

Exodus 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

Analysis

The request explicitly mentions 'the God of the Hebrews' (אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים), using Israel's ethnic designation. The warning that God might 'fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword' appeals to Egyptian fears of divine judgment. The three-day journey motif emphasizes proper worship requires separation from Egypt.

Historical Context

The term 'Hebrews' (Ivrim) appears primarily in contexts involving Egyptians, suggesting it was Egypt's designation for these Semitic foreigners. Ancient cultures understood that gods could strike with plagues—Egypt had experienced natural disasters before.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. Why does genuine worship sometimes require separation from worldly systems?
2. How do you balance cultural engagement with spiritual distinctiveness?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמְרוּ	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	הָעִבְרִים	נִקְרָא	עַל־נוֹ	לְלֹכָה	וְאֵלֶיךָ
And they said	The God	of the Hebrews	hath met			
H559	H430	H5680	H7122	H5921	H1980	H4994
דֶּרֶךְ	שְׁלֹשָׁת	יָמֵינוּ	בְּמִדְבָּר	וְנִזְבְּחָה	לַיהוָה	
journey	we pray thee three	days	into the desert	and sacrifice	unto the LORD	
H1870	H7969	H3117	H4057	H2076	H3068	
וְאֵלֵינוּ	פֶּן יִפְּגַע־נוּ	בְּדֶבֶר	אִם	בְּחֶרֶב:		
The God	lest he fall	upon us with pestilence		or with the sword		
H430	H6435	H6293	H1698	H176	H2719	

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:18 (Sacrifice): 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.