are phrased to say so.

Invented names and figures

Tamar bat Tzidkiyahu (the king's daughters are unnamed in Scripture). Bel-iddin, the garrison captain (Scripture records only that Chaldean soldiers were killed). The Elder of Shechem, the Younger Pilgrim, the Boy (the eighty and the ten are unnamed). The First and the Young Man among Ishmael's ten. The One-Armed Man and the Nurse. The Ammonite rider at the fords and the mechanism of the warning; Scripture says only that Yochanan and the captains "came and said," without saying how they knew.

Adjustments for staging

Yochanan's absence from the feast is explained by an errand south to Tekoa; Scripture says only that he was "in the field" and "heard." Seraiah ben Tanhumet and Yaazaniah are killed at the feast in the script; Scripture does not list the dead by name, though Yaazaniah's seal found in a Mizpah tomb makes his death there a reasonable dramatic choice. Azariah ben Hoshaiah is introduced at Gibeon so that he is a known face when he speaks at 43:2.

Baal's private dialogue, the visible Ammonite provisions in Ishmael's recruiting compound, and Ishmael's independence argument are dramatizations built from Baal's sponsorship, Ishmael's royal descent, and the political target recorded in Jeremiah. Yochanan's proposed nonlethal safeguards are also invented; Scripture records only his offer to kill Ishmael secretly. They are included to dramatize the distinction in Niddah 61a between accepting an accusation as fact and taking precautions against danger.

The communal morning shofar on Page 32 is a restrained dramatic reconstruction, not a claim that a documented sixth-century Mizpah service followed this form. The blower is not identified as a Levite. One shofar is used without trumpets because later Jewish sources reserve combined shofar-and-trumpet sounding for the Temple setting.



VISUAL ARCHAEOLOGY

VISUAL BIBLE AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Mizpah (Tell en-Nasbeh). About twelve kilometers northwest of Jerusalem, on a low plateau beside the ancient north road. Roughly eight acres inside the wall. Excavated 1926 to 1935 by William Badè. A ring-road town plan: houses built against a thick casemate wall, a monumental inner and outer gate complex, several large four-room houses, and remains that may be a Babylonian-period residence. Occupation continued through the Babylonian and Persian periods; Mizpah was still a district capital when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. The great cistern of Asa (Jer. 41:9) is the book's central object; the artist has license on its exact form, but keep it round, rock-cut, and deep.



VISUAL ARCHAEOLOGY (CONT.)

The Yaazaniah seal. Found in 1932 in a reused Iron Age tomb in the western necropolis at Tell en-Nasbeh. Black-and-white onyx, three registers: the owner's name, the title "servant of the king," and a fighting cock in a combat stance, one of the earliest depictions of the bird in the region. The link to the Yaazaniah of Jeremiah 40:8 is circumstantial but widely noted. On the page it should be drawn from photographs of the actual object. Caption on Page 64 does not name a museum; confirm the current holding institution before lettering if a name is wanted.



VISUAL ARCHAEOLOGY (CONT.)

Gibeon (el-Jib). About nine kilometers northwest of Jerusalem. Excavated by James Pritchard in the late 1950s. The great pool is a cylinder cut into limestone, about thirty-seven feet in diameter and eighty-two feet to the water, with a spiral staircase of seventy-nine steps carved into the wall. Gibeon was also a wine town: dozens of rock-cut cellars and jar handles stamped with the town's name. Gedaliah's line about "wine from Gibeon" on Page 33 is grounded in this.

Baalis of Ammon. A seal impression from Tall al-Umayri in Jordan names an official as servant of Ba'alyasha', king of the Ammonites, the same name as the biblical Baalis. The artist may show the impression on a jar at Rabbat-Ammon (Page 16). Ammonite script is a close cousin of Hebrew; Ammonite royal iconography can draw on the Amman citadel statuary.



VISUAL ARCHAEOLOGY (CONT.)

Nebuzaradan. The title rav-tabachim, chief of the guard. Babylonian court dress: long fringed robe, conical cap, elaborately curled beard, as on Neo-Babylonian reliefs and cylinder seals. Cuneiform tablets and styluses for the census at Ramah.

