

1 Samuel 11:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

Analysis

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

Nahash ('serpent' in Hebrew) exemplifies the hostile forces arrayed against God's covenant people. His siege of Jabesh-gilead, a town in Transjordan with close ties to the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 21:8-14), creates a crisis that will prove Saul's fitness for kingship. The men of Jabesh propose vassalage rather than death, revealing the desperate spiritual and military condition of Israel. Their willingness to 'serve' (abad) a foreign oppressor stands in stark contrast to their calling to serve the LORD alone.

Historical Context

The Ammonites, descendants of Lot (Genesis 19:38), occupied territory east of the Jordan River. Jabesh-gilead's vulnerability stemmed from its isolated position across the Jordan from the main Israelite settlements. This period (c. 1050 BC) saw increasing pressure from surrounding nations due to Israel's spiritual declension.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. When facing overwhelming opposition, do you first seek human solutions or divine intervention?
2. How does this crisis demonstrate Israel's need for godly leadership that Saul was meant to provide?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּעַל נַעֲשֵׂה עַל עַל יְבִישׁ
came up Then Nahash the Ammonite and encamped H5921 against Jabeshgilead
H5927 H5176 H5984 H2583 H3003

אָנָשִׁים יְבִישׁ אֶל נַעֲשֵׂה
H1568 said H3605 H376 against Jabeshgilead H413 Then Nahash
H559 H3003 H5176

בְּרִית לֹא כָּתַת יְתַעַזֵּב:
Make H0 a covenant with us and we will serve
H3772 H1285 H5647

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 12:12 (Parallel theme): And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.

Genesis 26:28 (Covenant): And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

Ezekiel 17:13 (Covenant): And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

1 Kings 20:34 (Covenant): And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

Judges 21:8 (Parallel theme): And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD? And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.

Job 41:4 (Covenant): Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?

Exodus 23:32 (Covenant): Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.