

Exodus 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.

Analysis

And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God (וְשִׁמְעוּ לְקֹלְךָ... וְהִנֵּה אֱלֹהִי הַעֲבָרִים נִקְרָה עָלֵינוּ וְעַתָּה נִלְכָה־זֶה אֶתֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ יְמִים) —God assures Moses: **they shall hearken to thy voice** (בְּמַקְבֵּר Israel will believe. The delegation: **thou and the elders**—corporate leadership confronting Pharaoh. The message: **The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us** (YHWH Elohei ha'Ivrim)—first use of "Hebrews" identifying Israel ethnically to Egyptians. The request: **three days' journey... to sacrifice**—initially seems like a temporary religious observance. Was this deception or a test? God knew Pharaoh would refuse even this modest request (v. 19), exposing his hardness.

Historical Context

The three-day journey request appears repeatedly (5:3, 8:27). Some interpret it as initial, tactical request that would be expanded; others as testing Pharaoh's

willingness to permit any worship. Ancient Near Eastern protocol required respectful initial requests before escalating. The phrase 'sacrifice to the LORD' (זִבְחַ לֵיהָה) emphasizes worship as Israel's purpose—they're not just escaping slavery but pursuing covenant relationship with YHWH.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the phased approach—starting with a three-day journey request—illustrate wisdom in confronting opposition gradually?
2. What does the emphasis on sacrifice/worship as the purpose for leaving teach about prioritizing relationship with God over mere circumstantial improvement?

Interlinear Text

וְשִׁמְעוּ וְ	לְקַل בְּ	וְבָאתְ	אַפְתָּה
And they shall hearken	to thy voice	and thou shalt come	H859
H8085	H6963	H935	
תְּאִמְרָת מֶ	מִצְבָּה יְמִ	מִלְּנָגֵן יְ	תָּאִמְרָת מֶ
thou and the elders	of Israel	unto the king	of Egypt
H2205	H3478	H413	H4714
		H4428	H559
וְעַת הַעַל יְנוּ נִקְבַּה הַ	קָעָרְבִּים	לִיהְיוּ הַ	אֱלֹהִים
H413	to the LORD	God	of the Hebrews
	H3068	H430	H5680
			H7136
בְּמִדְבָּר רַיְמִים	נִלְכָה	שְׁלֵשָׁת	דְּכָר בְּ
		H7969	H1870
days	into the wilderness	we beseech thee three	journey
H3117	H4057	H1870	H4994
אֱלֹהִים הַ	לִיהְיוּ הַ	וְנִזְבְּחַת הַ	
that we may sacrifice	to the LORD	God	
H2076	H3068	H430	

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 9:1 (References God): Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Exodus 7:16 (References God): And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

Exodus 9:13 (References God): And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Exodus 10:3 (References God): And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

Psalms 110:3 (Parallel theme): Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Joshua 1:17 (References God): According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

2 Chronicles 30:12 (Kingdom): Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

Numbers 17:4 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

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