Judean dress and objects. Belted tunics, mantles with corner fringes, head-cloths; paleo-Hebrew on seals, weights, and jar handles, including "belonging to the king" stamps; hand mills, four-horned incense altars for the shrine on Page 62 (or the small stamped female figurines common in the period).

Tachpanches (Tell Defenneh). In the eastern Nile Delta near the old road from Canaan, west of the Suez Canal. Flinders Petrie excavated in 1886 and identified a fortress with a large brick platform in front of its entrance, which he connected to the "brick pavement at the entry of Pharaoh's house" of Jeremiah 43:9. The mound's local name was Qasr Bint el-Yahudi, the Castle of the Jew's Daughter. Petrie's pottery finds show a strong Greek mercenary presence; put Greek helmets in the street on Page 61. Nebuchadnezzar's own fragmentary annals record a campaign against Egypt in his thirty-seventh year.

Palette by chapter. Prologue: ash and bruise. One: gold and green, the last warm chapter. Two: ochre and iron-red. Three: Elul blue at dusk, flat white at noon. Four: lamplight to black. Five: white limestone, white garments, one black circle. Six: hard blue water in a grey book. Seven: waxing moonlight. Epilogue: bleached Delta white, then a single museum-case spotlight.



GLOSSARY & PRONUNCIATION

Gedaliah - Babylonian-appointed Judean governor after Jerusalem's fall.

Mizpah - Benjaminite administrative center identified here with Tell en-Nasbeh.

Sheker - Falsehood or lie; the repeated word linking the two rejected warnings.

Tishrei - The seventh month in the biblical count and month of the New Year.

Rosh Hashanah - The New Year and Day of the Shofar Blast.

Tachpanches - Egyptian frontier settlement in the eastern Nile Delta.

Rav-tabachim - Babylonian title rendered as chief of the guard.

Paleo-Hebrew - Script used for in-world Judean seals and jar stamps.



LETTERING & HEBREW

LETTERING AND HEBREW

Production lettering uses Noto Sans SemiCondensed for dialogue, Source Serif 4 for captions, and Noto Serif Hebrew for square-script passages. In-world inscriptions remain illustrated objects.

All generated artwork is kept free of baked-in lettering. English and Hebrew are applied in the editable page layout.



AUTHOR'S AFTERWORD

There are four fasts in the Jewish calendar that remember the destruction of Jerusalem. Three mark the fall of a city and the burning of a House. One bears the name of a man.

That disproportion is where this book began for me. Gedaliah ben Achikam governed for only a brief season, and the biblical account of him occupies little space. Yet the Sages teach that the death of the righteous is weighed against the burning of the House of our G-d. They ask us to hold two devastations beside one another: the loss of the place where holiness was present, and the loss of a human being through whom a shattered people might have learned to live again.

The destruction of the Temple changed the historical task facing the Jewish people. After Jerusalem fell, Jeremiah's message was that Babylon's ascendancy had been decreed for a bounded time. He told the nations to accept Nebuchadnezzar's yoke and live. He told the exiles to build, plant, raise families, seek the welfare of the place where they had been sent, and wait for the appointed return.

That was not a command to disappear. It was a discipline of continuity. Exile would be real, humiliating, and long, but it would not have the last word. The people were to live Jewish lives inside a condition they could not end by force.

This book reads Gedaliah as a man who understood that change. Scripture does not tell us that he quoted Jeremiah 27 or Jeremiah 29, and Chazal do not formulate his conflict with Ishmael in exactly these terms. The interpretation is mine. What the text does tell us is that Gedaliah urged the remnant to remain in the land, serve the king of Babylon, gather wine, summer fruit, and oil, and inhabit the towns. Judeans returned from surrounding countries, and the harvest became abundant. His program was not a theory waiting to be tested. For a moment, it was working.

