

1 Samuel 20:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

Analysis

If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

The prepared excuse - David's attendance at a 'yearly sacrifice' in Bethlehem - used religious obligation to explain absence. Such family sacrifices were legitimate obligations, making the cover story plausible. Jonathan would claim David had 'earnestly asked' (nish'ol nish'al) - intensive Hebrew emphasizing repeated, passionate request. The statement was literally true: David did need to be elsewhere. Yet the stated reason concealed the actual purpose. While Scripture records without condemning, the episode shows how Saul's violence forced others into deception for survival.

Historical Context

Family sacrifices at ancestral locations were regular religious observances. Jesse's family in Bethlehem would have held such gatherings annually. Permission to attend family religious obligations was normally granted to court servants. The story exploited Saul's potential religious scruples.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you evaluate the ethics of protective deception in life-threatening situations?
2. What does this passage reveal about how one person's violence corrupts the moral choices of others?

Interlinear Text

אִם	יְפֹקֵד נִי	יְפֹקֵד נִי	אָב יָב	וְאָמַרְתָּ	לְנִשָּׂא לְ	נִשָּׂא לְ
H518	at all	at all	If thy father	me then say	asked	asked
	H6485	H6485	H1	H559	H7592	H7592
כִּי	עִיר וְ	לְהֵם	בֵּית	לָרוֹץ	דָּוִד	מִמֶּנִּי
	his city	to Bethlehem	H0	that he might run	David	H4480
	H5892	H1035		H7323	H1732	
הַמִּשְׁפָּחָה:	לְכָל שָׁם	הֵם יִם	זֶבַח			
there for all the family	H8033	for there is a yearly	sacrifice			
H4940	H3605	H3117	H2077			

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 17:58 (References David): And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

1 Samuel 9:12 (Sacrifice): And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place:

