

Exodus 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:

Analysis

Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt (לך ואספת את זקני ישראל ויאמרת אליהם ויאמר יהוה אלהי אבותיכם נראה אלי... פקד פקדתי אתכם) —God gives Moses his message and strategy. **Gather the elders** (זקני, ziknei)—work through existing leadership. The message: **appeared unto me** (נראה אלי, theophany), and **I have surely visited you** (פקד פקדתי, pakod pakadti, emphatic: "visiting I have visited"). The verb פקד (pakad) means "visit for purpose"—divine intervention. **Seen that which is done to you**—God's awareness motivates action. This message assures Israel that their suffering hasn't gone unnoticed; God acts to fulfill covenant promises.

Historical Context

The phrase 'surely visited' (פקד פקדתי) echoes Joseph's prophecy in Genesis 50:24-25: 'God will surely visit you.' Israel's elders likely passed down this promise through generations, waiting for its fulfillment. Moses' message confirms that the long-awaited visitation has begun. Working through elders respected existing tribal authority structures that would govern Israel's camp organization during the wilderness journey.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's 'visiting' Israel after centuries of silence encourage you when prayers seem unanswered for long periods?
2. What does Moses' instruction to work through existing elders teach about respecting legitimate authority structures when implementing change?

Interlinear Text

אֱלֹהִים	לֵאמֹר	יִשְׂרָאֵל	זִקְנֵי	אֶת	וְאָסַפְתָּ	לְךָ
H413	H559	H3478	H2205	H853	H622	H1980
		of Israel	the elders	and	and gather	
אֱלֹהֵינוּ	אֵל	נִרְאָה	אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	יְהוָה	וְהָיָה
H430	H413	H7200	H1	H430	H3068	
God	appeared	of your fathers	God	unto them	The LORD	
פָּקְדוֹתַי	פָּקְדוֹתַי	לֵאמֹר	וַיִּשְׁקֹב	יִצְחָק	אֲבִרְכָה	אֶת
H6485	H6485	H559	H3290	H3327	H85	
I have surely	I have surely	and say	and of Jacob	of Isaac	of Abraham	
בְּמִצְרַיִם:	לְךָ	הָעֵשׂוּי	וְאַתָּה	אֲתָּךְ	אֶתְּךָ	אֶתְּךָ
H4714	H0	H6213	H853	H853	H853	
to you in Egypt		you and seen that which is done				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 8:4 (Parallel theme): What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Exodus 4:29 (References Israel): And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

Exodus 4:31 (References Lord): And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Genesis 50:24 (References God): And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Acts 15:14 (References God): Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

Acts 20:17 (Parallel theme): And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

Acts 11:30 (Parallel theme): Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Exodus 13:19 (References God): And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

Exodus 4:5 (References God): That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

Exodus 2:25 (References God): And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.