

Exodus 32:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Analysis

Moses appeals to God's reputation among the Egyptians who would say לָכֵן הוֹצִיָּאֵם (lera'ah hotzi'am, He brought them out for evil purposes). The argument addresses God's missionary concern—His name's honor among nations. Moses suggests Israel's destruction would vindicate Egypt's gods and slander Yahweh's character, making Him appear malicious or impotent. The plea שׁוּב מִחֲרוֹן אַפֶּךָ (shuv meicharon apecha, turn from Your fierce wrath) uses anthropomorphic language, and וְהִנָּחֵם (vehinnachem, repent) means 'relent' or 'change course'—not that God sinned, but that He responds to intercession.

Historical Context

God's concern for His name among nations is a major biblical theme (Ezekiel 36:22-23). Moses understood that God's ultimate purpose was global testimony, not merely Israel's prosperity.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does concern for God's reputation shape your prayers and decisions?
2. What does God's willingness to 'repent' teach about prayer's effectiveness?

Interlinear Text

לָמָּה H4100	וַיֹּאמֶר H559	מִצֵּרִים H4714	וַיֹּאמֶר H559	לְרָעָה H7451
	and say	Wherefore should the Egyptians	and say	For mischief
הוֹצִיאָם H3318	לְהַרְגֵם H2026	אֹתָם H853	בְּהָרִים H2022	וּלְכַלֵּתָם H3615
	did he bring	them out to slay	them in the mountains	and to consume
מֵעַל H5921	פְּנֵי H6440	הָאֲדָמָה H127	שׁוּבוּ H7725	מִחַרְוֹן H2740
	them from the face	of the earth	Turn	from thy fierce
וְהִנָּה H5162	עַל H5921	לְרָעָה H7451	לְעַמֶּךָ H5971	אַפִּי H639
	and repent	For mischief	against thy people	wrath

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 9:28 (Parallel theme): Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

Exodus 32:14 (Repentance): And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Joshua 7:9 (Parallel theme): For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

Psalms 85:3 (Judgment): Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

Psalms 74:18 (Parallel theme): Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

Psalms 78:38 (Judgment): But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

Psalms 90:13 (Repentance): Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

Psalms 106:45 (Repentance): And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

Zechariah 8:14 (Judgment): For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

Genesis 6:6 (Repentance): And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.