

1 Kings 20:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

Analysis

And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

This verse contributes to the broader narrative of Ahab's wars with Syria, within the book's focus on prophetic ministry of Elijah confronting Baalism.

The Hebrew text reveals nuances important for understanding this passage's contribution to 1 Kings' theological message about kingship, covenant, and faithfulness to Yahweh. This verse demonstrates the consequences when God's people—especially their leaders—either follow or forsake the covenant established at Sinai.

Historical Context

First Kings was written during or after the Babylonian exile (6th century BCE), reflecting on the monarchy period (10th-9th centuries BCE) to explain why the kingdoms fell. Elijah's ministry (c. 860-850 BCE) occurred during Ahab's reign, a time of intense spiritual crisis in Israel.

Ancient Near Eastern kingship ideology viewed kings as divine representatives responsible for maintaining cosmic order through right worship. Archaeological discoveries from sites like Megiddo, Hazor, and Samaria confirm the historical reliability of 1 Kings' descriptions of building projects and administrative structures.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage illustrate the importance of complete obedience to God's word without compromise?
2. What does Elijah's ministry reveal about God's character and His commitment to His covenant people?
3. How does this verse point toward or prepare for the coming of Christ and His eternal kingdom?

Interlinear Text

אֲלֵהֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ אֲלֵהֶיךָ וְעָבָדָךְ
And the servants of the king of Syria said 1 H413
H5650 H4428 H758 H559 H430

מִתְּהִלָּה כִּי עַל אֲלֵהֶיךָ מִפְּרִים
of the hills are gods H5921 H3651 therefore they were stronger H2388
H2022 H430 H4480

לֹא אָלַמְתָּ נְלַכְתָּ מִתְּמִשְׁׁרֵת וְאַתָּם
than we but let us fight H854 against them in the plain H4334 H518
H199 H3898 H3808

מִתְּהִלָּה
therefore they were stronger H2388 H1992

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 14:23 (Parallel theme): For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

Isaiah 42:8 (Parallel theme): I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

1 Kings 20:28 (Kingdom): And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

2 Kings 19:12 (References God): Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Thelasar?

1 Samuel 4:8 (References God): Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