Gedaliah was not merely submitting. He stood between the people and the empire and made room for return, food, work, judgment, and ordinary life. He rebuilt without pretending that sovereignty had returned. A field could be planted without a Jewish king on the throne. The kingdom was gone. The people were not.

AUTHOR'S AFTERWORD (CONT.)

Ishmael carries the opposite reading of the moment. He is of the royal seed and one of the former king's officers. The biblical text names Baalis, king of Ammon, as the ruler who sent him to kill Gedaliah. Traditional commentators connect Ishmael's royal lineage to jealousy over Gedaliah's appointment. From those facts, this adaptation imagines a man who believes that accepting Babylonian rule means surrendering the Jewish future.

His grievance has a real shape. The royal house has been humiliated, and an empire has chosen a governor from the scribal house. To Ishmael, Gedaliah's success may look more dangerous than defeat because it teaches people to live without a king.

But Ishmael's answer contains its own accusation. He speaks of independence while depending on Baalis. He condemns Gedaliah for serving Babylon while carrying out the design of an Ammonite king. He says he is saving the House of David, then murders Judeans, kills the garrison whose deaths will expose the whole remnant to reprisal, takes the king's daughters captive, and drives the survivors toward another foreign border. His blow does not restore sovereignty. It makes the exile complete.

Rambam describes Gedaliah's death as the extinguishing of the remaining ember of Israel and the completion of the exile. That teaching gives the fast a national dimension beyond the death of one righteous man. The harvest community at Mizpah was fragile, but it was a living Jewish remnant in the land. When its governor was murdered and its people fled, something more than an administration ended.

The Talmud adds a different judgment, and I did not want the book to blur the two. In Niddah 61a, the Sages stop at Jeremiah's strange phrase that the dead in the cistern were killed "by the hand of Gedaliah." Ishmael killed them, the Talmud objects. The answer is severe: Gedaliah had been warned. He was not permitted to accept an evil report as established fact, but he was required to take precautions against the danger it disclosed.

AUTHOR'S AFTERWORD (CONT.)

Gedaliah was right to reject Yochanan's offer of a secret assassination. His failure was treating every lesser safeguard as the same moral act. Searching Ishmael's men or retaining trusted guards would not have declared him guilty. Compassion for the accused did not cancel responsibility for the people. Mesillat Yescharim uses Gedaliah to show why piety must be weighed with judgment: a beautiful instinct can become destructive when it ignores foreseeable consequences.

Yochanan carries the second half of that argument. He warns Gedaliah and is called a liar. After the warning comes true, he learns that trust is weakness. Then, when Jeremiah tells the remnant to remain in the land, Yochanan answers with the same word: sheker, falsehood. The man who was right about the danger becomes wrong about the prophetic word. Gedaliah mistakes caution for condemnation; Yochanan mistakes fear for wisdom. One rejects every precaution. The other rejects every promise.

That is why the two confrontations are staged alike. Moral memory can trap us in the arrangement of the last disaster. Yochanan believes he is refusing to repeat Gedaliah's error. Instead, he makes its twin. He allows a true warning to become a complete philosophy of distrust.

Tamar and the Nurse are inventions built inside the "king's daughters" named by Scripture. I wanted someone from the royal house to see what Ishmael could not: a dynasty has no meaning apart from the people it serves. Their small acts—preparing a hiding place, shielding a child, passing on practical knowledge—make preservation a form of heroism.

The cistern gathers every strand. King Asa dug it for fear of a war that did not come. Generations later, it gives water to a peace its builder never saw. Gedaliah sees continuity in it. Ishmael fills it with the dead. A structure made by an independent king survives into exile, and its meaning depends on the hands that inherit it.

I began with a question about warnings. I ended with a question about time: how does a people remain faithful when the chapter of history it wants has closed and the next one has not yet opened? Gedaliah understood the large answer and failed in the immediate duty. Ishmael rejected the large answer and destroyed what the duty was meant to protect. Yochanan survived both men and carried fear into the final choice.

The House burned in Av. In the seventh month, there were still people in the land, fruit in the jars, and water below the stone. That remaining life was neither a restored kingdom nor a small thing. It was the ember.

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