

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

נִשְׁאָן	לְ	נִשְׁאָן	לְ	וְאִמְרָתִךְ	אָבִיךְ	יְפָקֹד	נִי	יְפָקֹד	נִי	אָמֵן
H518	at all	at all	If thy father	me then say	asked	asked				
	H6485	H6485	H1	H559	H7592	H7592				
בְּ	עִירִזְ	לְ	צָמֵן	לְ	בֵּית	לְ	רֹזֵץ	לְ	מִתְּמַמָּן	בְּ
H4480	David	leave of me that he might run	H0	to Bethlehem	his city	H3588				
	H1732	H7323		H1035	H5892					
לְכָל	שָׁמְםָה	בְּמִימָה	לְכָל	שָׁמְםָה	בְּמִימָה	לְכָל	שָׁמְםָה	בְּ	בְּ	
sacrifice	for there is a yearly	H8033	H3605	there for all the family	H4940					
H2077	H3117									

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:

