

1 Samuel 29:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?

Analysis

The Philistine princes' challenge, 'What do these Hebrews here?' uses the ethnic designation 'Ivrim' (Hebrews) with apparent contempt. Their suspicion of David despite Achish's testimony shows that political alliances cannot overcome deep ethnic and religious divisions. Achish's defense of David, noting his time of service 'these days, or these years,' indicates David had been faithful in his visible duties. The confrontation exposes the tension between Achish's personal trust and the other lords' institutional suspicion.

Historical Context

The Philistine pentapolis (five cities) operated as a confederation with shared military command. The 'princes' (seranim) of the other cities could overrule Achish's individual decisions in matters affecting the coalition. This political structure inadvertently provided David's deliverance.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How have political or organizational structures unexpectedly worked for your benefit?
2. What does it suggest when enemies' suspicions prove more protective than their trust?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	שָׂרֵי י	פְּלִשְׁתִּים	מֶה	הָעִבְרִים	הֲאֵלֶּה
Then said	the princes	of the Philistines	H4100	What do these Hebrews	H428
H559	H8269	H6430		H5680	

וַיֹּאמֶר	אָכֵּךְ יֵשׁ	אֶל	שָׂרֵי י	פְּלִשְׁתִּים	הָלֹא	זֶה
Then said	here And Achish	H413	the princes	of the Philistines	H3808	H2088
H559	H397		H8269	H6430		

דָּוִד	עַבְדּוֹ	שֵׁא וּל	מֶלֶךְ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֲשֶׁר	הִנֵּה
Is not this David	the servant	of Saul	the king	of Israel	H834	H1961
H1732	H5650	H7586	H4428	H3478		

אֲנִי	זֶה	הֵי וּמִ	אֲנִי	שָׁנִים	וְלֹא	מָצָאתִי	
H854	H2088	in him since	H176	H2088	or these years	H3808	and I have found
		H3117			H8141		H4672

בּוֹ	מָא וּמָה	הֵי וּמִ	נָפַל וְ	עַד	הֵי וּמִ	הִנֵּה:
H0	no fault	in him since	he fell	H5704	in him since	H2088
	H3972	H3117	H5307		H3117	

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 27:7 (References David): And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

Daniel 6:5 (Parallel theme): Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

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