

1 Kings 20:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

Analysis

And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

This verse contributes to the broader narrative of Ahab's wars with Syria, within the book's focus on prophetic ministry of Elijah confronting Baalism.

The Hebrew text reveals nuances important for understanding this passage's contribution to 1 Kings' theological message about kingship, covenant, and faithfulness to Yahweh. This verse demonstrates the consequences when God's people—especially their leaders—either follow or forsake the covenant established at Sinai.

Historical Context

First Kings was written during or after the Babylonian exile (6th century BCE), reflecting on the monarchy period (10th-9th centuries BCE) to explain why the

kingdoms fell. Elijah's ministry (c. 860-850 BCE) occurred during Ahab's reign, a time of intense spiritual crisis in Israel.

Ancient Near Eastern kingship ideology viewed kings as divine representatives responsible for maintaining cosmic order through right worship. Archaeological discoveries from sites like Megiddo, Hazor, and Samaria confirm the historical reliability of 1 Kings' descriptions of building projects and administrative structures.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this passage illustrate the importance of complete obedience to God's word without compromise?
2. What does Elijah's ministry reveal about God's character and His commitment to His covenant people?
3. How does this verse point toward or prepare for the coming of Christ and His eternal kingdom?

Interlinear Text

הִנֵּה לְךָ אֶל צָעֵק וְהִיא עֹבֶר הַמִּלְחָמָה	And as the king passed by he cried And as the king	H1961 H4428 H1931 H5674 H413 H4428
וְהַבָּא בְּמִלְחָמָה הַיְשָׁרָב יָמַר אֵלֶיךָ	and he said Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle a man	H559 H5650 H3318 H7130 H4421 H2009 H376
וְיִשְׁמַר אַתָּה נַפְשֵׁךְ רַק אֵלֶיךָ	turned aside and brought a man and he said Keep a man	H413 H376 H559 H8104 H853 H376
תִּחְיֶה נַפְשֵׁךְ וְנַפְשֵׁה הַיְשָׁרָב אֵם בְּנֵי הָעָם	he be missing he be missing be for his life	H2088 H518 H6485 H6485 H1961 H5315 H8478
תְּשַׁקְּוֹל אֵלֶיךָ כְּפֹר נַפְשֵׁךְ וְנַפְשֵׁה	be for his life a talent of silver or else thou shalt pay	H176 H3603 H3701 H8254

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 10:24 (Parallel theme): And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him.