

Numbers 23:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

Analysis

Balaam's oracle 'from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him' presents God's perspective on Israel. The elevated vantage point symbolizes divine viewpoint versus earthly perspective. The Hebrew *ra'ah* (see) and *shur* (behold) emphasize careful observation. Balaam sees what God shows him: 'lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations' (verse 9). This sets Israel apart as unique among peoples—chosen, separated, and blessed. Their 'alone' status means they answer to God alone, not to international opinion or power.

Historical Context

Israel's unique status as dwelling alone anticipated their separation from pagan nations. They were not to intermarry (Deuteronomy 7:3), worship other gods (Exodus 20:3), or follow pagan customs (Leviticus 18:3). This separateness, viewed by enemies as vulnerability, was actually their strength—God's special covenant protection. Later, Israel's failure to maintain separation led to judgment (2 Kings 17:7-23).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's perspective on His people differ radically from the world's view?
2. What does it mean for believers to 'dwell alone'—separated unto God?
3. How is separation from the world a blessing rather than isolation?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר	כִּי	וְמִגְבָּעָה	וְתַּחַת	אֶרְאָה	כִּי	אֶרְאָה	כִּי	מִרְאֵשׁ	אֲשֶׁר	כִּי
H3588	For from the top	of the rocks	H6697	I see	H7200	him and from the hills	H1389	I behold	H7789	
	H7218			H7200			H1389			
לֹא	וּבְגַוְן	מִן	וְשָׁבֵךְ	לְבָדְךָ	עַמּוֹד	עַמּוֹד	לְבָדְךָ	עַמּוֹד	לֹא	וְתַחַשְׁבָּה:
H2005	him lo the people	alone	H7931	shall dwell	H1471	among the nations	H3808			
	H5971			H7931			H1471			

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 33:16 (Parallel theme): For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 32:8 (Parallel theme): When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 33:28 (Parallel theme): Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

Esther 3:8 (Parallel theme): And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

Ezra 9:2 (Parallel theme): For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

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