

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

בָּא	לָהּ	בַּעֲבָר	יִם	פָּלֶשֶׁת	יִם	שָׁרֵךְ	וְיִ אָמַר		
Then said	the princes	of the Philistines		H4100	What do these Hebrews			H428	
H559	H8269	H6430			H5680				
וְיִ אָמַר	וְיִ אָמַר	אֲלֹהִים	שָׁרֵךְ	פָּלֶשֶׁת	יִם	בְּלוֹא	זֶה		
Then said	here And Achish	H413	the princes	of the Philistines	H6430	H3808	H2088		
H559	H397		H8269	H6430					
זֶה	אֲשֶׁר	וְיִשְׁבָּא	לְ	מֶלֶךְ	שָׁא וְלָ	בְּדוּ	זֶה		
Is not this David	the servant	of Saul	the king	of Israel	H834		H1961		
H1732	H5650	H7586	H4428	H3478					
מֵצָא	אֶתְּנִי	וְלֹא	שָׁנִים	זֶה	אָתִי				
מֵצָא	אֶתְּנִי	וְלֹא	שָׁנִים	זֶה	אָתִי				
H854	H2088	in him since	H176	H2088	or these years	H3808	and I have found	H4672	
		H3117			H8141				
פְּנָהָה	בְּיִ וְמַ	נִפְלָה	עַד	מֵא וְמַה	בְּ				
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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