

1 Samuel 26:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

Analysis

David's vivid imagery reduces Saul's grand military expedition to absurdity: the king of Israel hunting 'a flea' and 'a partridge in the mountains.' The Hebrew 'par'osh' (flea) is among the smallest, most insignificant creatures, while the partridge (qore') was known for its exhausting, pointless flight patterns when pursued. This self-deprecating language simultaneously humbles David and exposes the foolishness of Saul's disproportionate response. The appeal 'let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD' invokes divine witness to any injustice.

Historical Context

Partridge hunting in the Judean hills was known for its futility; the birds would run and fly short distances, exhausting the hunter without being caught. This metaphor perfectly captured the years of fruitless pursuit Saul had undertaken.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing the disproportion in others' attacks help you respond with grace?
2. When have you found freedom in acknowledging your own insignificance in a conflict?

Interlinear Text

מִתְּנַדֵּד אֵת נֶצֶחָה	וְעַתָּה הַיְלֵדָה	לְמִתְּנַדֵּד אֵת נֶצֶחָה	וְעַתָּה הַיְלֵדָה
H6258	H408	fall	Now therefore let not my blood
		H5307	to the earth
		H1818	H5048
		H776	
לְפָנָי יְשַׁבָּא לְפָנָי	יְהִי הָיָה כִּי אֵצֶן אֵלֶיךָ לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי יְשַׁבָּא לְפָנָי	לְפָנָי יְשַׁבָּא לְפָנָי
before the face	of the LORD	is come out	for the king
H6440	H3068	H3588	H4428
		H3318	H3478
		H4428	H1245
בְּקָרְבָּן אֲתָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַד פָּרָעָה	רָאָתָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַד פָּרָעָה	בְּקָרְבָּן אֲתָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַד פָּרָעָה	רָאָתָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַד פָּרָעָה
H853	flea	a	as when one doth hunt
H6550		H259	H7291
			H7124
בְּרִים:			
in the mountains			
H2022			

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 24:14 (Kingdom): After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.