

1 Samuel 8:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

Analysis

And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

The conscription now extends beyond family members to household servants and livestock. The Hebrew "avadim" and "shiphchot" (menservants and maidservants) were not merely employees but integral members of the household economy, often for life. Their requisition would devastate families' productive capacity. "Bachurim" (young men, here rendered "goodliest") in the prime of strength will be diverted from family enterprises to royal projects. Even donkeys ("chamorim")—the primary beasts of burden for ordinary Israelites—will be commandeered. The phrase "put them to his work" (Hebrew "melakhto") echoes the language of Egypt's slave labor, creating an unmistakable parallel: Israel seeks a king to be like other nations, but other nations' kings make their people serve like Israel once served Pharaoh. The very deliverance God accomplished at the Exodus will be reversed by the institution they now demand.

Historical Context

Corvee labor (forced work for the state) was a standard practice throughout the ancient Near East. Solomon's labor conscription (1 Kings 5:13-18; 9:15-22) eventually provoked the northern tribes' revolt. The specification of donkeys rather

than horses indicates ordinary agricultural households rather than wealthy families.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the Exodus-reversal theme in this passage illuminate the danger of exchanging divine freedom for human security?
2. What forms of "bondage" do people voluntarily accept today in exchange for perceived benefits?

Interlinear Text

בְּחוֹרִיכָם וְאֶת שָׁפַח וְתִיכָם וְאֶת עֲבָדִיכֶם וְאֶת יְמִינֶךָ וְאֶת יְמִינֶךָ H853 **your menservants** H853 **and your maidservants** H853 **young men** H5650 H8198 H970

וְעֵשֶׂת	הַטּוֹבִים	וְאֶת	סְמֻדְרִיכָם	וְאֶת	יְמִינָה
and your goodliest	H853		and your asses	And he will take	and put

למלאכתו:

them to his work

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